



The National **Long-Term Care**  
**Ombudsman** Resource Center

## ***COVID-19 AND OMBUDSMAN PROGRAMS:***

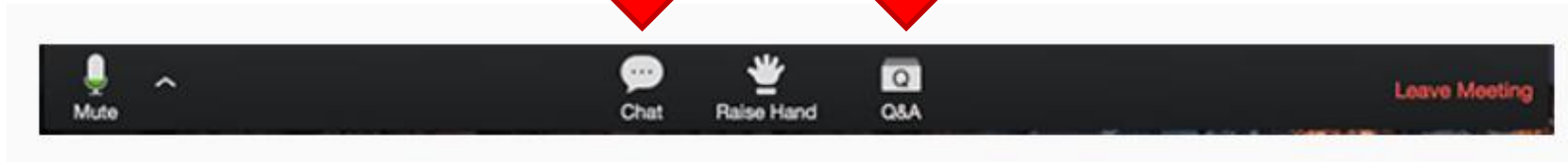
**UNDERSTANDING HOW TRAUMA IMPACTS YOU, RESIDENTS, AND  
YOUR ADVOCACY**

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*Compassion Fatigue in the time of COVID-19: Helping Ourselves to Help Others*

May 20, 2020

# Questions? Use the Q&A or Chat box.



## Question & Answer

The Q&A window allows you to ask questions to the host and panelists. They can either reply back to you via text in the Q&A window or answer your question live.

1. Click Q&A to open the Q&A window.
2. Type your question into the Q&A box. Click **Send**.

A screenshot of the Zoom Q&A window. The title bar says 'Q&A'. The main area contains the text 'You have no question.' Below this is a text input field with the placeholder text 'What happens when I raise my hand?'. At the bottom left, there is a checkbox labeled 'Send Anonymously'. At the bottom right, there is a blue 'Send' button.

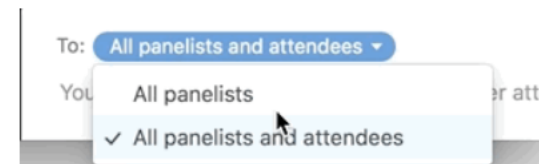
## Chat

The in-meeting chat allows you to send chat messages to and send a message to the host, panelists, and attendees (if permitted).

1. Click **Chat** to open the in-meeting chat.



2. The chat will appear on the right side of your Zoom window if you are not in full screen. If you are in full screen, it will appear in a window that you can move around your screen as needed.
3. To change who you are chatting with, click the drop down beside **To:**.





4. Type your message and press **Enter**.

# Learning Objectives

- Understand the differences between sympathy, empathy, and compassion.
- Understand the unique symptoms associated with and contributing factors leading to burnout, compassion fatigue, and vicarious trauma.
- Recognize symptoms of compassion fatigue at the individual and organizational level and be able to identify negative outcomes if left untreated.
- Increase competency in implementing resilience strategies – at the individual level as well as the organizational level – to enhance self-awareness and prevent onset or worsening of symptoms.

# Taking Care of You

- Compassion fatigue, burnout, individual trauma, and trauma-informed care
- Typical reactions to stress
- Self-care tips
- Program Management Considerations (supporting staff and volunteers)



## Taking Care of You

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) is an unprecedented pandemic. In our lifetime, we have never been in the situation of dealing with so many variables impacting us, our families, employers, family caregivers, and residents of long-term care facilities. In addition to the general stress of this pandemic, the way Ombudsman programs operate has been significantly impacted due to the temporary in-person visitation restrictions. In-person visits with residents are a core part of Ombudsman program outreach and advocacy, so the restrictions may increase your feelings of stress and helplessness since you cannot interact with residents in-person and observe their environment. Although it may not feel like it now, our current situation is temporary, and we will return to our regular routines eventually. However, during this difficult time, it is critical that you take care of yourself so you can be your best for others in both your work and personal life.

