

Self-Care Planning

Building Your Bridge for the Future

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Self-Care Planning

Self-care is not a luxury or fluff, but is essential because of the work that First Responders do. You wouldn't be here unless you are thinking of making change. Perhaps you are "sick and tired" of being "sick and tired."

You will use the information you learned this weekend to make a change in your life. This might be to practice stress management techniques, go to counseling, cut down on drinking, get help for your PTSD or depression, learn about anger management, etc.

It is best to have a plan to begin your healing, using what you have learned. This will be your Self-Care Plan. A Self-Care Plan has a goal and can be very simple.

Before you create your plan, it is good to know that change is a process of stages.

So, you should , you'll write a self-care plan that is linked to where you are in the process of change so that you set yourself up for success.

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Why is a Self-Care Plan Needed?

Because of **Convergent Responder Adverse Perils**

**Convergent
Responder
Adverse
Perils**

During your work, were you exposed to any of this CRAP:

- 1. A coworker's death or disfigurement?**
- 2. The death, rape or serious injury of a child?**
- 3. Multiple fatalities or grossly harmed survivors?**
- 4. Attempted or completed suicides?**
- 5. Personal mishaps and accidents involving death or permanent injury?**
- 6. Acts of terrorism?**
- 7. An officer-involved shooting?**
- 8. Grotesque injuries such as burned or dismembered bodies?**
- 9. Acts of violence resulting in death?**
- 10. Administrative problems in your department that worsened your mental health?**

Can you think of any other CRAP that you have experienced as a first responder?

What Happens to a First Responder who
Experiences CRAP?

- The rate of PTSD among the general population is 6%. It is 25-30% among first responders.
- First Responders are *10 times* more likely to attempt suicide.
- 85% of First Responders have experienced symptoms related to mental health issues such as heightened anxiety and depression.
- Past month heavy or binge drinking was reported by about half of male firefighters; 9% reported driving under the influence. Over 39% of female firefighters binge drink.
- In 2017, suicides left more officers and firefighters dead *than all line of duty deaths combined*.
- In 2017, 46 police officers were fatally shot. More than triple that — *140* — committed suicide.

A Message of Hope

Change is possible but it takes a lot of work. We get out of our self-care what we put into it. How much does this glass of water weigh?

Change is not linear...it has setbacks when we want to quit.

Things become damaged or broken, not people.

You must take care of yourself before you can help others heal.

People change for
two reasons:

-Either they learn
enough that they want to

-Or they've been hurt
enough that they have to.

A landscape of rolling green hills under a cloudy sky. The hills are covered in lush green grass and are arranged in a series of gentle, undulating curves. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds, and the overall atmosphere is serene and natural.

**Some people change when
they think they're a star or
something.**

Paris Hilton

Why We Fail to Change

Because we think change means action.

Our goals are not specific.

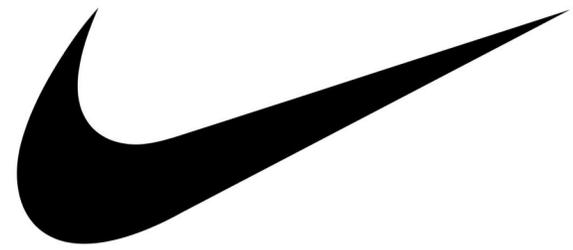
We overshoot and try to do too much.

We are no longer in crisis mode.

We 'think ourselves out' of change, like the elephant being tied to the stump.

We focus on taking care of others and avoid looking at yourself.

We are creating a goal that doesn't line up with where we are in the change process.



People go through stages to reach their self-care goal. Knowing what stage you are in helps you develop the best self-care plan.

- Precontemplation: I'm just not going to do it.
- Contemplation: I may just do it.
- Preparation: I'm getting ready to just doing it.
- Action: I'm just doing it.

When people change, they do so by moving through these stages. They also can go back and forth between these stages.

It's important for you to identify which stage you're at so that you can make a self care plan that works. The most effective self-care plans address where you are in this stage of change.

