

**ECHO IDAHO**

Counseling Techniques for  
Substance Use Disorders

# Ethical Boundaries to Prevent Burnout

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**StLuke's**

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**University of Idaho**  
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# Learning Objectives

01

Participants will learn the definition & components of burnout.

02

Participants will understand ethical codes & principles relevant to impairment and burnout.

03

Participants will learn ways to cope with and prevent burnout.



# Burnout

“Don’t let anyone tell you different, psychotherapy is one of the most tasking endeavors known to [human]kind...there’s nothing that compares to confronting human misery, hour after hour, and bearing the responsibility for easing that misery using one’s own mind and mouth.”

-Jonathan Kellerman



# Burnout

A condition related to overwhelming stress

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**Vulnerabilities: intense, face-to-face interaction addressing difficult problems can be emotionally and physically demanding**

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**Among medical professionals, burnout can be as high as 52%**

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**Growing area of research is on “parental burnout”**

**The U.S. Surgeon General  
Advisory on the Mental Health &  
Well-being of Parents (2024)**

(Farber, 2000; Nagoski & Nagoski, 2020)



# Burnout – what is it

- Freudenberger (1974)
  - **Emotional exhaustion** – the fatigue that comes from caring too much, for too long
    - Most strongly linked to negative impacts on our health – esp women(!)
  - **Depersonalization** – the depletion of empathy, caring, and compassion
  - **Decreased sense of accomplishment** – an unconquerable sense of futility: feeling that nothing you do makes any difference

“No more giddy-up”

