

**"Please Put On
Your Own Mask
Before Assisting
Others" / Ethical
Self-Care in the
Age of COVID-19**

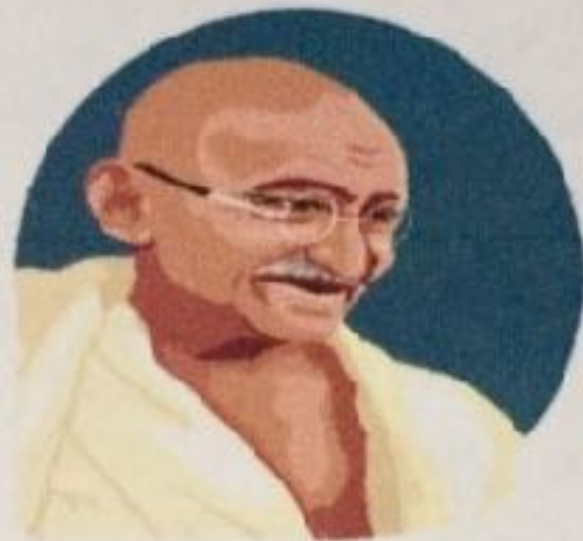
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Objectives

- Examine how our Professional Ethics obligations impact and influence both our professional and personal lives to ensure we are fit for duty to provide psychological support and services to our clients.
- Identify how the current Covid-19 pandemic has driven significant historic transformational changes in our communities, ourselves and our profession
- Discuss the importance of developing and sustaining a Self-Care Strategy to mitigate the impact of various Influencers on our overall Health & Well-being
- Review frameworks from both Worklife and Resilience perspectives to identify foundational elements that can be incorporated into developing both a Self-Care strategy and personal action plan
- Capture initial action steps of a personal action plan

"You must be the change you want to see in the world"...Gandhi





If I am not
the *Problem*,
there is no
Solution.

“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

World Health Organization Constitution (1948)



This Presentation

Won't be:

- Traditional trifecta of “Eat Well, Exercise, Get Enough Sleep”
- Collection of ethical scenarios of dual relationship clients or inappropriate supervisors
- Compilation of me doing Tik Tok video dances to Whitney Houston’s “The Greatest Love of All,” Kelly Clarkson’s “Stronger” and Taylor Swift’s “Shake it Off”

Will be:

- Examination of self care in current COVID-19 era thru lens of Frankl’s insights on meaning, Friedman’s framework of life domains, and ideas about resilience
- A challenge to mental health professionals to engage in self-care; please put aside cell phones
- About two hours long

Signs of the times...





A close-up photograph of a bright yellow fabric item, possibly a bag or a piece of clothing, featuring a black zipper at the top. The fabric has a textured, woven appearance. Printed in bold, black, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the yellow fabric is the text: "SOME DAYS THE BEST THING ABOUT MY JOB IS THE CHAIR SPINS". The item is resting on a light-colored, textured surface, likely cardboard or paper. In the background, a portion of a white box with some faint text is visible.

**SOME DAYS THE BEST
THING ABOUT MY JOB IS
THE CHAIR SPINS**

ALL I WANT FOR
CHRISTMAS
IS FOR SOMEONE
TO REMEMBER
MY DECEMBER
BIRTHDAY

**IF IT WASN'T
FOR STRESS
I'D HAVE NO
ENERGY AT ALL**



Ethics

- In reviewing the codes of ethics for social workers, licensed professional counselors, marriage and family therapists, there was a lot of verbiage about what to do when an MHP is impaired
- In the Social Work Code of Ethics, Sec. 4.05 on Impairment, there is a description of what interferes with their ability to practice, but not a lot said about pro-active behaviors
- The final sentence in a paragraph in the LPC Board of Examiners “Professional Responsibilities” (sec 2107) states “In addition, licensees engage in self-care activities to maintain and promote their emotional, physical, mental and spiritual well-being to best meet their professional responsibilities.”

Are you on “auto-pilot?”