By the very nature of Ombudsman program work, you may be subjected to compassion fatigue, burnout, or individual trauma. We have provided brief information about these and encourage you to use [screening tools](#) provided by Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration ([SAMHSA](#)) or other reputable health organizations. Please do not hesitate to seek assistance from family, friends, faith communities, co-workers, employers, and mental health providers if you are struggling.

**Compassion Fatigue** is emotional residue or strain of exposure to working with those suffering from the consequences of traumatic events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Compassion Fatigue can occur due to one stressful experience or can be due to a “cumulative” level of trauma.

**Burnout** is a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion that occurs when we feel overwhelmed by too many demands, too few resources, and too little recovery time. Burnout occurs over time, rather than in response to one event. Signs of burnout may be physical or emotional exhaustion, fatigue, insomnia, forgetfulness, impaired concentration, increased illness, loss of appetite, anxiety, depression, or anger.

**“Individual trauma** results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening with lasting adverse effects on the individual’s function and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.” [SAMHSA](#) HRSA Center for Integrated Health Services.

**Trauma-informed care** is an organizational structure and treatment framework that involves understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma (review this [fact sheet](#) for additional information). Recognition of the role of trauma in our lives is very important. **If you are experiencing trauma due to the COVID-19 pandemic, talk to your supervisor and seek support.**

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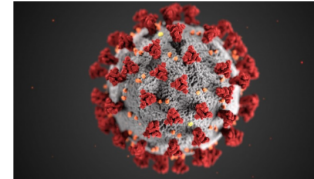
# COVID-19

- Updates and Information
  - CMS
  - ACL
  - NORC
  - Consumer Voice
  - Ombudsman programs

- [https://ltcombudsman.org/omb\\_support/COVID-19](https://ltcombudsman.org/omb_support/COVID-19)

## Coronavirus Prevention in LTC Facilities: Information for Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs

Updated May 18, 2020



As the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak continues to evolve, it is important for Ombudsman programs and other advocates to be informed and take precautions in order to prevent the spread.

For more information, visit:

[ACL COVID-19 page](#)

[CMS COVID-19 page](#)

[Consumer Voice COVID-19 page](#)

[CDC COVID-19 page](#)

The information on this page includes tips for preventing the spread of COVID-19, alternative ways to stay in touch with residents, and links to additional information. **Jump to:**

### Examples of Resident Support and Communication

- Texas Ombudsman program representatives, Vanessa Conway and Kim Palmore, visited a nursing facility and gave window hugs to residents. They wanted the residents to know that their Ombudsmen are still here and thinking of them. They made signs with positive messages and went to each window that was open. The residents waved, blew kisses, and gave air hugs. View [Picture 1](#), [Picture 2](#), and [Picture 3](#).
- The Pennsylvania Ombudsman program representatives started a new [Facebook page](#) titled *Virtual Visits of Cheer and Support*. On the page people are creating and posting videos to say hi and support nursing home and personal care home residents.
- Children can participate in the [Maine Notes for Seniors](#) initiative by writing notes, uploading a drawing, or sending a short video to residents in nursing homes and assisted living facilities.
- Michigan Attorney General, Dana Nessel, made a [video](#) on visiting at the window of a nursing home.
- The Pennsylvania Ombudsman program launched a statewide Virtual Family Council based on Zoom that will meet twice monthly for as long as they need to. Program representatives will facilitate the meeting and 10 representatives are contributing to the structure, content, and outreach. The meetings will educate, support, and gather information from the families. The program has created materials and a corresponding [Facebook page](#) that includes a button to allow for families to request the link for the call. This information was also sent to local legislators for their offices, the Department of Health, and the Department of Human Services.
- AARP Texas hosted Texas State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, Patty Ducayet, on [Facebook Live](#) for a conversation about nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and care for loved ones during the pandemic.

Find additional examples and ideas for staying connected with residents living in long-term care facilities on the [Consumer Voice website](#).