# Burnout

*I can't keep going in this  
empty existence.*

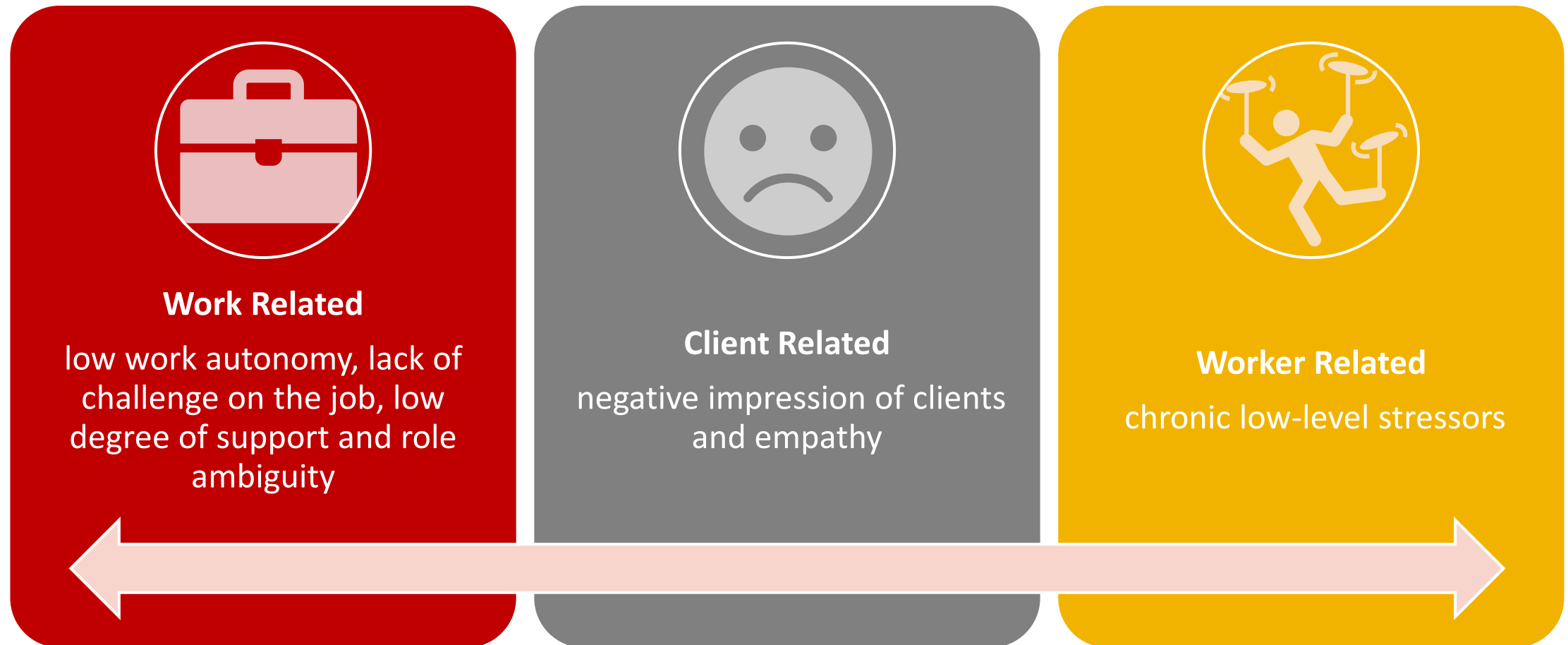




# Burnout

“a consistent correlation has been found between successful outcomes of therapy and therapist wellbeing...” – Beutler, et al 2004

# Burnout – 3 Areas of Burnout



Solderfelt, Solderfelt, and Wang (1995)





# Burnout – Maslach & Leiter (1997)

- “Burnout is the index of the dislocation between what people are and what they have to do. It represents an erosion in values, dignity, spirit, and will – an erosion of the human soul...”
- Burnout is not a problem of the **people**; it’s the **social environment in which people work**



# Burnout – Maslach & Leiter (1997)

## 6 work environment sources of burnout

1. Work overload
2. Lack of control
3. Insufficient reward
4. Unfairness
5. Breakdown of community
6. Value conflict



# Burnout – contributing factors

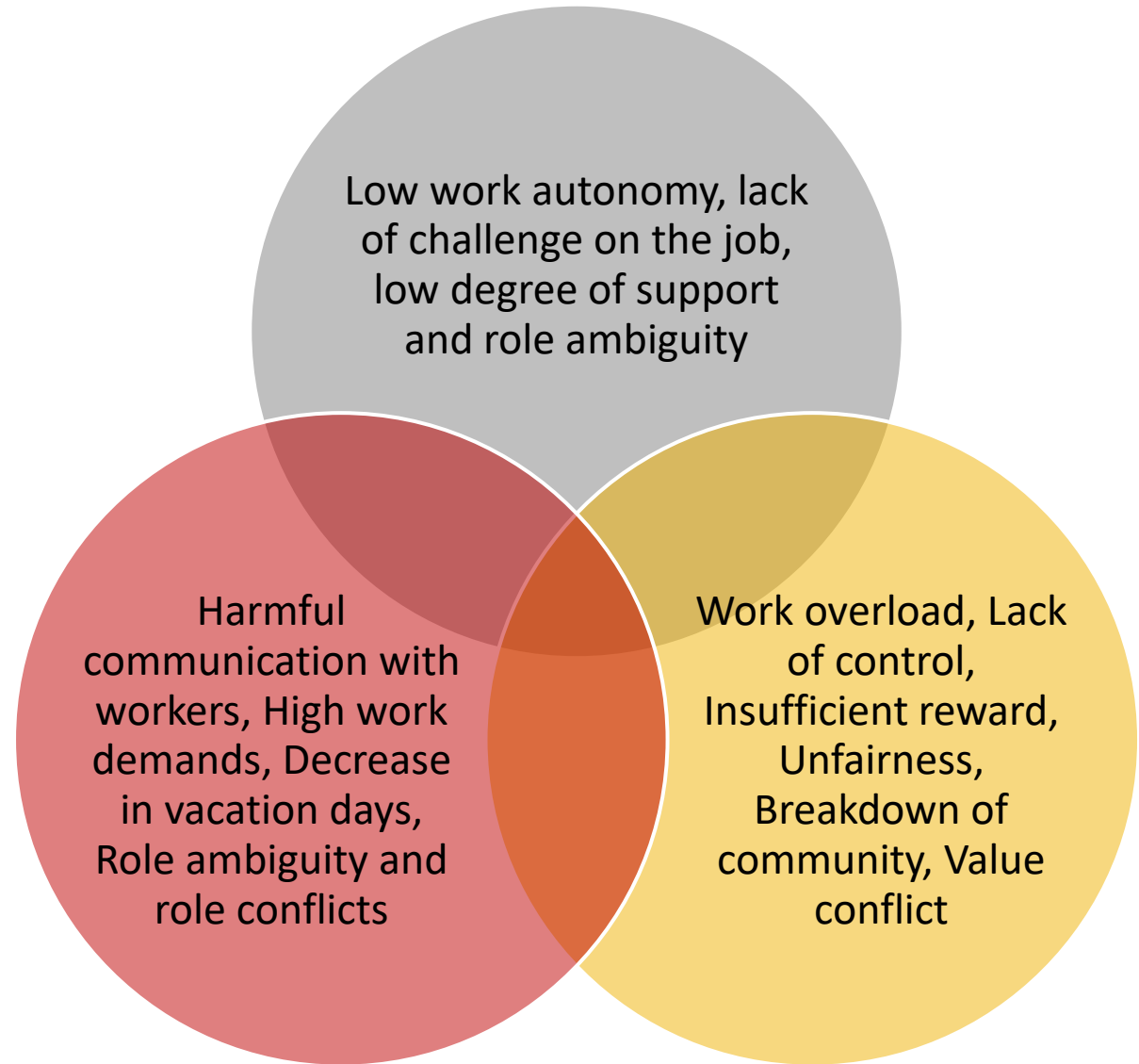
(Lee et al, 2020)

