

Lee Pesky Learning Center

Improving the lives of people with
learning disabilities



Self-Care = Extending Your Care to Your Self

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What is Lee Pesky Learning Center?

A private, non-profit educational agency

LPLC consists of a multi-disciplinary team of psychologists, teachers, counselors, and researchers. Most of our clients are kindergarten through high school age, although we do evaluate and treat adults.



Goals for Today

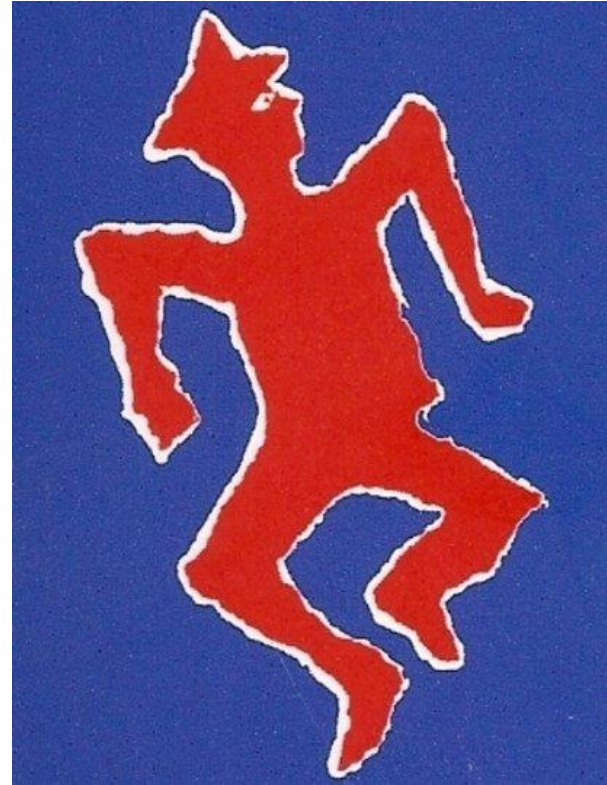
- Define key terms, such as self-care, burnout, compassion fatigue, etc
- Identify your personal self-care strategies and when to use them
- Practice a multitude of strategies together
- RELAX and HAVE FUN 😊



“Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here.” –Max Ehrmann

The Catch-22

The very thing that gives workers in the helpful professions the ability to do their work and do it well is the very thing that can make the it most challenging.



Statistics

- Social workers – 39% report current symptoms of burnout and 75% report experiencing burnout at some point in their career (Brown 2008)
- 62% of experienced Child Protective Service workers scored high on a measure of emotional exhaustion (Anderson, 2001)
- In one study, nearly 18% of case workers suffered from secondary traumatic stress





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Compassion Satisfaction

- “Compassion satisfaction is about the pleasure you derive from being able to do your work. For example, you may feel like it is a pleasure to help others through what you do at work. You may feel positively about your colleagues or your ability to contribute to the work setting or even the greater good of society through your work with people who need care.”
(ProQuol.org)
- CS is something you can intentionally grow and cultivate in yourself and in your organization.



Vicarious Trauma

- VT is not the same as burnout or compassion fatigue, though it may express as an exacerbated version of these two.
- VT is said to be “catching the symptoms” of the client, including intrusive images, difficulty sleeping, nightmares, hypervigilance, suspicion of others, high anxiety, numbness, shame, guilt, and inability to experience pleasure.
- Often used interchangeably with Secondary Traumatic Stress, though STS implies more temporary responses.

Burnout/Compassion Fatigue

- Often defined as a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job.
- Consists of exhaustion, depersonalization (feeling disengaged or detached from the world), diminished feelings of self-efficacy, reduced tolerance for others' problems, depression, and increased self-criticism.



Contributing Factors

- Compassion Fatigue/Burnout can be led to by
 - High caseloads
 - High ratio of “crisis” clients (suicidal, multiple problems, hostile transference, few options for help)
 - Low organizational support
 - Isolation (physical and psychological)
- VT can be led to by
 - Bearing witness to trauma
 - A sense of powerlessness that comes from feeling the need to “fix” a patient/client’s situation that can’t be fixed
 - Exposure to client trauma which “triggers” the worker’s own traumatic history



Contributing Factors

- Compassion Satisfaction can be increased by:
 - Balancing your caseload
 - Setting realistic expectations for yourself and your clients
 - Balancing your work/play/recharge activities
 - Regularly and actively engaging in SELF-CARE

Self-care defined

How would YOU define Self-care??



