



Foundations in Juvenile Healing to Wellness Court Coordination



Module Eight: Secondary Traumatic Stress
and Self Care as presented by the National
Native Children's Trauma Center



Tribal Youth Resource Center
www.TribalYouth.org

▶ BEFORE WE GET STARTED...

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Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) and Self-Care

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Objectives

1

Learn definitions of Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) and related concepts that are relevant to education settings.

2

Learn about the warning signs and symptoms of STS.

3

Learn strategies for STS mitigation.

Secondary Traumatic Stress

“The natural and consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other, the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person.”
(Figley, 1995)

STS Connection to PTSD

Recurrent, involuntary, and intrusive re-experiencing

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graph TD; A[Recurrent, involuntary, and intrusive re-experiencing] --> B[Psychological or physical reactions to cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the event(s)]; B --> C[Avoidance of memories, thoughts, feelings or with external reminders associated with the event(s)]; C --> D[Negative changes in cognition, mood, arousal, and/or reactivity beginning or worsening after the event(s)];
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Psychological or physical reactions to cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the event(s)

Avoidance of memories, thoughts, feelings or with external reminders associated with the event(s)

Negative changes in cognition, mood, arousal, and/or reactivity beginning or worsening after the event(s)

Compassion Fatigue

- Compassion Stress – the perceived demands derived from experiencing the suffering of others and wanting to help relieve this in some way (Figley, 1995; 2005)
- Compassion Fatigue –
 - “The experience of short-term exhaustion and traumatic stress reactions associated with exposure to the suffering of one’s clients.” (Boscarino, Figley, & Adams 2004)
 - “The weariness that comes from caring.” (Johnson, 1997)



Compassion Satisfaction

- The perceived joys derived from experiencing the suffering of others and succeeding in helping relieve it in some way (Figley, 2002)

Vicarious Traumatization: Impact on How We Feel about Ourselves, Others & the World

- Vicarious traumatization is changes in the inner experience of a staff member, such as expectations for trust, safety, control, esteem, intimacy that result from cumulative exposure.
- Difficulty gaining satisfaction from work.



STS in Indian Country

- Few studies have explored the impact of STS among American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) population
- AI/AN children are more likely than any other race to experience violence
- Due to the likelihood of trauma exposure, it is likely AI/AN helping professionals are impacted by STS



“For us the question is not who has been exposed to violence, it’s who hasn’t been exposed to violence?”

THE IMPACT OF A PANDEMIC ON STRESS

Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can include:

- Fear and worry about personal health and health of loved ones
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health conditions
- Worsening of mental health conditions
- Increased use of substances

Symptoms are often exacerbated by isolation, disruption of routine and loss of employment



Factors That May Impact AI/AN Caregivers continued...

- Few formal resources in the community to treat STS
- Communities with high rates of trauma may experience added stress to local providers and agencies
- Effects of collective Historical Trauma



Factors That May Impact AI/AN Caregivers

- Small communities comprised of mostly those who identify as AI/AN
- Individuals often have close kinship ties with intermediate and extended family
- Many providers are from the community they work in
- *“We know the community and their background and their family members and everything so we’re probably more impacted than if we were in a large city area”*
- *Caringi, Stanick, Trautman, Crosby, Devlin & Adams, 2015, p. 249*

- NICWA, 2015

Personal Impact of STS

- Fatigue
- Numb
- Upset Stomach
- Nausea
- Rapid Heartbeat
- Breathing Difficulty
- Sleeping Difficulty
- Dizziness
- Impaired Immune System

Physical

- Emotional Roller Coaster
- Denial
- Fear
- Anxiety
- Guilt
- Powerlessness
- Sadness
- Hypersensitivity
- Overwhelmed
- Minimization

Emotional

- Changes in routine
- Appetite changes
- Withdrawal
- Nightmares
- Elevated startle response
- Self-Destructive coping behaviors (substance use, gambling, spending, etc.)
- Accident proneness

Behavioral

Personal Impact of STS

Cognitive

- Confusion
- Diminished concentration
- Absent-mindedness
- Decision-making difficulty
- Self-doubt
- Rigidity
- Trauma Imagery

Interpersonal

- Isolation
- Blame Others
- Relationships deteriorate
- Decreased interest in intimacy or physical touch

Spiritual

- Question religious or spiritual beliefs
- Loss of purpose
- Anger at a higher power
- Question the meaning of life

Who Is Vulnerable To STS?



you.

