

Dimensions of Self Care: Exploring Clinical Issues for Social Workers in an Online Classroom

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In this example, we will share how and why we utilized Adobe Connect to explore self-care in a classroom setting. We will also explore how different features of Adobe Connect can be used to facilitate activities similar to this one, such as utilizing polls and breakout rooms

Teaching and Learning Goal

We had several goals in mind when teaching this activity.

- We wanted to help highlight the importance of self-care, focusing specifically on the need for it among social workers and educators given the many individual and systemic stressors that can arise for those of us in these fields.
- We wanted to explore the definitions and varying dimensions of self-care, hoping to facilitate a group discussion to allow space for those present to share their own definition and approach to it.
- By going into depth into a discussion on self-care, we were aiming to highlight how vital a well-balanced approach to self-care is, including creating a brave space to explore stressors that validates the communal need to prioritize self-care.

Activity and Results

Activity

We designed our activity to stress the vital importance of self-care in our field. We also prioritized images in the presentation to help facilitate discussion. We took into consideration who the students were and that they were ending the end of their semester. We presented this activity in the final class of our course. We sent the students a link to a resource which was a self-care questionnaire ([IFM Self-Care Questionnaire](#)) so they could have some familiarity with the topic the week before we presented. The students were advised to complete the questionnaire but did not need to submit it or share their results in the class if they weren't comfortable. The day of our class, we initially opened the discussion of what is self-care with the entire class (**Image 1**) and prioritized conducting a poll to get a sense of what some students utilize for self-care strategies (**Image 2**). After some time, we transitioned to break out groups (**Image 3**) in order to facilitate more nuanced discussions on the topic with guided questions. After fifteen to twenty minutes, the break out groups ended and we provided space for each group to present what they discussed. We concluded the session by discussing vicarious trauma, institutional trauma, and sharing suggestions around destigmatizing the need to seek professional help for those in the helping profession (**Image 4**). Lastly, we recommended the book "Trauma Stewardship" by Laura van Dernoot Lipsky and other resources.

Results

Students were engaged in the discussion and a few shared how thankful they were that we were making space in our class to discuss this topic. A number of students were able to share their current self-care activities as well as activities they would like to adopt. Other students shared that they felt their self-care routine was lacking given their busy schedules but that they wanted to carve out more time to incorporate this into their current routines.

Recommendations

Working as a team made the work enjoyable and more manageable. Our recommendation for folks who want to do something like this is to find a topic you're curious about or want to explore further and go for it! If you have worries or need support, finding a co-collaborator is a great way to also put something together that you're proud of. We also recommend checking in with your students after the presentation to see what resonated with them and what, if anything, they would do differently if they wanted to present themselves or wanted their professors to do another presentation on the same subject matter.

Technical Details and Steps

1. We researched for relevant resources and materials to be able to put our presentation together (Newell & MacNeil, 2010; Tse, 2008).
2. We created our presentation materials, creating slides, inputting relevant images and wordings onto the slide.
3. We sent our students a self-care questionnaire a week ahead of class with relevant instructions.
4. **Step one: polls.** The day of class, we utilized the poll function to increase class engagement and get an initial sense of some self-care activities used by our students.
5. **Step two: powerpoint slides.** Next, we presented our lecture which included topics such as vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, institutional trauma, and burnout.
6. **Step three: break out groups.** Following this, we utilized the break out group function in Adobe Connect in order to further discussion among our students. In these groups we provided suggested questions to help enrich the discussion. Some examples of the questions utilized included: "How do you utilize self-care in your practice or personal life? How do you see the issue of burnout being addressed (or not) in your agencies? How can institutional trauma be addressed in your organizations/agencies? What are some of the unique challenges that social workers face in the field? How would you address them?"
7. **Step four: clock and messaging functions.** While the break out groups were happening, we utilized the clock function as well as the messaging function to help groups stay on track with the fifteen to twenty minute discussion time frame. We also wrote to each group to give them 5 minute warnings then 2 minute warnings when we were nearing the end of the breakout group time.
8. To **conclude**, we ended the breakout groups and had the groups share their feedback with the larger class. We spoke with the whole class together to summarize the session and ended class soon after.