# Compassion Fatigue in the Time of COVID-19: Helping Ourselves to Help Others

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# Introduction

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- Our work is technically demanding
- Our work also places demands on our humanity
- Isolation, death, anxiety, grief = the perfect recipe for fatigue and burnout
- We must attend to ourselves in order to attend to our clients

# Participant Poll

- Have you received prior formal training on Compassion Fatigue?
  1. Yes
  2. No
  3. I don't remember last week, so your guess is as good as mine.



# Concerns heard by YOU

- Uncertainty
  - “I do this work because I want to be with people, now the future is uncertain.”
- Inadequacy
  - “I can’t do the typical follow-up as I once did.”
  - “I don’t know what’s happening inside the building.”
  - “If I’m not providing oversight, *who is?*”
- High Demands
  - Influx of calls from families, residents, AND staff

Is there light at the end  
of the tunnel?



# Caring for Others: Why do we do it?

- Brené Brown video: Empathy vs. Sympathy



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw>

# How do we help others with uncertainty?

- Normalize anxiety
  - “It very appropriate to feel anxious right now.”
- Focus on coping
  - “What would be most helpful to you right now?”
  - “What things are in your control right now?”
- Focus on areas of certainty and gratitude
  - “What are you most certain of?”
  - “What are the areas of your life around which you have gratitude?”

# Compassion

- What is compassion?
- How is compassion different from sympathy and empathy?





# Compassion

- An emotional response when perceiving suffering that involves an authentic desire to help.
- Derived from Latin and Greek roots “pati” and “pathein” meaning “to suffer” and the Latin root “com” meaning “with.”



# Compassion as documented in human history

- **Christianity:** The Good Samaritan
- **Confucius:** Major teacher of the Golden Rule
- **Judaism:** “The 13 Attributes of Compassion”
- **Buddha:** “Loving kindness and compassion is all our practice.”
- **Dalai Lama:** Believed the individual experience of compassion radiates outward and increases harmony for all: “*Compassion is a necessity, not a luxury...without it, humanity cannot survive.*”
- **Charles Darwin:** Not survival of the fittest, but survival of the kindest. “Communities, which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members would flourish best, and rear the greatest number of offspring.” (*Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 1898)

# Simply put, Compassion is:

- The feeling of sorrow or concern for another coupled by the desire to alleviate the suffering:
- “I feel for you” + “I understand you” + “I want to help”