- Those who are empathetic.
- Those who have experienced traumatic events in their own lives which are unresolved, and in turn, activated by similar reports of pain or trauma in others.
- Those who work directly with children and listen to their painful or traumatic experiences.
- Those who help others and often neglect or are unaware of their own feelings and needs.

Formal Methods of Assessing STS at the Individual Level

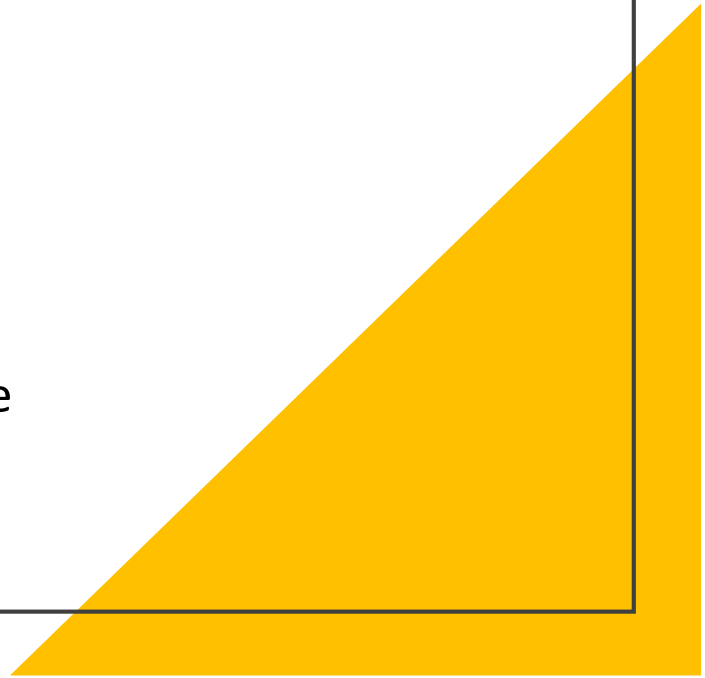


- Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale (STS Scale)
- Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL)

Group Activity: Physical, Emotional, Mental, Cultural, Social and Spiritual Impacts



- How has my work altered my sense of balance?
- What have I done to be more balanced?





Organizational Stress

Organizational Stress



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- Organizations can create workplaces that increase the likelihood staff are exposed to stress, are directly exposed to trauma, and experience STS.
- When organizations fail to create psychologically and physically safe spaces that address organizational stress, direct exposure to trauma, and STS, staff suffer.

