



Each time a woman stand up for herself, without knowing it possibly, without claiming it, she stands up for all women.

Maya Angelou



SELF-CARE AND SAFETY FOR ADVOCATES



 Session time:
70 minutes

TIME
Activity 1
Activity 2
Activity 3

 **FACILITATOR**
Guide

SELF-CARE AND SAFETY SESSION

OBJECTIVES

- To understand of the importance of self-care and safety as activists and agents of social change
- To recognize symptoms of burnout and challenges to work/life balance, and identify concrete prevention methods
- To identify self-care and safety methods that work for participants

MATERIAL

- 2 flip charts:
 - Write the session objectives and definition 1 of self-care on one of the flip charts
 - Write definition 2 of self-care on the second flip chat
- Markers
- Participant notebooks or journals

HANDOUTS

- “Tips on Self-Care and Personal Safety”

ACTIVITY ONE

 15 min

Self-Care and You

- 1 Write one definition of self-care on each of the flip charts:
 - **Definition 1:** Self-care is what people do for themselves to establish and maintain health and prevent and deal with illness. It is a broad concept encompassing the following:
 - Hygiene
 - Nutrition (type and quality of food eaten)
 - Lifestyle (sporting activities, leisure, etc.)
 - Environmental factors (living conditions, social habits, etc.)
 - Socioeconomic factors (income level, cultural beliefs, etc.)
 - Self-medication (using non prescription drugs or medicines to treat undiagnosed physical or psychological symptoms)¹
 - **Definition 2:** Self-care is the ability to engage in human rights work without sacrificing other important parts of one’s life—the ability to maintain a positive attitude towards the work despite challenges. Self-care can also be understood as a practitioner’s right to be well, safe, and fulfilled.²
- 2 Review the written session objectives on the flip chart with the group. 3 min
- 3 Remind everyone of the Training Agreements that they made at the beginning of the training (see pgs. XX). It is particularly important at the beginning of this session to stress the agreement of confidentiality and participants must keep this training a safe space to discuss everyone’s thoughts, opinions, and experiences.
- 4 What is self-care? Introduce the “self-care definition” activity. 12 min
- 5 Pick two groups of three volunteers each. Have each group hold one of the two definitions of self-care that you wrote on the flip charts, and have them stand around the room.
- 6 Tell the participants that they have five minutes to choose which definition of self-care they like best and to stand next to the person holding that definition.

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SELF-CARE AND SAFETY SESSION

- 7 Now that the participants are all standing next to a definition that they chose, pick at least two representatives from each group to describe why they chose the definition that they did. Have a brief discussion in plenary with participants to review the definition, and discuss how self-care and safety is relevant to work with adolescent girls and advocacy work.
- 8 Have participants come back into their original seats for Activity 2.

ACTIVITY
TWO

 35 min

Challenges to Self-Care and Safety in Advocacy for Adolescent Girls

Brainstorm

5 min

- In this session, it is important that participants understand the challenges that activists face towards self-care and safety. You can start this session by having a brainstorm with the participants about what challenges they foresee to caring for themselves and taking safety precautions that relate to their job as activists and advocates for adolescent girls.
- Three main topics that should come out of this brainstorm are “Burn-Out,” “Personal Vulnerability,” and “Putting Personal Safety at Risk”:
 - **Burn-Out.** A state of emotional and, in some cases, physical exhaustion —often resembles acute stress disorder, depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder. Burn-out does not refer to spending too much time on a task, but rather to an activist’s stress response stemming from the perception that the energy they have invested into a task has yielded insufficient returns.³
 - **Personal Vulnerability.** Many activists share personal stories through their activism, or are connected emotionally to the topics they are advocating for. It is important to recognize that through advocacy, we can become emotionally vulnerable through sharing our experiences or even by being so passionate. It is important to be aware of these aspects and also take care of our emotional well-being.
 - **Putting Personal Safety at Risk.** When we advocate for a cause, we speak publicly about our position and give interviews with the media. Advocates’ names and faces becomes personally associated with our cause, and therefore advocates can become the targets of unwanted political and social attention. It is important that advocates take precautions to safeguard themselves and their personal contact information on phones, computers, and social media to minimize the risks of becoming a target of threats, stalking, or violence.

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SELF-CARE AND SAFETY SESSION



NOTES

Some participants may have difficult stories to share and may become upset or distraught when talking about them, so be prepared to allow for some time and space to engage with these emotions.

Breakout Groups

15 min

Have participants separate into small groups of 3-4 people to discuss personal experiences or thoughts about burn-out, personal vulnerability, and putting personal safety at risk. The session does not need to be rigid—participants should be welcomed to share whatever experiences they have had or what they are feeling on this topic.

Plenary

15 min

- Participants should come back to plenary after the breakout groups. In plenary, ask the participants to identify things they can do to care for themselves and protect their own safety. They can identify activities, thoughts, or actions in either their personal or professional lives.
- Some examples of things individuals can do to take care of themselves include the following:
 - Take care of your body: Eat well, and exercise when possible
 - Find time to decompress and relax: Take time for recreation and spend quality time with family
 - Find and create safe spaces that consist of a supportive network of people
 - Take basic Safety precautions: Check in with organization/family on a regular basis, protect all contact and digital information

ACTIVITY THREE

 20 min

Personal Reflection on Self-Care

After the participants have finished brainstorming about ways to take care of themselves, it is time for them to reflect on their own feelings. The session will close with this personal reflection activity. Ask each participant to take out his/her notebook and a pen and find a comfortable place to think and write. Have participants think and journal about the following prompts:

- What aspects of my personal and professional life cause me stress, unhappiness?
- How can I think about taking care of physical and mental health in the long term?
- What are some ways that I can avoid burn-out in my professional life?
- What are some ways that I can safeguard myself and my family?
- What does my ideal work/life balance look like, and how can I achieve that balance?

