


## Objectives

- Vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, burn out
- Coping vs self-care
- Impact of helping others
- Importance of self-care
- Barriers to self-care
- Reframing self-care
- Try something, add to your self-care tool box

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## So many terms

Vicarious Trauma

Compassion fatigue


Burn out

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## What is vicarious trauma (VT)?

- The shift in world view that occurs in helping professionals when they work with people who have experienced trauma.
- Helpers notice that their beliefs about themselves and/or the world are negatively altered by being repeatedly exposed to traumatic material.
- The impact from hearing about other's traumatic experiences


(Perlmutter & Saakvitne, 1995)

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## Compassion Fatigue

- The phenomenon generally associated with the "cost of caring" for others.
- The emotional and physical erosion that takes place when helpers are unable to refuel and regenerate.
- Over-intensive identification with the survival strategies adopted by students/clients, and/or
  - inappropriate or lacking personal survival strategies.

(Figley, 1982, 2003)

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## Burn out

- Physical and emotional exhaustion that workers can experience when they have low job satisfaction and/or feel powerless and overwhelmed at work.
- Does not necessarily mean that our view of the world has been damaged, or that we have lost the ability to feel compassion for others.
  - This is not only related to people who hear/work with trauma

## What are signs of compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma?

- Difficulty concentrating
- Intrusive imagery
- Feeling discouraged about the world
- Hopelessness
- Exhaustion and irritability
- Helpers leaving the field
- Negative outcomes (dispirited, cynical workers, boundary violations)

## Possible impact for caring for/helping others:

### Benefits

- Happy
- Live longer
- Positively impacts on emotional and physical health
- Lower blood pressure and chronic pain
- Sense of purpose

### Costs

- Stress
- Burnout
- Compassion fatigue
- Negative mental, physical, and emotional health
- Impact on relationships
- Impact to worldview

"Self-care is not selfish. You cannot serve from an empty vessel." -Eleanor Brown

## Coping vs. Self-care

Coping	Self-care
Strategies that gets you through a tough situation	Ongoing activities, beliefs, attitudes, and perspectives that a person engages in; taking responsibility of own emotional, psychological, and physical health and well-being.
Used once stress/crisis is encountered	Used consistently, not necessarily tied to stress/crisis
Automatic, default	Intentional
Temporary, tide us over	Long term, build our reserves
Can be maladaptive	Promotes overall health and well-being

## Self-Care is Essential

- The costs of caring for others who have experienced trauma can be significant:
  - Stress
  - Burnout
  - Compassion fatigue
  - Negative mental, physical, and emotional health
  - Impact on relationships
  - Impact to worldview, feelings of safety
- Self-compassion and self-care mitigate the impact of vicarious trauma and decrease vulnerability to compassion fatigue.

**People will always be helped more by helpers who are**

- aware
- healthy
- centered

**What are barriers to self-care?**



**“It’s a really toxic mentality to believe that the more you work, the more committed you are.”**

—Meg Reilly, Campaign Workers Guild

[healingjustice.org/elections](https://healingjustice.org/elections)  
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**Healing Justice Podcast**

**Getting into the Practice of Self-Care**

- Find what works for YOU
- Nobody knows your body and needs like you do

- Start with:
  - healthy food
  - sleep
  - move
  - water
  - connect with others
  - reduce screen time
  - breaks
  - be in nature

**Top 10 Self Care Tips**

1. Breathe
2. Move
3. Nourish
4. Laugh
5. Notice
6. Create
7. Disconnect
8. Appreciate
9. Soak
10. Sleep



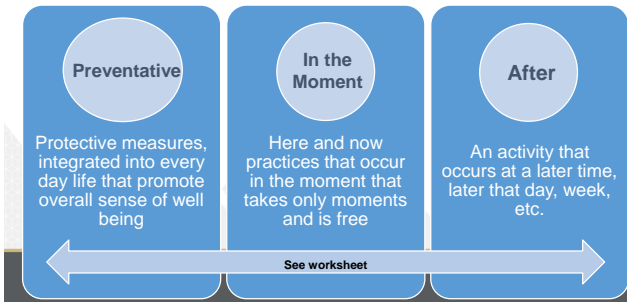
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**Acknowledge Impact – Utilize Self-Care**

- It is normal for people hearing about trauma to have emotions arise
- Images, filling in the blanks, shock, your own past experiences, feelings of inadequacy for not knowing how to respond, etc.

**Preventative  
In the Moment  
After/later**

### 3 Times for Self Care



### 3 Types of Self-Care



### In the Moment Energizing

- Increase & Emphasize the inhale
- Nurturing voice
  - Affirmative self talk
  - Set an intention
  - Play a motivating tune
- Acupressure
- Neck & Shoulder rolls
- Observe the good
- Hungry – eat, mindfully
- Thirsty – drink, mindfully

### In the Moment Grounding

- Increase & Emphasize the Exhale
- Heart holding
- Hand holding
- Anchor object
- Self massage
- Induced Yawning
- Tapping

### In the Moment Expressive

- Write self a sticky note
- Give self high five
- Write/Journal
- Phone a friend
- Lions roar
- Push the wall
- Release anger
- Release joy
- Release sadness
- Release fear



Having emotions is **NORMAL**, how are we expressing all those emotions!?

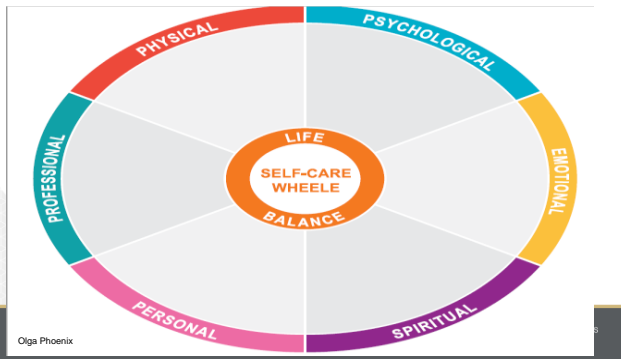
## Self-care as attunement

- In any given moment :
  - 1) How do I feel right now?
  - 2) What do I need/want right now?
  - 3) What can I do to work towards meeting that need right now?
  - 4) Do it right now
  - 5) Reassess as needed

Adapted by A.Kearns, LPC



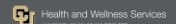
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Olga Phoenix

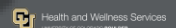
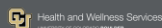
## Gratitude

- Gratitude can help with healing from trauma**
  - An attitude of thankfulness helps heal the effects of a traumatic incident as well as preventing it from getting worse. (Smith, 2014)
- Gratitude increases mental strength**
  - A study of War Vets found that those with higher levels of gratitude experience lower rates of PTSD, this was also similarly found after the 9/11 attacks. (Behavior Research and Therapy, 2006) (Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 2003)
- Gratitude improves psychological health**
  - Gratitude reduces toxic emotions, multiple studies found that gratitude increases happiness and reduces depression (Harvard Med School)



## What builds resiliency, the ability to handle, recover from, and thrive after painful experiences?

- Taking care of yourself
- Connecting with others
- Staying flexible
- All of the above



**“To keep the lamp burning we have to keep putting oil in it.”**  
-Mother Teresa

**“How are we showing up right now? How are we feeling? How are we using this time right now, to be healing and to be taking in our full selves?”**

- Unny Nambudiripad

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