The Breath of Stress-Free Living:
Professional & Personal Self-Care

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Introduction:
“Dum Spiro Spero!”
“While I Breathe I Hope!”
- Cicero
- David White: The Antidote to Exhaustion

Introduction:
Professional Ethics of Self-Care
Blaming the Victim: “Sometimes it’s a macro issue Peter.”
- An appeal to enlightened administrators everywhere
Positive Examples of Enlightened Administrators

• Breaks
• Open communication lines
• List of warning signs and “caution lights”
• Limits on overtime
• Monitor PTO/Vacation
• Wellness programs
• Debriefings

Mindfulness

According to Jon Kabat-Zinn, mindfulness is “paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally, to the unfolding of experience moment to moment.”

“Mindfulness is our complete, spacious, attentive awareness of everything in the present moment. To live in mindfulness means not to be pulled away by memories of the past or anticipation of the future. Mindful living engages us completely in this moment. We learn to be present to our fears, anxieties, worries or sorrows without being overwhelmed by them. It allows us to live free of judgement, and to make everything in our daily lives sacred and full of meaning, even things as simple as washing the dishes or turning on an electric light.” – Andrew Weiss

Mindfulness

Empirically-Based Research

• Mental health professionals tend to preach wellness to their clients but don’t practice it themselves
• A 2010 study found that 75.5% of mental health professionals conveyed that they believe that the impairment of fellow colleagues is a threat to the profession
  63.3% claimed that they knew a colleague they considered to be impaired
  (Puig, Baggs, Moon, Park, Kim & Lee, 2010)
• A similar study from 2011 concluded that, if left untreated, compassion fatigue can lead to depression and other stress-related illnesses
  (Slocum-Gori, Hemsworth, Chan, Canyon & Kazanjian, 2011)
• A more recent study from 2014 found an inverse correlation between mindfulness and compassion fatigue
  More mindfulness = less compassion fatigue
  (Thieleman & Cicciatello, 2014)

Compassion Model (ProQOL)
5 A’s of Mindfulness as Practical Coping Skills

1. Awareness
2. Attention
3. Acceptance
4. Anticipation
5. Action

The Mindfulness Skill: Awareness

Definition:
- To know the existence of something; cognizant.
- Awareness is like a container for all experiences. All senses, thoughts, emotions, hopes and desires, dreams and fears are held within awareness. You are able to live with greater equanimity and therefore peace, because the rise and fall of thoughts and emotions are just seen as little events in the vast container that is awareness (Alidina, 2015).

Example:
- “Just watch this moment, without trying to change it at all. What is happening? What do you feel? What do you see? What do you hear?” - Jon Kabat-Zinn

Activity:
- Opening Awareness Meditation - (Alidina, 2015)

The Mindfulness Skill: Attention

Definition:
- To focus perception.
- According to Dr. Sood, “intentional trained attention is directed by your will. This trained attention pulls you away from distractions to savor a more wholesome moment of life. Trained attention doesn’t deny or repress reality. It gives you temporary freedom from negativity. You stop carrying the entire load of the past and the future in your head. Trained attention is focused, relaxed, compassionate, nonjudgmental, sustained, deep, and intentional.” (2013)

Example:
- Shift attention from working on one activity to another. When a person is working on case notes for one client and they need to start working on a treatment plan for another client, they shift their attention and focus to another activity.

Activity:
- Walking meditation

Opening Awareness Meditation

Shamash Alidina:

www.guilford.com/alidina-materials
The Mindfulness Skill: Acceptance

Definition:
- Open to the reality of something, not approval or disapproval or passive acquiescence.
- “Acceptance of the present moment has nothing to do with resignation in the face of what is happening. It simply means a clear acknowledgment that what is happening is happening” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

Example:
- Accepting that your client has done what he can in your session today. Acceptance doesn’t tell you what to do, but rather increases your understanding of the moment. What happens next, what you choose to do, has to come from your understanding of the moment (Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

Activity:
- “This Is It” Mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

The Mindfulness Skill: Anticipation

Definition:
- The person with a well-differentiated “self” recognizes his realistic dependence on others, but he can stay calm and clear-headed enough in the face of conflict, criticism, and rejection to distinguish thinking rooted in a careful assessment of the facts from thinking clouded by emotionality. Thoughtfully acquired principles help guide decision-making about important family and social issues, making him less at the mercy of the feelings of the moment. What he decides and what he says matches what he does.

Example:
- Practice crafting non-anxious, calm, clear “I positions.”

Activity:
- “Anticipation as a Planful Path” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

The Mindfulness Skill: Anticipation

Managing the Five Styles of Anxiety

- Over-Functioning
- Under-Functioning
- Distancing
- Pursuing
- Blaming

“We are not our thoughts.”
- Eckhart Tolle
The Mindfulness Skill: Action

Definition:

"One practical way to do this is to look at other people and ask yourself if you are really seeing them or just your thoughts about them." - Jon Kabat-Zinn

Example:
- Performing an activity while:
  - keeping attention and awareness on the task at hand and your own thoughts regarding the task.

Activity:
- Mindful exercise

Wrap Up

- Sitting meditation is the 21st century’s way of exercising the brain:
  - Not philosophy, not new-age fluff
  - Brain science

- Question is not “To be or not to be?” We have no choice but to be and be our best. These 5 coping skills provide a succinct framework in which we respond to challenges of our profession.

Mindfulness Resources

- Barbara Clark’s Beyond Affirmations Meditations Google App
- Mindfulness Resources
  - Introduction
  - Relaxation and well-being
  - Self Love (Part 1 & 2)
  - Soothe your skin
  - Heal Your Relationship With Money
  - Heal Your Relationship With Food
  - Support Your Heart
  - Support Your Lower, Middle, and Upper Back
  - Stress and Anxiety
  - Support Your Pregnancy & Your Changing Pregnant Body
  - Support Your Pregnancy & Your Changing Pregnant Body
  - Support Your Stomach
  - Support Your Stomach
  - Support Your Knees
  - Headaches And Migraines
  - Support Your Ankles
  - Support Your Neck
  - Support Your Hips
  - Release Grief & Trauma

Mindfulness Resources

- The Mindful Way Through Stress: The Proven 8-Week Path to Health, Happiness, and Well-Being - Shamash Alidina
  - How Mindfulness Helps with Stress
  - Discovering Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction
  - Getting the Most Out of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction
  - Eight Weeks of Mindfulness
  - Deepening Your Awareness
  - Mindful Stretching and Yoga
Mindfulness Resources

The Mayo Clinic Guide to Stress-Free Living
Amit Sood
- The Brain and the Mind
- Attention Training
- Refining Interpretations
- Gratitude
- Compassion
- Acceptance
- Higher Meaning
- Forgiveness
- Tribe
- Relaxation and Reflection

Mindfulness Resources

Beginning Mindfulness: Learning the Way of Awareness
Andrew Weiss
- Beginning Mindfulness
- Four Foundations of Mindfulness
  - A ten-week course
- Widening of the Heart
- Going On

Mindfulness Resources

Wherever You Go There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life
Jon Kabat-Zinn
- The Bloom of the Present Moment
- The Heart of Practice
- In the Spirit of Mindfulness

Questions?