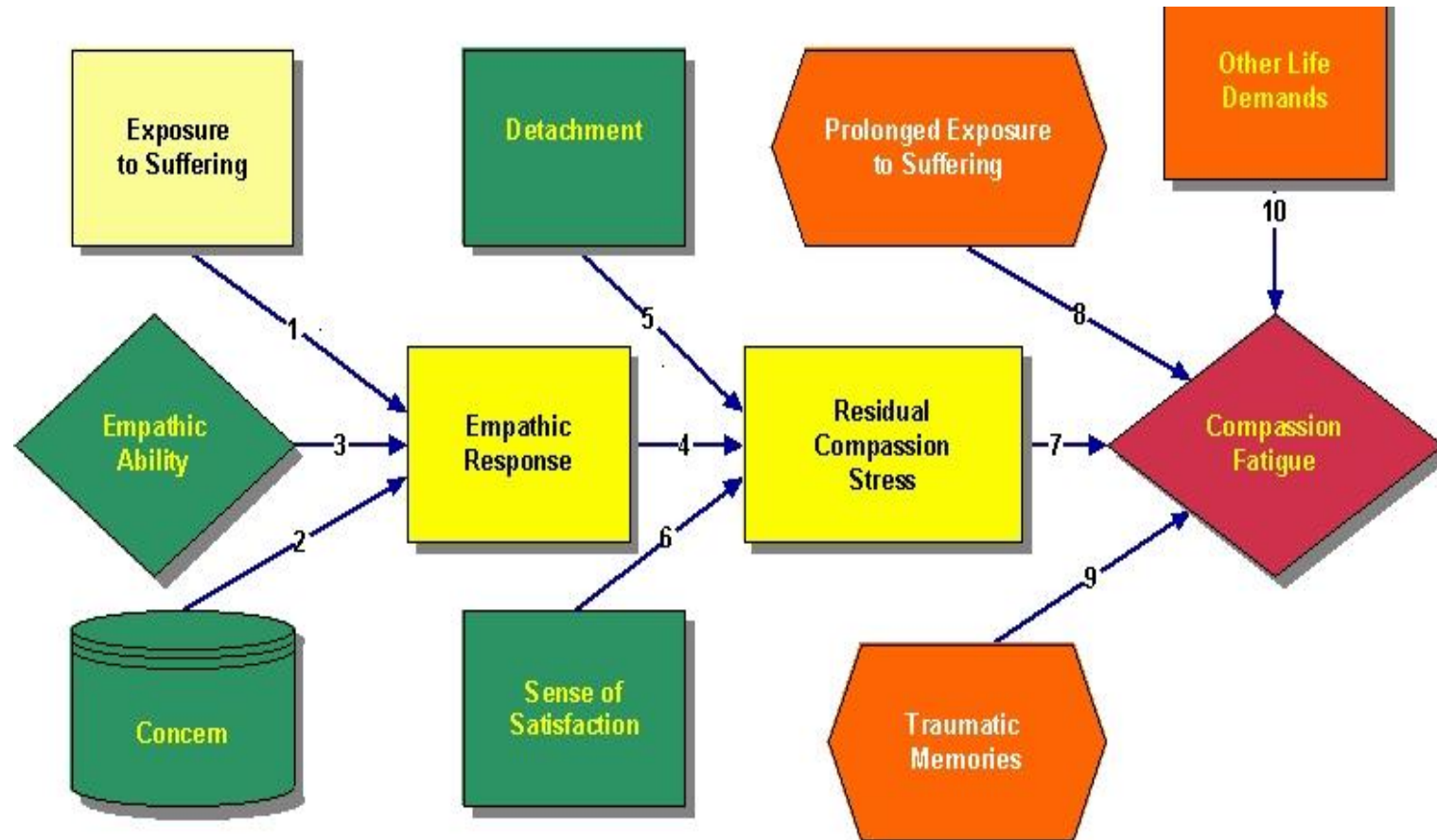
# The “Cost of Caring”

- Work centered on the relief of suffering involves absorbing information about suffering, thus absorbing that suffering itself:
  - “secondary victimization”
  - “vicarious trauma” or “trauma by concern”
  - “Chiasmal trauma”: an entire system is affected by trauma to even one member

# The Study of Compassion Fatigue

- Term was introduced by Joinson in 1992 and developed by Figley in 1995.
- Figley developed a model for the process by which compassion fatigue develops.
- Model has been used to describe development of symptoms across multiple care settings and among persons in different care roles.

# Figley's model of Compassion Fatigue



The Compassion Fatigue Process (Figley, 2001)

# External Factors

- The Work Environment
  - Societal support
    - Public policy, regulations
    - Social acceptance, activism
  - Work Setting
    - Physical environment
    - Employer values, culture
    - Job tasks, personnel guideline
    - Management, colleagues

# The Effects of External Factors

- The “Six Futilities”
  - Perception of the Suffering
  - Patient demands
  - Institutional Demands
  - Communication, treatment errors
  - Feelings of inadequacy
  - Sense that the care is not benefitting the client

# Also, Internal Factors have an impact

- The personal gift and curse of empathy
  - High empathy helps us understand *and* can challenge our equanimity
  - Personal History/Personality
    - Our temperament
    - Family/social history
    - Personal boundaries
    - Unresolved personal trauma
    - Over-generalization: thinking others' experiences are similar to ours

# Internal Factors, cont.

- “Pathological Altruism”
  - A combination of:
    - An excess of empathy
    - An inability to self-regulate
    - Being more focused on relieving one’s own discomfort than another’s

# What Happens to Us?

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“BURNOUT”

VS.

