Building Resilience for Child Welfare Professionals

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Learn more about tools and resources available to help yourself and your clients respond with resilience in the face of challenges.

Engage in practical approaches for coping with personal and workplace stress.

Collaborate with colleagues to discuss tactics to normalize struggle and build connections.
What is stressful in your life?

Share in the chat.
COVID-19 and Mental Health: Normalizing Struggle

The research on mental health is showing:

- Nearly half (45%) of adults in the United States reported that their mental health has been negatively impacted due to worry and stress over the virus.

- More than one third of Americans reported that coronavirus has had a serious impact on their mental wellbeing and close to 60% feel that the virus has affected their daily lives.

You are not alone.
What are some work-related stressors that feel like they are depleting your energy?

Share in the chat!
COVID-19 and Mental Health

During the pandemic, child welfare workers...

**Experienced High Levels of Burnout**
Caused by consistent work expectations and a large decrease of workers

**Felt Ignored and Unrecognized as Frontline Workers**
Caused by workers being expected to complete their duties but risking their health due to delay/lack of PPE for workers.

**Were Overwhelmed and Stretched Beyond Their Capacities**
Caused by workers being expected to complete their normal job duties and autoadapt to the new normal

**Were Worried/Fearful**
Caused by worries of possibly contracting the virus and spreading to clients and their personal families

(Renov et al., 2022)
Workplace Stressors

- Large, demanding caseloads
- Unpredictable schedules
- Time-consuming paperwork
- Lack of time
- Negative workplace morale
- Lack of basic safety
- Adapting to new technology
- Ethical dilemmas
- Staff turnover
- Damaging effects of child maltreatment
Your feelings are valid
Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being (2014a, p. 7).
Trauma is Nearly Universal
Types of Trauma Across the Life Span

- Loss of loved one
- Experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect
- Witnessing violence in the home or community
- Divorce or separation
- Incarceration
- Natural disasters (fire, hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes)
- Loved one experiences mental illness or substance use disorder
Introduction to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
Strength, Trauma, and Resilience Studies
"The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet."

- Dr. Rachel N. Remen, Kitchen Table Wisdom
What is Vicarious Trauma?

- The emotional residue that can result from hearing about or witnessing another person's traumatic experience.
- Vicarious trauma can further activate previously experienced trauma.
Vicarious Trauma Responses

- Change in worldview
- Anxiety & hyperarousal
- Avoidance
- Difficulty making decisions
- Decreased empathy
- Anger & irritability
- Intrusive thoughts
- Difficulty separating work life from personal life
- Hopelessness & feelings of inefficacy
- Hyper-vigilance
- Exhaustion
- Vicarious Trauma Responses
How to Combat Trauma and Vicarious Trauma?

Building Your Resilience!
Resilience is a dynamic process of positive adaptation in the face of significant adversity or change. It is accessible to anyone, regardless of personal histories. It is not an immutable trait, nor can it be used up. In fact, it can be increased daily!

There are ways to build new skills and develop the components of resilience.
Being self-competent

Components of Resilience

Coping

Sense of Control

Ability for self-control (delayed gratification)

Hope: Believing good things are in the future

Possessing stress management skills

Having a role model

Practicing relaxation techniques

Having social support

Having choices

Being emotionally intelligent

Fostering healthy relationships

Having a set of beliefs and values

Finding meaning or purpose in life

Being self-competent

Ability to trust

Feeling safe & loved

Feeling connected to other people

Being empowered; Taking action

Working through problems; Believing that things get better

Understanding life isn't perfect

Sense of Belonging

Connection

Character

Flexibility

(Iacoviello & Charney, 2014)
What is in your resilience toolbox?

Share in the chat!
The Characteristics of A Resilient Person

**Cognitive Flexibility**
- Being aware of negative thoughts
- Avoiding perfectionism

**Active Coping Skills**
- Seeking out resources
- Engaging in healthy responses to stress

**Emotional Self-regulation**
- Having the ability to focus
- Planning ahead

**Optimism**
- Being hopeful for the future
- Having a sense of humor

**Physical Well-being**
- Getting good sleep
- Having healthy eating and exercise habits

**Supportive Social Network**
- Building prosocial skills that foster supportive relationships
- Engaging in positive communities

**Mindfulness/Spirituality**
- Having positive core values/beliefs
- Finding meaning and purpose in life
YOUR BRAIN'S HAPPY CHEMICALS TO FIGHT STRESS

THE REWARD CHEMICAL (DOPAMINE)
- Completing a task
- Engaging in self-care
- Celebrating little wins

THE LOVE HORMONE (OXYTOCIN)
- Hugging a loved one
- Giving a compliment
- Playing with a baby or a pet

THE MOOD STABILIZER (SEROTONIN)
- Enjoying the outdoors
- Meditating
- Eating dark chocolate

THE PAIN KILLER (ENDORPHINS)
- Exercising
- Laughing
- Helping others

(Breuning, 2016)
Focus on Strengths

Why should we do this?