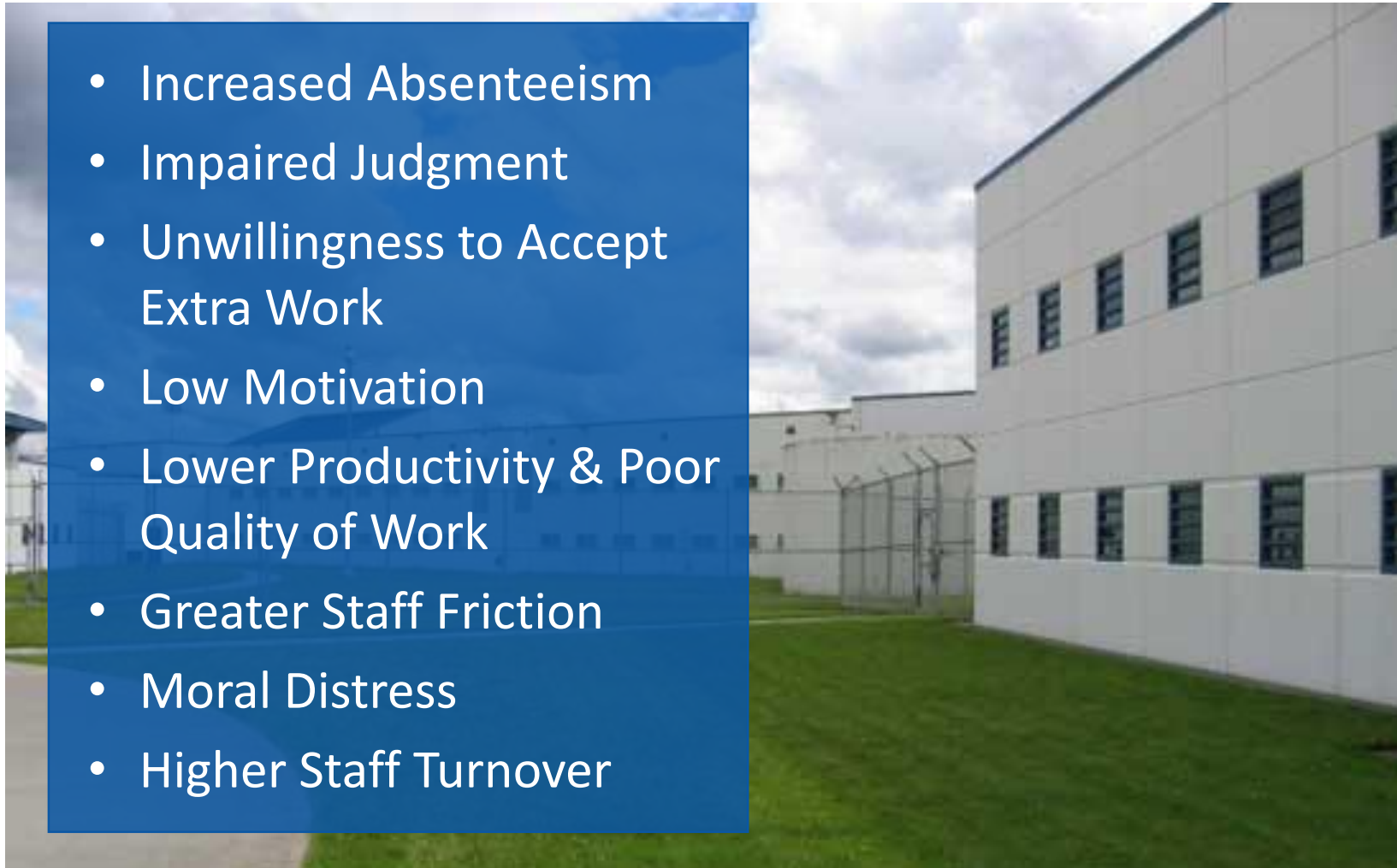
Sources of Organizational Stress



- Budget Cuts and Pay Loss
- Layoffs
- Unsupportive Co-Workers & Leadership
- Lawsuits
- Investigations
- Facility Closing
- High Case Load

Organizational Functioning

- Increased Absenteeism
- Impaired Judgment
- Unwillingness to Accept Extra Work
- Low Motivation
- Lower Productivity & Poor Quality of Work
- Greater Staff Friction
- Moral Distress
- Higher Staff Turnover



Formal Assessment of Organizational Response to STS

- [Secondary Traumatic Stress-Informed Organization Assessment \(STSI-OA\)](#)
- More information: Go to <http://www.uky.edu/CTAC/STSI-OA> or contact Ginny Sprang at sprang@uky.edu.



Mitigation Strategies

Self-Care

- “Self-care is an **ethical imperative**. We have an obligation to our clients- as well as to ourselves, our colleagues, and our loved ones- not to be damaged by the work we do.”
- Saakvitne & Pearlman
- “We can’t teach what we don’t know. We can’t lead where we won’t go.”
- Malcolm X

