



Self-Care Reality Check


BREAKING FREE FROM THE FAUX FIX

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Abstract

In the high-pressure environment of academic advising, the well-being of advisors often takes a back seat to the demands of their roles. This presentation will examine the difference between true self-care and faux self-care, emphasizing the latter's superficial and temporary nature. By integrating information from credible sources and personal life-experiences with positive results, I will highlight the critical need and essentials for academic advisors to engage in genuine self-care practices that foster long-term well-being, resilience, and job satisfaction. Attendees will leave equipped with actionable strategies that transcend traditional self-care clichés, ultimately aiming to reduce burnout and enhance motivation.





Today's Game Plan

- What is Self-Care in Academic Advising?
- Why does it matter?
- Overview of Real vs Faux Self-Care

Objectives:

- Differentiate between true and faux self-care
- Recognize burnout and its impact to advisors
- Discuss research-backed self-care strategies
- Resources





“Almost anything that improves your relationship with yourself is true self-care”

Pooja Lakshmin



What is Self-Care in Academic Advising

- More than just breaks & relaxation – It's about sustainability in your work and well-being
- Setting boundaries – Protecting your time by not answering emails after hours
- Emotional self-care – Allowing yourself to step away and recharge when overwhelmed
- Practicing what you preach – You advise students to prioritize their well-being—do the same for yourself
- Recognizing your worth – You deserve the same care and patience that you offer to others
- Protecting your energy – Small, intentional choices that prevent burnout and keep you engaged in your work
- Asking yourself: “How can I support myself the way I support my students?”

Understanding Self-Care



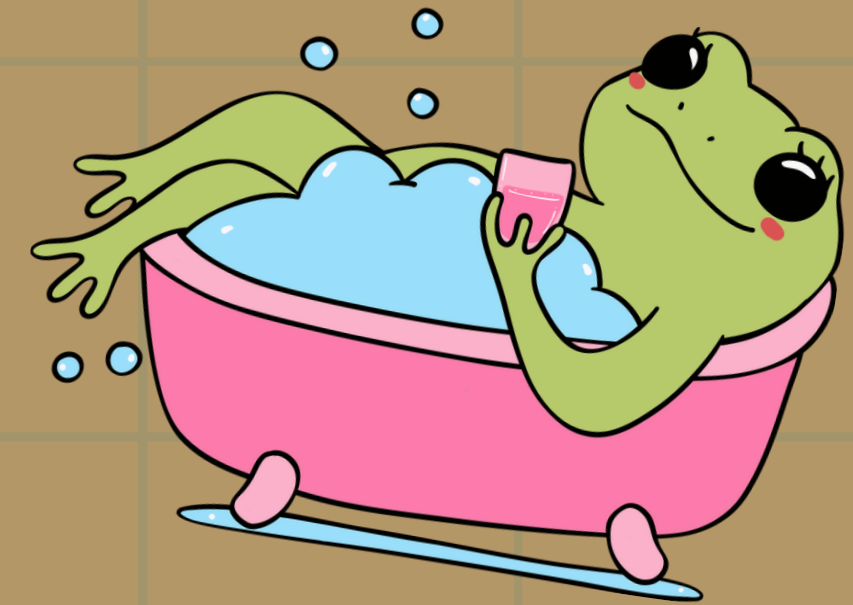
Self-care is the intentional practice of nurturing your physical, emotional, and mental well-being in a way that sustains you long-term. It's more than just relaxation—it's about making daily choices that protect your energy and prevent burnout. Reading books from experts can be helpful, but true self-care comes from action—applying what you learn, setting boundaries, and prioritizing yourself in meaningful ways. Ultimately, self-care is about strengthening your relationship with yourself and recognizing that your well-being matters just as much as the work you do.



*Please share a self-care practice
you've tried in the chat box*

Faux Self-Care

- Temporary relief - spa days, shopping
- Prescribed from outside
- A noun, typically describing an activity product
- Maintains status quo in your relationship or family, and does nothing to change larger systems
- Common examples: a yoga class, a meditation app, or a fancy face cream
- Often leaves you feeling further away from yourself
- Typically comes with feelings of guilt



Consider This...