What this looked like in Adobe Connect

Image 1: Adobe Connect classroom displaying our title slide "Dimensions of Self-Care: Clinical Issues for Social Workers" with both authors' names listed below. Note: The names in the chat are those of the authors and a friend who agreed to help out with taking a screengrab; no student names are shown. Adobe Product screenshots reprinted with permission from Adobe.

Image 1 Alt-Text: In this image, the presenters are featured in a small Video pod on the far left side, with an Attendees pod below that. The top center shows the PowerPoint slide which features the topic for the session and the names of the presenters. Below the PowerPoint slide is the Chat Pod in which we are greeting each other and students as they enter the room at the beginning of the session. The chat comments say: "Hi all!" "Hi Everyone, Welcome," "Hi guys," and "How is everyone doing today?" To the right is a presenter chat pod, which is only visible to presenters and which is used to keep presenters on track during the session.

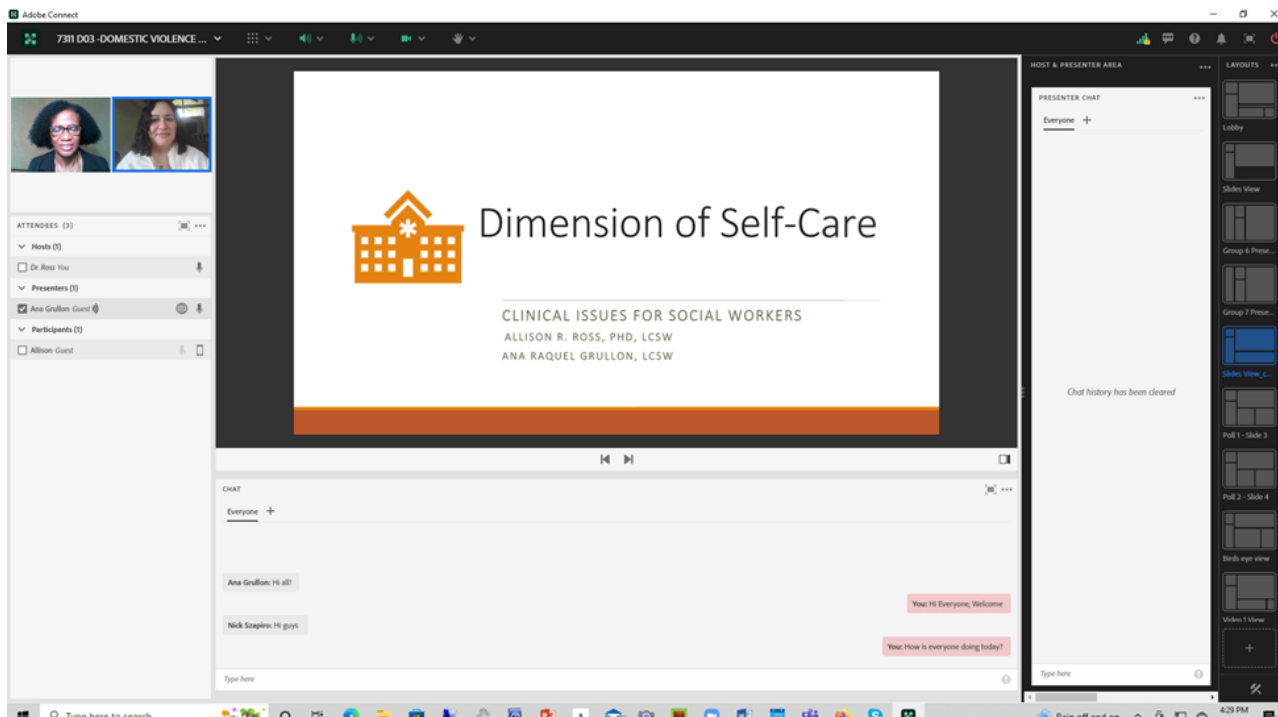


Image 2: Adobe Connect classroom displaying our poll question: “Why is self-care important and relevant to our work?”. Note: The names in the chat are those of the authors and a friend who agreed to help out with taking a screengrab; no student names are shown. Adobe Product screenshots reprinted with permission from Adobe.