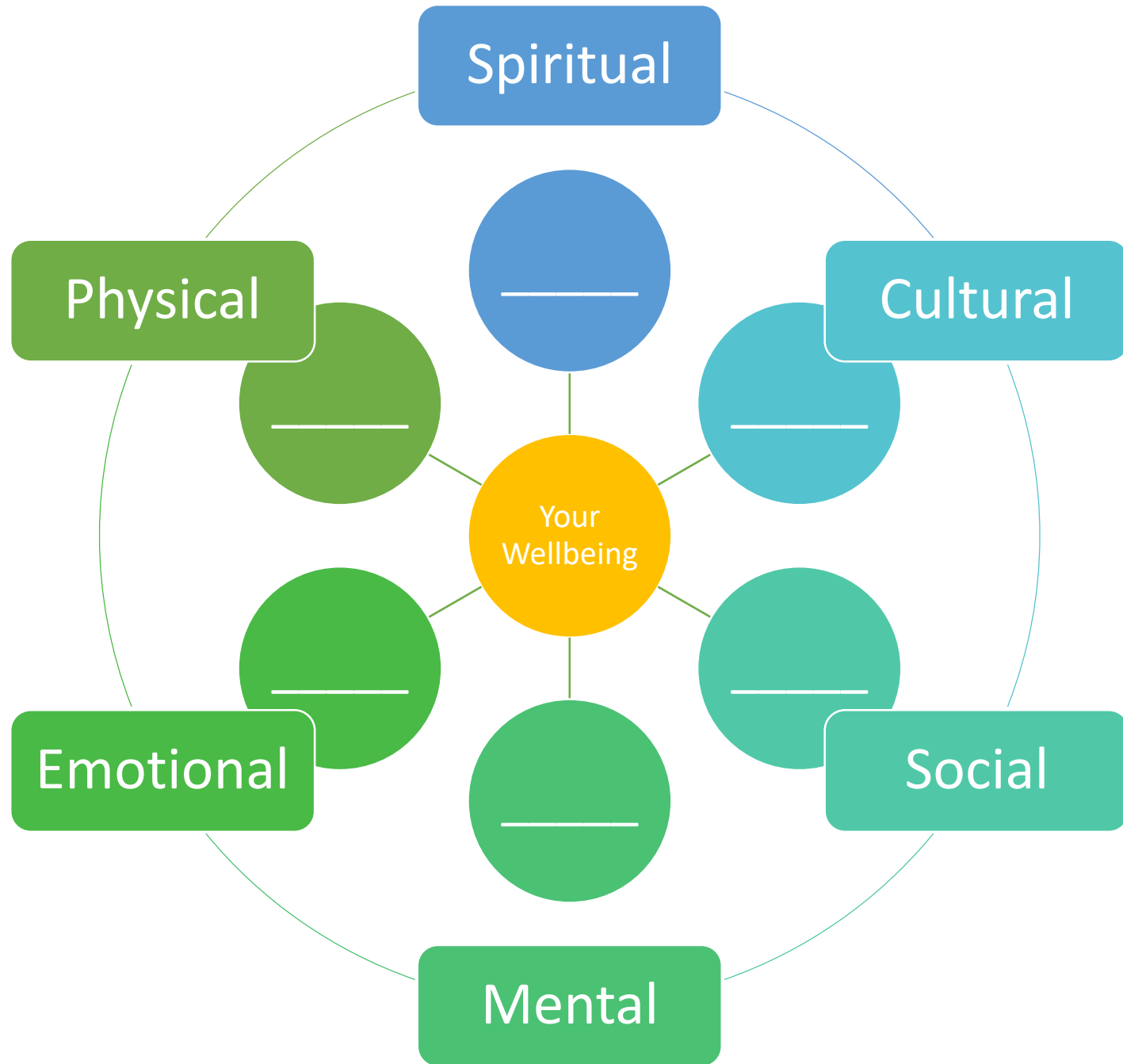


Radical Self-Care



- **Intentionally** and **frequently** creating opportunities for respite and replenishment
- Engage in activities that:
 - Offer distraction
 - Help unwind or decompress
 - Personal growth

Make a Holistic Plan





Spiritual Strategies for Wellbeing

- Spirituality, or systems of meaning, are central to trauma responses
- What is nourishing and effective for you?
 - Traditional tribal spirituality
 - Other religious traditions
 - A sense of purpose
 - Seeking awe, joy, beauty, and wonder