## Factors contributing to therapist burnout

- Harmful communication with workers
- High work demands
- Decrease in vacation days
- Role ambiguity and role conflicts



# Contributing environment factors





# The fix

Burnout Creation	Burnout Prevention
Work overload	Sustainable workload
Lack of control	Feelings of choice and control
Insufficient reward	Recognition and reward
Breakdown of community	A sense of community
Unfairness	Fairness, respect, and justice
Significant value conflicts	Meaningful, valued work
Lack of fit (incongruence) between person and job	High job-person fit



# **\*\*Caution\*\***



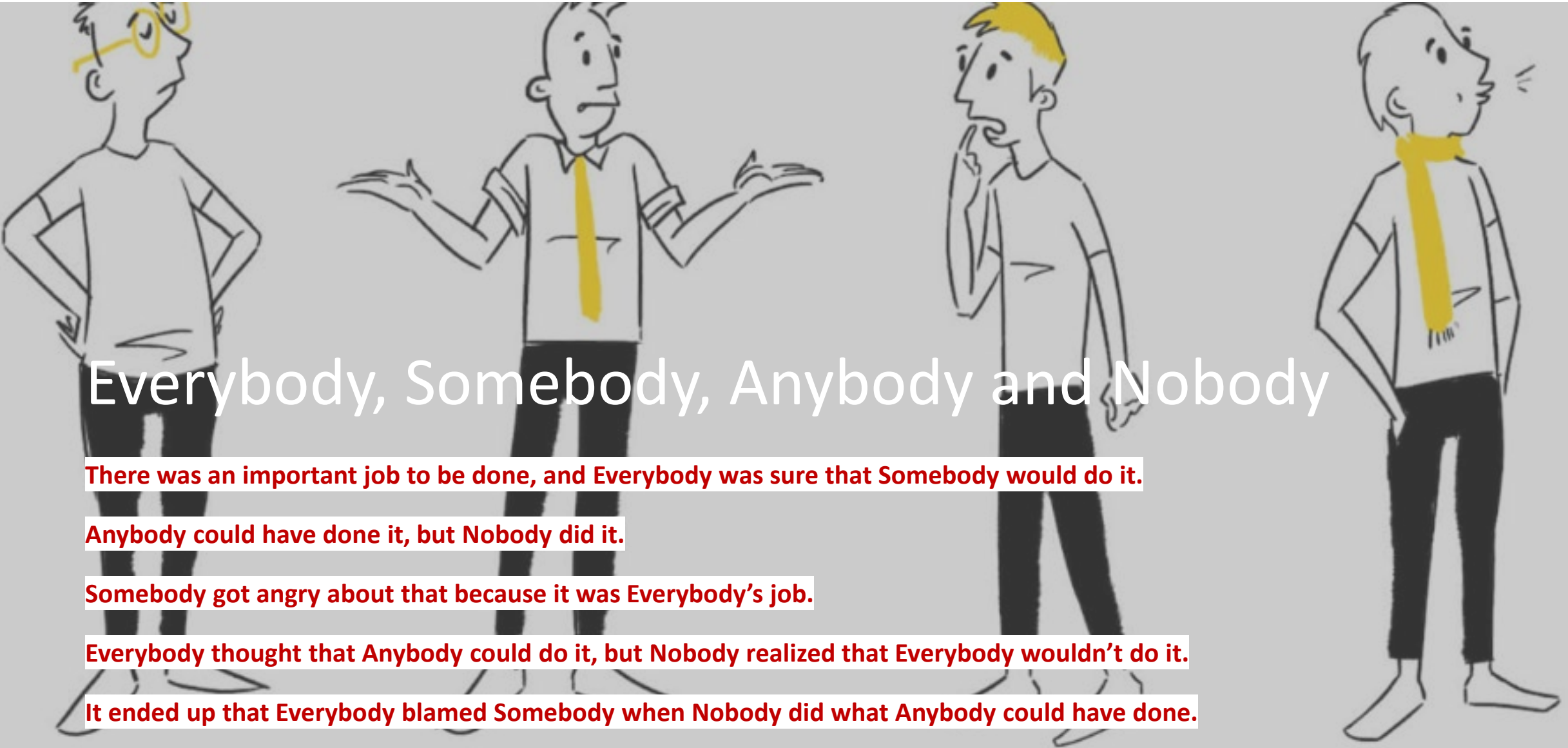
While research supports contributing factors to burnout are often found at the organizational level - where does organizational fix end and professional responsibility start?