Take a close look at how faux self-care shows up in your life

- To be clear—attending a yoga or exercise class, or using a meditation app, is not inherently negative when labeled as “faux self-care”.
- The key is to pair these activities with real self-care practices, such as setting boundaries, practicing self-compassion, and aligning with your core values. When you engage in this deeper work, it can help guide you toward wellness activities that truly support your well-being.
- Mindset drives us toward faux self-care. Three common reasons why we turn to faux self care: Escape, Achievement, and Optimization (making something as effective, efficient, or functional as possible).



True Self-Care

- Intentional
- Sustainable
- Originates within you
- A verb, describing an invisible, internal decision-making process
- Allows you to get your needs met in your relationships, & can effect change in your family, workplace, and larger systems
- Brings you closer to yourself and what's important to you
- Comes with a short-term emotional cost, in order to reap longer-term emotional gains





What is Burnout?

Burnout is a state of chronic exhaustion—mentally, emotionally, and physically—caused by prolonged stress and overwork. It's not just feeling tired; it's feeling drained, unmotivated, and detached from your work. Burnout happens when the demands placed on you exceed your ability to recharge, leading to fatigue, cynicism (distrust), and reduced effectiveness.

Recognizing the signs early—like constant exhaustion, emotional detachment, and irritability—can help prevent burnout by prioritizing boundaries, self-care, and meaningful rest.

Reality of Burnout

Common Causes in Advising

- High Workloads
- Emotional Exhaustion
- Role Ambiguity

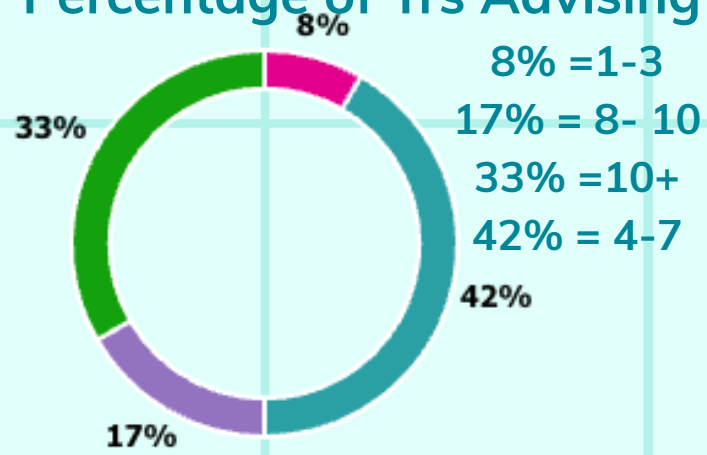
Effects

- Job performance (errors, inefficiency)
- Student Interactions (Reduced empathy, lower engagement)
- Health (Fatigue, anxiety, depression)

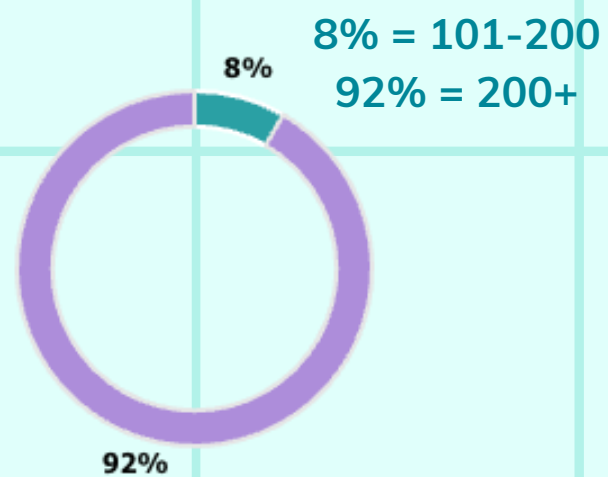


What Some Advisors Feel...

