

Sustaining Ourselves for the Long Run

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ITINERARY

1. The State of Helping Professionals
2. Personal Impacts and Emotional Awareness
3. Realistic Strategies to Manage Empathy Fatigue
4. Validation and Resilience



What We Already Know

- Cost of living expenses
 - Montana is the most unaffordable state to live in! (National Association of Realtors)
- Lack of housing
- Cost of groceries
- Lack of affordable insurance options
- AND WE ALL EXPERIENCE THIS TOO!
 - And get the backlash from our patients when they are frustrated by this...



The State of Helpers



How do we get here?

- Burn Out

- Comes on slowly for a variety of reasons
- Heavy Case Loads
- Perceived inequality at workplace
- Feeling overextended
- Conflict at work
- Feeling unappreciated at work

- Empathy Fatigue

- Hearing others' traumas both emotional and physical
- Visualizing the story as though they could have happened to you
- Experiencing trauma yourself
- Social/organizational Isolation
- Demanding shifts and repeated exposure to traumatic stories
- Lack of training – CHW Training



Common Symptoms



Break Out Discussion

- In your work, have you had an experience where hearing another's trauma has stayed with you to a point where you could not stop thinking about it or could relate to it as though you were in their shoes?
- If so, how did that impact you? (At home and/or work)
- 10 Minutes



Detour to the Brain...

- The brain is wired to protect us
- Which means that biologically, we need to remember the negative experiences we have.
- They stick to the brain easily
- Where the positive slides off like Teflon...
- And in our helping positions, hearing trauma related to lack of services/care all day
- And simultaneously experiencing this ourselves – Our brain enters fight, flight, freeze, fawn.

Trauma Responses



The infographic is titled "Trauma Responses" and is set against a light yellow background. It features four quadrants, each with an illustration and a list of associated emotions and behaviors. The top-left quadrant shows a blue bull with yellow horns and a hand holding a black cloth, representing the "Fight" response. The top-right quadrant shows a blue rabbit running, representing the "Flight" response. The bottom-left quadrant shows a blue deer with large antlers, representing the "Freeze" response. The bottom-right quadrant shows a blue bird perched on a hand, representing the "Fawn" response. At the bottom right of the infographic is the PsychCentral logo.

Response	Emotions/Behaviors
Fight: Confront the threat.	anger, rage, confrontation, high energy
Flight: Run away from the threat.	anxiety, panic, avoidance, high energy
Freeze: Shut down to block out the threat.	dissociation, numbness, shutdown, low energy
Fawn: Appease the threat.	people-pleasing, codependency, lack of boundaries

