

A Guide to Fostering Wellbeing

FOR STAFF, SUPERVISORS, AND SURVIVORS

Practical tips for staff, supervisors, and survivors to encourage healthy behaviors that can increase overall wellbeing and mitigate burnout.



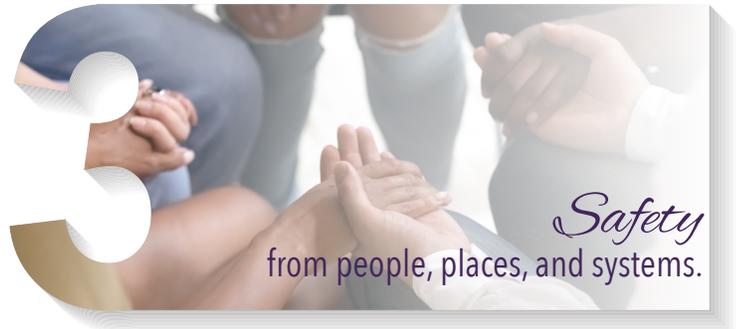


Social Connectedness
a sense of belonging.



Stability
a sense of predictability.

The Five Domains of *Wellbeing*



Safety
from people, places, and systems.



Mastery
a sense of choice, curiosity, and influence
in our environment and relationships.



*Meaningful Access to
Relevant Information*
tailored resources to a person's specific
needs and concerns.



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Staff burnout is an unceasing and persistent issue that many frontline staff in a variety of helping disciplines face. Directors, partners, and staff of Family Justice and Multi-Agency (FJ/MA) Centers report increasing levels of stress, vicarious trauma, and burnout on a regular basis. Addressing these issues is complex and FJ/MA Center leadership face challenges associated with the wellbeing of staff and partners, from simply doing such hard work on a day-to-day basis, to managing challenges brought on by things outside their control, such as a pandemic, civil unrest, or increases in community violence, to name a few. The nature of this work can easily and quickly lead to burnout and staff turnover if not deliberately addressed.

This short guide was created to provide practical tips for staff, supervisors, and survivors to encourage new behaviors that can increase overall wellbeing and mitigate burnout. We would like to thank Cathy Cave of the National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma and Mental Health for sharing her expertise during the Alliance-hosted national webinar series called, "Healing Modalities: Trauma-Informed Approaches for Sustaining Our Resilience as We Work, Parts One and Two." Guidance and recommendations from these webinars, along with the Alliance's own work around the development of trauma-informed, hope-centered organizations have informed this brief guide for staff and leadership at Family Justice/ Multi-Agency Centers, on how to cultivate hope, resiliency, wellbeing, mitigate burnout, and encourage better self-care for themselves and the survivors they serve in Center.

Alliance for HOPE International has done a great deal of work with the Full Frame Initiative over the years including piloting a focus on the 5 domains of

well-being in Family Justice Centers. Each of the domains plays a powerful role in the Family Justice Center framework. Social connectedness comes from strong, close knit relationships in Centers and the welcoming of survivors into this community of care as equals to the professionals. Stability is crucial to wellbeing by avoiding the turmoil of constant change to exacerbate stress beyond what is caused by the subject matter of the work in Centers. Safety for survivors should be the number one priority in all Centers but it must also be a regular topic of discussion and focus with partners and staff members in Centers. Mastery for a professional or a client in a Center relates to "agency" - the ability for each person to set their own goals and identify their own pathways in life. This includes the opportunity for all needed training for professionals to do their job well and confirmation that people are not experiencing undue anxiety and stress in doing their job. Meaningful access to relevant information and services is the ultimate goal in FJ/MA Centers. For staff and partners in a Center, this means overcommunicating about operations and challenges and making sure that self-care, training, and support are always available.

The first major focus around wellness must be on encouraging staff and partners to take responsibility for their own self-care. Self-care must be a personal choice and encouraging and educating staff about this core responsibility in their own lives must be regularly emphasized.

Staff Self-Care

SELF-ADVOCACY

Self-advocacy is possible when you are able to identify what is important to you in the workplace. Staff should be encouraged to ask the following questions and make a note of their own answers for reflection:

What are your limits, boundaries, and goals?

What does the current workplace do for your wellbeing needs?

How does the workplace get in the way of your needs?

What is something the workplace can provide to you for your wellbeing needs?

What must you decide, choose, and do to be your own advocate?