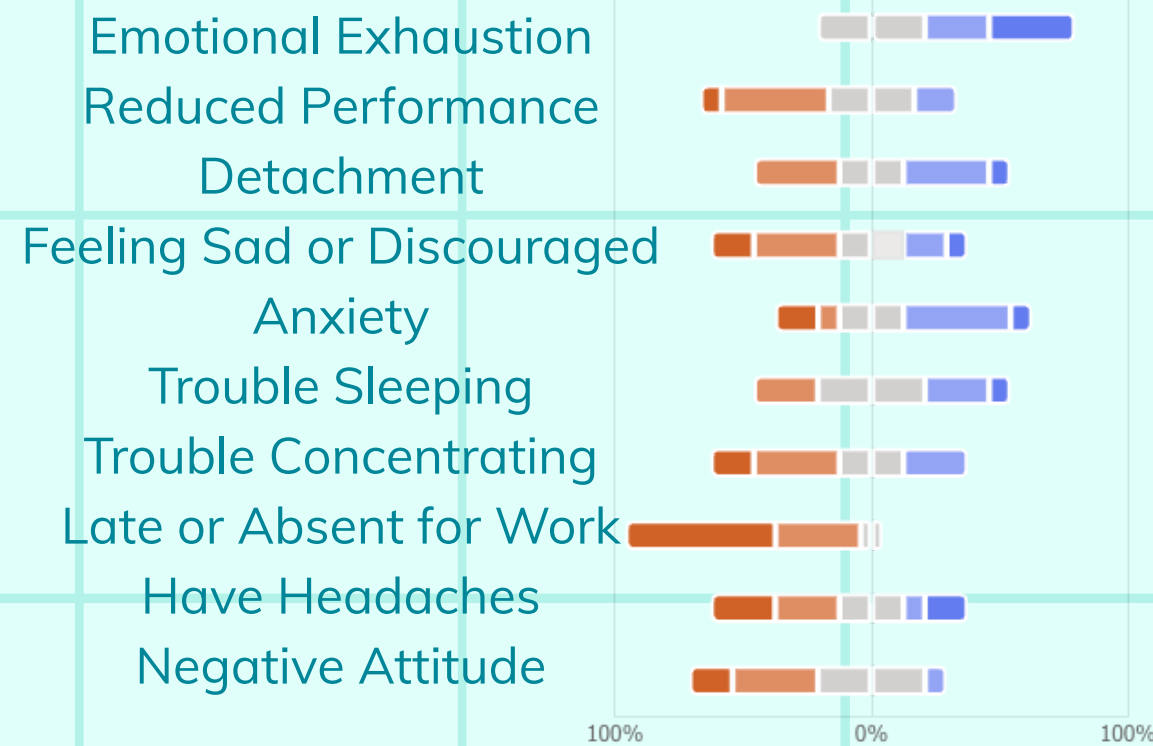
Percentage of Yrs Advising



Caseload

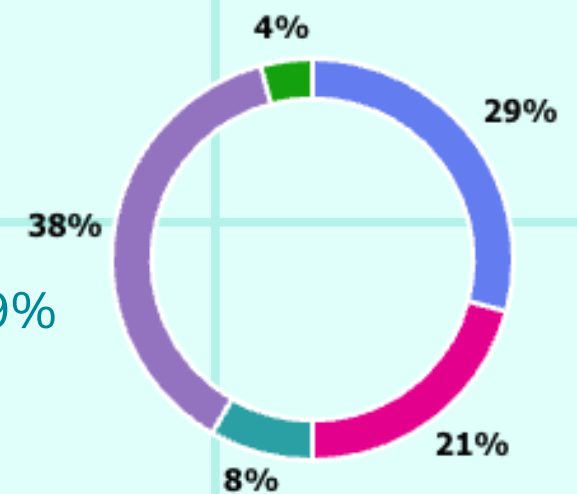


Symptoms of Burnout (1-5 Scale)



Contributive Factors

High Caseloads = 29%
 Limited resources/support = 21%
 Lack of professional development = 8%
 Unrealistic expectations from admin = 39%
 Other = 4%





What Some Advisors Feel...