What if the organization is not focused on addressing the psychosocial stress of staff?

We cannot wait for others to care for us.

Our codes of ethics mandate us to self monitor & respond; avoid harm & do good; honor our commitments to self, patients, profession



# Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody

There was an important job to be done, and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it.

Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it.

Somebody got angry about that because it was Everybody's job.

Everybody thought that Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it.

It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.

- Charles R. Swindoll

Everybody


Somebody

Anybody

Nobody







“A professional’s personal code of ethics evolves from an inner sense of right and wrong, a healthy set of personal and professional boundaries, an informed awareness of relevant published standards, years of experience, and ongoing consultation and lifelong continuing education.”

# Ethical Practice

The informed and responsible boundary decisions helpers make in everyday professional activities

What you do when nobody is watching

(Pope and Vasquez, 2011)





# ACA Principles of Ethical Behavior

## **Autonomy**

- Fostering the right to control the direction of one's life

## **Nonmaleficence**

- Avoiding actions that cause harm

## **Beneficence**

- Working for the good of the individual and society by promoting mental health and well-being

## **Justice**

- Treating individuals equitably and fostering fairness and equality

## **Fidelity**

- Honoring commitments and keeping promises, including fulfilling one's responsibilities of trust in professional relationships

## **Veracity**

- Dealing truthfully with individuals with whom counselors come into professional contact



# NASW Ethical Principles

## Social Justice

- Challenge social injustice

## Dignity and worth of the person

- Respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person

## Importance of human relationships

- Recognize central importance of human relationships

## Integrity

- Behave in a trustworthy manner

## Competence

- Practice within areas of competence and develop and enhance professional expertise



# Ethical Codes

## **ACA (2014) C.2.g Impairment**

- Counselors monitor themselves for signs of impairment from their own physical, mental, or emotional problems and refrain from offering or providing professional services when impaired. They seek assistance for problems that reach the level of professional impairment, and, if necessary, they limit, suspend, or terminate their professional responsibilities until it is determined that they may safely resume their work. Counselors assist colleagues or supervisors in recognizing their own professional impairment and provide consultation and assistance when warranted with colleagues or supervisors showing signs of impairment and intervene as appropriate to prevent imminent harm to clients.



# Ethical Codes

## **NASW (2020) 4.05 Impairment**

- (a) Social workers should not allow their own personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties to interfere with their professional judgment and performance or to jeopardize the best interests of people for whom they have a professional responsibility.
- (b) Social workers whose personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties interfere with their professional judgment and performance should immediately seek consultation and take appropriate remedial action by seeking professional help, making adjustments in workload, terminating practice, or taking any other steps necessary to protect clients and others.



# Where do boundaries come in?

Boundary is a limit – this is about understanding our limits and “what we are and what we have to (and can) do”.



Codes mandate us to self monitor & respond; avoid harm & do good; honor our commitments to ourselves, patients, professions & communities



We cannot wait for others to care for us.

- We can work with organizations to understand burnout and how to help solve for it
- We must be boundaried to and by ourselves to prevent distress, burnout, and impairment

# A note on self-care

“Self-care is not an indulgence. It is an essential component of prevention of distress, burnout, and impairment. It should not be considered something ‘extra’ or ‘nice to do if you have time’ but as an essential part of our professional identities.”

You can’t “self care” your way out of burnout.

The only way, is through it.

