

PREVENTING PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT

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**Professional Self-Care  
and Compassion Fatigue**

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## Disclosure

The views expressed in this presentation are solely those of the presenters and do not represent those of the Veterans Health Administration, the Department of Defense, or the United States government.

The presenter has no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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## Learning Objectives:

1. Define and explore "self-care" and the ways in which it is necessary but insufficient to deal with compassion fatigue and burnout.
2. Define and explore the psychological literature surrounding "resilience."
3. Discuss practical, achievable ways that professionals in demanding fields can build resilience into their repertoire to achieve enduring burnout and compassion fatigue prevention.

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## Compassion Fatigue vs. Burnout:

There are four major differences between compassion fatigue and burnout.

1. Compassion fatigue is caused by the exposure of traumatic material. Burnout is caused by work-related attributes such as the job, coworkers, one's supervisor and poor work culture.
2. Compassion fatigue has a rapid onset and can be felt after the first experience of absorbing one's traumatic material. Burnout emerges gradually over time as the work-related attributes such as too much paperwork, lack of resources, and long shifts, pile up.
3. Compassion fatigue is a term that describes the impact of helping others. Burnout is a term that describes the impact of a stressful workplace.
4. Compassion fatigue has a quicker recovery time than burnout, if managed early. Burnout has a longer recovery time.

(Barbara Rubel, Grief Work Center)

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### Some Reasons That Helpers Don't Get Help



- We think we should not have problems
- It's easier to help others than to get help for ourselves
- We think we should know how to solve our problems
- We view our problems as signs of failure or inadequacy
- We intellectualize to distance ourselves from emotional impact
- We feel embarrassed to seek help from our peers
- We can sabotage our own treatment

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### Assess Your Stress Level

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### Professional Quality of Life Scale

**PROFESSIONAL QUALITY OF LIFE SCALE**  
 COMPASSION FATIGUE AND COMPASSION SATISFACTION  
 (PINES) (PINES) (PINES)

How do you feel about your work? (Rate each item from 1 = Not at all to 5 = Very much)

Item	1 = Not at all	2 = Somewhat	3 = Moderately	4 = Quite a bit	5 = Very much
1. I am happy.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I am proud of my work.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I get satisfaction from being able to help people.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I feel energized by my work.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I feel energized after working with those I help.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I feel a little bit nervous, nervous, or fearful when I see a patient.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am not as productive at work because I'm being help over traumatic experiences of a person I help.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I think that I might have been affected by the traumatic events of those I help.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I feel nervous about my work.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I feel nervous about my work.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I feel nervous about my work.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I feel nervous about my work.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I feel nervous about my work.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I feel nervous about my work.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I feel nervous about my work.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I feel nervous about my work.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I feel nervous about my work.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I feel nervous about my work.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I feel nervous about my work.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I feel nervous about my work.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I feel nervous about my work.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I feel nervous about my work.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I feel nervous about my work.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I feel nervous about my work.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I feel nervous about my work.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I feel nervous about my work.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I feel nervous about my work.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I feel nervous about my work.	1	2	3	4	5
29. I feel nervous about my work.	1	2	3	4	5
30. I feel nervous about my work.	1	2	3	4	5

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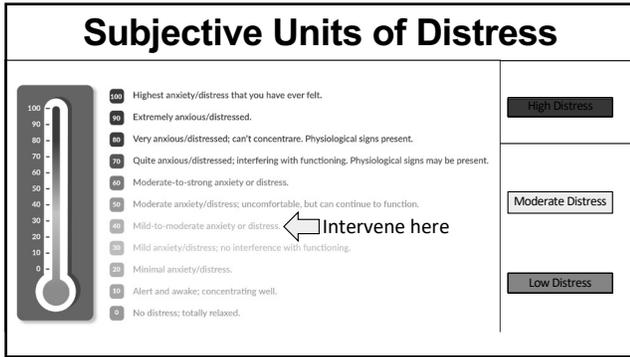
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### Self-Care Definition

Per APA dictionary:

*n.* activities required for personal care, such as eating, dressing, or grooming, that can be managed by an individual without the assistance of others.

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### Self-care: Are you doing it wrong?

- It is easier said than done
- One and done model
- Copy and paste approach
- Timing is important
- It is necessary, but not sufficient, for wellness!

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### Resilience Definition

Per APA Dictionary:

*n.* the process and outcome of **successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences**, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral **flexibility** and **adjustment** to external and internal demands...

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### Resilience is...