SELF-CARE AND SAFETY SESSION

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PARTICIPANT
Guide

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HANDOUT

- “Tips on Self-Care and Personal Safety”

ACTIVITY ONE

15 min

Self-Care and You

ACTIVITY TWO

35 min

Challenges to Self-Care and Safety in Advocacy for Adolescent Girls

ACTIVITY THREE

20 min

Personal Reflection on Self-Care



A6 SELF-CARE AND SAFETY SESSION

HANDOUT: TIPS ON SELF-CARE AND PERSONAL SAFETY

Physical Health

- 1 Keep yourself active.** Physical activity keeps our body and mind in top shape. It not only prevents chronic illness but makes us feel more energized and mentally sharp.
- 2 Eat healthy meals three times a day.** Having a balanced diet protects you from illness and keeps you focused. Do not skip meals, and take your time to enjoy each of them. Try not to eat standing up, while working on your computer, or while in your car or on public transportation. Snack often—carry fruits or nuts in your bag for when you need an extra boost of energy. Most important, keep yourself hydrated by bringing water with you to your appointments and meetings throughout the day.
- 3 Sleep seven to nine hours each night.** Appropriate sleep duration is linked with an increased ability to pay attention, react, and process new information. Constant sleep deprivation is associated with motor vehicle accidents, obesity, diabetes, heart problems, and psychiatric conditions like depression.⁴
- 4 Visit your doctor at least once a year.** Get to know your body, be aware of your body's sensations, and listen to it. Our body is a keen instrument capable of telling us when it is time to give ourselves a break. Even when you feel fine, make sure to visit a doctor at least once a year for an annual physical exam.

Psychological Health

- 1 Enjoy time with important people in your life.** Sometimes activists in their passionate call for action inadvertently neglect spending time with their partners, family, and friends. It is important to make space and time to reconnect with special people in your life outside of work.
- 2 Spend a few minutes of each day alone.** Make sure to reflect on the day's activities, interactions you had, how you felt, and anything interesting you might have learned.
- 3 Participate in activities that give you pleasure.** This can include listening to music, keeping a journal, dancing, cooking, or anything that you find relaxing and rewarding. Know what you enjoy and do not feel guilty about doing things that bring you comfort.
- 4 Take breaks.** Short breaks throughout the day can be very effective in injecting your day with energy to keep working. You may choose to go for a walk after lunch, have a coffee break, close your eyes for a minute or two, or share a joke with friends.
- 5 Separate your work from your personal life.** As challenging as it may be, try not to allow your work to permeate every aspect of your life. Do not let your work as an activist be the subject of every conversation you have.

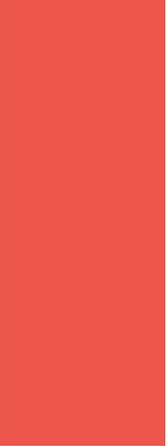


A6 SELF-CARE AND SAFETY SESSION

HANDOUT: TIPS ON SELF-CARE AND PERSONAL SAFETY

Personal Safety

- 1 Be aware of your surroundings.** Whether you are somewhere you often frequent or a new place, make sure you are aware of the people and context around you. Do you know any of the people around you? Do you feel safe? Try not to walk alone at night or around places that you do not know and that might be dangerous.
- 2 Meet in public places.** If meeting someone for the first time, make sure to agree to meet in a public place. Meeting in cafes, restaurants, and parks is a good idea. Never agree to meet somewhere you expect no other people will be around. If you ever feel uncomfortable, leave.
- 3 Keep your digital world protected.** Make sure to keep your computer, phone, and sensitive digital documents (like contact lists and phone trees) password-protected. If your computer were to be stolen, is there easy access to other people's personal information? Consider keeping your computer, and folders inside your computer, also password-protected. When leaving an Internet café, make sure that you have signed out of and closed all email and social media accounts.
- 4 Do not reveal personal information on social media.** Remember that supporters and non-supporters might be following you on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.). Be careful not to reveal any private information that could call for unwanted contact. Be thoughtful about how often and where you "check in" or mention your specific location at different points throughout your day. Review your privacy settings on your social media accounts to ensure that you are sharing your posts with appropriate audiences only. Never reveal personal information like cell phone numbers or home addresses on social media.
- 5 Take a personal defense class.** The first principle of personal defense is to not get into dangerous situations in the first place by taking precautions like those described above. However, physical confrontations do happen, and participating in a self-defense class or workshop might give you the skills necessary to confront an aggressor in case of violence.
- 6 When traveling, share detailed itineraries with friends and colleagues.** Detailed itineraries include the following:
 - Flight information
 - Hotel information
 - Site visit information (contact names, numbers, addresses)
 - Contact information for taxi or driver you will be using
 - Contact information for all other relevant parties
 - Personal emergency contact information (parents, spouse, other)
- 7 Establish specific communication patterns with family and friends,** particularly if you are traveling to a potentially unsafe location. For example, every evening, send an updated travel itinerary for the following day, including all meetings and relevant contact information, hotel information, and driver contacts. Alternatively, establish a daily phone check-in every day during an agreed-upon time to let them know that you are safe.



REFERENCES

1. WHO <http://apps.who.int/medicinedocs/en/d/Jwhoip32e/3.1.html>
2. New Tactics in Human Rights: <https://www.newtactics.org/conversation/self-care-activists-sustaining-your-most-valuable-resource>
3. New Tactics in Human Rights: <https://www.newtactics.org/conversation/self-care-activists-sustaining-your-most-valuable-resource>
4. <http://www.sleepfoundation.org/article/how-sleep-works/how-much-sleep-do-we-really-need>

NOTES
