

# Preserving Self in a Sea of Trauma— Selfcare: Deeper Than You Think

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# Presentation Objective

- ❖ Identify Indicators of overwork and overextension in social workers.
- ❖ Recognize social worker self-care as an ethical issue.
- ❖ Recognize the significance of self-care for the self, family, agency and clients.
- ❖ Share various ways to self-care including one's faith.

# Spiritual Caution Against Overworking

Psalm 127: 1-2 (NIV)

Because we fail to appreciate the delicate balance between work & rest

When our work consumes us we do not have time for other vitally important

Prolonging our labor violates a basic spiritual principle

When our work consumes us we do not have time for other vitally important things

Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders **LABOR IN VAIN**.  
Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain. **IN VAIN** you **RISE EARLY** and **STAY UP LATE**, toiling for food to eat – for **He grants sleep to those He loves.**

God is interested in our well-being

# Indicators of overwork and overextension in social workers

- Higher resting heart rate
- Grouchy mood
- Lack of Sleep
- Lack of Self-care
- Inability to emotions
- Lower immunity
- Irregular appetite
- Fatigue
- Feeling less motivated
- Feeling extremely stressed
- Lack of energy
- Replace sleep with things like caffeine
- Neglecting important relationships

# Statistics on Trauma

If one expands statistics to both human-made and natural disasters, authors elaborate that over nine million deaths and 7000 traumas occurred around the world between 1951 and 2000 (Sundne, 2003).

Although the field has been looking intensively at the impact of trauma on clients, we know less as a field about the impact of trauma-specific treatment on the “helpers”. As many as 24 million or 8% of US residents will experience a traumatic stress response during their lives; but the rate is an estimated 15% (Bride, 2007) to 50%, (Conrad, 2007) potentially nearly six times higher, among mental health workers.

# The difference between Vicarious/(Secondary) Trauma, Compassion Fatigue and Burnout

**Compassion Fatigue** (CF) refers to “the profound emotional and physical erosion that takes place when helpers are unable to refuel and regenerate”.

**Vicarious Trauma** (VT) is “the profound shift in world view that occurs in helping professionals when they work with clients who have experienced trauma: Their fundamental beliefs about the world are altered and possibly damaged by being repeatedly exposed to traumatic material (Pearlman & Saakvitne (1995).

**Burnout** describes the physical and emotional exhaustion that workers can experience when they have low job satisfaction and feel powerless and overwhelmed at work. Burnout can be resolved fairly easily. i.e., changing jobs

**CF and VT** is not easily resolved. They are cumulative over time and evident in our personal and professional lives. They are also an occupational hazard of working in the social work field. (Saakvitne & Pearlman, 1996)

# Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)

The term "**secondary traumatic stress**" (STS) refers to the observation that people, such as family, friends, and human services personnel, who come into continued, close contact with trauma survivors may also experience emotional disruption, becoming indirect victims of the trauma (Figley, 1995).

# Prevalence of Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) among Social Workers

- ❑ **Nearly all (97.8 percent)** of the respondents indicated that their client population experienced trauma. And most (88.9 percent) indicated that their work with clients addresses issues related to those client traumas. Clearly, **social workers** are indirectly exposed to trauma as a result of their work with clients and, thus, may be at risk of experiencing STS symptoms.
- ❑ **70.2 %** experienced at least one symptom in the previous week, 55 percent met the criteria for at least one of the core symptom clusters.
- ❑ **15.2 %** met the core criteria for a diagnosis of PTSD (Bride, 2007).

# Prevalence of Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) among Social Workers

- The **intrusion** criterion was endorsed by **nearly half** of the respondents, whereas the **avoidance and arousal criteria** were each **endorsed by one-quarter** of the respondents.
- Regarding individual symptoms, **the most often reported symptoms** were **intrusive thoughts, avoidance of reminders of clients, and numbing responses**.
- Among the **least reported symptoms** were **distressing dreams and a feeling of reliving client's traumas**.
- However, it is important to note that nearly half (**45 percent**) **did not meet any of the three core criteria for PTSD** (Bride 2007).

# Prevalence of Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) among Social Workers

- **50% of child welfare workers** experience STS symptoms in severe range (Conrad & Keller-Guenther, 2006)
- **42% of social workers** said they suffered from secondary traumatic stress (Adams et al., 2006)
- Beaton and Murphy reported **social workers** experience **physiological and physical symptoms**, some extending to **serious illnesses**, and ultimately a **higher mortality rate** among controls (Figley, 1995)

# Prevalence of Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) among Social Workers

An independent body of literature generated from the field of traumatology has emphasized the potential for harm to therapists who specialize in trauma therapy (Figley, 1995a, 1995b; Pearlman & Maclan, 1995)

Therapists are exposed to the stressors and psychic pain experienced by their clients and also carry the professional burden of being expected to remain open and available to their clients on an emotional level. It is this empathic involvement that sets the stage for the potentially deleterious effects of therapy to affect the professional (Raphael & Wilson, 1993).

