

Center for Advanced Studies
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HAZARDS OF PRACTICE AND TIPS FOR PROFESSIONAL RESILIENCY

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**Minnesota Child Welfare
Practitioners / Professionals**

**Celebrating Your Intense
Caring for Others!**

Outline

- The Professional Challenge
- Joy and Rewards
- The Cycle of Caring
- Hazards of Practice
- What is Resilience?
- Two Models of Practitioner Resilience
- Ten Resilient Practitioner Tasks
- References

The Professional Challenge

The Professional Challenge:
To Wade with Vitality into Ocean of Human Suffering...
and Be Intensively Present For the Suffering Other and
Do it Again...and Again...and Again...
and Be Honored to Have Such Work



The Challenge and the Danger

giving of yourself without going numb, staying open, avoiding burnout. The people who work at the shelter have learned how to swim through the need without drowning in it. They are shrinking the ocean of need, drop by drop.

Karen Russell (2017, p.233) in *Tales of Two Americas*

The Challenge and the Danger

The nurse repeatedly swallows a fragment of the trauma—like a nurse who is looking after an infectious patient, putting her at risk of feeling them, too. And taking in even a small part of tragedy and grief, and loneliness and sadness, on a daily basis over a career is dangerous and it is exhausting.

Christie Watson (2018, p. 282) in *The Language of Kindness, A Nurse's Story*



Self Care in Other Fields

- How does the opera singer take care of the voice?
- The rock climber, the arms?
- The woodcutter, the axe?
- The photographer, the eyes?
- The ballerina, the legs and feet?
- How does the Child Welfare Practitioner / Professional take care of **the self** ?



Joy and Rewards

The Joy and Rewards of Child Welfare Work

Our goals of understanding others' points of views, alleviating human suffering, and enhancing relationships are noble goals. (Pipher, 2003, p. 179)

What do we live for, if it is not to make life less difficult to each other? (Mary Ann Evans; Eliot, 1956, p. 537)

I rarely hear my therapist colleagues complain that their lives lack meaning. Life as a therapist is a life of service in which we daily transcend our personal wishes ...There is extraordinary privilege here. And extraordinary satisfaction, too. (Yalom, 2002, p. 256)

More Joy and Rewards

This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy. (George Bernard Shaw; cited in Larson, 1993, p. 2)

A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops. (H. Adams, 1918, p. 300)