Self-care Activities



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Self-care Key Points

- ANY attempt to care for yourself is a good one and is worth doing.
- Do not expect quick-fixes for pervasive problems, but expect to be surprised by the power of an intentional act of self-care to change your thoughts/feelings in the moment.
- ANY (healthy) action taken with the *intention* of self-care *is* self-care!



Self-care basics

- Remember you are a human creature with basic needs:
 - SLEEP
 - Exercise/movement
 - Real food
 - Lots of water
 - Connection to others



Know where you're at

- Take stock and know your limits
- Use a questionnaire (like the ProQOL) to assess yourself
- Ask loved ones and co-workers for an outsider view of your behavior and well-being



Breathe... now for a brain break...



Brainstorm!

- Collect ideas from yourself and each other to create a “bank” of self-care.
- Let’s do it now! 😊



Creating space-time

- Find “windows” of time in your week for your you-care, as well as large chunks of time that you “protect” from intruding “to-dos” and demands.
- Remember – this work for yourself is as or more important than the work you do for others – as your service to others depends on it!



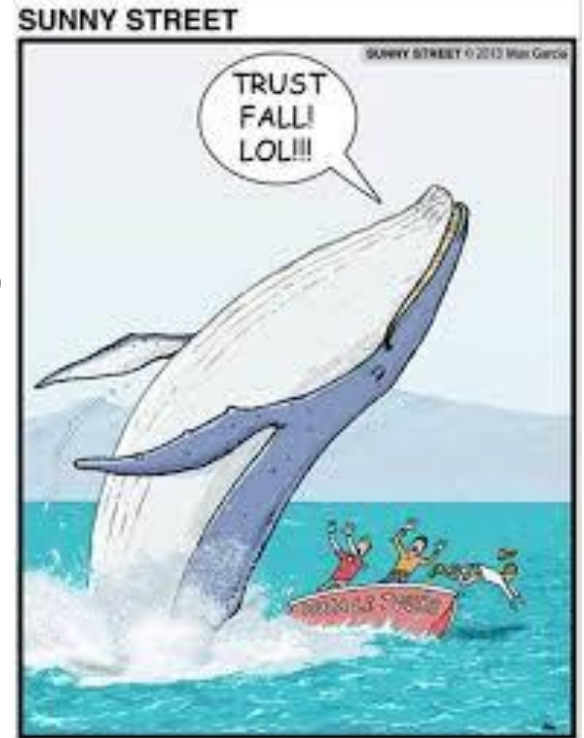
Connection

- Connection with others is of utmost importance for anyone
 - Allocating time for loved ones
 - Joining a support group
 - Creating a support group
 - Small, social “snacks” in the day
 - Allowing yourself to be truly present during your social interactions



The art of delegation

- Learn to delegate and trust that others will do a good job of what you ask.
- You create less work for yourself AND an opportunity for others to grow.
- Exercise your right to ask for help and seek the knowledge of others.



Transitioning from Work to Home

- What is your transition like? And do you check emails/take calls throughout the evening/weekend?
- Create a ritual -
 - Changing clothes when you get home
 - Singing to your favorite playlist in the car
 - Staying outside in your backyard for a moment before going in



Other Common Ways to Self-care

- Getting into nature –a moment outside, a short walk, or a hike on a the trail
- Mindfulness practice
- Meditation practice
- Engaging in a loved activity:
 - Playing music/singing
 - Yoga
 - Dance
 - Creative arts
 - Writing
 - Going to the gym
 - Reading for pleasure



Other Common Ways to Self-care (cont.)

- Journaling
- Engaging in one's spiritual practice
- Researching a favorite topic
- Gardening, caring for plants
- Time with animals
- Decorating your space/office with loved pictures and items.



When to seek professional counsel...

- When you are feeling persistent and pervasive signs of anxiety/depression
- If you cannot seem to leave work at home, are working excessive hours on consistent basis
- Work-related stress has been (or has begun) impacting your personal well-being, your family/friends, and/or your clients.



“If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete.” – The Buddha



References

- Mathieu, Francoise (2007). Transforming Compassion Fatigue into Compassion Satisfaction: Top 12 Self-Care Tips for Helpers.
- Meichenbaum, Donald (unknown date). Self-care for Trauma Psychotherapists and Caregivers: Individual, Social, and Organizational Interventions.
- Pierson, Judith (unknown date). Vicarious Trauma and Self-Care (powerpoint presentation).

Resources

- <http://www.tendacademy.ca/>
- www.proqol.org
- Borysenko, J. (2003) Inner peace for busy people: 52 simple strategies for transforming your life.
- SARK (2004) Making your creative dreams real.
- Weiss (2004) Therapist's Guide to Self-Care

Thank You!

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