

# Mindfulness and Self Care

## Building a Resilient Community and Culture of Caring

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**Safe Babies**  
A Program of ZERO TO THREE





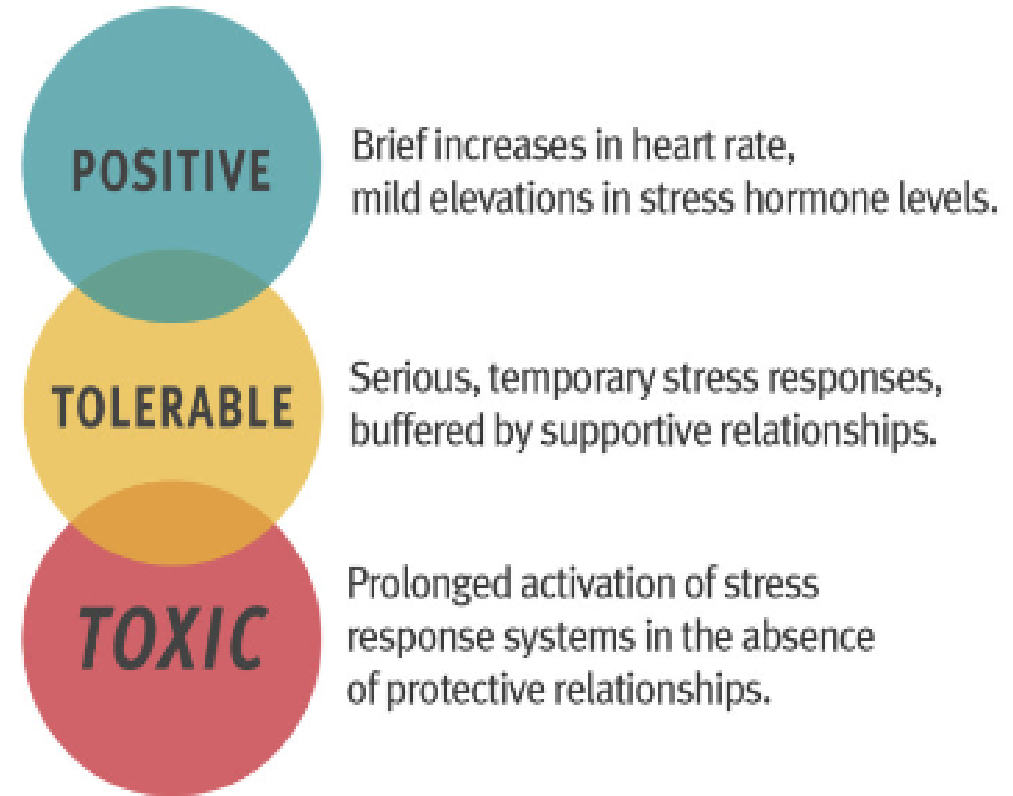
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[www.menti.com](https://www.menti.com) - Enter the code **5472 3414**



## During this presentation:

**“Slow down and  
noticing our own thoughts  
and feelings”**



<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/toxic-stress/>

# Defining the Problem

## Vicarious Traumatization; Compassion Fatigue

“...refers to the cumulative effect of working with survivors of traumatic life events. *Anyone who engages empathically with victims or survivors is vulnerable.*”

(Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995, p.31.)



# Secondary Traumatic Stress

- Stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person (Figley, 2002)
- Caused by repeatedly hearing stories about stressful events/trauma
- Helping professionals are at high risk and can be highly impacted