IDENTIFY BARRIERS AND PATHWAYS

The science of hope is central to the journey toward self-care for partners and staff in an FJ/MA Center. "Hope is the belief that your future can be better than your past and that you play a role in making it happen." Hope is a verb. It involves goal setting, motivation to pursue those goals, and pathways thinking to find the steps toward your goals ([Gwinn, Hellman, 2019](#)). This means that each of us must be challenged to set our own practical goals around self-care. Goal setting is not the end of the process. Identifying barriers to our goals must be a regular practice. Addressing barriers in one's personal life and those in the workplace can be daunting. If barriers are internalized and never processed or articulated, professional growth can be stunted. Staff should be encouraged and given opportunity to communicate barriers within the workplace to their supervisor.

- First, work on **ARTICULATING YOUR GOALS** to your supervisor.
- Second, come to your supervisor with both **GOALS AND PROPOSED PATHWAYS** to achieve your goals around self-care.
- Make time to talk to your supervisor to **DISCUSS WHAT YOU FIND TO BE A BARRIER** to completing your work in a way that supports your overall wellbeing.
- Dialogue on the **PATHWAYS THAT WOULD ALLEVIATE** these barriers.
- **IDENTIFY KEY WAYS** you would like your supervisor to support your goal achievement.
- **BE SENSITIVE** to the fact that your goals and the organization's goals may not be in alignment.
- **BE PREPARED** to find ways that these goals can align to support the work of the organization and your own wellbeing.



SELF-CARE ACTIVITIES

BREATHWORK

Take a deep, conscious breath periodically throughout the day. Create a habit of taking a breath before certain activities, such as answering the phone or getting on a video call. Awareness of your breath can reduce your stress levels.

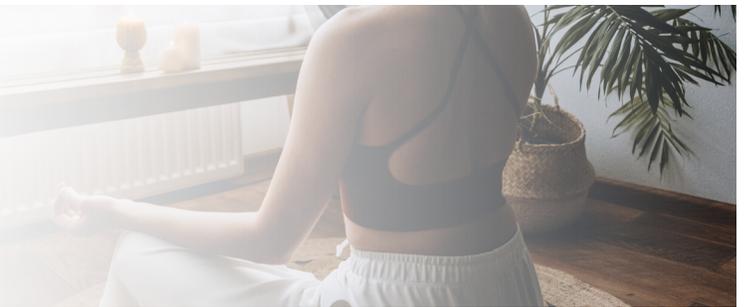


MOVEMENT

Simple changes such as standing up once every hour can be a simple reminder to be connected to your body while you work. If possible, aim to stretch whenever you complete a small task and take walks during breaks. Fresh air can be powerful in reducing toxins in the body and tension that builds from sitting in one place too long.

MINDFULNESS

Stay in the present moment. Bring attention to when you become distracted in thought. Once you are aware of your distractions, you can come back to your work without judgment or unnecessary thinking. Take short breaks during your day to quiet your spirit, mind, and body with no outside interferences.



VISUALIZATION/IMAGINATION

Reframe negative thoughts with positive desired outcomes. Imagine what your work day will look like once you've completed an unenjoyable or difficult task. Having something to look forward to can reshape your current thoughts and help restructure your day. Imagination is the instrument of hope. Healthy work habits must include imagining our successes in the short or the long-term, imagining how such achievements will feel, and then beginning to articulate the steps get there.

TAKING BREAKS

Short or long breaks serve as a benefit to your wellbeing. Take breaks with others, do something active, and allow yourself time to completely step away mentally and physically from your work.





Supervisors Supporting Staff

HONORING THE WHOLE PERSON

It can be easy for supervisors or managers to overlook staff members as complex individuals when busy with work, responsibilities, and impending deadlines. A potentially toxic environment can be created when we think of staff as only executors of tasks, rather than as a whole person with more to offer to the organization.

Here are some **KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF** as a supervisor or manager about how you interact with staff:

What unique qualities does each staff member bring to the team?

How do you implement self-defined strategies to support staff needs and desires to enhance their wellbeing?

How can you make yourself available to address your staff's concerns, goals, barriers, and pathways?

Offer stability: How can you create an anchored space for staff to express and act on their wellbeing goals and needs?

Conduct regular check-ins and team meetings, and reach out to staff during periods of high stress.

KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR STAFF about their experience in the workplace:

Do you have a feeling of belonging?

Where do you feel you have control and choice?

How familiar or predictable is your work?

Are you able to be true to your core identity?

How can I meet your needs without danger, shame or difficulty?

ISOLATION IN MANAGEMENT

Supervisors are vulnerable to feeling isolated at work due to job responsibilities, dynamics between staff and management, and maintaining healthy boundaries. Supervisors are also often working longer hours and blurring the lines between work life and personal life. This is only intensified as responsibilities increase.

Here are some **QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF** to mitigate isolation and burnout as a supervisor:

Do I absolutely need to work the extra hour?
What will I gain? What will I lose?

Can what I'm working on be delegated?