Image 2 Alt-Text: In the top center, this image shows a Poll Question with responses from attendees. The question says “Why is self-care important and relevant to our work?” There are four sample responses shown: “Self Care helps to keep us grounded; To help reduce the possibility of burnout; Because it helps keep us balanced to be able to continue to do our work effectively; and It’s a skill we and our clients need to learn to be healthy.” The presenters are featured in a small video pod on the far left side, with an Attendees pod below that. Below the Poll responses is a Chat pod with some of the poll responses also typed into the chat, and to the right is a Slide displaying the poll question. To the far right is the Presenter-only area, which students cannot see.

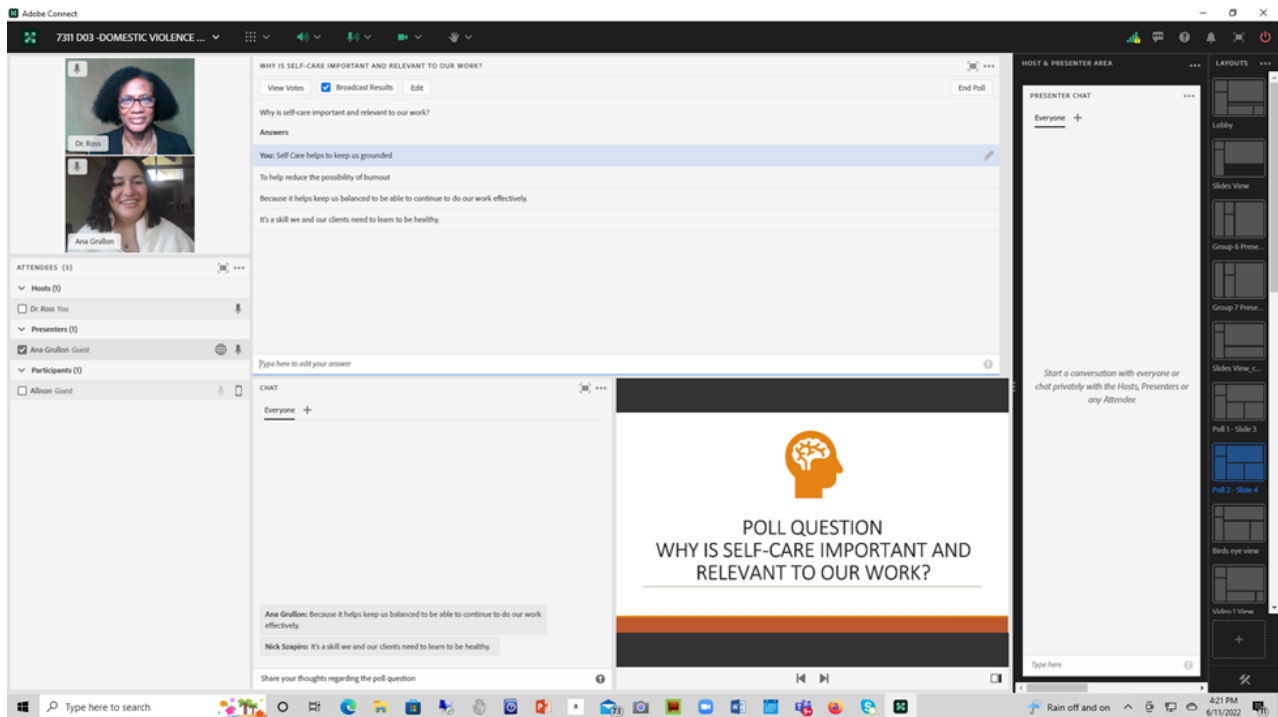


Image 3: Adobe Connect classroom displaying our layout and guided questions for the breakout groups, including “How do you utilize self-care in your practice and personal life? How do you see the issue of burnout being addressed in your agencies?”. Note: The names in the chat are those of the authors and a friend who agreed to help out with taking a screengrab; no student names are shown. Adobe Product screenshots reprinted with permission from Adobe.