- Ordinary not extraordinary
- It does not mean the absence of distress or emotional symptoms
- Not a "trait" – involves thoughts, behaviors, and actions



American Psychological Association

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### Factors Involved in Resilience

1. Supportive relationships inside and outside of one's family
2. The capacity to make realistic plans and take steps to carry them out
3. A positive view of yourself and confidence in your strengths and abilities
4. Cultivate a willing attitude
5. The capacity to manage strong feelings and impulses (i.e., distress tolerance)
6. Engaging in self-care

...In other words, these are all things someone can cultivate within themselves....

American Psychological Association

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### 1. Supportive relationships inside and outside of one's family

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### Connect with Other People Daily

- Eat meals with others
- Call friends and family
- Play games virtually and in person
- Reconnect with someone you haven't talked with recently
- Watch movies
- Talk with your neighbors



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### Everyone Needs ONE Person in Whom to Confide



- Family member
- Friend
- Minister
- Priest
- Rabbi
- Therapist
- Mentor
- Clinician

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**Make new friends (that meet different needs)!**

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2. The capacity to make realistic plans and take steps to carry them out

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### Focus on What You Can Control



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### Focus on What You Can Do Now

~~Yesterday~~  
Today  
~~Tomorrow~~

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### Project Manage Your Life

1. Make self-care appointments well in advance (e.g., doctor's appointments, dental appointments, therapy appointments, massage, haircuts)
2. Make connections with helpful professionals (i.e., financial planner, accountant, dietician)
3. In moments of calm, look ahead to future storms and plan ahead

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**Ask Yourself Two Questions:**



- 1. What gives your life meaning?
- 2. What gives you joy?

Do more of those things

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3. A positive view of yourself and confidence in your strengths and abilities

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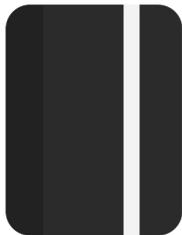
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**Start a Gratitude Journal**



- ☑ Write 3 things you are grateful for every day for at least 21 days
- ☑ No repeats
- ☑ Good for the whole family!

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## Be Kind to Yourself



- Practice self-compassion
- Immerse yourself in simple comforts
- Remind yourself that you are doing the best that you can

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## Engage in a Solo Hobby



- Something that:
- isn't related to work
  - doesn't involve another person

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## 4. Cultivate a willing attitude

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## Willingness vs. Willfulness

Willingness is:

- Doing what is effective in each situation, in an unpretentious way.
- Acting from your inner self and your deepest core values.
- Awareness of and respect for our roles and relationships to others.
- Listening and reflecting.
- Keeping things in perspective (i.e., will the situation that causes the distress matter in 5 years?)

Willfulness is:

- Refusing to make changes that are needed.
- The desire to be right in a situation, regardless of what is needed to be effective.
- Fighting any suggestions that will improve distress and thus make it more tolerable.
- Being rigid and inflexible.
- The opposite of doing what works, of being effective.

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## At work...

Develop communication and problem solving skills:

- Patterson, Kerry, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler. *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking when Stakes are High*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2002.
- Goulston, Mark. *Just Listen: Discover the Secrets of Getting Through to Absolutely Anyone*. New York, NY: AMACOM, 2010.
- McKay, Matthew, PhD. *Messages: The Communication Skills Book*. Arlington, TX: Future Horizons, 2009.
- Goleman, Daniel. *Working with Emotional Intelligence*. New York, NY: Bantam Dell, 2000.
- Cloke, Kenneth and Joan Goldsmith. *Resolving Conflict at Work: Eight Strategies for Everyone on the Job*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc., 2011.

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## Personally...

- Gottman, John. *The Relationship Cure: A 5 Step Guide to Strengthening Your Marriage, Family, and Friendships*. Harmony, 2002.
- Chapman, Gary. *The Five Love Languages. The Secret to Love that Lasts*. Northfield Publishing, 2015.

Podcast:

- Perel, Esther. *Where Should We Begin?*  
<https://www.estherperel.com/podcast>

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5. The capacity to manage strong feelings and impulses (i.e., distress tolerance)

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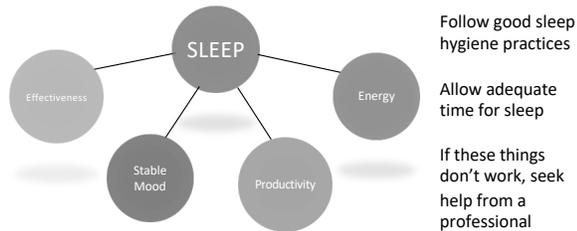
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### Sleep 6.5-7.5 Hours a Night



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### Exercise 3-4 Hours a Week