PsychCentral



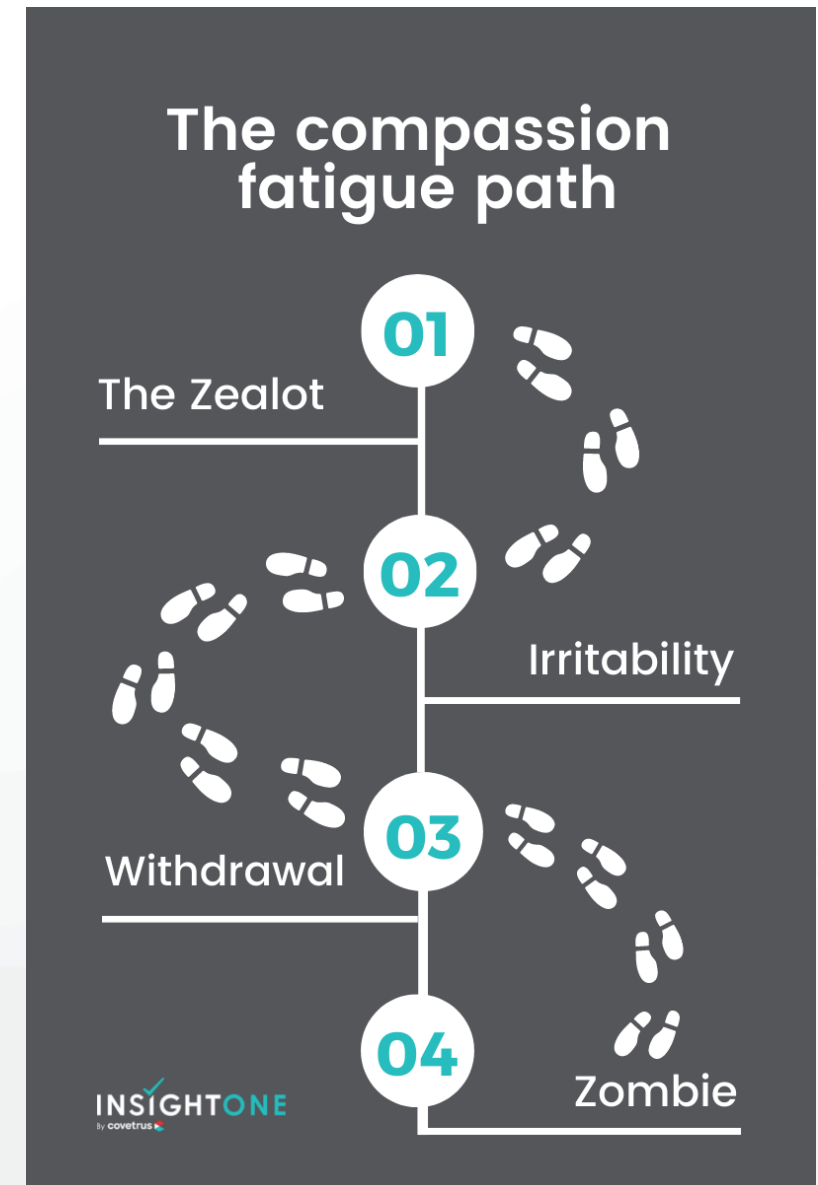
Mindfulness Practice

- Turn off your cameras and make sure you are muted.
- Gaze forward and downward or close your eyes.
- Breathe in through your nose and fill you belly with air.
- Breathe out through your nose, you should feel your stomach deflate and the warm hair exit your nostrils.
- Let your shoulders relax while you breathe.
- I promise this will only take 5ish minutes!