# The Costs of Caring:

The same attributes that make us good at our work have a cost

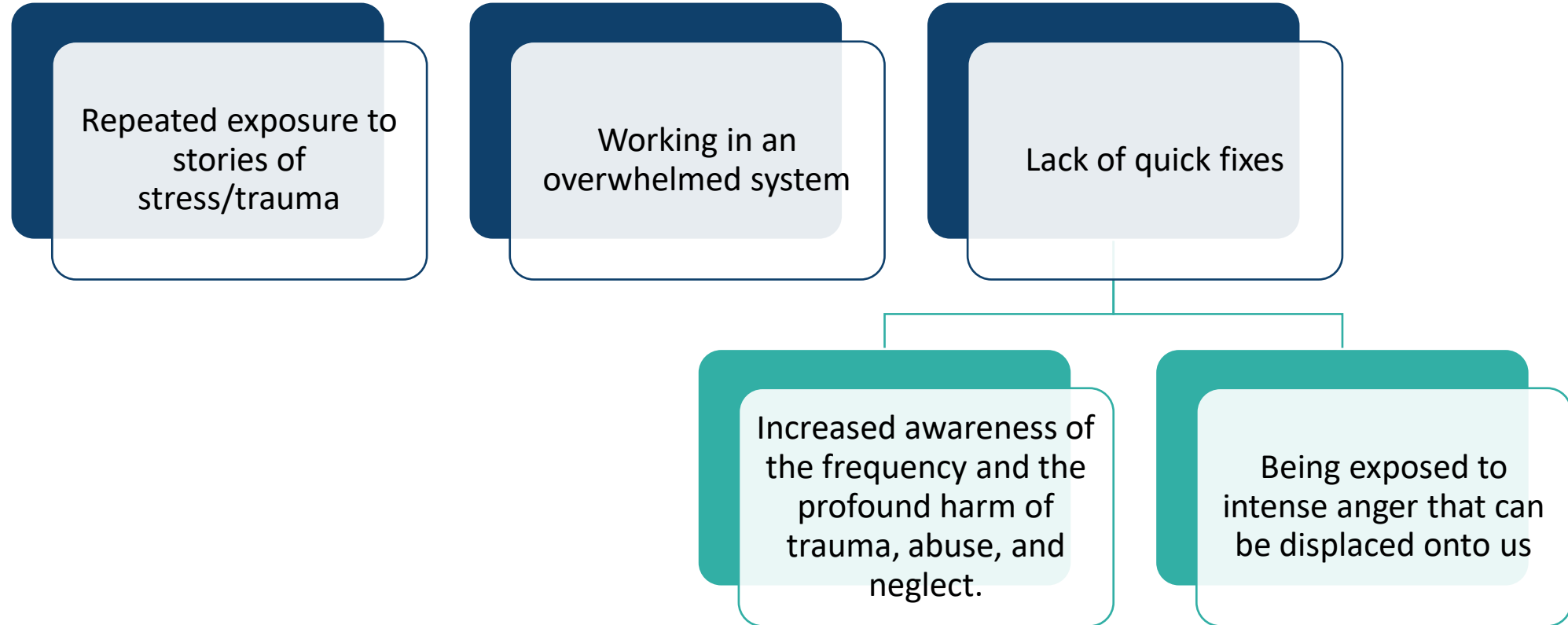
Figley, 1995

“It is not possible to work on behalf of human beings to try to help them without having powerful feelings aroused in yourself.” (Pawl, 1995)

Therefore, we must be able to experience, tolerate, verbalize, and hold trauma and pain that we see in families that we try to help

It’s important to be aware of additional feelings. COVID-19 has contributed to the difficulties with our work

# What puts us at risk for vicarious traumatization, compassion fatigue, or dysregulation



# Risk Factors that Can Impact Our Work with Traumatized Children and Families

Measuring self-worth by how much you help others.

Unrealistic expectations of yourself and others.

Perfectionism and critical self-view.

Fearing others will judge you if you show “weakness”

Avoidance of feeling/showing feelings

Being unable to give or receive emotional support.

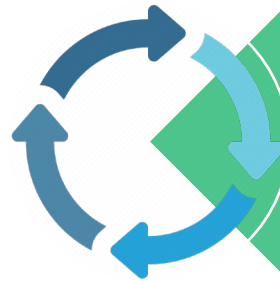
Lack of work/life balance



# Additional Risk Factors



A history of stressful life events which have not been worked through



Repeated exposure to the cruelty of people leading to increases in cynicism and becoming emotionally hardened



Not being able (or willing) to discuss the painful and troubling aspects of work with spouse, partner, family, or friends

# How to Recognize Signs of Stress in Yourself and Others

Feeling stressed

Difficulty managing  
emotions (irritability,  
emotional outbursts)

Problems with decision  
making, memory, or  
concentration

Problems in relationships  
(increased  
conflict/isolation)

Difficulty managing  
boundaries (e.g., taking  
on too much  
responsibility; leaving work  
behind)