- Mental Health Professionals (MHP) are engaged in a profession with great responsibilities, similar to “safety sensitive positions”
- A safety sensitive position is one where if the person holding the position is impaired, there can be significant negative consequences to himself/herself, other people and the environment
- We must never lose sight of the fact that MHP hold positions of high responsibility. When airline pilots need a break, they may be able to put the plane on “auto pilot.” A MHP does not have that choice, but many have operated on “auto pilot” occasionally, I’m sure. But what would the consequences be of operating on auto-pilot every day?
- We are not proposing that MHP need to be perfect. But MHP do need to be honest about their own status and take action, i.e., self-care, to prevent impairment,

2020 is different...

- Often times, MHP have been called upon to respond to crisis, e.g., 9/11, industrial fatalities, etc.
 - Most of the time, the MHP has not experienced the same crisis or trauma
- 2020 is different. The **whole world** is living through this pandemic era.
- Recent US studies showed 1 in 4 people ages 18-24 had seriously considered suicide in the 30 days preceding the survey. The number of Americans reporting anxiety is three times the number from 2019.

Losses Known and Unknown

- In 2020, everyone worldwide is dealing with news of positive cases, social distancing, isolation, anxiety, depression, mask wearing, contact tracing, and vaccine development; almost like ongoing trauma and grief
- Everyone, including MHP, has experienced losses to some degree: social activities, work, leisure, travel, etc. Some losses are not yet known.
- Therefore, it becomes critical for MHP to engage in self-care, now more than ever. And by definition, a MHP should be an expert in this category...

Viktor Frankl

- A book that regained popularity during the pandemic is “**Man’s Search for Meaning**” by Viktor Frankl
 - A first-person account of surviving the concentration camps of WWII
 - Written in 9 days in 1945; 100 printings in English; translated into 24 languages; more than 15 million copies in print
 - *It should be noted that in no way are we suggesting that the circumstances that victims of the Holocaust experienced are identical or comparable to what is happening now. Frankl wrote the book not to emphasize a factual, detailed account of why millions died but to explore why some people survived at all*
 - Frankl provides his own perspective, from his personal position as a prisoner and psychiatrist; it is this perspective that we will expand upon

Perspective

- Frankl noted that it would be hard to be methodical in describing circumstances he himself experienced. But while outsiders can be detached and objective, he felt an outsider is too far removed to make statements of any real value
- The “man inside” knows best. Some judgements may be out of proportion; it may be necessary to share intimate details. Are we as MHP the “man inside?”

Identity Issues

- Outside the camps, Frankl was a psychiatrist. Inside the camps, he told them he was a doctor. So while he had tasks and work to do sometimes “as a doctor,” he was still treated like a prisoner with little food, rags for clothes, worn out shoes, etc.
- In this COVID era, we have all experienced losses. A prisoner’s losses were extreme – all possessions were taken away
- One of the hardest losses was the loss of identity. Outside the camp, a prisoner had a job, a position in society, a role as a family member. How is that similar to now?

“Man is a being who can get used to anything.”

- Dostoevsky (1821-1881)

- To survive, they knew they had to look healthy enough to work.
 - They would shave every day to make themselves look younger.
 - If shoes didn't fit, they'd still walk assuredly.
 - “Fake it till you make it.”
 - Emphasis in this case was on behavior. All the prisoner had was his physical body and his mind.
- In the COVID era, how important is behavior in self care? If you are at home, are you shaving every day? Showering? Does this make a difference?
- Prisoners worked in abominable conditions – digging holes in the freezing winter, subsisting on meager portions of bread and watery soup, along with physical abuse. Frankl noted it wasn't the beatings that so much affected them, but the insult of it all.

A Fine Line...

- At first, prisoners were disgusted by the ugliness and horror of life in the camps.
 - Initially, they would avert their eyes from others' torture
 - Eventually, they would watch unmoved.
 - This insensibility was a necessary protective shell
- As MHP, we are said to be holders of “terrible information” at times.
 - Clients may relate horrific incidents, dark feelings, and despair.
 - We must be aware of how we handle all this. **THIS IS KEY TO SELF CARE: HONEST AWARENESS.**
 - We cannot allow ourselves to be completely insensitive and numbed out.
 - We cannot allow ourselves to become emotionally overwhelmed and devastated by our clients' situations
 - We must walk that fine line; be self-aware; take breaks; consult with peers for feedback; take a temperature check; get debriefed after critical incidents or when appropriate

