

WELLNESS AS AN ESSENTIAL ASPECT OF SERVICE DELIVERY FOR HUMAN SERVICES PROFESSIONALS

Justin R. Watts Ph.D. NCC, CRC

Assistant Professor

Department of Rehabilitation and Health Services

The University of North Texas



UNT
UNIVERSITY
OF NORTH TEXAS
EST. 1890



Objectives

Upon completion of this webinar, participants will be able to:

1. Identify ways to enhance wellness in personal life and professional practice
2. Discuss and identify impairment in professional functioning
3. Identify suitable activities that promote holistic wellness personally and professionally

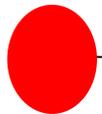
A little about myself

- So one thing you might be asking..... What exactly qualifies this guy to teach me about self-care?
- Education and background
- Research
- Training (Counselor education and Supervision)
 - Work with supervisees and counselor trainees
- My own history with self-care



Self-care

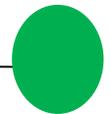
- Self-care is often something that we talk about.....
- In each class I teach, this topic is discussed, assigned, evaluated, but often when students get out into the field they fail to carry it out
- There seems to be something in our nature as counselors that makes this an issue
 - Counselor training at Penn State
 - Counselor training at UNT



0: I am
burning the
candle at
both ends



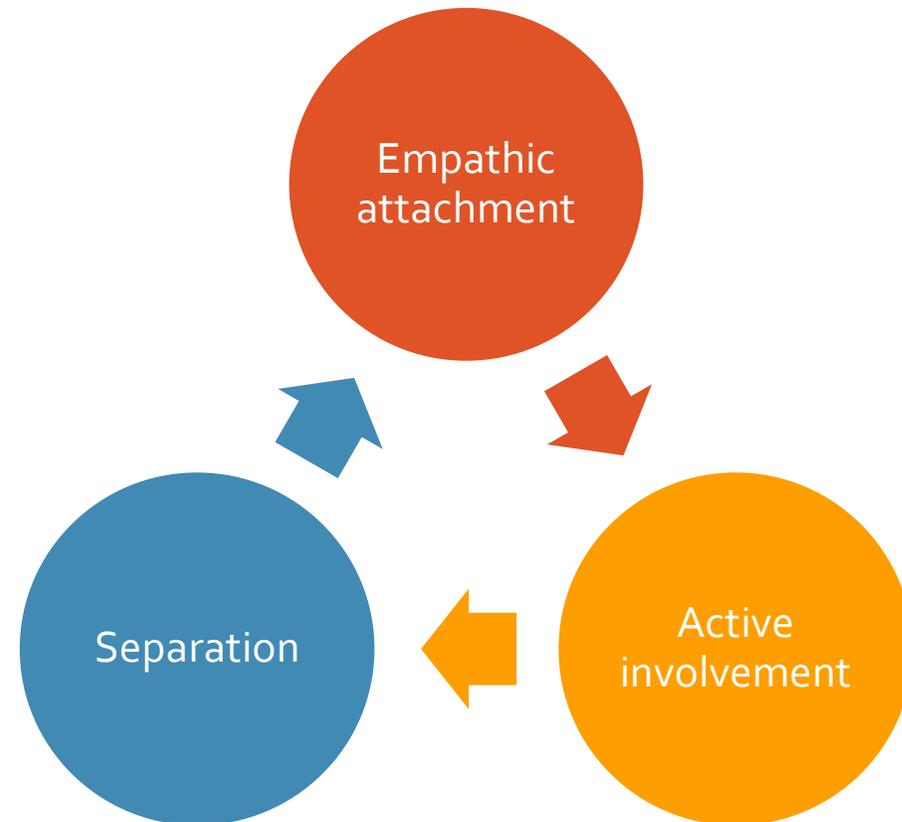
5: I have it
mostly figured
out, but I am not
consistent



10: I'm a pro, and
could probably give
this presentation
myself

The toll of the human services profession

- Those of us who work with chronic issues **often disregard own our self-care needs** when focusing on the needs of clients
 - This shows up early in training
- Sense of achievement (lowers and prevents compassion stress), many of us rarely experience this
- **One way caring**
- We often work with those who are stressed, hurting, traumatized, alone, lonely. **When we hear their stories, it is hard not to develop an altered view of reality**
 - Example, police work