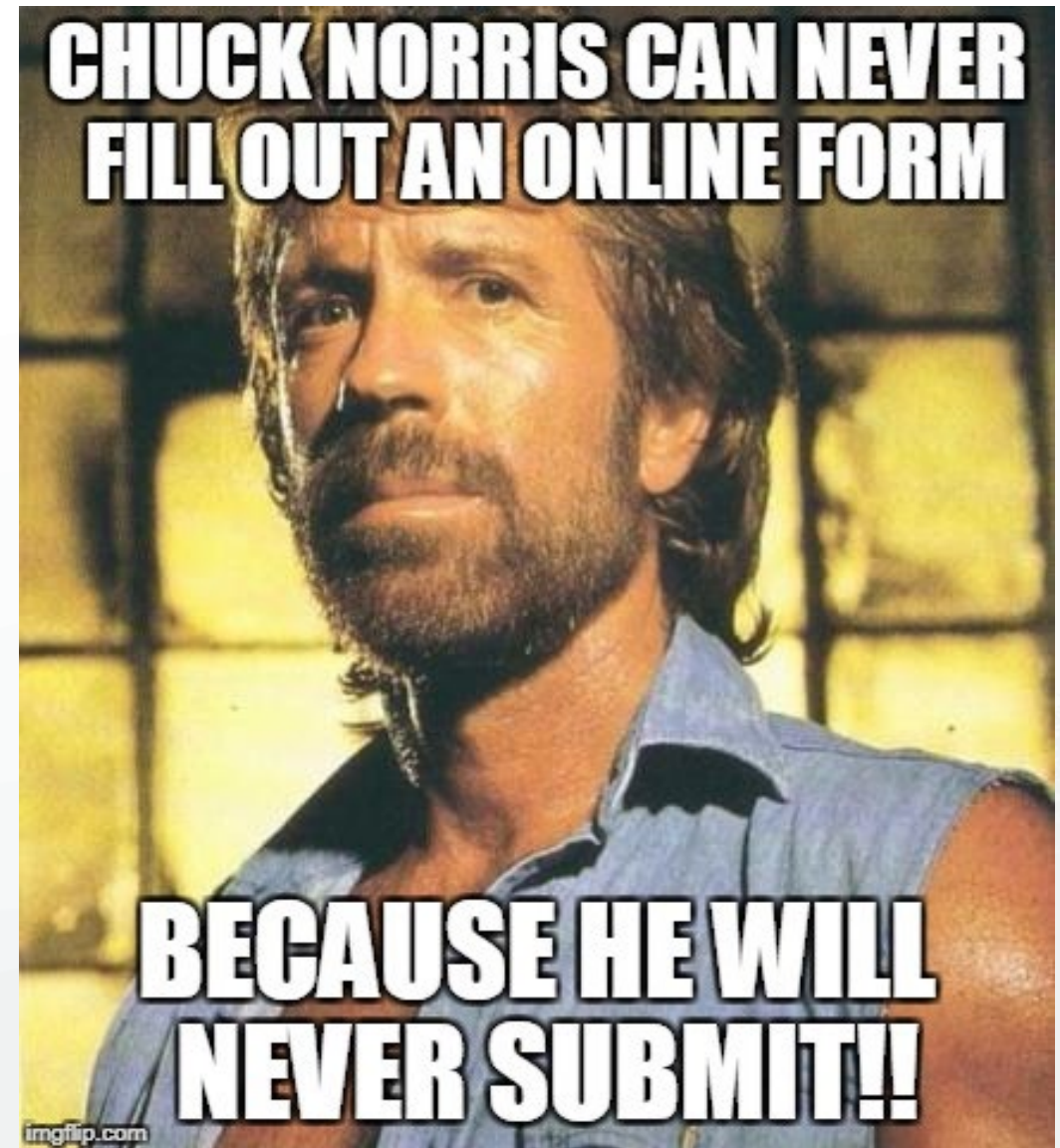
Phases of Fatigue

- **Zealot:**
 - Go the extra mile without complaining; Put in extra hours; Involved and available
- **Irritability:**
 - Lose sense of humor; make mistakes at work; become cynical; Feel undervalued
- **Withdrawal:**
 - Poor sleep habits; begin justifying poor behavior because we work so hard...; patients run together in your mind; neglect family duties; may begin self-medicating
- **Zombie:**
 - On autopilot; feeling depleted and numb
- What phase (if any) do you believe you may be in?



Resilience...

The process of adapting well in the face of trauma or tragedy, threats or other significant sources of stress.



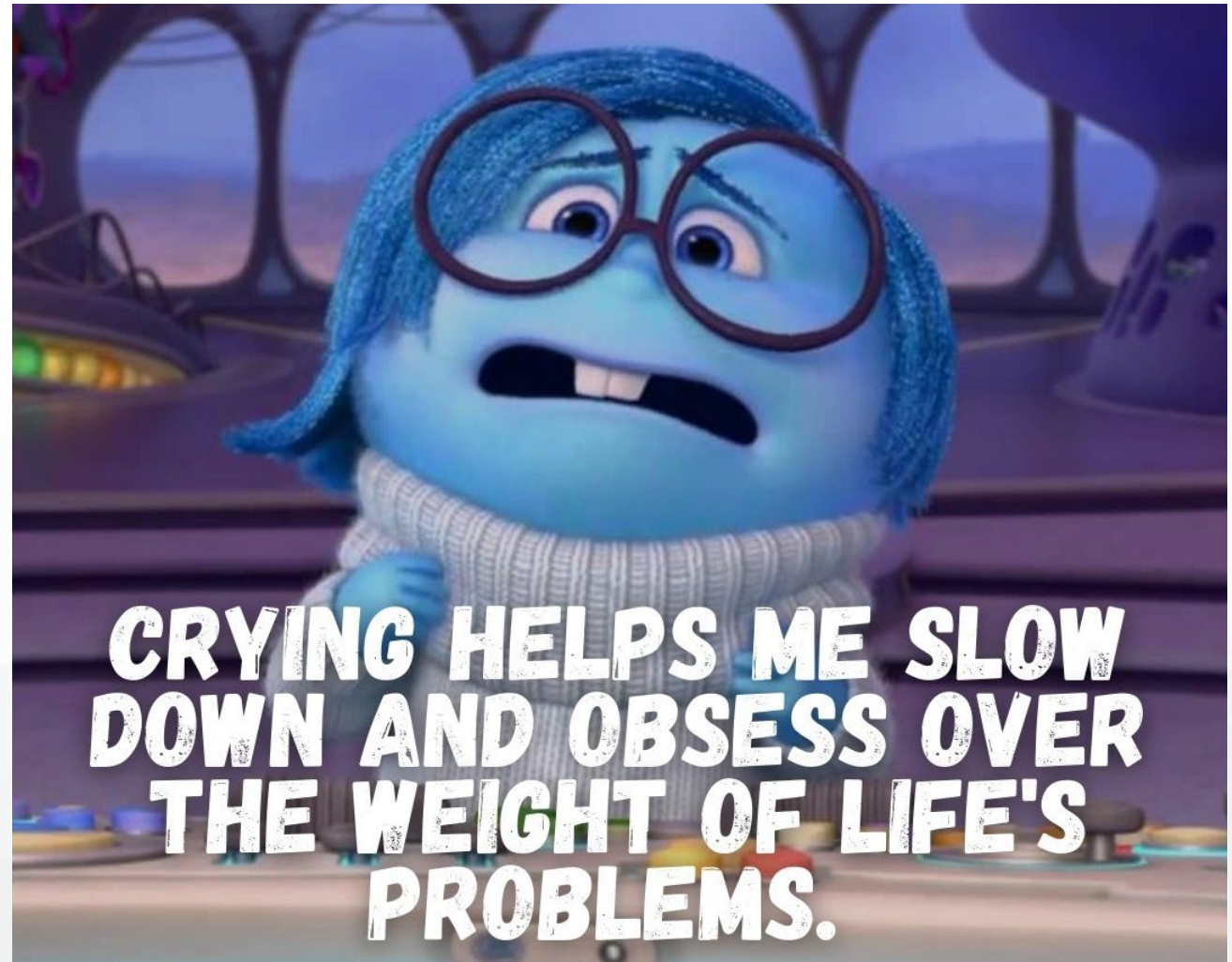
Traits:

