



ALASKA NATIVE
TRIBAL HEALTH
CONSORTIUM



Self Care for Providers

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Introductions!

Professionally, I'm a Psychologist: Therapy, Evaluations,
Supervision, Teaching

Personally: I'm a gardener, paddler,
dog lover, yogi, spouse, auntie, friend.



At Your Tables, Please Introduce Yourself...

- What is your professional role and how do you spend your time?
- If you're comfortable, please share a few parts of your personal identity, too.

Throughout this presentation, please know that you can choose to disclose personal information or choose not to. Take care of yourself, and make choices that feel right for you.

This Presentation is about YOU

The professional, and the person.

- We all know professional boundaries are important, but we also recognize that you have to care for yourself—the person-- in order to do your job well and be satisfied in your work.
- YOU are the single most important tool you will use in caring for others. Your experiences, emotions, and ways of relating to others are essential for the care you provide.
- Screening forms, interviews, workbooks, medical and dental procedures... these are also useful and important. But they are not as important as you.

Training Objectives



- Participants will know the difference between stress, burnout and secondary trauma and identify characteristics of each.
- Participants will identify at least six intentional self-care strategies.
- Participants will self-assess their own self-care and set goals for how to enhance their self-care plan.

How are you coping with your work— as a provider and a person?

- What are some of the challenges involved in being a provider in Alaska, especially in rural communities?
- Ten Minute Breakout: What are some of the consequences that come along with these challenges?
 - ▣ Physical
 - ▣ Emotional
 - ▣ Behavioral
 - ▣ Interpersonal

Burnout and Secondary Trauma

□ Burnout

- A state of physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion caused by excessive or prolonged stress.
- Results from the *amount* of work-related stress and the *environment* at your workplace.

□ Secondary Trauma

- Emotional distress and behavioral challenges that result from hearing firsthand about the traumatic experiences of others.
- Results from the *specific traumatic content* of the work you do.

These are both different from normal work-related stress.

More on Burnout

Signs and symptoms

Physical

- Always exhausted
- Frequent illness
- Sleep problems

Emotional:

- Feelings of failure
- Helplessness
- Detachment / numbing
- Cynicism and negativity

Behavioral:

- Procrastination
- Absenteeism
- Isolation
- Short temper
- Using food or substances to cope

Work-Related Contributors

- Too much to do, not enough resources
- Lack of control over job duties, decisions, etc.
- Unclear or overly demanding job expectations
- Lack of positive feedback or reinforcement
- Chaotic or crisis-oriented environment

More on Secondary Traumatic Stress

Signs and symptoms

- Can be similar to PTSD
- Hypervigilance
- Anger
- Insomnia
- Fear or physical anxiety
- Minimizing
- Guilt
- Numbing: “Checking out” or avoidance with clients
- Withdrawal from close personal relationships
- Re-experiencing client trauma or personal trauma

Contributing Risk Factors

- You work with traumatized children
- You are highly empathic
- You have your own history of trauma
- You feel inadequately trained or professionally isolated
- The volume or severity of trauma you are exposed to can also be a factor

https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/secondary_traumatic_stress_child_serving_professionals.pdf

A note about self care...

It is important to recognize that there are some factors we have limited ability to change:

- Culture at your workplace
- Severity of trauma you are exposed to in your job

Today, we are focused things we can control— the choices we make about how to take care of ourselves. *Self-care* can help prevent and manage stress, burnout and secondary trauma response.

However, your agency, tribe, community, etc. also have some responsibility for helping to manage the problems we've talked about. *Our focus on self-care today does not mean you can or should be solely responsible for fixing the challenges facing direct care providers.*

Self Care is Active

- Intentional efforts to reduce the negative impact of stress
- Intentional efforts to achieve optimal physical and mental health
- Self care is *intentional* and *active*.
- There's nothing wrong with being lazy, checked out, and "rotting" sometimes. But sometimes these behaviors get out of balance, and they start to resemble numbing or avoidance... *can anyone relate?*



A good self-care plan...



A self plan typically involves:

- ▣ Protected time away from work
- ▣ Physical activity
- ▣ Time spent outside
- ▣ Connection with others
- ▣ Attention to sleep and nutrition
- ▣ A bit of peace and quiet
- ▣ A spiritual, cultural, or other meaningful practice
- ▣ Humor and fun

*With your group, discuss how you are doing in each area.
What is working well? What do you need more of?*



Sleep and Nutrition



Humor and Fun



Physical Activity



Time Spent Outside



Protected Time Away from Work



Spiritual or Cultural Practice



Connection with Others



Peace and Quiet

Who has time for all this?

When you're busy, overwhelmed, and tired, it can be hard to consider adding anything else to your plate.

To help, here are some thought challenges for you:

- ▣ If you feel hopeless, try **curiosity**: *“What would it be like if I tried even one or two of things?”*
- ▣ If many people rely on you, try **comparison**: *“If my child / partner / friend / patient really needed a little time from me, would I give it? So why not myself?”*
- ▣ If you find yourself always thinking you should do more, try **reframing** from challenge to reward: *“My to-do list feels really hard. What if a time for myself felt like a break instead of like more hard work?”*

What if you need to set boundaries?

- If you are doing six assessments a week, scheduling eight clients a day, doing presentations for the school and the tribe, training new employees, working on call every day, etc, etc...
- Please know that even in an agency with limited resources, there is such a thing as doing too much.
- Know when you need to set limits.
- Practice what to say: “I am taking on too much right now, and I wish I could help, but I need to say no to this.”
- If your supervisor’s expectations are more than you can handle, have a respectful talk with them about your need for self-care. Try to find some middle ground.

** And— if you are a supervisor, can you welcome these conversations as healthy, appropriate, and ultimately good for the agency?*

What if you need to make a change?

- Sometimes, employees can make choices about their job that help them manage burnout and secondary trauma.
- Doing something different can be energizing and can enable you to contribute in different ways.
- Could you:
 - *Change up your activities within your current job?*
 - *Transition into another job at your agency?*
 - *Seek out additional educational opportunities?*
 - *Refocus your efforts in any other way?*

** And-- if you are a supervisor, can you better support your employees to explore these choices while still pursuing the goals of your agency?*

Group Breakout: Commitments



Let's each make a commitment to try one **active, intentional** self care activity that you're not already using.

Then, let the support and wisdom of this group motivate you moving forward!



I appreciate you!

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OUR VISION:

Alaska Native people are the healthiest people in the world.