Precontemplation

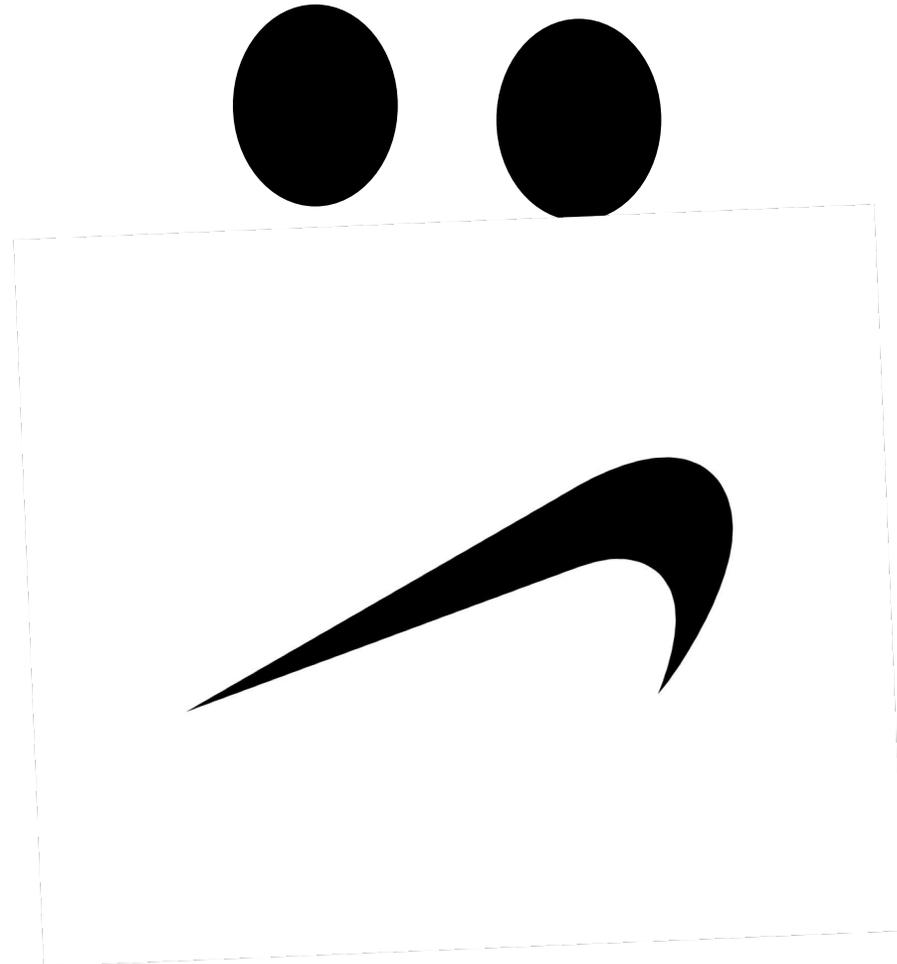
First responders in this stage have no intent to take any action on self-care. They don't see a need to change, yet.

People in this stage will rebel if forced to change.

They may want to self-care, but do not intend to.

I'm just not going to do it.

Chances are, you wouldn't be here if you weren't thinking about healing.



How to Move from the Precontemplation Stage?

- For the significant other, don't force someone to take care of himself/herself. That will only be met with resistance and resentment. Rather, provide the first responder with the key if they are in this stage: Give them information.
- For the first responder, get as much information as you can so you can make an informed decision to change. Coming to this retreat is an example of gaining information.
- Learn about how you are affecting people in your world, for better or worse.
- Compare how you were when you started your career, with what you've become.
- Get information from others, such as your significant other, children, coworker you trust.
- Have others share information about how they see you.
- Write about what could be different if you took steps to take care of yourself. Write about what your life would be like if you begin to heal.

