

BE YOUR BEST SELF: THE SCIENCE AND ART OF SELF- CARE

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BURNOUT IS A BIG DEAL

- The world seems to be in the midst of a pandemic of burnout, spread across all age groups, genders, professions, and cultures.
- Research suggests between 21-67% of mental health professionals are experiencing burnout.

Miller, S., Hubble, M. & Mathieu, F. (2015, May-June). Burnout Reconsidered: What Supershrinks Can Teach Us. *Psychotherapy Networker*, 18-23;42-43.

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IMPACT ON OUR LIVES

- Increased absenteeism
- Anxiety/depression/exhaustion
- Job turnover
- Physical illness
- Insomnia
- Hypertension/weight gain, muscle and bone disorder

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SYMPTOMS

- Similar to those of PTSD
- Personal traumas may resurface
- Hypervigilance, hopelessness
- Sleeplessness
- Fear
- Chronic exhaustion
- Inability to listen (avoidance of clients)
- Minimizing
- Guilt

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ARE YOU AT RISK?

- 6-26% of therapists working with traumatized populations and up to 50% of child welfare workers are at risk
- Women and highly empathetic individuals are at higher risk.
- Risk is higher for professionals who have heavy caseloads, inadequate training, unresolved personal trauma, and are socially isolated.

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WERE YOU PREPARED?

- Very few supervisors are actually required to have any supervisory experience prior to the being offered the opportunity to supervise.
- Very little time is spent on supporting and mentoring your position. This is true all over the country.
- Most of you did not go to 'Supervisor School' before you accepted your job.

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SUPERVISOR SCHOOL 101

- Be “professional”.
- Remain emotionally regulated.
- Stay on task.
- Do not whine or complain.
- Always know the helpful answers.
- Present as sane/sober/kind.
- Never over-spend your budget.

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WELCOME TO SUPERVISION!!

- This will be a chance to have an impact on the larger system.
- I will finally get to pick my own staff and employees.
- I can take the time to really train them for the job they need to do.
- They will appreciate my good leadership.
- I will turn this unit around in terms of moral and best practice.

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SOCIAL WORKERS SELF SELECT

- Our greatest strengths become our greatest weaknesses.
- Social workers are highly empathic.
- The capacity to share, connect, empathize, problem-solve, and engage deeply is what makes us good at what we do. It also leaves us vulnerable.

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WHAT IF YOU MESS UP?

- Failure will result in a very bad outcome for everyone.
- Lack of improvement for clients may result in jail, prison, or loss of a child/parent.
- These are higher stake outcomes than most folks cope with on a daily basis.
- This is a heavy burden.

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STARING AT THE CEILING

- Sometimes, despite your best efforts, a child is still returned or not returned when you KNOW it is the right thing.
- Sometimes you know a parent has done everything right and they do not get another chance.
- Sometimes your staff just won't cooperate no matter what you do.

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OUR WORK RELATIONSHIPS

- We work harder for someone who seems invested in our success.
- The relationship we create is the only tool we really have to make a difference.
- Clients and employees always refer to a relationship, not a program.
- Employee/employer relationships are often more stressful or challenging than the ones with our clients.

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INTERNAL WORKING MODEL

- It is the foundation for our faith in love's possibility or our doubts about that very issue.
- Understanding that we can influence others is a vital step in development.
- This is our internalized sense of security.

YOU CAN BE THEIR SECURE BASE

- Respect their fear - In order for people to change, they need to accept help from others and know that you are safe.
- They have to take some risks and we have to provide enough support and encouragement to make this happen.
- We use our own security to offer them some.

THEY WON'T STOP CALLING

- It is not uncommon to have one or two cases or employees that could be a full-time job.
- You spend most of your day dealing with them. They **text** you, **call** you, **email** you, **call** your supervisor, **call** the county attorney, **call** the county board, the foster parents **call** you, and then they **call** your Grandma.

UNMANAGEABLE WORKLOADS

Too tired to work
Too much work to sleep



INCREASED PLACEMENTS

- Additional scrutiny from the Governor's Task Force has led to a substantial increase (20-47% in many counties) in adjudicated CHIPS cases statewide.
- Agencies are overwhelmed, professionals are overworked, and families are often under-supported.

BEST INTEREST HAS LOST GROUND

- Legally, parents' rights far outweigh children's needs for permanency. Children in care have meager legal standing relative to the adults who are seeking a return of custody.
- This results in prolonged stays in foster care and increased risk of multiple placements.
- The standard for reasonable efforts is extremely high.

INCREASED LEVEL OF TRAUMA

- Children entering foster care have been exposed to neglect/maltreatment and have often had multiple placements and returns to foster care.
- The cycle of rejection has created severe damage and left the child with multiple areas of deficit.