(Barnett, Johnston, and Hillard 2006)





# THIS IS THE WAY

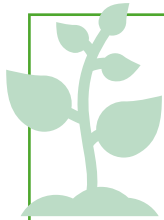
## Preventing Burnout

- If the solution isn't to throw your organization slide #13 or bubble baths, what is?
- I want to offer 2 possible suggestions:
  - Creating your own greenhouse to address work environment
  - Completing the stress response cycle





# Create Your Own Greenhouse

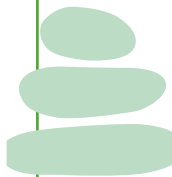


Create an environment where many factors – temperature, soil, and water – are ideal for growth



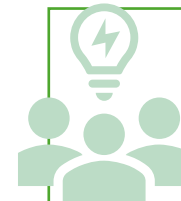
Learning environment where practitioner growth is encouraged

- Creates energy and vitality



Leadership that promotes a healthy other-care vs self-care balance

- “Here, we care for the clients, students, and patients and practitioners”.



Social support from peers

- Social support can be a stress reducer



Mentoring



Emotional environment of respect, playfulness, humor, and joy

Skovholt and Trotter-Mathison, 2016



# Completing the stress response cycle

1. *Stressors* are what activate the stress response in the body
  - Work stressors: “It’s the administration and the paperwork and all that crap”
    - And you can’t get rid of those kinds of stressors
2. *Stress* is the neurological and physiological shift that happens in your body when you encounter a threat (stressor)
3. **Burnout is a condition related to overwhelming stress**
4. Dealing with stress is a separate process from dealing with the things that cause your stress.
5. You can get rid of the stress itself when you know how to complete the *stress response cycle*

Nagoski & Nagoski (2020)



# WUT





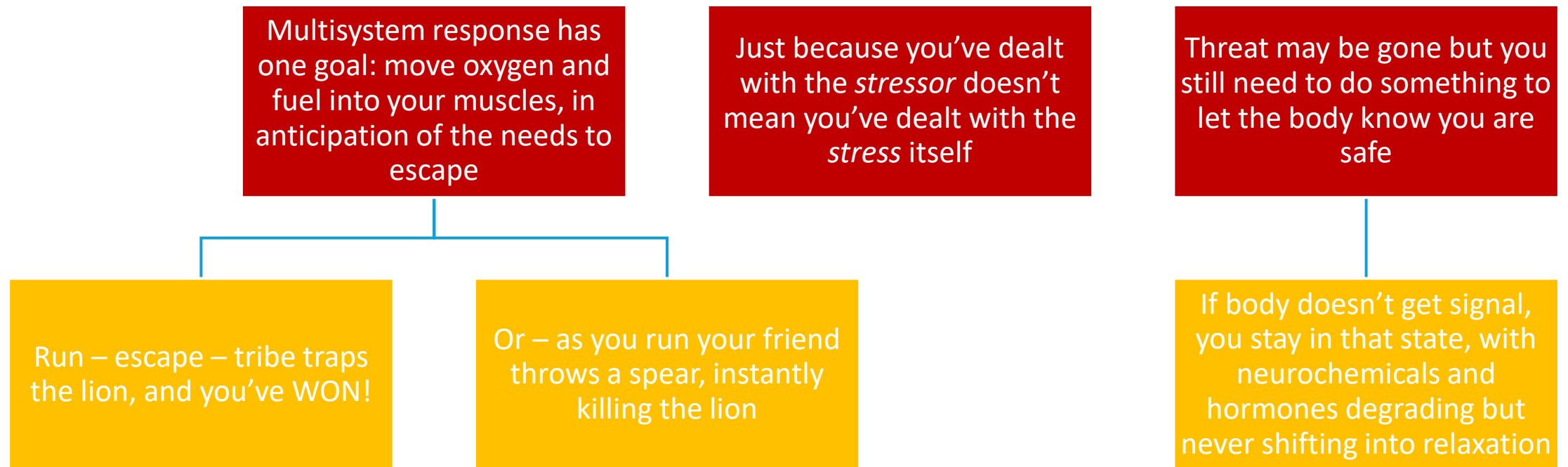
# A story of the stress response cycle



Nagoski & Nagoski (2020)