Contemplation

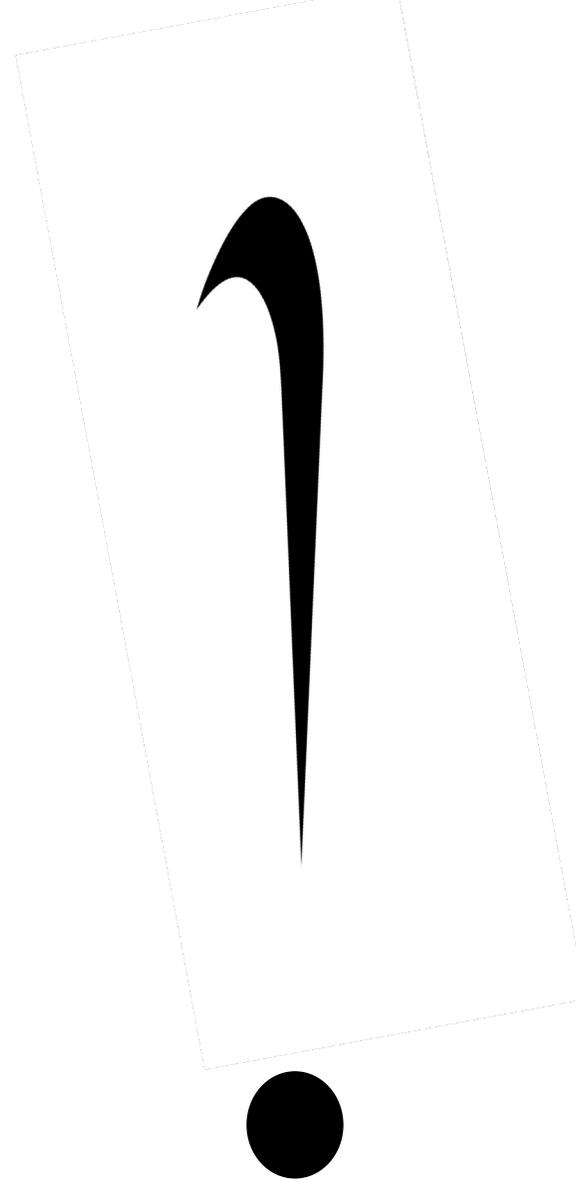
The first responder is considering both the pros and cons of self-care.

The pros of adopting self-care strategies are outweighing the cons.

The first responder however, often remains ambivalent and continues to question the need to self-care.

It may only take one more 'pro' to tip the scales and help the first responder move to the next stage.

I may just do it.



How to Move From Contemplation

- The first responder should consider all of the benefits and risks, the pros and cons, that are associated with self-care.
- You can make a list of the pros and cons of change.
- Once you complete that list, begin to challenge the 'cons' on the list...one by one.
- Get help creating that list from someone you trust.
- Use the 'best friend' technique. What would you advise your best friend to do?

Preparation

The first responder in this stage has made a commitment to begin self-care and will do so in the next 30 days.

He/she is taking real steps to begin acting on healing.

The first responder is identifying what resources are needed to get help and make a change.

I'm getting ready to just doing it.



How to Move From Preparation

- View past attempts to self-care as not failures but you are a “work in progress”.
- You will use your inner strengths inherent in first responders to your advantage: problem solver, being patient, being solution focused, being a hard worker, etc.
- You can make your commitment to take care of yourself ‘public’. Commitments are strengthened if you let others you trust know what your plan is.
- Significant others can help the first responder by helping remove barriers that would interfere with taking action.

Action

In this stage, self-care has started.

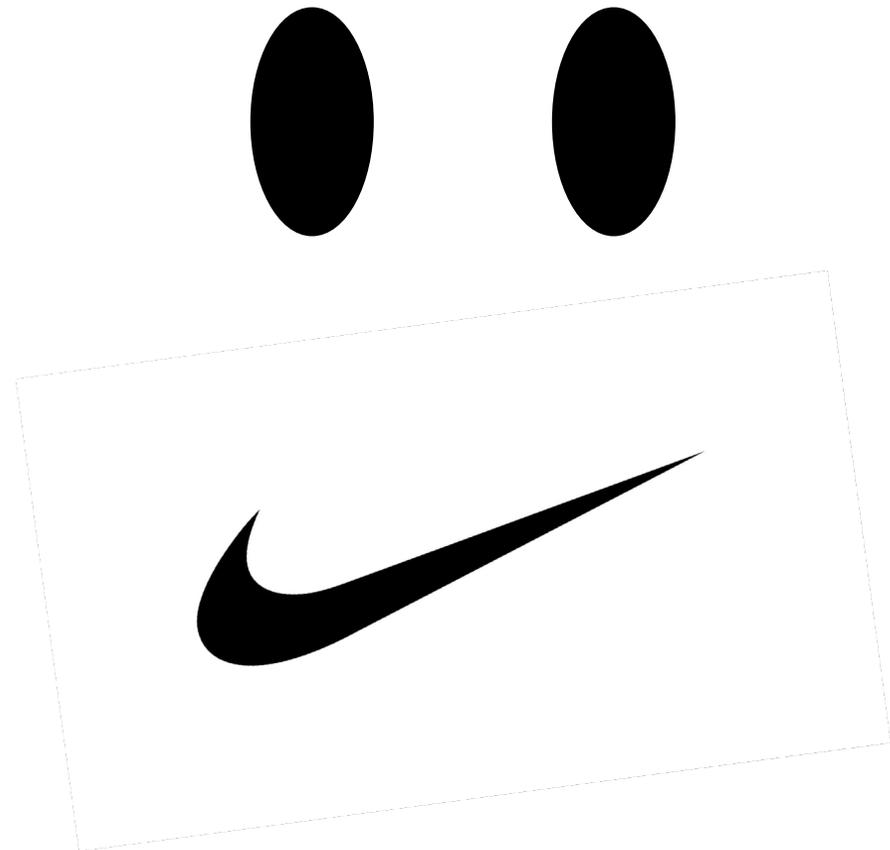
The first responder is beginning to take real steps towards better psychological, physical and spiritual health.

