



**North American Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW)**  
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*“A Vital Christian Presence in Social Work”*

**CURRICULUM MODULE ON INTEGRATING FAITH AND  
SPIRITUALITY IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION**

**Importance of Self-Care: A Spiritual Perspective**

**By: Sherry Sheffield, Ph.D., LCSW  
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**Primary course:** Practice with Individuals (BSW and MSW)

**Secondary course(s):** Practice with Families SWK Elective; Field Education

## **I. Core Competency Addressed:**

**Educational Policy 2.1.1** – Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly: Social workers serve as representatives of the profession, its mission, and its core values. They know the profession's history. Social workers commit themselves to the profession's enhancement and to their own professional conduct and growth.

## **II. Specific Practice Behaviors Related to the Module:**

Social workers:

- practice personal reflection and self correction to assure continual professional development
- attend to professional roles and boundaries;
- use supervision and consultation.

## **III. Materials Needed and/or Assigned Readings:**

Tse, S. (2009). Self care for health professionals: Addressing mind, body, and spirit. *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*, 15(6), 244.

Tse's one page editorial postulates the use of a performance psychology model of spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical capacities as a useful framework to explore students' answers to the following question: "What do you do to keep yourself healthy and happy?"

Wagenfeld-Heinz, E. (2009). Faith and its application to the practice of social work. *Journal of Religion, Spirituality, & Aging*, 21, 182-199.

This article discusses a qualitative study of 20 geriatric social workers and how they integrate personal faith and spirituality with the values of social work and utilize their personal beliefs to deal with the challenges of practice.

## **IV. Description of the Module:**

Students are expected to complete the assigned readings and be prepared to discuss their understanding and critique in class. Class discussion will be facilitated through questions that encourage students to thoughtfully consider their need for self care and how, if applicable, they utilize spirituality to care for self.

A. Discussion will be encouraged using the following questions:

- What do you do to keep yourself healthy and happy? (Tse)
- What is your understanding of self-care?
- What strengths do you draw from spirituality or spiritual beliefs?
- What plan of action do you have in place to advance self-care in your life?

B. Class Activity I

1. Students will be asked to complete the Professional Quality of Life Scale Version IV (ProQOL- R-IV) questionnaire as an exercise to promote their awareness of their QOL at this stage in their academic/professional career.
2. Class discussion will center on students understanding of their current QOL level.
3. Students will be encouraged to discuss how they view their QOL level with regard to their current interactions, where applicable, with peers, colleagues, and clients, as well as in their interactions with family and friends.

C. Assignment I

1. Students will be asked to complete a literature review on the concepts of self-care and spirituality among helping professionals.
2. Students will write a paper that outlines the following:
  - Findings from the literature.
  - Characterize how self care is supported by spirituality.
  - Provide you personal reflections on the concept of self care and spirituality.
  - Identify potential pitfalls in the lack of self-care.
  - Discuss a viable plan to implement self-care.
  - Discuss a plan to use supervision/consultation to maintain self-care.

## **V. Additional Class Activities and Assignments:**

### **A. Class Activity II**

1. Review the NASW Code of Ethics
2. Identify how the Code supports self care.

### **B. Class Activity III**

- **Self- Care & Coping Strategies:**
  - a. Students will form groups of 3 to 5 students.
  - b. Students will be asked to discuss the concept of self-care.
    - i. What is the benefit of self care?
    - ii. How does one become aware of the need for self care?
    - iii. How is self-care beneficial to one's work with clients?
  - c. Students will discuss coping.
    - i. What are healthy ways to cope with stress?
    - ii. What are ways in which spirituality is a coping strategy?
  - d. Student groups will share with the class their conclusions about the concept of self care and present options for coping strategies that include a spiritual component.