Lack of interest/difficulty  
feeling connected to  
events around you

Loss of meaning and hope

# Difficulties of Working with Traumatized Children and Families

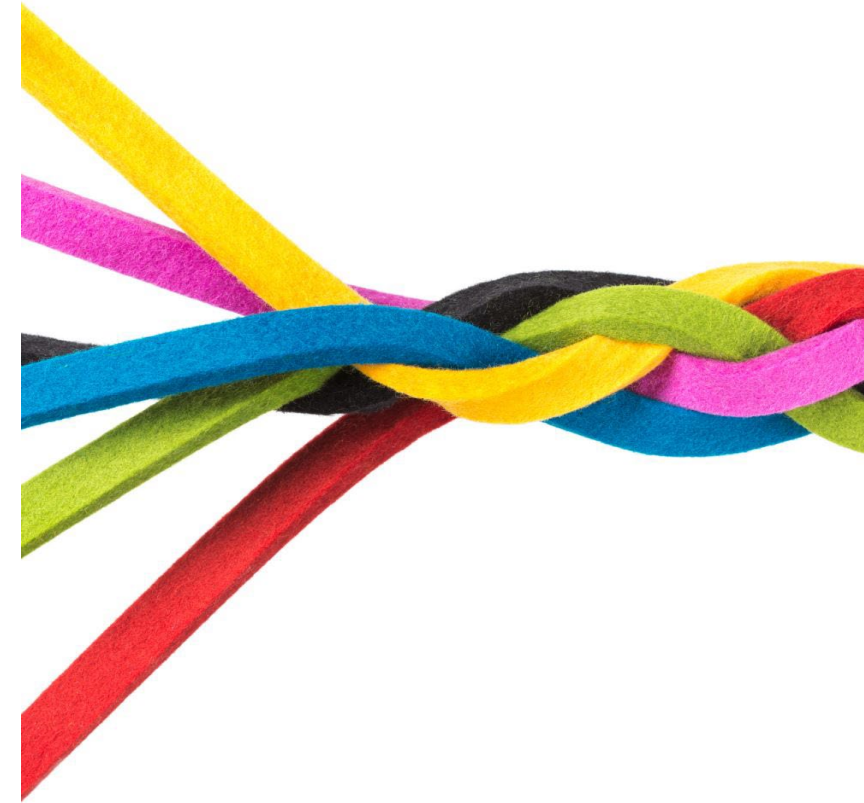
- Balancing demands of work with children and families impacted by trauma
- Other responsibilities and pressures
- Limited support – “difficulties leaving work at work”



# Let's also consider compassion satisfaction

Can come from:


- Working together with colleagues having shared goals
- Contributing to a positive work setting
- Deriving pleasure from helping others through your efforts
- Developing trusting relationships; gaining support from others; remembering also to practice self-care
- Being able to safely share your concerns and problem solve issues with colleagues
- Find time for self-care
- Mindfulness- being fully present and aware of your feelings working with young children and families in child welfare



## Compassion Fatigue

- Burnout
- Secondary Traumatic Stress

## Compassion Satisfaction



## Thoughts about Ways to Provide Support for All Working with the Traumas of Child Welfare System

- Can you find a way to talk “safely” with others about your concerns
- Discussions facilitated by professionals who understand trauma and secondary traumatic stress
- A time to provide support and problem solve issues
- A time to share, learn, demonstrate empathy for others in same situation

**What are the Biggest Challenges  
and Concerns for you in your  
position right now?**

# “Surge Capacity” May be Depleted by Your Attention and Work Required Every Day

- Surge capacity is a collection of adaptive systems – mental and physical
- We draw upon them for short-term survival in stressful situations
- At times, facing many difficult situations from work in general and especially in the child welfare system may have depleted “surge capacity”
- If surge capacity is depleted, it has to be renewed

Ann Masten, Ph.D., Univ of Minnesota



# BALANCE

## SELF CARE

- ✓ Adequate sleep
- ✓ Healthy nutrition
- ✓ Relaxation
- ✓ Physical activity
- ✓ Socializing



# Prevention (Personal)

- Maintain adequate self-care
  - Know and honor your personal limitations
  - Exercise compassion for yourself
  - Learn to say “no.”
- Maintain appropriate boundaries
- Stay emotionally connected without becoming over-involved – “Whose needs am I meeting?”
- Dilemma – how can we “unwind at home” if we are also working at home and cannot share our concerns?
- How can we unwind without having flexibility and needing to stay safe?