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A MESSAGE TO THE VOTERS

- Your caseloads are too large.
- Mandatory paperwork requires you to sacrifice relationship-building time with your staff.
- Relationship-based programs are intensive and more expensive. They are also more effective.
- You work with a very “at risk” population. There are no easy fixes to address a lifetime of harm.
- As a supervisor, find ways to support the most effective interventions and care less about the ones that aren’t.

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MESSAGE TO THE SUPERVISORS

- Unmanageable caseloads make it unrealistic to expect much success in terms of relationship building. Sometimes it is one or the other.
- The 60 minute meeting, 10 times a day may not be working for your staff or your clients.
- The forms you are required to use may not be asking the right questions. Ditch the ones you can.
- Your successes may not be truly captured in the data you collect.

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THE PAPERWORK

- If you were measured by how current and “good” your paperwork was but still had poor work relationships, it would hard to find fault in your work quality.
- We measure what we see.



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THAT DAMN REPORT

- If you cut corners, you won’t make a compelling case.
- If you don’t cut corners, you will be up all night.
- Sometimes nobody even reads the blessed thing!
- They are often overwhelming.
- They seem pointless.



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THE PAPERLESS SYSTEM

Electronics interfere with how we connect, listen, and make eye contact.

- Do they see your laptop or your face?
- Is your phone on?



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WHO IS IN CHARGE?

- Do you manage your job?
- Does your job manage you?
- What, exactly, IS within your power to change?

(25)

NEW DATA

- It is not how demanding your job is or the level of responsibility, but how much control you have in performing the work.
- The more control or options you have in any situation to do your job, the less stress you will feel.

(26)

COMMON SELF-CARE ADVICE

1. DO MORE OF THIS.
2. DO LESS OF THAT.

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SO.....DO MORE!

- More sleep
- More fun
- More exercise
- More time off
- More hobbies
- More mindfulness
- More team meetings

(28)

MACRO SELF-CARE

- Take longer, more expensive vacations.
- Daily morning yoga with cross-fit weights 5 times a week. Eat a healthy lunch every day.
- When you get home, go to your gardening club, your book club, etc.
- Make a list every morning and sleep 8 hours every night.
- Count your blessings. Be sure to be positive.

(29)



(30)

I simply don't have time at the end of my day for my good intentions.

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"What fits your busy schedule better, exercising one hour a day or being dead 24 hours a day?"

MAYBE YOU SHOULD DO LESS?

- If you go back to the basics, it is the quality of relationship you build, nurture and work within, that really matter.
- All the best strategies, trainings, modalities, education and new ideas will be less effective if you don't keep focused on the relationships you have.

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YOURSELF

- Micro care is the relationship you have with your own mind and body.
- It is the one relationship most of us neglect and it is the one that is most relevant, in terms of preventing or allowing burn out.

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MICRO SELF-CARE

- Micro self-care is about making small changes with reliable frequency.
- Neuroplasticity (the brain's ability to reorganize itself with new neural networks) happens with brief, repetitive experiences.
- Small and frequent works better than big and seldom.

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MICRO

- **Relaxation** dials down burnout.
- **Energizing** our sense of purpose overcomes compassion fatigue.
- **Grounding** ourselves keeps us safe from secondary trauma.

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THE PLAN

- One-minute meditation by Martin Boroson (**relax**).
- Tense major muscles, breathe, and relax for 5 seconds. Repeat 3 times (**energize**).
- Sit still, look at a loved photo or object, and repeat your mantra about connectedness to others (**grounding**).

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BE WHERE YOU ARE

- This is mindfulness.
- Take a seat, take a breath, and simply commit to being aware of the present moment.

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A NEW TWIST

- Involvement, caring, or connection is not the point; a good outcome is the point.
- Connection and involvement is a means to an end.
- “Super shrinks” (Psychotherapy Networker)

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YOU CAN MANAGE YOUR DESK

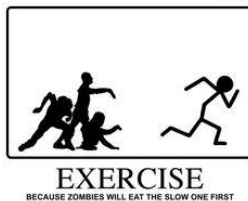
- You spend a lot of time sitting. If you didn't, you wouldn't get your reports done.
- You have little time for “breaks”. If you took them, you might get assigned more cases. So be careful.
- THIS IS A SERIOUS BURNOUT ISSUE!!!



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THE NEW SMOKING?

- The lack of exercise and immobility of our work lives is creating an epidemic of physical and mental health problems that is as serious to our generation as smoking.
- It is the new national health crisis.



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CREATURE COMFORTS

- Where do we sit in the room?
- Do we have a blanket and pillow?
- Do you have a fidget toy?
- Can you offer a glass of water?

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HAVE A SUPPORT SYSTEM

- You need as much support as you need.
- Having someone to share your ups and downs with on a regular basis, even for short periods of time, can make the difference between depletion and sustenance.
- IT IS OK TO BE OFF-TASK!