"Lack of sleep is currently affecting my well being and I worry about my job while I am trying to relax"

"It is hard to disconnect and it keeps me from being present to my personal life outside of work because I can't stop thinking about it."

"Exhaustion after a long day of appts and then the stress to do emails."

"Makes you disenchanted with the profession and frustrated with trying to help students."

"Mostly affects my relationships with my family and friends being to exhausted or disconnected."

"It impacts my overall attitude and how I interact with the people I care most about which is not okay."





Burnout vs. Well-Supported Academic Advisor



Advisor 1: Burnt-Out and Overwhelmed

8:00 AM: Arrives at work already exhausted from checking emails late at night. Skips breakfast, running on caffeine

9:00 AM - 11:00 AM: Back-to-back advising sessions with no breaks. Feels pressure to solve every student's problem and goes beyond advising scope to help

11:30 AM: Tries to catch up on emails but feels overwhelmed by urgent requests. No time to step away or recharge

12:30 PM: Skips lunch due to a meeting about new advising initiatives. Feels unappreciated and like more responsibilities keep piling up

2:00 PM: A difficult conversation with a struggling student leaves them emotionally drained. No time to process before the next meeting

4:00 PM: Stays late to finish paperwork, feeling like there's never enough time. Thoughts of quitting or resentment creep in

6:00 PM: Still responding to emails at home, sacrificing personal time. Stress lingers, affecting sleep and health

Advisor 2: Well-Supported and Balanced

8:00 AM: Starts the day with a short mindfulness exercise. Has breakfast and sets an intention for the day

9:00 AM - 11:00 AM: Schedules breaks between advising sessions to reset. Uses active listening but sets boundaries on what's within their role

11:30 AM: Checks emails in a focused, time-blocked session instead of reacting all day. Prioritizes urgent messages without stress

12:30 PM: Takes a real lunch break. Walks outside or connects with colleagues for support

2:00 PM: A difficult student conversation happens, but they have coping strategies in place (deep breaths, processing afterward)

4:00 PM: Wraps up for the day without guilt. Leaves tasks for tomorrow, knowing they've done enough

6:00 PM: Unplugs from work. Engages in personal hobbies, family time, or relaxation. Work stays at work

Burnout Assessment Checklist

**All answers are anonymous and
you won't need to enter any
personal information**





Burnout Assessment Checklist

Results:

- ✓ **0-3 Yes Answers → You're managing your well-being well, but keep checking in with yourself**
- ✓ **4-6 Yes Answers → You may be experiencing moderate burnout—time to set boundaries and focus on self-care**
- ✓ **7+ Yes Answers → High burnout risk! Prioritize your well-being and explore strategies to regain balance**

Breaking Free: Self-Care Strategies

- Unplug when the clock stops!
- Set boundaries
- Listen to Your Inner Voice
- Practice Healthy Habits
- Have Self-Compassion
- Breathe before reacting - trust me, it works!
- Emotionally Detach
- Set a Shut-Down Routine
- Get an Advising Accountability Partner
- Celebrate Small Wins
- Disconnect to Reconnect
- Create new initiatives that promotes self-care during the day - how we feel at work reflects in our work!
- Create an “Applause” folder for those tough moments to remember your “WHY”
- Remember rest is a tool, not a weakness
- Give yourself permission to pause, breathe, and come back stronger
- Create micro-habits during the day
- Create your own systems that work for you to keep your sanity intact (within reasonability of course!)
- Attend therapy sessions (Make sure your insurance can cover a therapist or get an HSA/Flexible Spending)



Phrases to Practice

“I’ve reached my capacity”

“No”

“Can we find a way to balance this?”