# Complete the stress cycle



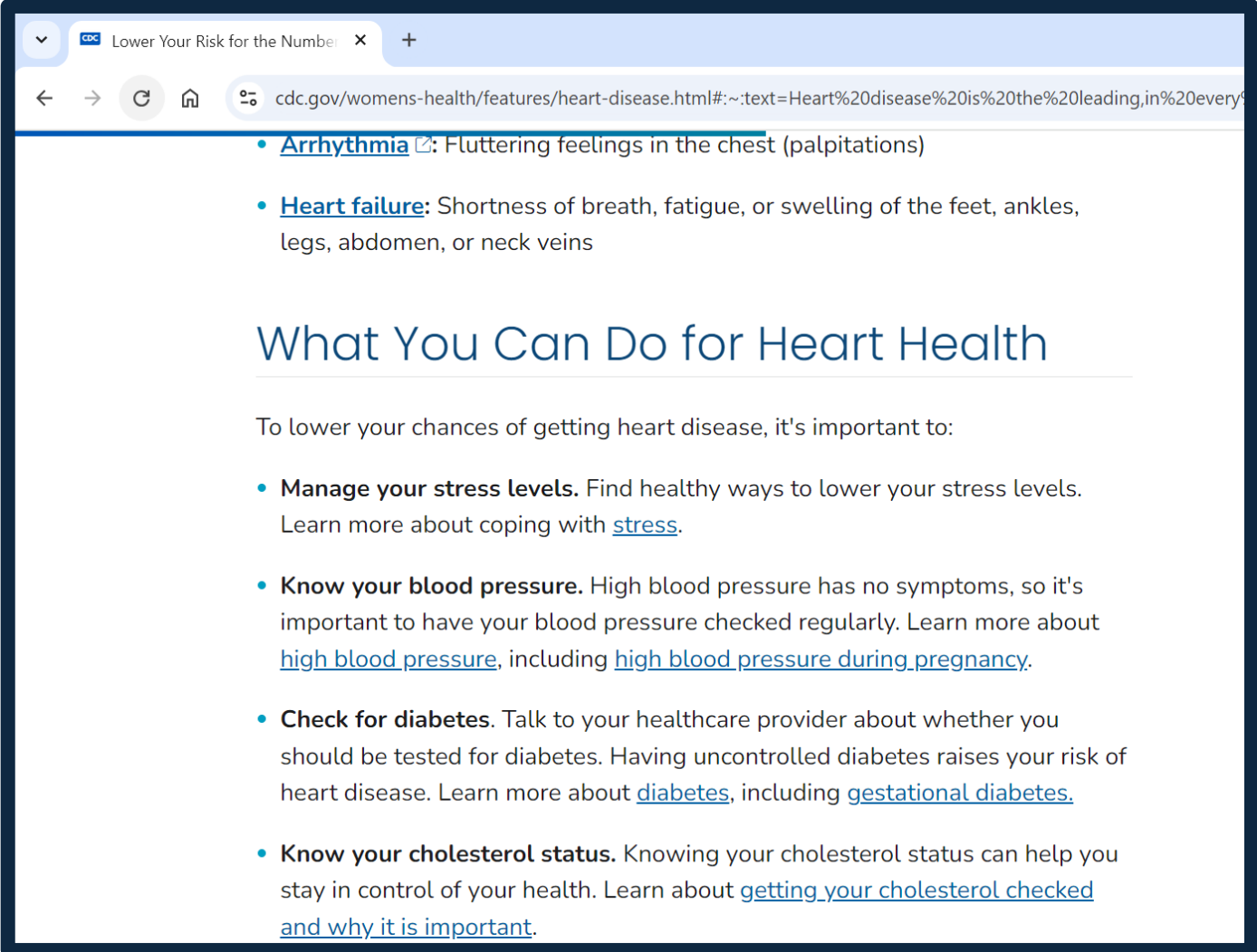
# Health risks

## What if you don't address the stress?

- Chronically activated stress response means chronically increased blood pressure – the increased wear on your blood vessels leads to increased risk for heart disease.
- That's how stress leads to life-threatening illness.

Leading cause of death for women?  
Heart disease.

2021 heart disease killed 1/5 women



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL [cdc.gov/womens-health/features/heart-disease.html#:~:text=Heart%20disease%20is%20the%20leading,in%20every](https://www.cdc.gov/womens-health/features/heart-disease.html#:~:text=Heart%20disease%20is%20the%20leading,in%20every). The page content includes a list of heart disease symptoms and a section titled 'What You Can Do for Heart Health'.