Can I increase professional development of staff by including them on current projects that are on my plate?

Am I only reaching out to my staff and fellow supervisors with work-related items?
Am I regularly connecting with them on a personal level as well?

Can I leave work at work, or am I taking it home with me either through thinking about work or working on my off time?

What feeds my soul each day?
Am I prioritizing time for these things?

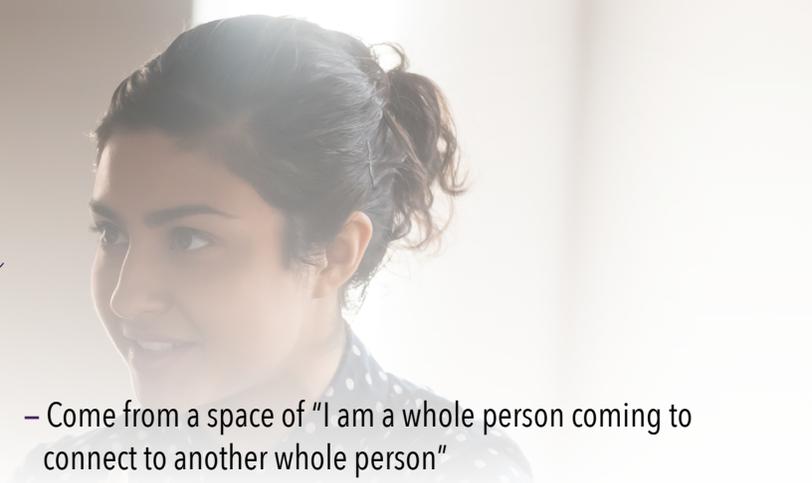




Staff Supporting Survivors

KEY POINTS

- **HOPE PREDICTS WELLBEING** in all people including survivors.
- **NURTURING HOPE IN SURVIVORS** is about letting them make their own choices, set their own goals, and navigate their own pathways to those goals.
- This means nothing should happen that a survivor doesn't say "YES, I WANT THAT."
- We all experience trauma and stress but we may experience it differently. What causes one person **TRAUMA OR STRESS** may not cause another person to have the same reactions.
- Remember: Trauma is not what happens to you, **TRAUMA IS WHAT HAPPENS INSIDE YOU** because of what has happened to you. Make sure to always provide non-judgmental support of each person's experience.
- **DON'T "OTHER" SURVIVORS** by putting them in a different category than you.
- Ask about safety and comfort and work together to create it. The goal of FJ/MA Centers is help survivors achieve their goals and find their pathways to those goals. Ask questions like:
 - Before we get started, is there anything we can do to help you feel safer and more comfortable while we talk?
 - When you are overwhelmed or distressed, what does that look and feel like?
 - What tends to add to your distress?
 - What has helped in the past when you have felt this way?
 - Are there things we can do (or not do) to support you?



- Come from a space of "I am a whole person coming to connect to another whole person"

- We can often be looking to the people we serve for validation.

It is an added burden to survivors for us to expect validation for our job performance from them.

Beware of frustration you might feel with survivors for not responding to our needs to be affirmed for doing a good job in helping them.

Survivors can pick up on whether we are comfortable in our own skin, are nervous, or are having a bad day .

Share with a survivor if you are not having a good day or have personal issues impacting you. Details should not be shared, but make sure survivors don't blame themselves for how you might react at a given time or on a certain day.

Work hard to ground yourself before engaging with a survivor.

By grounding yourself, and practicing honesty, then you are also modeling healthy relationship behavior.

Be honest, even if the news isn't good.

- In challenging times, you want to sustain connection and trustworthiness.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF about the way services are delivered to survivors in Centers:

What methods do you use to keep survivors grounded?

Do survivors have information on what to expect in order to mitigate anxiety?

How often do you check if a survivor needs water or a breather to break up the intake or service delivery process?

In what way do you provide access to meaningful materials and relevant resources within your Center?

If rising hope predicts wellbeing and improves self-care, are you measuring hope with your partners, staff, and the survivors being served? Do you know on a pre-post basis whether your approach to wellness and self-care is having a positive impact?

QUESTIONS TO ASK SURVIVORS about the way they are receiving services:

Were those that helped you kind-hearted in working with you?

Did they try to meet you where you were instead of immediately trying to get you to feel or act differently?

Was the help offered to you what you needed?

Was the information provided to you helpful in mitigating your anxiety surrounding the intake and service delivery process?

Did you feel you were provided the opportunity to take a break from the intake process or from other services you were offered whenever needed? Were you provided water, snacks, or other comforts that you wanted or needed?

Were the materials and resources provided to you meaningful and relevant to what you needed when you came to our Center?