“Not every problem is mine to fix”

“Saying no to extra work is saying yes to my well-being”

“I do not need to be available 24/7 to be effective at my job”

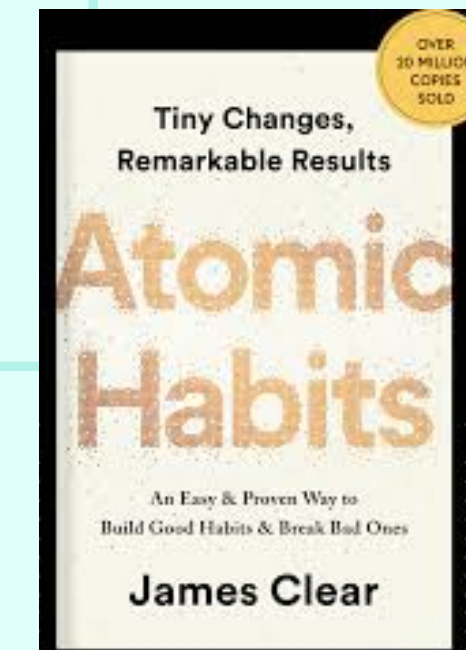
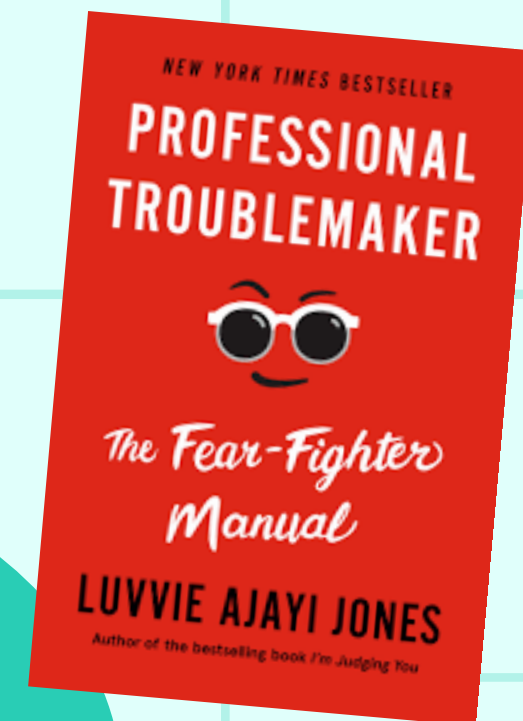
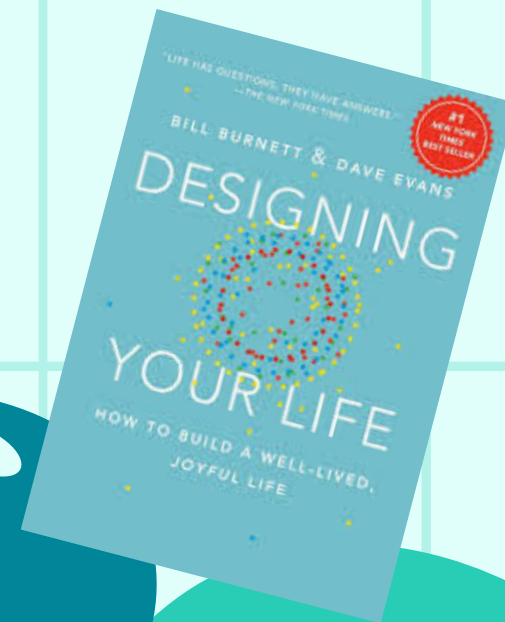
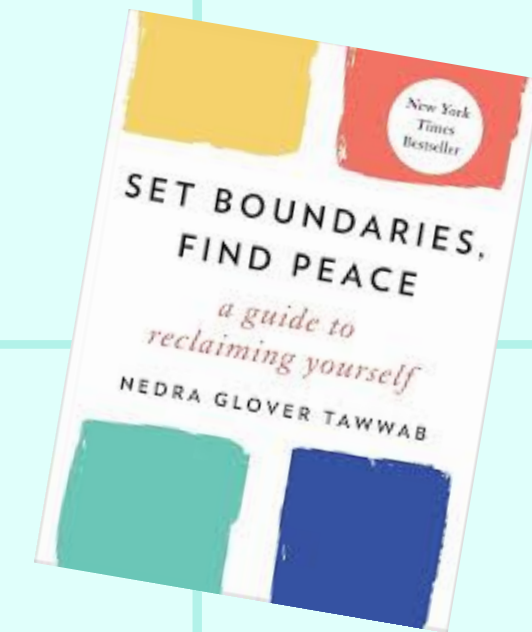
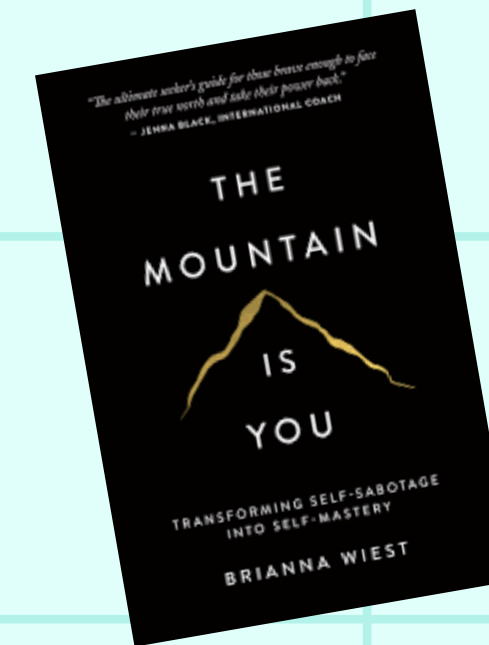
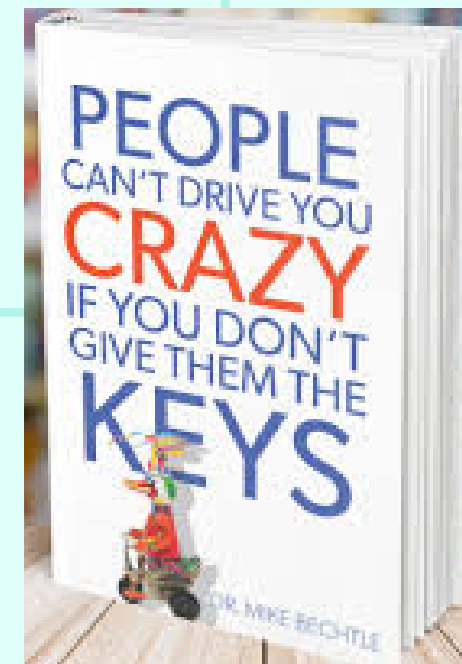
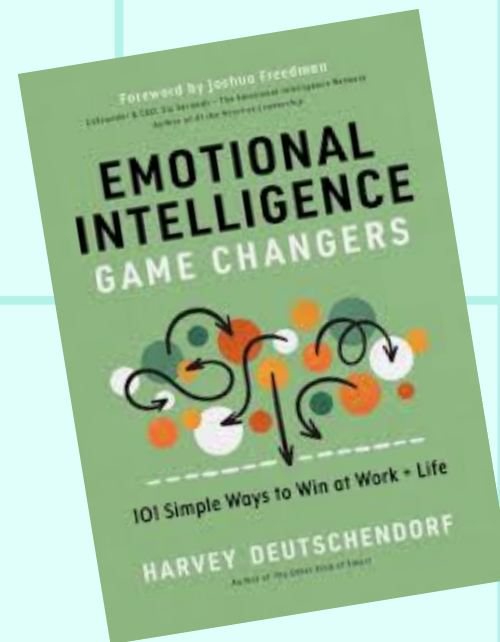
“I cannot pour from an empty cup—I will take time to recharge”

“I give my best when I take care of myself first”

“My well-being is just as important as the success of my students”



Books to Help You Thrive, Not Just Survive





Remember...

- Self-Care is intentional and necessary
- Recognizing burnout is the first step
- Colleague, Admin, and Community support can enhance well-being

Let's Connect!

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Handouts QR Code

Feel free to explore affirmations, strategies, & more!



<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qn5-6VcgwtsBUgDKzcrkVnWdV5uAyHO3e-4Ihb9dEB0/edit?usp=sharing>



Resources

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