The Cycle of Caring

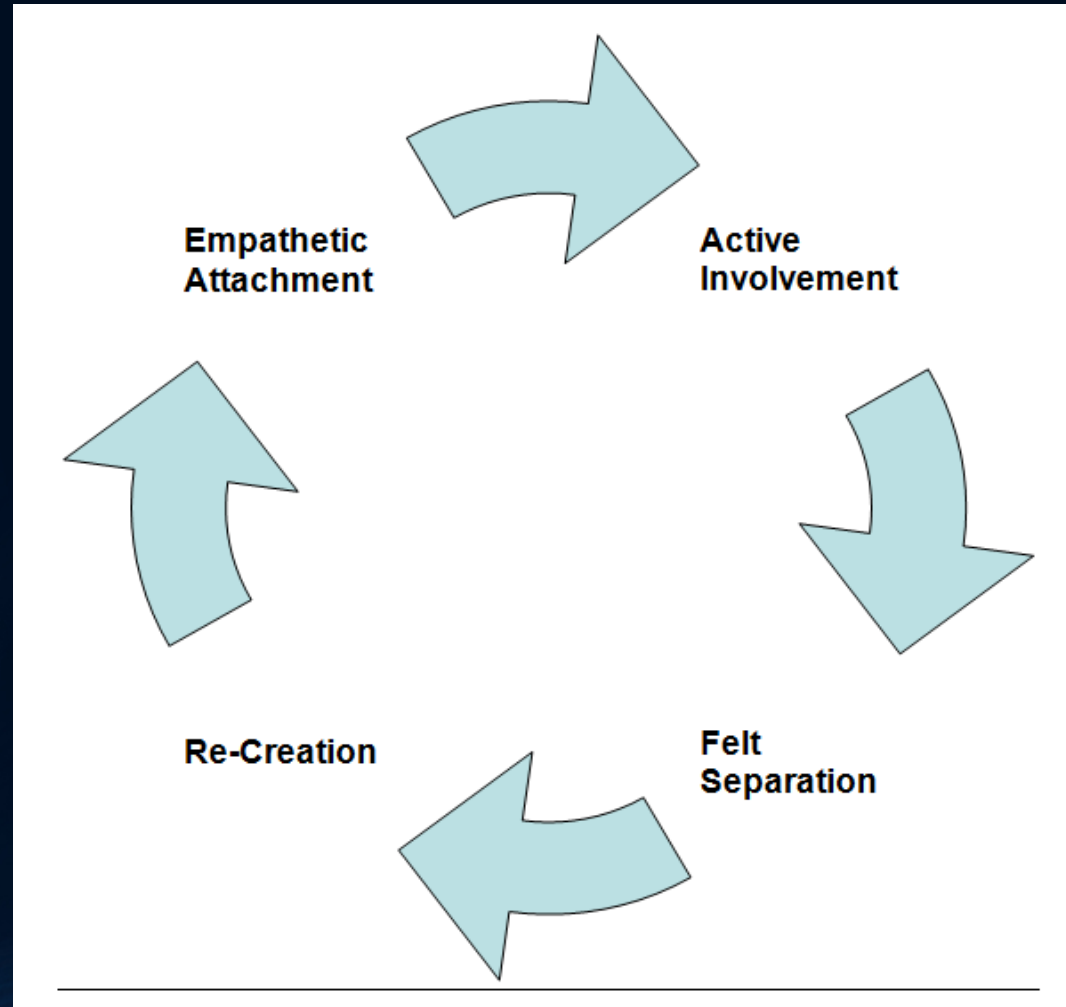
The Cycle of Caring

The demand to be attuned, to be interested, to be energetic for the other--the other who is often in misery, anger, defiance, or hopelessness-- and to continue to do it over and over again, defines the work of the therapy practitioner.
(Skovholt et. al, 2004, p. 18)

We tend to forget the complexity of the process [of being empathetic]. It is extraordinarily difficult to know really what the other feels... (Yalom, 2002, p. 21)

The basic meaning of care is: to grieve, to experience sorrow, to cry out with.
(Nouwen, 2004, p.33)

The Cycle of Caring



Hazards of Practice

Hazards of Practice

Dwelling with the stories that haunt us: Building a meaningful nursing practice. (Rashotte, 2005, p.34)

If you are paying attention to the world you see a lot of pain...

- *Francesca was in therapy after a brutal date rape. Sue Anne came because her husband had just killed himself. (Pipher, 2003, p. 53)*

Hazards of Practice

The capacity for compassion and empathy seems to be at the core of our ability to be wounded by the work.
(Stamm, 1995, p. ix)

When I am affected by a woman's story or someone tells me something about a domestic violence situation, I can't stop thinking about it. I feel for that person. I think about them all day every day... **(Boyland cited in Lipsky & Burk, 2009, p. 124)**

Burnout

As general exhaustion

Professional Uncertainty

Ambiguity of the human condition
Method and outcome are unclear

Compassion Fatigue – Emotional Depletion

As emotional exhaustion

Hemorrhaging of the Professional Self

Ambiguous Endings / Loss

Clients disappear without closure

Vicarious Trauma

Being changed cognitively by the stories of
human suffering

Continual Low-Level Traumatic Stress

Being present with constant narratives of agony and distress

What is Resilience?

What is Resilience?

- Resilience refers to positive adaption in the context of risk or adversity. (Masten, 2014, p. 9)
- Simple definition...being able to bounce back from difficult challenges
- An early use of the word resilience---Tredgold in 1818 described timber that would bend but not break. (Hou, 2014)



North of Eilat Dom Palms. Photographer: Dafna Tal.
Ministry of Tourism www.goisrael.com

What is Resilience?

- The two pioneer longitudinal studies of human resilience were done by
- **Werner, Bierman & French (1971), Werner & Smith (2001)** multi-racial cohort of 698 children born in 1955 on the Hawaiian island of Kauai
- **Garmezy (1971) of poor children growing up in Minneapolis**
- Neither used the word resilience in their early writings, but did in time.



Resilience Research

*Mother was proud of her work on the longitudinal study of the children of Kauai who were born in 1955. Over the years she did many interviews and collected much data mainly with Emmy Werner. The concept of '**vulnerable but invincible**' seemed to describe some of these participants and **the term resilient was used later in the study to describe them.***

Stephen Smith
Eldest son of Ruth S. Smith

April 25, 2019

One Study of Resilience

Paramedics increased resilience:

- Supportive management
- Debriefing
- Referral to outside agencies i.e. therapy
- Peer support
- Support from family and friends
- Use of humor
- Detachment

Two Models of High Practitioner Resiliency

Eye of the Storm Model

Characteristics of Highly Resilient Therapists Model

The Eye of the Storm Model of High Practitioner Resiliency



At the Eye in the Quiet Sits the Practitioner

- Developing a High Vitality Index
 - Personal Vitality and Professional Vitality Exceed Personal Stress and Professional Stress
- Developing Cycle of Caring Expertise
- Maintaining an Intense Will to Learn and Grow



Summary of the Eye of the Storm Model of Practitioner Resiliency

- Outside, the storm swirls
- Inside the Eye *in the Quiet*
- The Child Welfare Professional –Client working relationship.