“COMPASSION FATIGUE”



# “Burnout”

- Gradual physical, mental, emotional erosion due to long-term involvement in emotionally demanding or unfulfilling situations:
  - Exhaustion: physically, mentally drained
  - Depersonalization: feeling hardened or numb
  - Achievement Void: reduced accomplishment, satisfaction.



# “Compassion Fatigue”

- Feels similarly to “burnout” but:
  - Can emerge suddenly
  - Existential/spiritual effects: overarching meaninglessness, worthlessness, hopelessness
  - A sense of isolation from supporters, hyper-vigilance or fear
  - Symptoms often disconnected from real cause

# Signs and Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

- For the Individual:
  - Difficulty concentrating, pre-occupation, exhaustion
  - Nightmares/flashbacks
  - Over-reactions or avoidance of sensory/emotional stimuli
  - Chronic physical ailments: colds, stomach problems
  - Apathy, anhedonia
  - Excessive negativity: blaming others, complaining
  - Compulsive/avoidant behaviors: substance abuse, over-spending, over-eating, gambling
  - Problems in personal relationships, intimacy
  - Denial of difficulties or problems

# Signs and Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

- For the Institution:
  - High absenteeism and/or staff turnover
  - Increasing difficulty completing routine tasks, assignments
  - Inability of staff to respect and meet deadlines
  - Unprofessional outbursts of anger, aggression
  - Instability, conflict in staff/team relationships
  - Desire among staff member to break the company rules
  - Staff inflexibility, increased rigidity, resistance to change
  - Excessive complaining, negativity towards management
  - Skepticism or apathy about organizational vision, future
  - Inability of staff to believe improvement is possible

# WHY are we susceptible to Compassion Fatigue?

- Sympathetic Nervous System:
  - Fight, flight, or freeze
  - Is an adaptive response in *real* crises, but wilts us day in and day out
- Parasympathetic Nervous System:
  - Restores physiological equanimity
  - Keeps you rooted, helps you tend and thrive

# Critical in a Time of COVID-19

- Heightened states of:
  - Anxiety
  - Uncertainty
  - Unknown of the future
  - Decision-making / Risk assessment
- And
  - Chronicity of the above states
  - Perception of “no end in sight”

# How do we protect ourselves?

- The antidote to vicarious trauma, burnout, and compassion fatigue is:



RESILIENCE

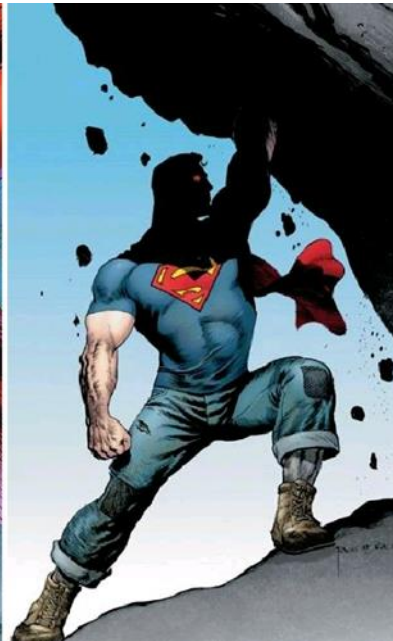
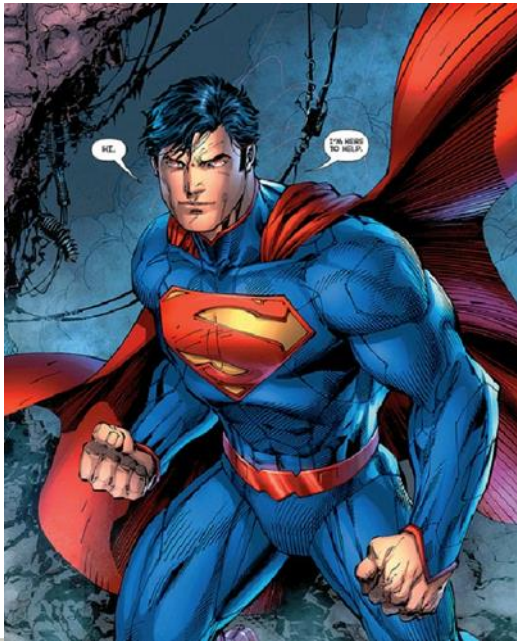
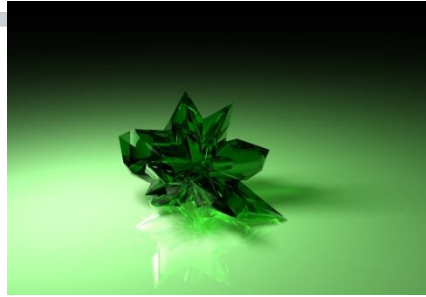