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### Self-Soothe (Comforting Yourself through Your 5 Senses)



<b>Touch</b>	stuffed animal, stress ball, cozy blanket, stretch
<b>Hear</b>	music, guided meditation, nature
<b>See</b>	snowglobe, pictures, videos
<b>Taste</b>	mints, tea, sour candy, chocolate
<b>Smell</b>	lotion, candles, perfume

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### Practice Mindful Meditation



#### THE BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS

Physical	Mental
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Boost energy levels	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relieves stress
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Improves sleep	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reduces anxiety
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reduces chronic pain	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Improves mood and happiness
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Improves heart function	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Boosts concentration and focus
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Helps with digestive problems	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Improves self-esteem

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### #1 Limit Exposure to Distressing Content



Watch no more than one hour of news daily

Watch less, read more

If you must watch, watch more pleasant things

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### Do Hopeful Things

Connect with young children in your family
Plant a garden
Dream about the future
Plan a vacation
Watch a hopeful movie or read a hopeful book
Carry something that inspires you

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### 6. Engaging in self-care

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### Why Is Self-Care Important?



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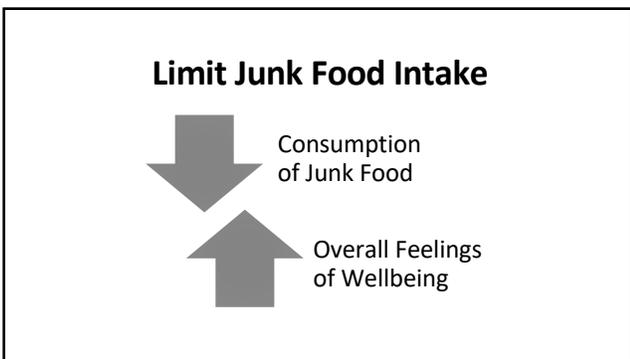
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## Go Outside



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## Some Final Thoughts

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## Resilience Can Be Cultivated



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**You have only four days to start caring for yourself in new ways**

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### **A Question**

The Japanese word for "crisis" means both "danger" and "opportunity".

**Which will this crisis mean for you?**

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We have an obligation to our clients, as well as to ourselves, our colleagues, and our loved ones, not to be damaged by the work we do.

Karen Saakvitne & Laurie Pearlman, 1996

Please, keep an eye out for your colleagues, too.

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## Resources

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## Self-Screening Tools

- Professional Quality of Life Scale  
[http://proqol.org/uploads/ProQOL\\_5\\_English\\_Self-Score\\_7\\_2011.pdf](http://proqol.org/uploads/ProQOL_5_English_Self-Score_7_2011.pdf)
- T2 Mood Tracker app



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## Free Mindfulness App



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## Mindfulness Coach App

Designed to support independent mindfulness practice.

Features:

- Mindfulness Training
- Practice Now
- Track Progress
- Build Expertise



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## Free Mindfulness Resources

- Free online Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction course:  
<http://palousemindfulness.com/selfguidedMBSR.html>
- Guided mindfulness meditations available at
  - <http://www.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/resources/multi-media/index.asp>
  - <http://www.fammed.wisc.edu/mindfulness-meditation-podcast-series/>
  - <http://marc.ucla.edu/body.cfm?id=22>

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## Self-Care Workbooks

- Self-Care Workbook:  
[http://www.figleyinstitute.com/documents/Workbook\\_AMEDD\\_SanAntonio\\_2012July20\\_RevAugust2013.pdf](http://www.figleyinstitute.com/documents/Workbook_AMEDD_SanAntonio_2012July20_RevAugust2013.pdf)
- When Compassion Hurts:  
[https://www.beststart.org/resources/howto/pdf/Compassion\\_14MY01\\_Final.pdf](https://www.beststart.org/resources/howto/pdf/Compassion_14MY01_Final.pdf)

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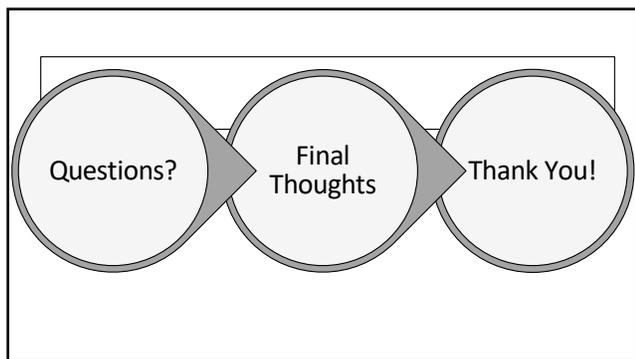
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