You are working on being less self-destructive.

Maintenance of self-care is key so first responders need encouragement and support.

Anticipate relapse-it will happen, so plan for it.

I'm just doing it!



How to Maintain Action

- Reinforce yourself and, for significant others, praise your first responder.
- Treat yourself and others when you take steps in your self-care plan.
- Expect relapse to happen. Create a plan in advance.
- Help others if they are struggling and in the previous stages.

What's in a Self-Care Plan?

A Goal That Focuses on Taking Care
of Yourself

Self-Care Goals Should be SMART

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Relevant
- Time Focused

Example: *“I am going to the gym two days a week for a month.”*

Example: *“I will talk to my doctor about using medication to help manage my anger.”*

Example: *“I will keep a journal of my anger for the next 30 days. I will write what triggered it, what I did, and what I could have done differently.”*

Example: *“I will look into the Psychology Today website and find someone who does EMDR and call them to make an appointment.”*

Example: My List of Pros and Cons of Starting Self-Care.

- I would learn more about what is bothering me and why I am so angry.
- If I got self-care, I could maybe help other first responders someday.
- I could stop having nightmares.
- My drinking could decrease or stop.
- My marriage could improve.
- My kids wouldn't fear me.
- I wouldn't hate myself and feel guilty so much.
- I would get embarrassed to go and talk to someone about what I've experienced.
- I could get known as "Crazy Chris".
- A therapist probably wouldn't understand me even if I shared.
- I would be afraid of failing if I started to make a change in myself.
- I don't know of any help where I live.

“I’m at the Contemplation stage. In the next 30 days, I will decide if I want to start a plan of self-care.”

- I will make a list of the pros of changing and the cons of changing. I will have at least 15 pros on my list. And I will get this information from reviewing my life and also input from people I trust including my wife, my best friend, and my son.
- I will keep a journal of my nightmares, anger outbursts and how much I am drinking each day for the next 30 days.
- I will get a book about PTSD and read it.
- I will write about what my life would be like if I didn’t have the nightmares and if I stopped drinking.
- Of the cons on my list, I will write at least one challenge to each.
- I will get more information from Ohio Assist about their services and discuss these with my significant other.
- I will read up about EMDR and what it can and can’t do.

“My goal in the next 30 days is to get help for my PTSD and my depression.”

- I will gather the names of at least three therapists in my area and make an appointment. I will go to at least one intake appointment.
- I will make an appointment, and keep it, to talk to my spiritual mentor about how my work is affecting my life.
- I will call my friend, Mick, when I am in distress.
- I will document TICE in a journal in order to improve my self-awareness. My triggers, images, the cognitions and emotions I experience. I will talk to my partner about this when it happens and share one entry in my journal.
- I will buy the book *Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement* and read it.
- I will make a date with my significant other and share with him/her something I have kept inside me about my work.
- I am going to download the free ***PTSD Coach*** app and work through it.
- I will practice tactical breathing...three by three by three at least once a day.
- I will look into my department EAP to see what they can offer me.
- I will connect with my local CISM/Peer team.
- I will go to at least five AA meetings and see if it is right for me.