- **Arrhythmia**: Fluttering feelings in the chest (palpitations)
- **Heart failure**: Shortness of breath, fatigue, or swelling of the feet, ankles, legs, abdomen, or neck veins

### What You Can Do for Heart Health

To lower your chances of getting heart disease, it's important to:

- **Manage your stress levels.** Find healthy ways to lower your stress levels. Learn more about coping with [stress](#).
- **Know your blood pressure.** High blood pressure has no symptoms, so it's important to have your blood pressure checked regularly. Learn more about [high blood pressure](#), including [high blood pressure during pregnancy](#).
- **Check for diabetes.** Talk to your healthcare provider about whether you should be tested for diabetes. Having uncontrolled diabetes raises your risk of heart disease. Learn more about [diabetes](#), including [gestational diabetes](#).
- **Know your cholesterol status.** Knowing your cholesterol status can help you stay in control of your health. Learn about [getting your cholesterol checked and why it is important](#).





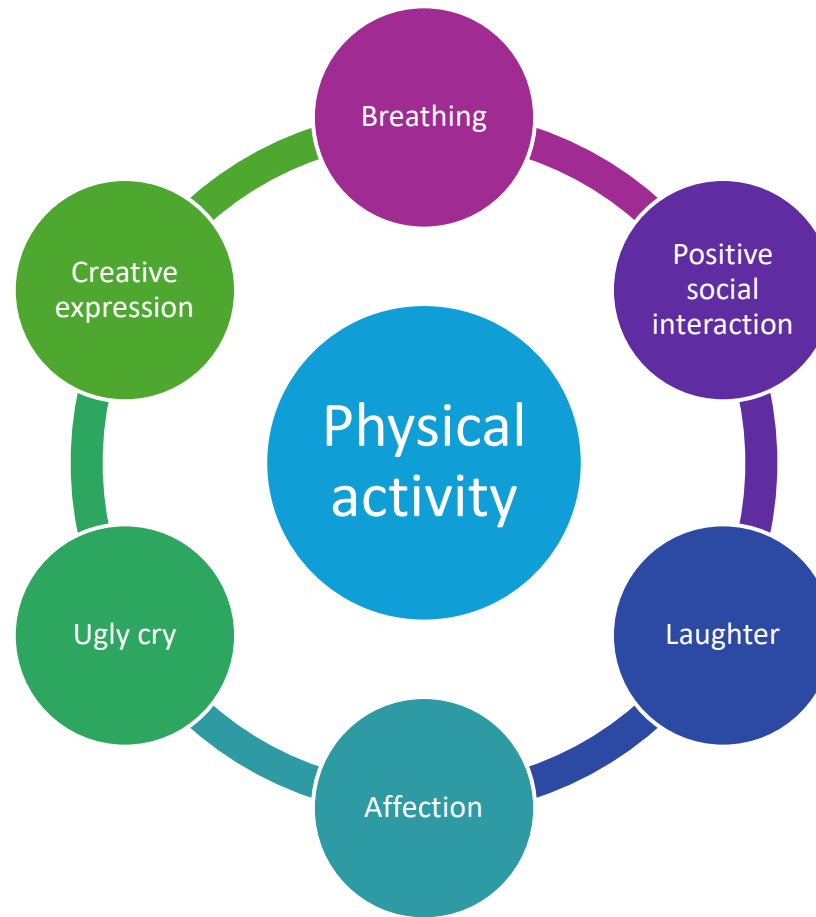
# Complete the stress response cycle

“Unless you do something to complete the stress cycle, in most situations in the modern, post-industrial West, the stress will kill you faster than the stressor”

The most efficient strategy for completing the stress response cycle?

Physical activity

# Complete the stress response cycle



Nagoski & Nagoski (2020)





# Complete the stress response cycle

Thirty minutes of anything that works for you

- You experience stress everyday, so must complete the cycle every day
- Make it a priority, like your life depends on it
  - Because it does

How do you know when it's complete?

- Your body tells you
- It's easier for some people to recognize more than others
- Sometimes it's easier to see in others

Nagoski & Nagoski (2020)

# Key Points

- Burnout is a **condition related to overwhelming stress**
- Research supports contributing factors to burnout are often found at the organizational level
- Our codes of ethics mandate us to self monitor & respond
- We can work with organizations to understand burnout and how to help solve for it
  - We cannot wait for “Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody” to do it for us
- We must be boundaried to and by ourselves to prevent distress, burnout, and impairment
- We cannot “self care” our way out of burnout
- Chronically activated stress leads to life-threatening illness
- The only way, is through it
- Create your own greenhouse to address work environment
- Complete the stress response cycle



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