- ❖ Emotional Intelligence
- ❖ Ability to set and defend boundaries
- ❖ A social system
- ❖ Flexibility – Sees change as an opportunity
- ❖ Ability to sit with difficult emotions
- ❖ Growth mind set
- ❖ Sense of Humor
- ❖ Where do you fall?
 - ❖ [Resilience Test - Take Our 5 Minutes Self Assessment \(mind.help\)](#)



Responding to Empathy Fatigue

- ❖ Emotional awareness
 - ❖ How do your emotions show up?
 - ❖ Tightness in your chest?
 - ❖ Exhaustion?
 - ❖ Irritability?
 - ❖ Substance use?
 - ❖ Name it to tame it...
- ❖ Avoid avoidance!
 - ❖ Is this emotion a sign that I need to do something or just noise that I have no control of?





Radical ACCEPTANCE

RADICAL ACCEPTANCE IS FULLY ACCEPTING SOMETHING WITHOUT:

- Judging it 
- Trying to force it to change 

WHAT ARE YOU REFUSING TO ACCEPT?

 It could be a situation, memory or an emotion.

BELIEFS THAT GET IN THE WAY:

 It means you are giving up
It means you are OK with the situation

EMOTIONS THAT GET IN THE WAY:

-  Intense anger at someone or something
-  Guilt/shame about something you did or who you are
-  Rage at the injustice of the situation

You've never tried to change the color of the sky. You've never judged it for being blue- it's just blue.

If you hated the color blue you would still accept that the sky is just blue.

Radical acceptance is something you choose to do.


It does not mean you like or agree with something, just that you accept it as it is.

DBT


DISTRESS TOLERANCE: TIPP SKILLS

TIPP skills are all about changing your body chemistry - heart rate, temperature, and breathing - in order to relax our minds and bodies when we are struggling with extreme emotions.


TEMPERATURE

 **T** Hold your breath and submerge your face in cold water, or hold ice pack to your eyes and cheeks to simulate submerging yourself underwater. This will trigger your dive reflex, which slows your heart rate and activates your parasympathetic nervous system to reduce stress and increase relaxation.


INTENSE EXERCISE

 **I** Engage in high intensity physical activity to expend any built-up energy as a result of your strong emotions. It also naturally releases endorphins in order to reduce stress and increase a sense of happiness.