# Resilience

- Defined as:
  - The ability of something to return to original shape after it has been pulled, stretched, pressed, bent, etc.
  - The ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change.
- We need to develop skills to stay well for better performance and well-being in high-compassion stress work!



# No Pressure.



# Resiliency Skills

## #1: Self-Awareness

- Self-Awareness
  - **Physical, emotional**
  - Technical
  - Existential
- Self-Awareness Tip: What's going on in your body, mind, and spirit when you are working is often a clue/barometer of what's going *on in your clients and others*.

# Awareness:

## Issues and Contributing factors

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- What type of cases contribute to your stress level, increasing your vulnerability to compassion fatigue?
- What are the potential costs or consequences for undiagnosed and untreated compassion fatigue?

# Resilience Skills:

## Self-Awareness, cont.

- Self-Awareness
  - Physical, emotional
  - **Technical**
  - Existential



- Questions to ask yourself:
  - What skills and knowledge bases are natural talents for you, and where might you put some effort into developing more?
  - What are your strengths, growing edges, and blind spots?

# Resilience Skills

## Self-Awareness, cont.

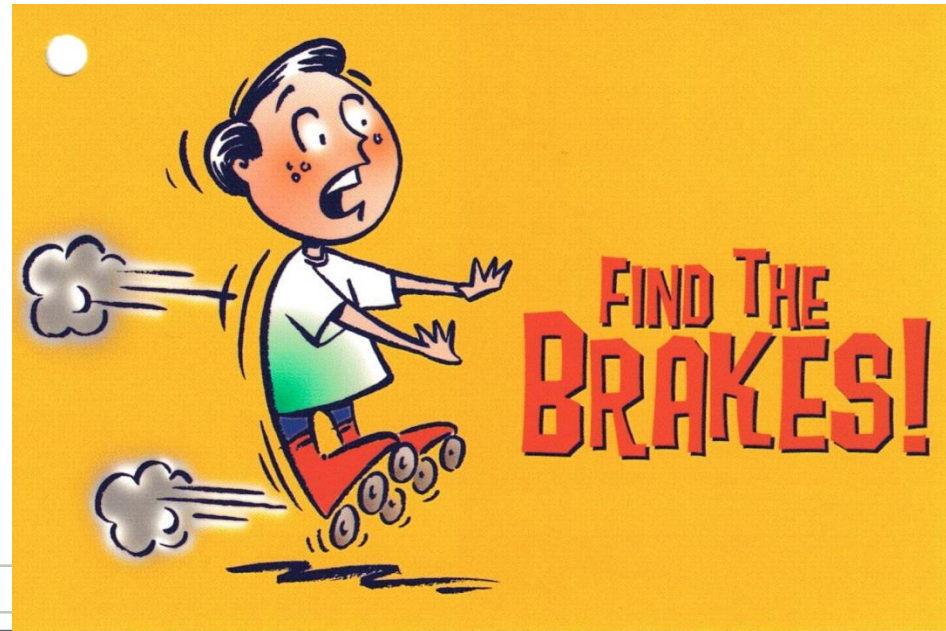
- Self-Awareness
  - Physical, emotional
  - Technical
  - **Existential**
- The nature of our work begs all the “big questions”
- Spend time consciously exploring your questions about life and death, truth and justice, good, evil
- Develop a language and a coping strategy to manage suffering, horror, tragedy, and to help find meaning