# Prevention at Work



Recognize normalcy of stressors and responses



Reframe the problem to reduce anxiety



Improve eating and exercise habits



Take breaks

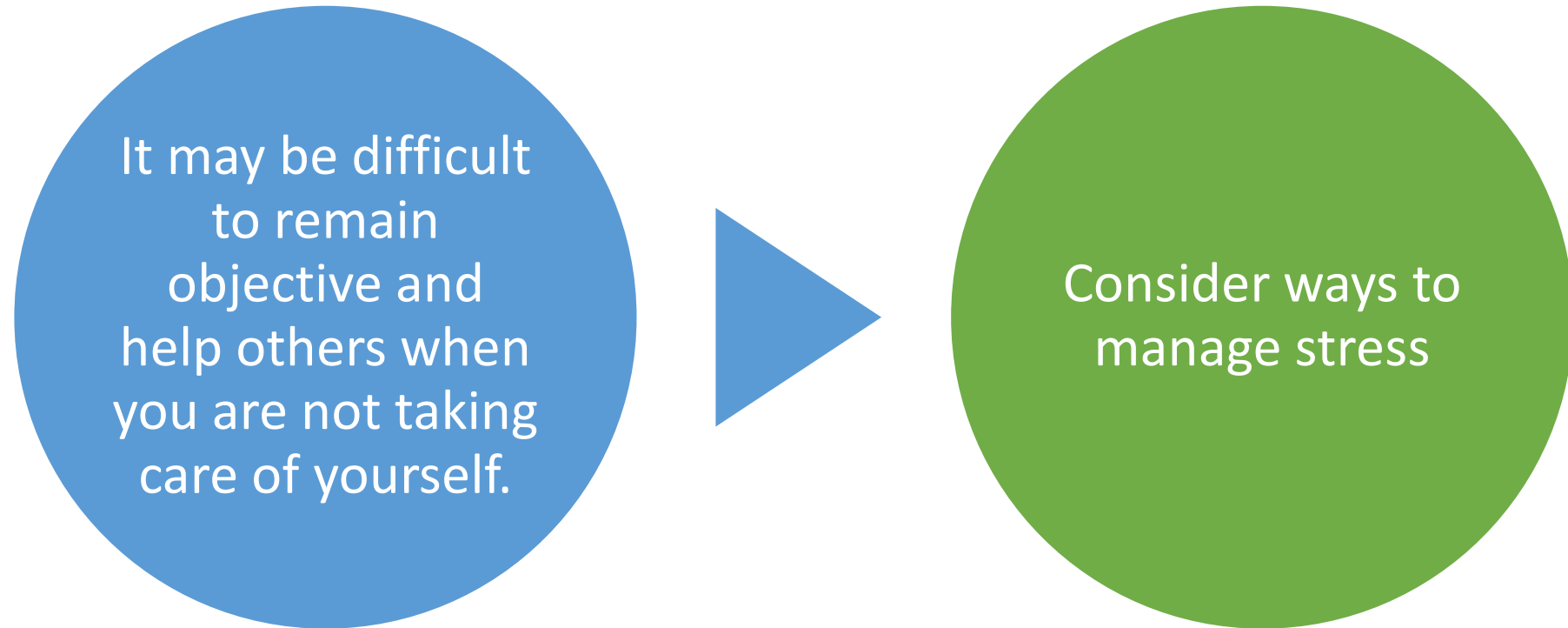


Seek support from others



Learn relaxation techniques to incorporate into your routine (even just deep breathing)

# Take Care of Yourself to Help Others



# Ways to Practice Self Care

Awareness – slow down and focus inwardly to determine how you are feeling

Seek balance in all areas of your life including work, personal, family, rest, leisure

Connection – building connections and supportive relationships with co-workers, friends, family, community, others you can trust – Social connection as a stress reducer