PACED BREATHING

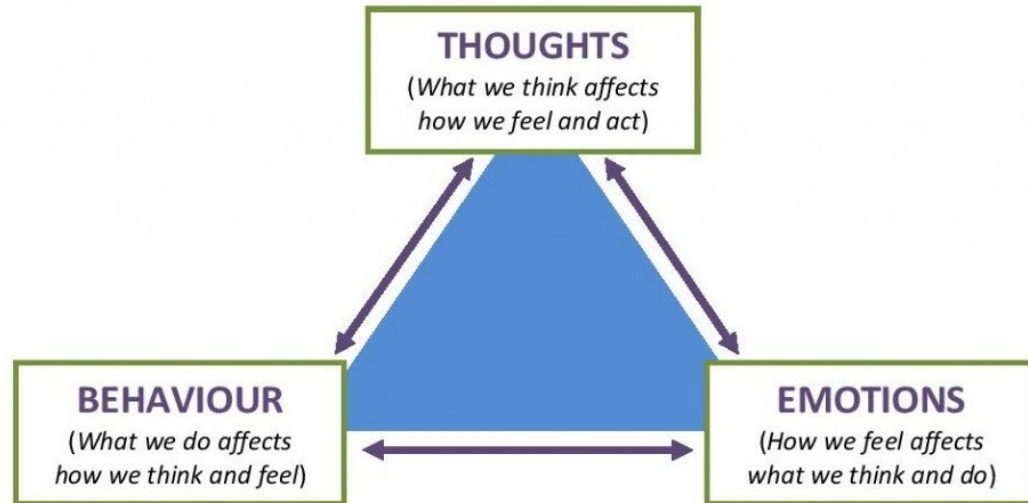
 **P** Breathe deeply and slow the pace of your breathing, exhaling one or two seconds longer than your inhale. This will reduce your heart rate and by focusing on your breath you can become more mindful and reduce the intensity of your emotions.

PAIRED MUSCLE RELAXATION

 **P** Take a deep breath in and tense the muscles in your body. Hold for a moment, then slowly release your breath and relax your muscles as you say "relax" in your mind. Practice this regularly. When you are in high stress situations tell yourself to "relax" and instinctually your body will release its tension and you will be able to calm down.



Feeling or a Fact?



- When we are experiencing a depression or anxiety, our brain often tells us that our feelings are facts...
- Ex) I am such a failure because I couldn't help with...(I may feel that way, but it doesn't make it true...)



Boundaries



- The word “boundary” can be misleading.
- It sounds like being separate.
- They provide healthy rules for navigating relationships, intimate or professional which is *connecting*.
- Boundaries are like a fence with a gate and may at times be flexible.



Professional Boundaries

- Only working during work hours
 - Including emails and phone calls
- Knowing your limits
- Only accepting responsibility for what you are able to do
- Be explicit from the start
- Applies to clients/patients and coworkers...

Motherhood
CHAPTER 33

6

WAYS TO SET BOUNDARIES

moonstruckmom.com

- 1**  Understand & define where you stand.
- 2**  Relay your limits.
- 3**  Be direct.
- 4**  Give yourself permission.
- 5**  Seek support.
- 6**  Be assertive.



Value-Based Action

Career/employment:

What do you value in your work? What would make it more meaningful? What kind of worker would you like to be? If you were living up to your own ideal standards, what personal qualities would you like to bring to your work? What sort of work relations would you like to build?



Time to Laugh... (Not fact checked)

The 22 most ridiculous US laws still in effect today

It's illegal to attend a public event or use public transport within 4 hours of eating an onions or garlic

(Indiana)

justsomething.co

The 22 most ridiculous US laws still in effect today

You are not allowed to eat fried chicken any other way than using your hands

(Gainesville, GA)

justsomething.

The 22 most ridiculous US laws still in effect today

Policemen are allowed to bite a dog if they think it ... dog down

justsomething.co

The 22 most ridiculous US laws still in effect today

Bear wrestling matches are prohibited

The 22 most ridiculous US laws still in effect today

You can be arrested or fined for harassing Bigfoot

(Washington)

justsomething.co

The 22 most ridiculous US laws

A motorist with cri intentions must stop at the city limits and telephone the chief of police as he is entering the town

(Washington)

justsomething.co

(Alabama)

justsomething.co

still in effect today

are not allowed to cross the road

(Quitman, GA)

justsomething.co



Break Out!



- Who did you reach out to for **support**?
- What **strategies** did you use to get through?
- What did you **learn** from the situation?
- And how have you changed **habits/behaviors** as a result?



Opportunity to Share/Provide Support



