PROMOTING WELLNESS & PREVENTING BURNOUT IN HUMAN SERVICES

Working in human services as a clinician, teacher, caseworker, probation/parole officer, police officer, residential care staff, administrator, etc. can be a rewarding profession; however, it can also be stressful at times. Working with children, adolescents, adults, and families who are struggling in life can be challenging and increase the risk of 'Burning Out' if we do not take good care of ourselves, both personally and professionally.

Listed below are strategies for how to prevent burnout and create a professional and personal space in which human service providers can thrive. The information is organized into PERSONAL Strategies (things we can do in our *personal life*) and PROFESSIONAL Strategies (things we can do in our *work life*) for promoting wellness and preventing burnout.

PERSONAL Strategies for Promoting Wellness & Preventing Burnout

1) MAINTAIN A 'BALANCED LIFE'

Make time for Sleep, Healthy Diet, Physical Exercise, Mind-body practices, Vacations, and Fun!

2) BE RESPONSIVE TO YOUR NEEDS AS AN INTROVERT OR EXTROVERT

If you are introverted and get your energy from alone time, make time for it. If you are extroverted and get your energy from social interactions, make time for it.

3) SCHEDULE TIME FOR 'ACTIVITIES THAT ARE RELAXING, MAKE YOU HAPPY, AND/OR EXPRESS YOUR PASSION' (e.g., relaxing on the couch watching football and eating nachos!!)

4) DEVELOP 'PERSONALITY ATTRIBUTES & STRATEGIES' LINKED TO 'WELL-BEING & EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE'

- ***Enthusiasm***- Friendly, sociable, emotionally expressive
- ***Positive Affectivity-*** Happy, energetic, confident
- ***Optimism-*** Possessing generalized favorable expectancies for your future
- ***Low Withdrawal-*** Not easily discouraged or overwhelmed; Low rumination, isolation, & avoidance
- ***Intellectual Curiosity-*** Open to new ideas, enjoy thinking deeply, reflect a lot on their experiences
- ***Industriousness-*** Achievement-oriented, self-disciplined, efficient, competent
- ***Cognitive Reappraisal-*** Rethinking a situation in a way that reduces emotional distress
- ***Compassion-*** Feel and care about others' emotions and well-being

5) UTILIZE ADAPTIVE HUMOR and LAUGHTER

Adaptive humor that is *affiliative* (tolerant and accepting humor that fosters relationships) and *self-enhancing/ self-supporting* (helps buffer and protect self, but not at the expense of others). No sarcastic or put-down humor.

6) EMBRACE THE FACT THAT WE ALL MAKE MISTAKES

- No one is perfect
- Remind yourself that mistakes are opportunities to learn and grow (personally & professionally)
- Model for clients how to take personal responsibility for your mistakes/ errors

7) MEET YOUR 'BASIC HUMAN NEEDS' (Physiological, Safety, Social, Competency Needs)

8) SURROUND YOURSELF WITH 'PSYCHOLOGICALLY HEALTHY PEOPLE'

Foster relationships with stable, honest, supportive people, while setting limits with people who are not.

9) ADDRESS YOUR OWN PSYCHOLOGICAL STRUGGLES

Access support and therapeutic services to address past and present adversity/ stressors (as needed).

PROFESSIONAL Strategies for Promoting Wellness & Preventing Burnout

10) UTILIZE 'HEALTHY COMPARTMENTALIZATION'

Maintain a clear boundary between Work Life & Home Life. Allow yourself to take breaks from work… physically, mentally, & emotionally. Maintain a present-moment focus when doing leisure activities.

11) IDENTIFY AND LEARN FROM 'POSITIVE, COMPETENT COWORKERS'

Be a sponge and learn as much as you can from competent co-workers who freely share their knowledge.

12) PARTICIPATE IN 'COMPETENT, STRENGTHS-BASED SUPERVISION'

HANDOUT: Guidelines for Strengths-Based Supervisors

13) CREATE A 'SUPPORTIVE, COLLABORATIVE, NON-COMPETITIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT' (A Strengths-Based Team)

- Hire and Promote Staff who possess good character strengths- Positive; Team Player; Work Ethic; Humble *(keep Ego in-check)*
- Be Strengths-Based with Colleagues (e.g., celebrate co-workers' successes; talk about positives, not just problems; Share your knowledge with each other)

14) MAINTAIN A 'STRENGTHS-BASED, SOLUTION-FOCUSED APPROACH'

Focus on strengths, solutions, and exceptions to problems in your interactions with clients and co-workers. Chronic negativity and deficit-based thinking is toxic to self and others.

15) BE COGNIZANT OF 'PROTECTIVE FACTORS' LINKED TO HEALTHY WORK LIFE

(e.g., Role clarity; Sense of professional autonomy & being treated fairly; Manageable caseloads; Healthy team; Quality clinical supervision)

16) MAINTAIN 'HOPE' ABOUT CLIENT'S CAPACITY TO MAKE POSITIVE CHANGES

Remind yourself about the many areas of research that provide reasons for hope (e.g., developmental/ neurological maturation, neuroplasticity, resilience, post-traumatic growth/ post-adversity growth, etc.)

17) MAINTAIN 'PERSONAL INTEGRITY'

Always make Decisions and Advocate for what is in the Best Interest of Clients, Coworkers, and Self. Losing your voice can increase hopelessness.

18) BE A 'LIFE-LONG LEARNER'

Human behavior is complex, and no one has all the answers, so keep pursuing new information & ideas

19) MAINTAIN 'REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS AND GOALS' FOR CLIENTS

Permanent change does not happen overnight. Do not give up when clients are slow to make changes.

20) RECOGNIZE AND APPRECIATE EVEN 'SMALL POSITIVE CHANGES' IN CLIENTS

Pay attention to the small changes that occur gradually over time.

21) AVOID BECOMING OVER OR UNDER RESPONSIBLE for a client's treatment progress.

22) DO NOT PERSONALIZE A CLIENT'S PROBLEMATIC BEHAVIORS

Remind yourself that a client's problem behaviors are influenced by social history, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), developmental stage, and/or psychological struggles. Let it bounce off.