Building Connections and Supportive Relationships

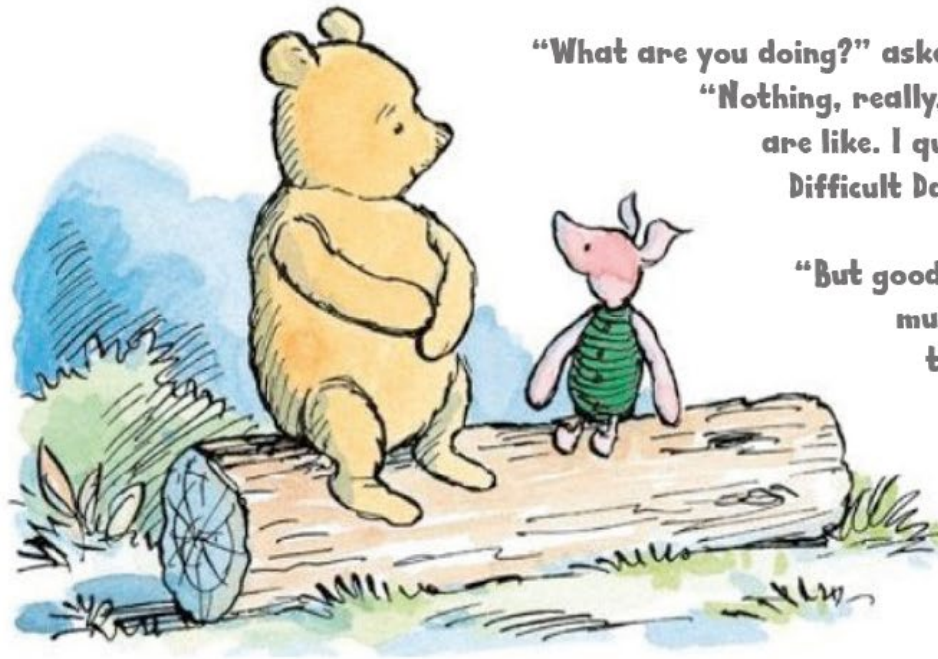
**“Today was a Difficult Day,” said Pooh.**

**There was a pause.**

**“Do you want to talk about it?” asked Piglet.**

**“No,” said Pooh after a bit. “No, I don’t think I do.”**

**“That’s okay,” said Piglet, and he came and sat beside his friend.**



**“What are you doing?” asked Pooh.**

**“Nothing, really,” said Piglet. “Only, I know what Difficult Days are like. I quite often don’t feel like talking about it on my Difficult Days either.**

**“But goodness,” continued Piglet, “Difficult Days are so much easier when you know you’ve got someone there for you. And I’ll always be here for you, Pooh.”**

**And as Pooh sat there, working through in his head his Difficult Day, while the solid, reliable Piglet sat next to him quietly, swinging his little legs...he thought that his best friend had never been more right.”**



# Remember

Put your own “oxygen mask” on first



# Research-based Suggestions to deal with Compassion Fatigue

Ways to improve your mood, increase life satisfaction and mitigate stress include:

- Recognizing the risks for yourself
- Finding a way to debrief distressing material
- Working on self-awareness
- Taking a periodic inventory of how balanced your life is or isn't
- Being intentional about balance and protecting yourself



# Factors that Buffer Against Compassion Fatigue and Burnout

- Use of humor
- Regular exercise
- Enough sleep
- Keeping in touch with friends
- Having hobbies
- Taking breaks, if possible
- Being part of a healthy team environment
- If possible, sharing stressful experiences and receiving support