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FIND A MANTRA

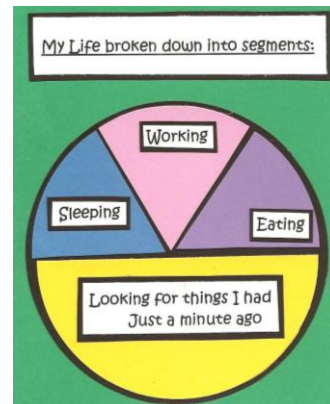
- This work is very important.
- I make a difference.
- I contribute to the greater good.
- Everyone deserves another chance.

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COMPARTMENTALIZE

- When we get too focused on the long list in front of us, we can be demoralized and overwhelmed.
- One meeting at a time, one day at a time, one challenge at a time. **Hey, does that ring a bell?**
- If we teach it, we need to reach it.

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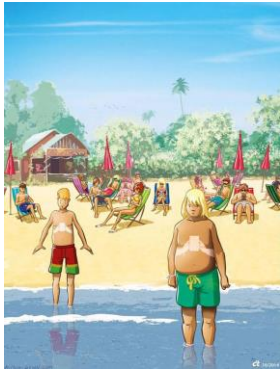
UNPLUG

- We have fewer “real” boundaries or limits around our personal time.
- We use email/voicemail/laptops/iPhones as a convenience but have trained people to think we are always accessible.
- How many portals of entry into your life do you tolerate or want?

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“When you’re feeling overworked, stop and smell the roses that we installed as an app on your BlackBerry.”



LEARN TO SAY NO

- Learn to MEAN IT when you say it.
- Learn not to feel guilty about saying it.
- Learn to let others take over.
- Be a 2-year-old again, they say “NO” a lot.
- Review Step #1.

LACK OF SLEEP

- “...Too little sleep can have serious health consequences, including depression, weight gain, heart disease and probably mortality”.

Steven Feinsilver, Director of the Center for Sleep, Medicine at Mount Sinai School of Medicine

McDonald, J. (2015). Sleep Like a Pro. *TIME: The Science of Sleep*, 56-65.

SLEEP AND LEARNING

- Sleep helps build long-term memories and fully incorporating the day’s lessons requires a full night’s sleep.
- “If you don’t sleep the night after training, then even if you sleep the next night or the next night, you never learn.”

— Charles Czeisler, director of sleep medicine at Harvard Medical School and consultant to NASA, the Secret Service, and the NBA

McDonald, J. (2015). Sleep Like a Pro. *TIME: The Science of Sleep*, 56-65.

YOUR SPIRITUAL SELF

- Have a sense of what you are passionate about and why it matters in the big picture.
- Spending time by yourself and learning to live with silence is how we come to listen to our inner voice. This is a lesson the elders taught.

LISTEN TO YOUR BODY

- Every one of us has a weak point. The body compensates, but only when it has to.
- Our organs are all interrelated. Some are more susceptible to stress than others.
- What hurts first? The early warning signs...
- **This is true on a larger agency scale as well.**

GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

- We need to pay attention to the symptoms we develop, our family history, and our level of distress/impairment.
- We need to trust that getting help is good.
- Identify our barriers (shame, guilt, fear).

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BREAK THE RULES

Play before work—the work is never done.

Have dessert before the veggies—your stomach can't hold all the food.

Sleep as late as your teenager—make it a contest.

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You are never too old to have a happy childhood.



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IT'S ALL CONNECTED

- The greatest predictor of positive outcomes for our clients is the manner in which we interact with each other.
- Positive relationships and care in the work environment directly impact our ability to extend this to our client system.

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HOPE AND CONNECTION

- One of the greatest things we do to improve our clients' lives is to offer hope.
- Every opportunity we have to form a connection, however brief, is an opportunity to make a difference.

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WE LIGHTEN THEIR LOAD

- People can and do overcome the negative effects of insecure attachment under the right circumstances.
- The hill is less steep when we are with a buddy.
- The backpack is lighter when we hold hands.

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MICRO MOMENTS

- “Micro-moments” of connection (e.g. sharing a smile or expressing concern):
 - Improve emotional resilience
 - Boost immune system
 - Reduce susceptibility to depression and anxiety

Barbara Frederickson, as cited by E. Millard (“The Power of Kindness”; ExperienceLife.com)

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SMALL KINDNESSES

- We can smile.
- We can open a door.
- We can talk about hope.
- We can give some ideas.
- We can lighten the load.
- We can climb the hill with them.
- We can help shape their future.



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Practice Play

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Embrace Learning



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Seek Laughter



[69]

BELIEVE

Believe that you make a difference every day.

Believe in the power of the human spirit.

Believe in yourself and what you bring to the process.

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PUT YOUR HAND ON YOUR HEART

- Our physiology is hardwired to recognize this as a self-soothing gesture.
- BE WHERE YOU ARE!

E. Millard ("The Power of Kindness"; ExperienceLife.com)

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