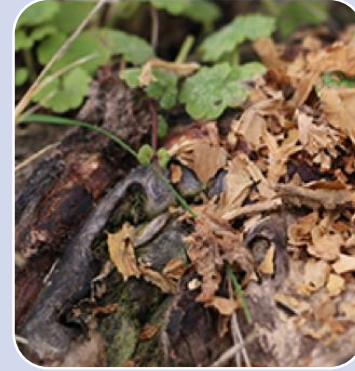
Cultural Strategies for Wellbeing

Culture is a “set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group that encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs” (UNESCO, 2002)

- Rejection of aspects of your culture (internal, external) can result in negative impacts, including on mental health
- Connecting with your culture can have positive impacts, including fostering resilience
 - Culture is prevention
 - Culture as a protective factor
 - Cultural identity is key



Medicine



Sage

- Cleansing and heart health

Sweet Grass

- Cleansing and protection of mind and body

Cedar

- Protection of a place and general health

Bear Root

- Heart and lung health

Tobacco

- Offering of thanks for wisdom and help

Corn Pollen

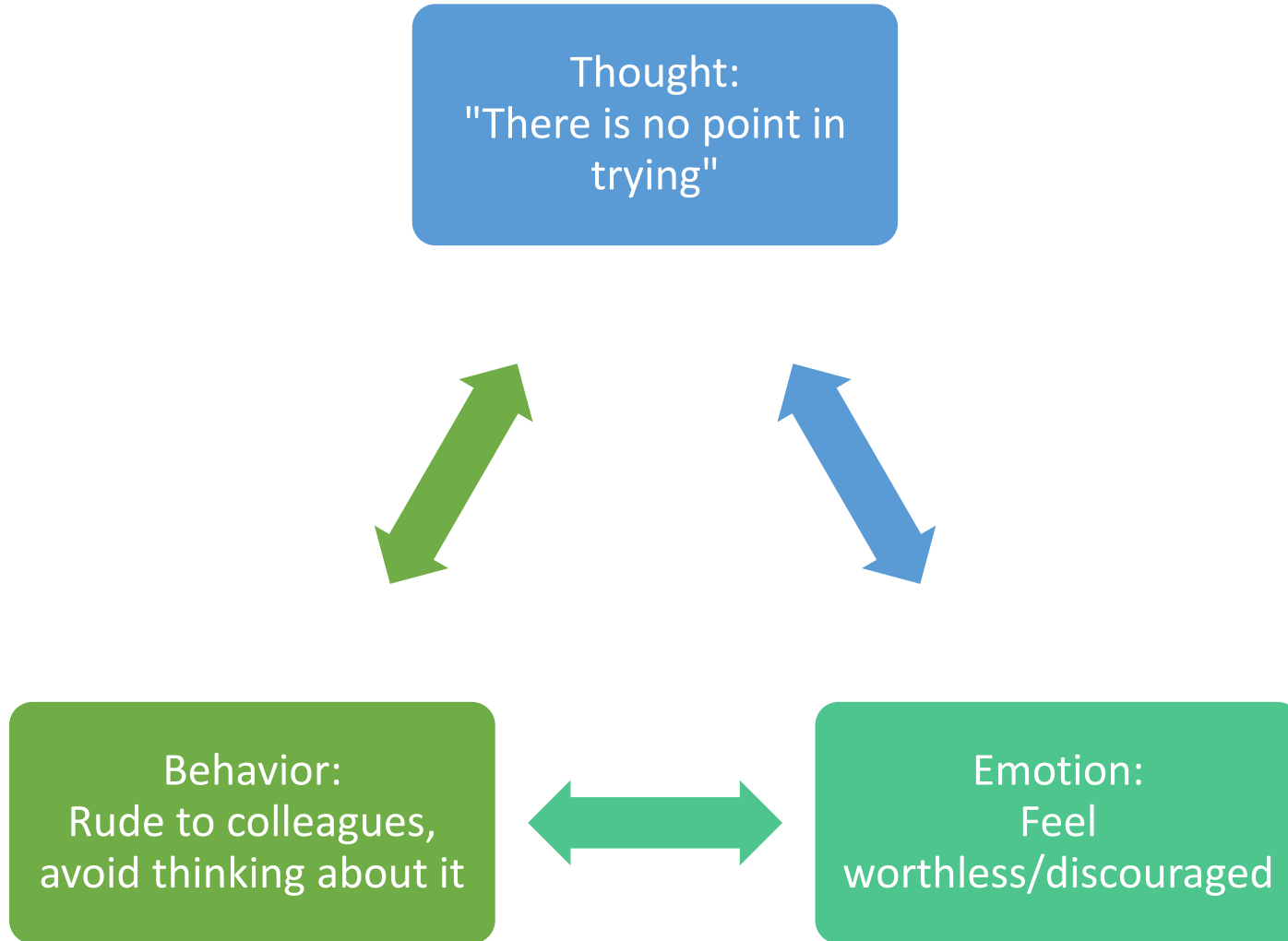
- Blessing and Prayer

Develop Optimism

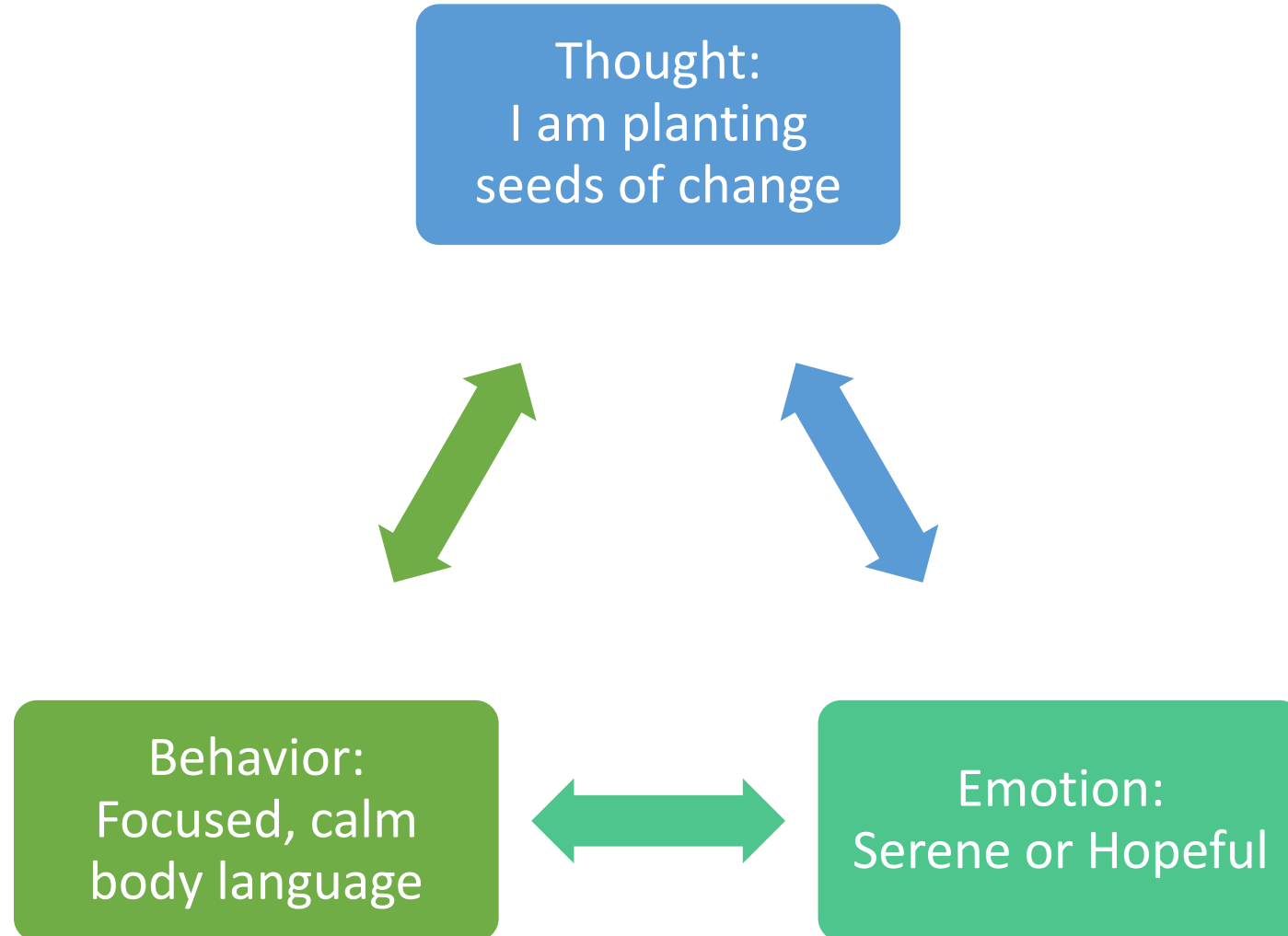
- Often easier to identify what is going wrong than what is going right
- Optimism can be learned