Issues facing counselors related to self care

- Compassion fatigue: The process of empathy and compassion comes at a cost most of the time. When we attempt to see the world as those who suffer, we suffer. Compassion fatigue interferes with our ability or interest to bear the suffering of others
- Counter-transference
- Burnout
- Vicarious trauma
 - In a study done in 2002 looking at professionals working with trauma....
 - 55% distressed at time of study
 - 35% very or extremely emotionally drained
 - 18% had secondary stress disorder, another 18% were close

Burnout is the result of a decreased ability to attach with the next client because of the emotional depletion accumulated over a period of caring for others

You cannot burn out if you are not on fire - Jim Morrison

Hazards that contribute to the difficult nature of our work

- We choose this work because it is valuable, for many it provides meaning and purpose (paycheck is a bonus!)
- When we perceive our work to have little effect, we may lose hope because the very reason we got into this work in the first place (helping others, making a difference) is in itself threatened.
- We cannot be effective in our work if we cannot be empathic and emotionally available

I have always been better at caring for and looking after others than I have in caring for myself, but in these later years I made progress – Carl Rogers

Hazards that contribute to the difficult nature of our work

- Clients with unsolvable problems that need to be solved
- Many clients do not have the basic resources for success
- Motivation gap between client and counselor (our commitment should match)
- Many of us cannot say “no”
- Constant empathy, interpersonal sensitivity, and one way caring
- Difficult to measure success
- Normative failure
 - All of our work and determination is sometimes not enough
- Suicide (in most extreme cases)

Issues facing counselors related to self care

- Stress
 - Chronic stress leads to disease
- Those new to the field may feel inadequate or underprepared
- Experts often feel stressed by
 - Issues that challenge competency
 - Unmotivated clients
 - Breaches in personal and professional relationships
 - Intrapersonal life crises that challenge professional roles
- **Effects of stress on helping professionals:** depression, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, isolation, low job satisfaction, disrupted personal relationships, loneliness, professional ineffectiveness, occupational burnout, depersonalization, sense of low personal accomplishment

Addressing the issue

- Evidence is mounting demonstrating the negative consequences of lack of self-care and the presence of compassion fatigue
- As human service professionals we cannot “afford to not attend to mistakes, misjudgments, and clinical errors” of those who are impaired or fatigued
- The impact is not only felt on our physical, emotional and spiritual health, our clients may also suffer

I have always been better at caring for and looking after others than I have in caring for myself, but in these later years I made progress – Carl Rogers

Professional self-care?

- Professional development: making sure we do our job well, efficiently. Staying excited and decreasing boredom, getting feedback about our performance
- Managing success: much of the success we experience on the job comes from clients and supervisors (we cannot control perceptions at times), focusing on what we can control (a) expertise and (b) quality of our involvement in the relationship process
- **Introspection**: developing self awareness and increasing personal maturity.
- Being active in the work culture: **Instead of waiting for our job to meet our needs, find ways to advocate**. Personal mentoring, supervision, support from co-workers
- Dealing with loss: many of our client relationships “end without an ending”, seek support from colleagues and find a way to reframe this
- **Addressing systemic concerns** (case-loads, breaks, etc.)
- Personal self care

Personal self-care

- Its important to really examine where we are at holistically, life is too short to be miserable
- Should be physical, emotional, social and spiritual
- We do need to be assertive regarding our wellness
- Challenge our own perspective regarding work, its difficult to separate who we are as a counselor from who we are as a person
- Physical activity
- Regular health screening and check up
- Social support
- Counseling, meditation
- Hobbies!
- Scheduling realistically
- Take time away from work, and really be away from work (phone, internet)

Self-care plan (example)

- Setting clear boundaries
 - In all of my syllabi I note that evenings after 5 pm are dedicated to my family and other interests, this includes weekends. Emails received after 5 pm on Friday will be answered Monday morning.
 - No email checking after 5 pm or before 8 pm
 - When I travel, I set a clear out of office automatic reply
 - Deciding when I talk about work outside of the office
- Travel
 - Probably the most important hobby that I have. When I travel for pleasure, the phone goes off, email checking is not permitted (by my wife).
- Professional development: Making sure I make time to read and attend conferences. Everything runs better when I am excited about new things that I am doing (students, research etc).
- Learning to say “no”
 - This involves meeting with supervisors, discussing my strengths limitations, making sure they are aware of my work load. Getting mentoring, also reminding them what is on my plate (they are not always aware)
- Social/family support
- Meditation (mornings), exercise afternoons (4-5X a week, cardio (30 min) and weights)
- Scheduling my week appropriately to have a weekend (this is a learning process): being realistic, making time for lunch

Questions?



You cannot *drink*
from an empty cup.

FILL YOURSELF UP. YOU'RE WORTH IT.

References

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