Characteristics of Highly Resilient Therapists Model



(Hou & Skovholt 2019)

Suggested Resilient Practitioner Tasks

- **First Essential Resilient Practitioner Task:**
 - Losing One's Innocence about the Need to Assertively Develop Resiliency and Self-Care Skills
- **Second Essential Resilient Practitioner Task:**
 - Developing Abundant Sources of Positive Energy
- **Third Essential Resilient Practitioner Task:**
 - Relish the Joy and Meaning of the Work as a Positive Energy Source
- **Fourth Essential Resilient Practitioner Task:**
 - Searching for Empathy Balance and Boundaried Generosity

Suggested Resilient Practitioner Tasks

- **Fifth Essential Resilient Practitioner Task:**
 - Developing Sustaining Measures of Success and Satisfaction
- **Sixth Essential Resilient Practitioner Task:**
 - Importance of Deep and Expansive Love in One's Life
- **Seventh Essential Resilient Practitioner Task:**
 - Creating a Greenhouse at Work
- **Eighth Essential Resilient Practitioner Task:**
 - Our Own Physical Health as a Source for Positive Energy
- **Ninth Essential Resilient Practitioner Task:**
 - A Long-Term Continual Focus on the Development of the Self

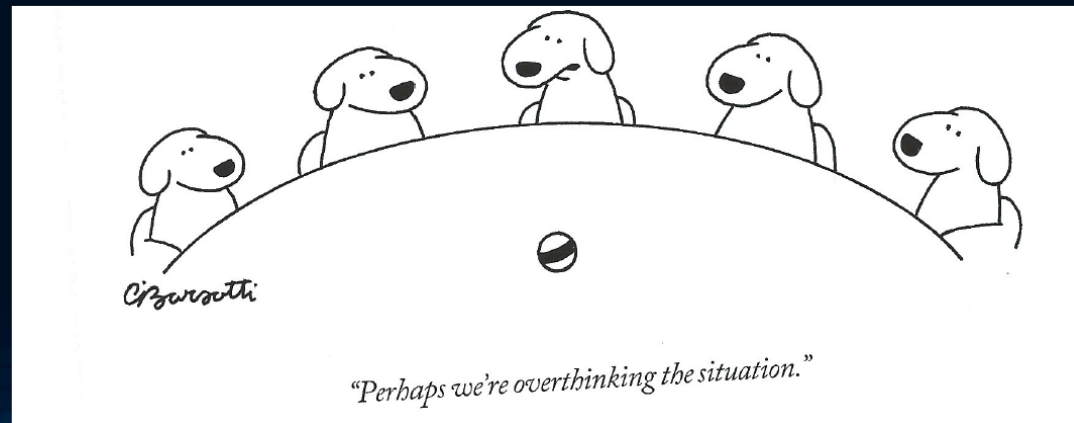
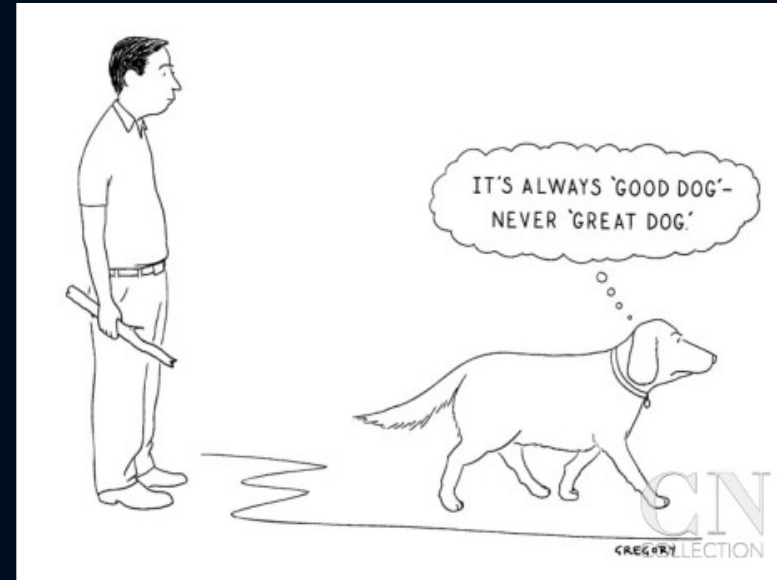
Suggested Resilient Practitioner Tasks

- *Tenth Essential Resilient Practitioner Task:*
 - Having Pleasure and Joy in One's Life





"I'm gonna talk to her. How's my breath?"



Resilience

- Finally, try imagining a favorite tree in front of you
 - ...magnificent trees take in our carbon dioxide and give off oxygen...but they need sunlight, rain and good soil.
- Those in the relationship-intense professions do the same
 - They take in the carbon dioxide of others and give them oxygen
 - ...but they too need sunlight, rain, and good soil
 - ...How is your supply?

There is no greater pleasure than knowing you made a real difference in the life of another human being...one that never loses its special meaning.

(Norcross and Guy, 2007, p. 21.)



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