

## Save your spoons, practice self care

Longwood students talk about how they practice self care

By Taylor O'Berry

On Sept. 19, Longwood University's [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) held a group discussion about self care as part of their Mental Health Cafe Series. Alvin Wood, a graduate intern for CAPS, lead this first session.



Sign outside of Longwood's Health and Fitness Center.

“For the series, the goal is to get people talking about mental health issues,” Wood said, “whether it is about depression or anxiety.”

Wood stated the cafe will help people understand that others feel the same way they do. “Other people have ideas about what these things are and how they affect their lives,” Wood said.

According to the [American Psychological Association](#), 48.7% of students in 2012 attended counseling for mental health concerns.

Around 11 students showed up to the cafe. Seated in a circle with the students and two other counselors, Wood began the session by asking for someone to define what self care is to them.

One student said, “Self care is taking time for yourself especially if you have any health issues.”

Another student bounced off of this by stating that self care doesn’t always have to be perfect.

Many students were hesitant to speak up during the cafe and most of the talking was done by four of the same students. Wood then asked what kind of barriers kept them from practicing self care.

Most of the students agreed they do not give themselves a enough time to do self care because they are busy with school work. Wood asked why self care is important. This is when a student brought [The Spoon Theory](#); the theory that people have a certain amounts of ‘spoons’ everyday and throughout the day, hard tasks or situations take the spoons away one by one. The spoons represent someones mental or physical illness which makes it hard to go through the day like a health person can.



This idea quickly became the topic of the session by students talking about what things take their ‘spoons’ away, whether it is helping others but not making time to help their self or struggling with depression.

“Self care relaxes you so that things take less spoons,” one student said.

A counselor brought up that being around certain people can take away spoons and how it is important to choose friends who push you to be better.

A student who expressed how he struggles with depression has friends who help him take that first step to getting better.

Wood asked the students what they do to try to make time for self care and one student replied by saying all she does is homework and how she has friends how help her step away from it sometimes.

She said, “Even when I don’t have homework, I still feel like I need to do homework.”

Another student recommended that she should join a club and meet new people rather than spend all her time worrying about homework.

Two students, David Wentworth and Whitney Jones said overall that the cafe was not helpful to them but would recommend to other students.

“Find a friend who makes you take care of yourself,” said Wentworth.

CAPS will be having another Mental Health Cafe about depression on Oct. 3 in the Health and Fitness Center.