- Focusing on individual strengths helps a person feel more confident, capable, and prepared to engage in difficult or challenging concepts.

How does this apply to me?

If you want to be open to change and learn new skills, it is important to look at strengths first.

If we are open to change, we are more likely to develop resilience.

Everybody has strengths!
Identifying Your Strengths

Everyone has them, but you may need a reminder!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I inspire others.</th>
<th>I am a good team member.</th>
<th>I learn from my mistakes.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am an effective leader.</td>
<td>I am always learning how to be better worker.</td>
<td>I help move projects forward.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I help make a difference in children's lives.</td>
<td>I am skilled at public speaking.</td>
<td>I follow through on my commitments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I create a safe and inclusive space.</td>
<td>I am empathetic towards others.</td>
<td>I am a source of good energy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am dependable.</td>
<td>I am self-aware.</td>
<td>I have overcome hardship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I advocate for others.</td>
<td>I take care of my health.</td>
<td>I help other people when I can.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to provide for myself and my family.</td>
<td>I keep going, at least most of the time!</td>
<td>I am easily able to adapt to change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am creative.</td>
<td>I believe in a higher power.</td>
<td>I have hobbies.</td>
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</table>
This place is a dump.

What are you talking about? This place is beautiful! Look around.
**Affirmations**

- I've got this.
- I am healthy and worthy.
- Good things are on the way.
- I have what it takes to succeed.
- I am strong.
- My hard work is going to pay off.
- I am blessed.
- I am surrounded by people who love me.
- Goodness flows through me.
- I will keep going.
- I am part of a divine world.
- My life is just beginning.
- I am brave.
- I am filled with potential.
- Obstacles are moving away from me.
For many people, meditation is a beneficial practice that allows them to become more appreciative of everyday things and feel more connected to themselves and others.

For those who are religious, praying can serve as a way to cultivate gratitude and become more aware of all good things in one's life.

Journaling is proven to be extremely beneficial to mental health and self-esteem.

In multiple studies where the participants reflected on things they were grateful for, they were "more optimistic and felt better about their lives." (Emmons & McCullough, 2013)

You can improve your relationship with another person by letting them know you appreciate all they can do. Expressing this joy for one's impact on your life can also make you happier with yourself.

Although it is easier to focus on negative things, routinely taking a moment to identify a few things you are thankful for is a great way to brighten your mood.
Stress Management

- Walk
- Yoga
- Talking to a close friend
- Breathing techniques
- Reading
- Identify your emotions
- Practice mindfulness
- Exercise
- Journaling
- Any positive activity or skill that helps you cope!
What do you do for self-care?

Self-care is anything you do to take care of yourself so you can stay physically, mentally, and emotionally well.
How to know when you are Engaging in Self-Care

Your physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being is being prioritized.

Time alone and social support is what you need and want.

Self-care helps you feel better and recharged, and it suits your lifestyle.

Self-care allows your brain to rest and regain focus.
How to know when you are engaging in self-care:

- You can regulate your emotions in a safe space and be present in the current moment.
- You know that once a self-care practice produces reluctance, it is no longer a form of self-care for you.
- You have clear boundaries consistent with those of the profession.
- You feel more alert and attentive.
- You recognize a positive and strengthened relationship with your feelings.
- You can recognize that you don’t need fancy or expensive self-care routines and engage in intentional self-care activities for your own benefit.
- You can reflect on your emotional experiences instead of avoiding them.
- You acknowledge that self-care is not selfish but rather an act of improving your ability to care.
- You recognize an increase in your productivity and a boost in creativity.
Breakout Session: Reflection
8 Steps to Take Today to Normalize Struggle and Cultivate Resilience

- Acknowledge your own stress to normalize it.
- Mention the universal nature of stress; show compassion.
- Identify what you've already overcome.
- Encourage positive affirmations.
- Talk about how coping and resilience can be grown every day.
- Recognize your specific strengths and take opportunities to discover additional strengths.
- Participate in selfcare.
- Take advantage of local mental health resources/EAP programs.
STARS: Strength, Trauma, and Resilience Studies Certification

STARS is a university-led, evidence-based, trauma-informed, engaging workforce resilience training that will motivate, educate, and improve the skills of the child welfare workforce to improve child safety.

https://ficw.fsu.edu/grow-center/align/stars-AdCert

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Thank you!

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References