Image 3 Alt-Text: This image shows a Breakout Group activity layout. At the far left is the Attendees pod that stretches from top to bottom of the image. The presenters are featured to the right of the Attendees pod; this is where students in breakout groups would be able to see each other. To the right of the presenters is an example of a breakout room Notes pod depicting suggested roles for students. It says “Roles” at the top, followed by “Facilitator: Reporter: Scribe:” with space for the group to type the names of the students who will facilitate the discussion, who will take notes and who will report back after returning to the class. The questions for discussion in the breakout room are shown to the far right on a slide that says “Self-care discussion (Breakout Groups)” at the top. Below that is a decorative image of a human body, in orange and white, with these questions next to it: “How do you utilize self-care in your practice or personal life?” “How do you see the issue of burnout being addressed (or not) in your agencies?” “How can institutional trauma be addressed in your organizations/agencies?” and “What are some of the unique challenges that social workers face in the field? How would you address them?” Below the breakout room and slide is a Chat pod with one chat that says “Breakout group will start soon.” To the far right is the Presenter-only area, which students cannot see; it contains a blank Presenter Chat pod.

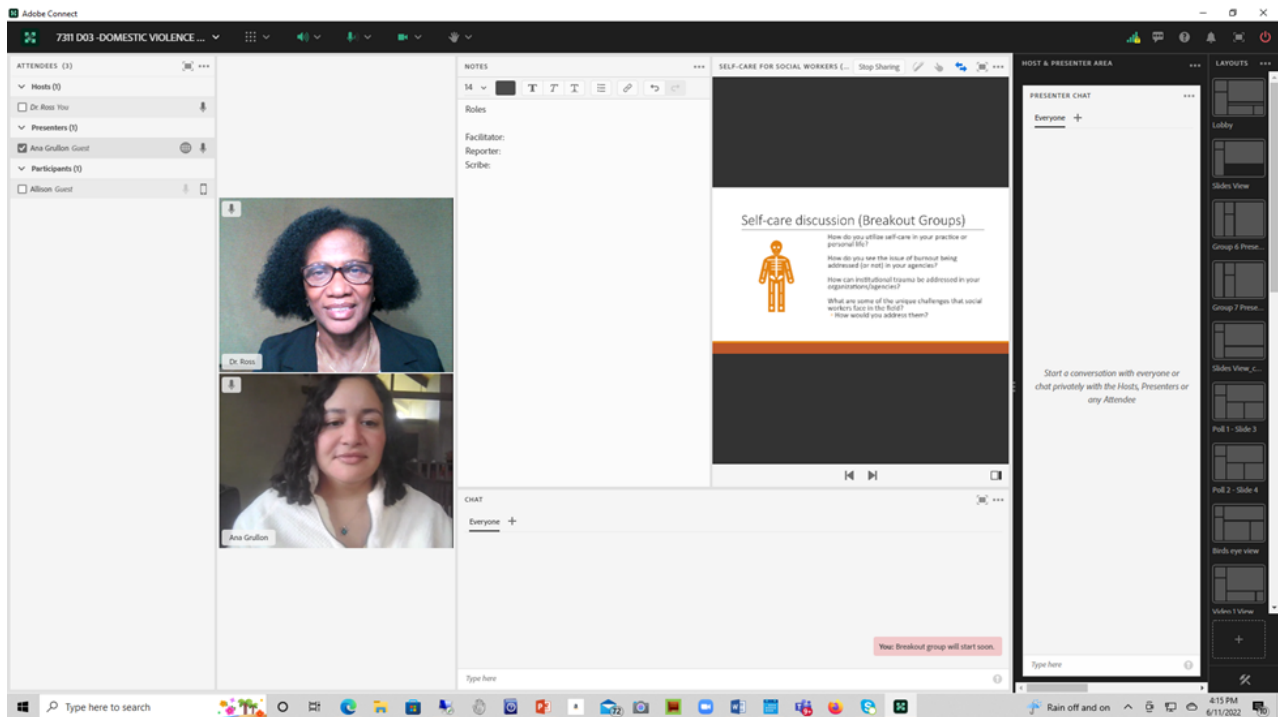
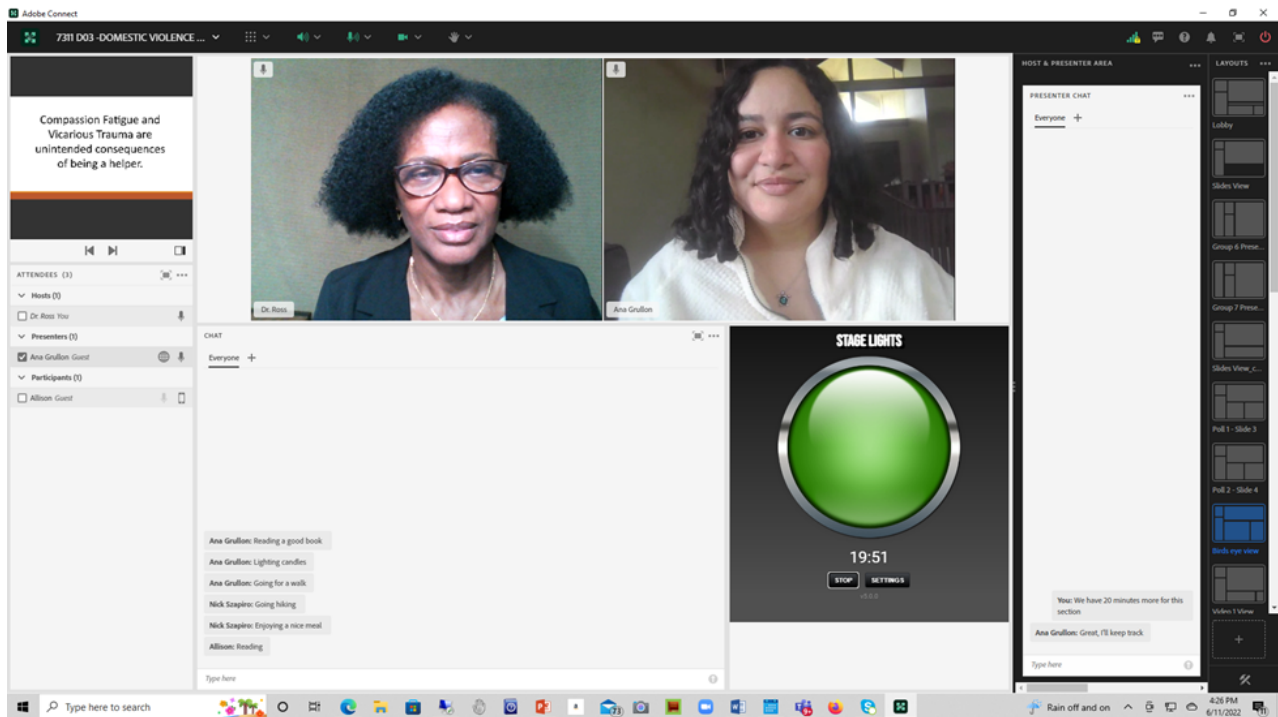


Image 4: Adobe Connect classroom showing our continued lecture, with a slide stating: “Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma are unintended consequences of being a helper.” Note: The names in the chat are those of the authors and a friend who agreed to help out with taking a screengrab; no student names are shown. Adobe Product screenshots reprinted with permission from Adobe.

Image 4 Alt-Text: This is a screengrab of an Adobe Connect classroom. On the far left, there is a narrow slide pod with a narrow Attendees pod below. The slide says “Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma are unintended consequences of being a helper.” In the top center of the image there is a Video pod that shows both instructors (this chapter's authors). Below the Video pod is a Chat pod where all attendees are able to share thoughts or respond to questions. The chats say: “Reading a good book;” “Lighting candles;” “Going for a walk;” “Going hiking;” “Enjoying a nice meal;” and “Reading.” To the right of the Chat pod is a stage lights timer to help us keep time for each activity. To the far right is the Presenter-only area, which students cannot see; it contains a Presenter Chat pod, with chats that say “We have 20 minutes more for this section” and “Great, I’ll keep track.”