Challenge Unhelpful Thoughts



Replace with Helpful Thoughts



Social Strategies for Wellbeing



- Social isolation is solitude that is unwanted and unhealthy; linked to poor cardiovascular health and cognitive functioning
- Relationship is key
- Social support and social skills are protective factors
- Increased sense of belonging to tribe, strong connection to community and culture, and intergenerational interactions reduce risks for chronic disease for AI/AN

(Sources: Center for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion)

Positive Imagery



Visualize a relaxing place in your mind



Engage in the sights, sounds, and sensations



Take a few deep breaths



Return when feeling overwhelmed

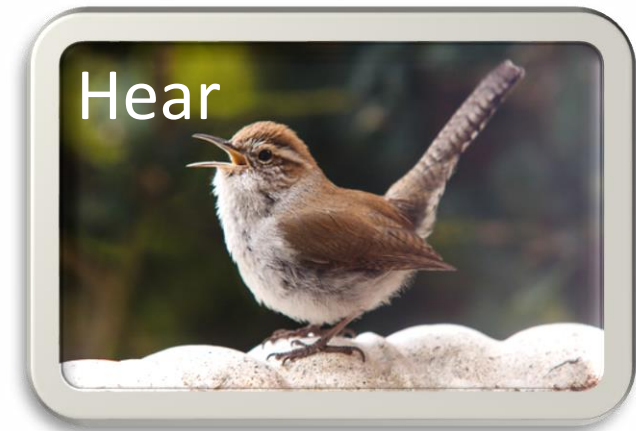


Deep Breathing

- Simple, but effective! Can be done any time anywhere
- Controlled breathing **helps us to calm down**
- To keep thoughts calm and relaxed while breathing, introduce the words “calm” or “relax” while breathing out
- Imagine your other thoughts floating away in a balloon



Grounding





Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- Useful for **relaxing the muscles when they feel tight** because of emotional stress
- Key: tensing a group of muscles, hold in a state of extreme tension for a few seconds, relax the muscles

Organizational Self-Care

- Team building activities
- Relationship building
 - Staff check ins
- Fostering community pride
- Using kinship terms
- Respecting how each person defines family
 - Leave and attendance policies
- A sense of belonging for all



Connecting with Compassion Satisfaction

- Think of a time you connected with a child
- Identify three students who made progress
- Identify five compliments you have received from students, co-workers, parents, administrators
- Why did you choose to work in this setting?



Formal Debriefing and Reflection

- Attend to your mental and emotional reactions
- Seek support from peers and supervisors when needed
- Steps to low impact debriefing:
 1. Self-awareness
 2. Fair warning
 3. Consent
 4. Limited Disclosure



Finding the Time for Workplace Wellness

If you have:

2 minutes

- Smile
- Breathe deeply
- Make coffee or tea
- Stretch
- Sign up for a training opportunity
- Thank someone
- Tell a joke to a co-worker
- Have a “2min dance party”

10 minutes

- Clean up your workspace (or at least a part of it!)
- Plan a party to celebrate an accomplishment or milestone
- Discuss training opportunities with your supervisor
- Do a wellness activity with your colleagues at a staff meeting

5 minutes

- Respond to an email that has been nagging you
- Have a conversation with someone who you don’t usually work with
- Schedule a team meeting
- Straighten up one of the common areas

30 minutes

- Eat lunch with your colleagues
- Sit or walk outside
- Assess your wellness plan
- Discuss self-care, burnout and compassion fatigue at a staff meeting
- Have a “walking meeting” with a colleague

An empty lantern
provides no light.
Self-care is the fuel
that allows your
light to shine
brightly.





Thank you



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