# Resilience Skills

## #2: Self-Regulation

- Self-Regulation
  - Boundaries
  - Values Clarification
  - Arousal Management



# Resilience Skills

## #3: Self-Care

- Self-Care
  - Eat well, exercise, and sleep
    - *Right for you!*
  - Have fun like your life depends on it
    - *It does!*
    - *Get “shallow, simple, and silly” for your health!*
  - Talking really does help
    - *With the right person!*

# Take a moment:

- List one mini-escape or diversion that worked well to restore and renew you.
- List one thing that brings you joy.
- When was the last time you did it?
- What gets in the way of doing it more often?
- What are your personal triggers indicating it's time to “recharge your battery?”



# Resilience Skills

## Self-Care, cont.

- TALK IT OUT.
  - Talking is one of the most effective ways of preventing and healing from compassion fatigue
  - Who you talk to is important
    - The person you choose should be someone who:
      - Can really relate
      - Can be present without interfering with your process
      - Doesn't "one-up" you or switch to their story
      - Needs to understand and honor confidentiality!
    - Utilizing your EAP benefits

# Video

- “It’s Not About the Nail” (YouTube video)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4EDhdAHrOg>

# Resilience Skills

## What about those External Factors?

- Ask yourself:
  - Am I (still) committed to:
    - The agency's mission, values, culture
    - The physical environment/resources
    - The organizational structure
      - Lines of authority
      - Style of communication
    - My colleagues/managers/supervisors

# Final Tips on Preventing Compassion Fatigue

- “Dig where the ground is soft” – Chinese proverb
  - Avoid your trickiest area to fix and pick the issue you can most easily visualize changing/improving.
  - Example: Making a commitment to go for a walk during your lunch hour vs. getting rid of a difficult supervisor.



# Prevention tips, cont.

- Take stock of what's on your plate
  - Make a list of all the demands on your time and energy
  - Look at your list carefully; what stands out? What factors contribute to overflowing your plate? Brainstorm with a friend.
- Start a Self-Care collection
  - Ask friends what they do for self-care; start making your list – you may learn new things and new ideas!

# Prevention tips, cont.

- Start a self-care practice with your team:
  - Start a contest for best self-care idea of the week.
  - Create a self-care board where people post their favorite ideas.
  - Initiate “5 minutes of self-care” at each staff meeting, where someone is in charge of bringing new ideas to the group.
  - Find time for yourself everyday – Rebalance your workload.
  - Delegate work – at the office AND at home
  - Create a transition from “work” to “home” (which is one in the same)
    - Do you walk? Change clothes? Listen to fun music on the commute? Find a way to transition.

# Final thoughts

- Poem:
  - “Kindness” by Naomi Shihab Nye





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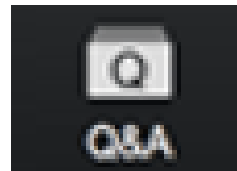
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# QUESTIONS

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**Please type your questions into the Question and Answer box by clicking on the Q&A icon at the bottom of your screen.**



# RESOURCES

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# Resources

- **Administration for Community Living (ACL)**
  - Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): <https://acl.gov/COVID-19>
- **NORC Resources**
  - Coronavirus Prevention in Long-Term Care Facilities: Information for Long-Term Care Ombudsman  
Programs: [https://ltcombudsman.org/omb\\_support/COVID-19](https://ltcombudsman.org/omb_support/COVID-19)
  - Trauma-Informed Issue page: <https://ltcombudsman.org/issues/trauma-informed-care>
- **National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (Consumer Voice)**
  - Supporting Coronavirus Prevention in Long-Term Care Facilities:  
<https://theconsumervoice.org/issues/other-issues-and-resources/covid-19>

# Additional Questions? Comments?



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