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Allison Ross, PhD, LCSW-R is the Deputy Clinical Director at Sanctuary for Families, a \$24M organization that provides comprehensive services to adults and children survivors of domestic violence, sex trafficking and other forms of gender violence. In this role, she supports the oversight of the Clinical Department, which has a staff of over 60 and a budget of over \$4.5M, including overseeing the Non-Residential Program Services to survivors and children at multiple sites, the African Community Initiative, the South and East Asian Community Initiatives, the Hotline and the Clinical Administrative Program. Dr. Ross earned her MSW from Columbia and her PhD from Fordham. As an educator, she serves as a Field Instructor for MSW, MHC, and undergraduate interns. She has also been an Adjunct Instructor at Columbia University's School of Social Work since 2011, teaching Domestic Violence and Social Work Practice including Field Education Seminar. Dr. Ross was one of the school's first online instructors, piloting two online courses before the Online Campus launched and currently having taught more than 20 online courses. She serves on the school's adjunct advisory committee. Dr. Ross is also an Adjunct Instructor at Silver School of Social Work, New York University since 2013, Teaching Research 1 and II. Dr. Ross is serving on a dissertation committee as an outside reader for a doctoral student completing her PhD. She presently serves on the Board of Directors for the New York State Coalition against Domestic Violence (NYSCADV) and is a member of National Association of Social Workers (NASW- NYC Chapter) As a Clinical Practitioner, Dr Ross is certified and rostered in Trauma Focused Cognitive Behaviors Therapy (TF-CBT), Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT), and Child Parent Psychotherapy (CPP) with additional trainings and certificates in other interventions such as Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) and Trauma Informed Care (TIC). She is honored to be recognized by The National Association of Social Workers- NYC Chapter (NASW-NYC), and the Board of Directors as a recipient of the EMERALD AWARD, representing 16-25 Years of exemplary leadership and contributions in the Social Work profession. Dr. Ross' publications demonstrate her commitment to social justice, advocacy, and empowerment through the lens of race, diversity, and intersectionality. They include Working with Immigrants at Sanctuary for Families; Impact of Psychoeducational Advocacy Training as Compared to Psychoeducational Support Group as an Empowering Tool for Female Survivors of Domestic Violence; and Cell phones, clothing, and sex: First impressions of power using older African Americans as stimuli.



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Ana Raquel Grullón, LCSW is a licensed clinical social worker currently working towards obtaining a second master's in International Community Health from the University of Oslo. She completed her undergraduate studies at Swarthmore College and obtained her MSW degree from Rutgers University. She has been an associate at Columbia University's School of Social Work since 2018. She has specialized in providing individual, dyadic, family, and group therapy with a focus on trauma informed developmental and behavioral services from birth throughout the lifespan. She is trained in TF-CBT, Parenting Journey, and GABI. While working at Montefiore Medical Center, she was actively engaged in child welfare and was the Program Coordinator for the Parent Infant Court Project, with a special focus on reunification for children in foster care. She was also on the Adoption for Safe Families Act Mental Health Subcommittee, where she helped coordinate mental health trainings for family court judges in NYC's boroughs. She has worked in various settings, including medical and community mental health. Currently, she is in private practice focusing on supporting clients with a holistic and functional medicine approach. Her areas of interest include earning secure attachments, the correlation between physical and mental health in people with a high number of Adverse Childhood Experiences and how domestic violence impacts health outcomes. She is currently working on obtaining certification to better serve neurodivergent clients, clients who have faced toxic work environments, as well as clients who need perinatal mental health support. She focuses on supporting both children and adults through a number of experiences, including trauma, social/emotional issues, life transitions, and fostering secure attachments. Empowering clients, helping to strengthen family and community connections, as well as supporting clients to facilitate healthier interactions with those around them have been the main foci of her work.



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