Raise Awareness of Self-Care

Activity (20 mins): Combine teaching with brainstorming and group discussion to raise awareness among participants about issues of self-care.

We all need to strive to maintain some balance and wellness in our lives. As we know, well-being is essential to most areas in our lives – relationships, studies, etc. It particularly improves our abilities as peer supporters, because it helps ensure that we have perspective on a situation. Although we do not need to be perfect, we should all seek to model an attitude and behaviors consistent with taking care of ourselves – mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually, etc.

Ask participants, what they can do to ensure that they are at their best with regard to well-being (mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually, etc.)?

Record their answers on the flipchart and discuss them during the brainstorm. Possible answers might include:

- Sleep regularly
- Eat regular healthy meals
- Exercise
- Drink in moderation
- Manage stress levels
- Spend leisure time with family and/or friends
- Take part in activities that allow you to 'switch off' (e.g. going to the cinema, reading a novel, sailing a boat, etc.)
- Talk with confidants about your life
- Seek help if you experience problems
- Treat yourself occasionally (i.e. take a bath, buy a CD, etc.)
- Practice relaxing (music, yoga, meditation, candles, nap in the sun)

• Balance working and studying hours

It is also very important that we care for ourselves while helping others. When we talked about personal boundaries, we mentioned the need to remain detached from the situation. That space is useful for the person being helped, but also, critical to protecting our well-being. If at any point while supporting a peer (or anyone else in life), you feel that you are 'losing yourself' – alarm bells should ring! Always remember that we cannot save a person or solve them problems. If participants find that they are devoting too much energy to helping a peer, they may need to talk with a professional themselves (a counsellor, peer support supervisor, etc.).

Peer support often involves helping others with problems that can affect us all. Thus, there may be times when participants have issues that they need to explore and they should not reach out to others. During these periods, it is better to devote energy to themselves, rather than trying to support others. There is no problem or shame in focusing on themselves, especially because it makes them better, more integrated peer supporters in the long run.

Ask participants, when should they not take on peer support?

Record their answers on the flipchart and discuss them during the brainstorm. Possible answers might include:

• Crisis in your life – family, relationship, college, etc.
• Following a bereavement
• Commitment to other obligations
• Physical or emotional health problems
• Anxious or stressed out
• Overworked at job or studies