## The Personal Impact of Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)

<b><u>Cognitive</u></b>	<b><u>Emotional</u></b>	<b><u>Behavioral</u></b>	<b><u>Spiritual</u></b>	<b><u>Interpersonal</u></b>	<b><u>Physical</u></b>
Diminished concentration	Powerlessness	Clingy	Questioning the meaning of life	Withdrawn Decreased interest in intimacy or sex	Shock
Confusion	Anxiety	Impatient	Loss of purpose		Sweating
Spaciness	Guilt	Irritable	Lack of self-satisfaction	Mistrust	Rapid heartbeat
Loss of meaning	Anger/rage	Moody	Pervasive hopelessness	Isolation from friends	Breathing difficulties
Decreased Self-esteem	Numbness	Regression	Ennui	Impact on parenting	Somatic reactions
Trauma Imagery	Helplessness	Sleep disturbances	Anger at God Questioning of prior religious beliefs	Projection of anger or blame	Aches and pains
Apathy	Overwhelmed	Appetite changes		Intolerance	Dizziness Impaired Immune System
Self-doubt	Depleted	Nightmares Elevated startle response		Loneliness	
Perfectionism	Shutdown	Use of negative coping			
Minimization	Fear				
Disorientation	Sadness	Losing things			
Preoccupation with trauma	Depression	Hypervigilance			
Rigidity	Hypersensitivity	Withdrawn			

Figley, R. Charles. (1995). Coping with secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder: *Compassion Fatigue Coping with Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder in Those Who Treat the Traumatized*.

# Self-Care Practice Live Poll

What do you do for self-care?

Live Poll

[https://www.polleverywhere.com/free\\_text\\_polls/SbZ5KOokVvo0yPG0wNmf3](https://www.polleverywhere.com/free_text_polls/SbZ5KOokVvo0yPG0wNmf3)

# Social Worker Self-care as an Ethical Issue

## NASW Code of Ethics (2019)

### **2.08 Impairment of Colleagues**

- (a)** Social workers who have direct knowledge of a social work colleague's impairment that is due to personal problems, psychosocial distress, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties and that interferes with practice effectiveness should consult with that colleague when feasible and assist the colleague in taking remedial action.
- (b)** Social workers who believe that a social work colleague's impairment interferes with practice effectiveness and that the colleague has not taken adequate steps to address the impairment should take action through appropriate channels established by employers, agencies, NASW, licensing and regulatory bodies, and other professional organizations.

# Social Worker Self-care as an Ethical Issue

## What Self-care is not

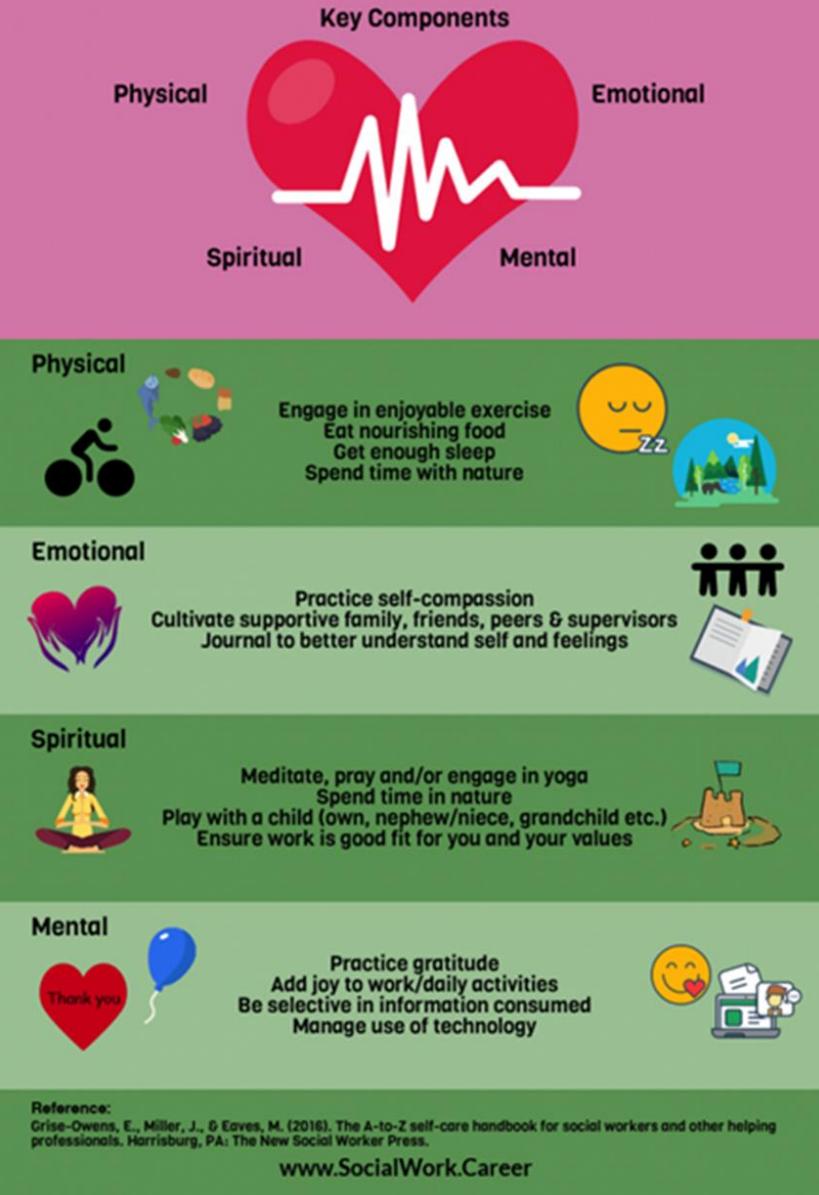
- An indulgence
- Selfish
- Trying to be athletic
- Something extra that you need to fit into your schedule or a “nice to do” activity if you have the time
- If my organization can be better, I will be better and if we wait until the organization changes to take better care of ourselves
- Rigid and

