

Session E: Psychologist Well-Being and Competent Practice

Presented by the WVPA Colleague Assistance Committee

Disclaimers

- The presenters have no financial or personal conflicts of interest re: this symposium.
- The information in this symposium is derived from:
 - Empirical literature available through peer reviewed journals
 - Primary source data from survey of WV psychologists and psychologists-in-training
 - Best practices and professional standards

Symposium Agenda

- Part 1: Self-Care as a Foundation for Ethical Practice (1:00-2:30)
- Refreshment Break (2:30-3:00)
- Part 2: Exploring the Benefits of and Need for Colleague Assistance (3:00-4:30)

Self-Care as a Foundation for Ethical Practice

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Self- Assessment

- Professional Quality of Life Questionnaire
- Self-Care Assessment

- Please take a moment to complete each measure and score your responses.

(This is for your own information and confidential)

Psychologists are Vulnerable to Distress, Burn-Out, and Compassion Fatigue ^{1,2}

- Distress
 - Emotional response a person has in response to challenges, demands, and stresses in their life ¹
 - Is a normal part of life, but can lead to burnout over time
- Burn-Out
 - Overwhelming Exhaustion
 - Cynicism and Detachment
 - Lack of Accomplishment
- Compassion Fatigue
 - Reduced capacity for empathy

- Everyone may experience distress at some point.
- Distress, burn-out, compassion fatigue, and problems with professional competence fall along a continuum.
- Burn-out and difficulty coping can develop slowly and gradually.
- Active self-assessment and self-care can help us recognize and address distress as it is happening, rather than becoming aware in hind-sight.

Resources
Fatigue
Pressure
Illness Isolation Finances
Utilization-Reviews
Slow-Progress Stress
Family Client-Severity
Self-Judgement
Insurance
Evaluations

Mental Health Impacts for Psychologists

- Depression
 - The most commonly cited concern, with endorsement rates in surveys ~ 50% to 60%. ⁸
 - Psychologists also endorse high rates of anxiety (~40%) and emotional exhaustion. ⁹
- Personal Crisis
 - 29% of surveyed psychologists reported having felt suicidal in the past. ⁶
 - 2% to 4% of psychologists reported having attempted suicide when distressed. ⁷
 - Compared to other occupations (controlling for age/gender/race), psychologists have higher rates of suicide. ⁵

Risks for Distressed Practitioners

- Failing to Meet Standards of Care
- Practicing While Impaired
 - In one survey, 6% of psychologists reported providing therapy while intoxicated by alcohol.⁷
- Reduced Quality of Care
 - 36.7% of psychologists reported providing reduced quality of care when distressed ⁴
- Ineffective/Inadequate Care
 - 4.6% of psychologists acknowledged providing care that was inadequate due to personal distress ⁴
 - 59.6% of clinicians acknowledged working when too distressed to be effective. ⁷

APA Code of Ethics³

- Principle A: Beneficence and Nonmaleficence - Psychologists are aware of the possible effects of our own physical and mental health on our ability to help those with whom we work.
- Ethical Standard 2.03 – Psychologists make ongoing efforts to develop and maintain our competence.
- Ethical Standard 2.06 - Psychologists monitor and assess our ability to practice competently and take steps, seek treatment, or even stop practicing for a time if personal problems, distress, or illness interfere with the ability to practice.

Self-Care Supports Quality of Life *and* Competent Practice^{1,2}

- Can relieve stress and prevent progression to burn-out
- Can foster experience of positive emotions and improve resilience
- Can role-model positive self-care for colleagues and learners
- Can help us slow down and evaluate need for additional supports or intervention
- Self-care is most effective if we schedule small self-care breaks regularly throughout our days.



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Small Group Discussion

Cope- Ahead Plan

- What self-care strategies do you currently use?
- Based on your self-care assessment, are there any self-care strategies you would like to add?
- What barriers do you experience in your self-care practice?
- Develop your own cope-ahead plan on the worksheet provided – ask your group for help!

Large Group Discussion

- What barriers to self-care did we identify in our groups?
- What were some of the strategies for overcoming barriers?
- For the self-care skills we already use, what helps us to be successful?
- How can we support/affirm our colleagues in their self-care?
- In our professional roles, how might we bring self-care into our workplace?
- What other topics arose in small group discussion?

References

1. <http://societyforpsychotherapy.org/distress-therapist-burnout-self-care-promotion-wellness-psychotherapists-trainees-issues-implications-recommendations/>
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7. Pope, K. S., Tabachnick, B. G., & Keith-Spiegel, P. (1987). Ethics of practice: The beliefs and behaviors of psychologists as therapists. *American Psychologist*, 42, 993-1006.
8. Smith et al. (2009). Psychologist impairment: What is it, how can it be prevented, and what can be done to address it? *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 16, 1-16
9. Wise et al. (2012). Ethics, self-care and well-being for psychologists: Reenvisioning the stress-distress continuum. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 43, 487-494.