# Self-Care is not Selfish



Good sleep



Eating healthy food



Exercise – whatever works for you - even walking

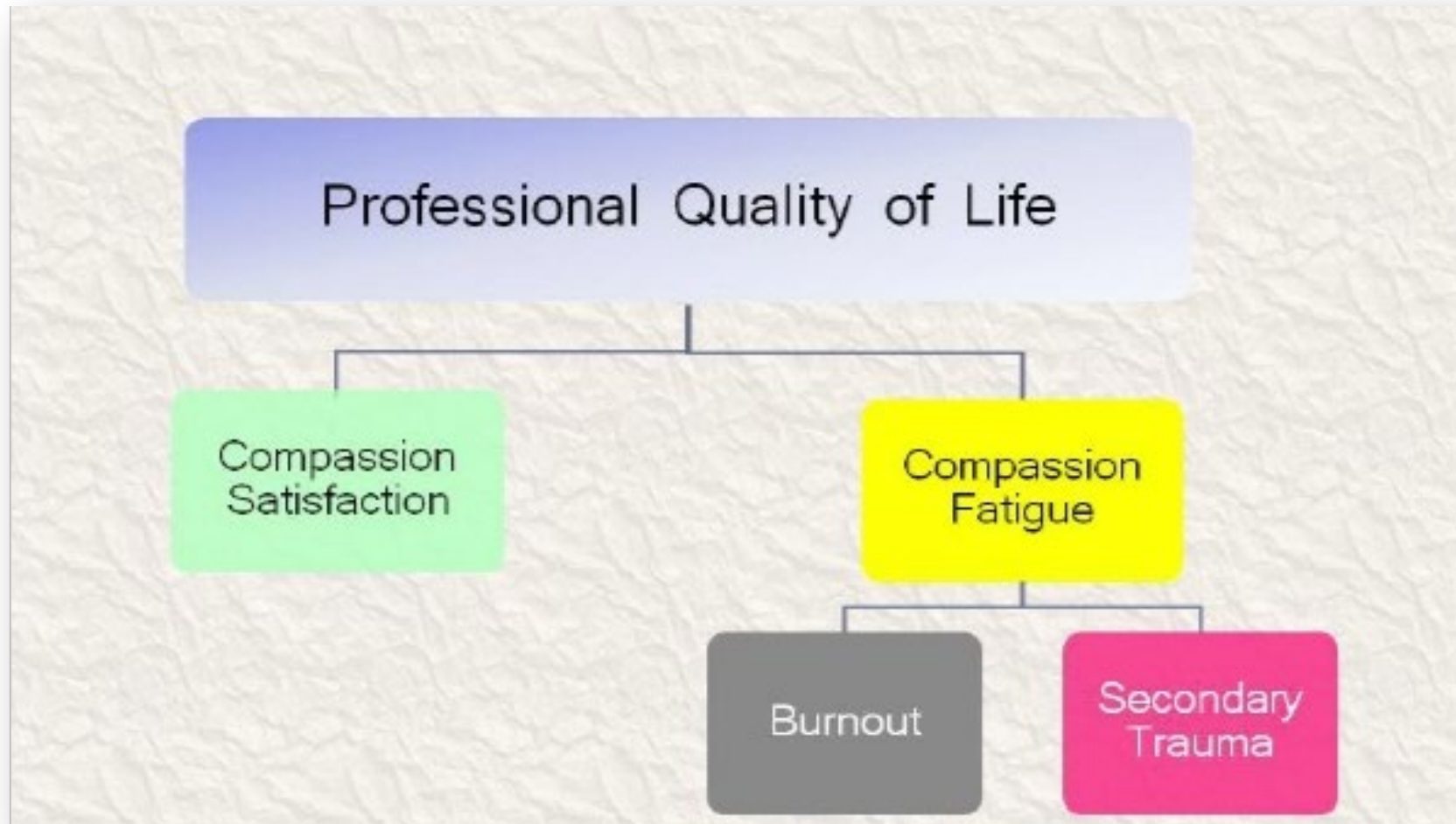


Time for yourself



Meditation if you choose

# Compassion Satisfaction



# Compassion Satisfaction

The positive aspects of helping

- Experience satisfaction in helping others

Providing care

Working with colleagues

Altruism

Beliefs about self

# What is Most Important?

- Trusting relationships with – family, friends
- Gaining support from others
- Fostering wellness – self-care for mind and body
- Avoid negative outlets
- Finding purpose – helping others
- It shows strength, not weakness, to ask for help

## Building your Resilience



# Self-Care Resources

- Headspace
- CALM – Calm.com
- 4-7-8 breathing technique:
  1. breathe in through the nose for a count of four
  2. hold the breath for a count of seven
  3. part the lips and exhale loudly for a count of eight

# Resources

- [How-to-maintain-emotional-health-when-working-with-trauma-1\(1\).pdf](#) (Osofsky, Putnam, Lederman)
- [FigleyLudick2017copy.pdf.compassionfatigue.pdf](#)
- [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/lawyer\\_assistance/resources/compassion\\_fatigue/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/lawyer_assistance/resources/compassion_fatigue/)

# Thank you!

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Early connections last a lifetime