## What Self-care is

- A life-style
- Taking care of the whole being
- Getting active
- An essential professional activity for promoting ethical practice
- A core competence of social work practice
- Part of social work code of ethics
- Intentional and personal
- A component of sustainability

# Self-Care Tips

for Social Workers and  
Other Helping Professionals



The Key components of self-care focuses on:

- Physical \*
- Emotional \*
- Spiritual \*
- Mental/ psychological \*
- Professional
- Personal



# Spiritual Self-Care

3 John 1:2 (NIV) “Dear friend I pray that you may **ENJOY GOOD HEALTH** and that all may go well with you, even **as your soul is getting along well.**”

1 Timothy 4:8 (NIV) For **physical training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way,** as it **holds promise for the present life** and also for **the life to come.**

Mark 12:30-31 says, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘**LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.**’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

1 Corinthians 15:44 (NIV) It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a **natural body**, and there is a **spiritual body.**

# Spiritual Self-Care

our worldview drives our picture of God which in turns determines when and if we go to God regarding our lives. And by going to God is selfcare through our devotional life.

Being a social worker isn't easy in a fallen world; it's a tough job that requires a lot from the social worker. You're faced with many different challenges from different angles, every single day.

Jesus Christ, the ultimate social worker. He cares for the spiritual, social, financial, mental, and physical needs of everyone. We might be tempted to say that Jesus didn't have the emotions we do while He was here on earth because of His divine nature. However, we cannot discount that He was also fully human.

Our relationship with God is at the core of how we care for ourselves.

# Spiritual Self-Care

When Jesus was faced with difficult moments in His ministry, He turned to the father. For example, Mathew 26:39 shows us that Jesus was in agony regarding His pending sacrifice on the cross for our sins. He said, "...“O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”. He prayed this prayer three times (see Mathew 26:39-44) This shows us that Jesus felt. He had emotions.

Before we can turn to God, the picture of God we have in our minds is important. Are you theistic or deistic in your thinking? Meaning do you see God as the creator who is involved and active in your life, or do you see Him as the creator who is off in the distance and not active or involved in your life? This thinking is fed by your worldview.

# Spiritual Self-Care

## What is your worldview

- If your worldview tells you that though we live in a fallen and broken world, and we're all broken people in need of a loving and forgiving savior, then you're most likely to develop a relationship with God that is sustained by having daily devotions.
- Spending time in the word of God is sustaining. It gives us strength. It renews our mind. It refreshes our soul.
- Jesus prayed to God and stayed connected to the Father as part of His self-care. (look into come apart and rest a while...desire of ages) Jesus didn't take on every case, He took care of himself by resting and connecting with the Father
- As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are to be like Him. Therefore, we must go to God in prayer as part of our self-care

# Spiritual Self-Care

## What is your worldview

- ❑ To be disciplined disciples should be our heart's desire as followers of Jesus Christ.
- ❑ Selfcare doesn't come automatically; it has to be intentional.
- ❑ Jesus took time to enjoy nature, and spend time with family and friends, He was big on relationships.

# Self-Care Wisdom

“As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands, one for helping yourself, the other for helping others.”

Maya Angelou

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