PREVENTING BURNOUT IN HUMAN SERVICES WORK

Working in human services as a Teacher, Therapist, Caseworker, Probation/Parole officer, Police officer, Residential Direct Care staff, Administrator, etc. can be a very rewarding profession but also stressful at times. Working with children, adolescents, adults, and families, including those struggling in life, can be challenging and increase the risk of providers Burning Out if they are not taking good care of themselves.

Listed below are some strategies for how to prevent burnout and create a professional and personal space in which human service workers can thrive.

1. ESTABLISH 'POSITIVE, COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS'
with clients and co-workers.

2) MAINTAIN A 'STRENGTH-BASED, SOLUTION-FOCUSED APPROACH'
with clients and coworkers. Chronic negativity is toxic to self and others.

3) MAINTAIN 'HOPE' ABOUT CLIENT'S CAPACITY TO MAKE POSITIVE LIFE CHANGES. Remind yourself about the many areas of research that provide reasons for optimism (e.g., developmental maturation, neuroplasticity, resiliency, posttraumatic growth, etc.).

4) MAINTAIN 'REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS AND GOALS'.
Permanent change does not happen overnight.

5) RECOGNIZE AND APPRECIATE POSITIVE CHANGES
(even small and transitory changes) that occur gradually over time.

6) AVOID BECOMING OVER OR UNDER RESPONSIBLE
for client's treatment progress.

7) DO NOT PERSONALIZE PROBLEMATIC BEHAVIORS. Remind yourself that a client's problem behaviors are often related to their social history, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), developmental stage, and psychological diagnoses. It is okay to not like a client's 'problematic behaviors' but we must always like them as a person.

8) REGULARLY 'CHECK-IN/ COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR SUPPORTS'
(Supervisor, Co-workers, supports & Family supports) about successes, job stressors, insecurities, frustrations, etc.

9) CREATE A 'SUPPORTIVE, NON-COMPETITIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT'.

- Practice the character quality of *Humility (keep your Ego in-check).*
- Celebrate co-workers successes.
- Be open to learning from others.

10) BE A 'LIFE-LONG LEARNER'.
Human behavior is complex and no one has all the answers, so maintain an intellectual curiosity.

11) IDENTIFY POSITIVE, COMPETENT PEOPLE AND LEARN FROM THEM
(Be a sponge!)

12) EMBRACE THE FACT THAT WE ALL MAKE MISTAKES.

- No one is perfect.
- Remind yourself that mistakes are opportunities to learn and grow (personally & professionally).
- Model for clients how to take personal responsibility for your mistakes/ errors.

13) EMBRACE 'PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH WELL-BEING AND EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE'

- Enthusiasm
- Low Withdrawal
- Compassion
- Industriousness
- Intellectual Curiosity
- Positive Emotions
- Gratitude.

14) UTILIZE 'HUMOR AND LAUGHTER' when appropriate. Use affiliative and self-deprecating humor (ability to laugh at yourself); not put-down or sarcastic humor.

15) UTILIZE 'HEALTHY COMPARTMENTALIZATION'. Allow yourself mental breaks from work. Maintain a present-moment focus when doing leisure activities. Try not to take "work stress" home with you.

16) MAINTAIN A 'BALANCED LIFE'.

Make time for Physical Exercise, Mind-body practices, Sleep, and a Healthy Diet.

17) SCHEDULE TIME FOR 'ACTIVITIES THAT ARE RELAXING, MAKE YOU HAPPY, AND EXPRESS YOUR PASSION' (e.g., laying on the couch eating nachos while watching a Nebraska Cornhusker football game... okay maybe not everyone would choose this activity).

18) ADDRESS YOUR OWN PSYCHOLOGICAL STRUGGLES

(past & present) through social support, therapy, etc.

19) BE RESPONSIVE TO YOUR NEEDS AS AN INTROVERT OR EXTROVERT.

If you are introverted and get your energy from alone time, make time for it. If you are extroverted and get your energy from social interactions, make time for it.

20) MAINTAIN PERSONAL INTEGRITY

by always making Decisions and Advocating for what is in the Best Interest of Clients, Coworkers, and Self. Having a voice can help counteract Hopelessness.

21) SURROUND YOURSELF WITH PSYCHOLOGICALLY HEALTHY PEOPLE

and be streetwise about people who are not.