Unfiltered, Honest Self-Care

- Whether you are a new or an experienced MHP, you need to realize that your profession carries with it some unique requirements. Why did you choose this job? Is the workload sustainable? Are you sustainable? As an MHP, you may engage in personal therapy, acquire a mentor or a coach, take periodic breaks or do a tag team approach.
 - One of the main reasons MHP do not engage in self-care is that they may think it is a sign of weakness or lack of competence. A recent Today Show report spotlighted this issue
 - Lack of self-care may lead to even more significant consequences

“light in the darkness”

- Frankl noted that some in the camps were reduced to a regressive state, a primitive level of existence. If we observe this “burnout” in ourselves or others, we have an obligation to confront this.
 - Sometimes our care extends beyond our “self” to others and to the profession in general.
 - Several codes of ethics include this vital component
- Frankl noted that he saw beauty in art and nature as never before in the camps due to the intensity of his inner life.
 - Personally, I’ve noted my backyard has never been so alive with green growth, squirrels, lizards, bees, and birds of all varieties.
 - Frankl watched sunrises, sunsets, clouds, and Salzburg mountains during transport
 - It was a physical and metaphorical “light in the darkness” for him.
 - This “light” can be key to self-care. Get outside. Turn off your phone. Take walks.

Creativity and Self-Care

- Creativity was another coping mechanism in the camps. They would stage small cabarets with some laughs, some tears, just to forget for a while. Songs, poems, jokes, some with satire of local topics. It was such an important thing for some prisoners to attend, that they would miss the only food distribution of the day.
- A faint sense of humor could provide a bit of relief, an aloofness, an ability to rise above the situation if only for a few seconds...How many of us have used humor as a means of self-care in the COVID era? The classic TV show M*A*S*H* used humor in a dire wartime setting.
- Humor is very important in our opinion. In that spirit, we will take a short break to relieve some of the heaviness of our topic. These slides hopefully combine creativity, humor and getting outside to enjoy nature...

I decided to go to a Sunday Jazz Brunch. I invited my friends, Myrtle and Fern...



We started with a few mimosas..



Then we had some delicious ham and eggs!



For dessert, we had Elephant Ear pastries and Bananas Foster...



The jazz trumpets were so beautiful, we started weeping...



But after ordering a mint julep, we felt a whole lot better...



We stayed till the brunch shut down at 4:00...
what a wonderful time we had!



Does one really have a choice...?

- Frankl talks about developing gratitude for the smallest things. Gratitude development is a significant treatment topic today.
 - Example of group's gratitude upon transferring to a different camp
- Self-care and self-concept area are connected to gratitude
 - Gratitude diaries used in therapy
- Concept of fatalism must be addressed
 - Example of folk tale
 - Fatalism can be taken to extremes. Concept of “learned helplessness” (Martin Seligman)
- So, the question is: Does one have a choice in the face of the darkest of circumstances? The answer is...

“Yes”

- That answer of “Yes” is key to self-care
- It is possible for all of us.
- We just have to do it.

The Concept of Provisional Existence

- Provisional existence
 - For prisoners, there was no way to know how long it would last; there was no known date for the end of the war. Faith in some version of a future was critical
 - Some chose to respond by letting themselves decline, not take life seriously, feeling life is of no consequence, no future goals....Life is meaningless
 - Some chose to take action, attaining a human greatness that could never be achieved in other circumstances.
 - He describes approaching suffering with dignity... “There is only one thing I dread – not to be worthy of my sufferings.” - Dostoevsky

An “Aha” moment...

- Frankl noted a connection between the state of mind (courage, despair) and the immune system
 - In despair, one would say “I have nothing to expect from life anymore.”
 - A key concept to embrace according to Frankl was **“It does not matter what we expected from life, but what life expected from us.”**

Frankl's "Workshop Presentation"

- Frankl on one occasion was asked to address a group of despairing prisoners.
 - What are the irreplaceable losses? Health, happiness, professional abilities, position in society could be achieved again or restored
 - All they had gone through could be an asset for them in the future... "that which does not kill me, makes me stronger" (Nietzsche) (not Kelly Clarkson)
 - He was mindful that his joys, experiences, accomplishments of the past could never be taken from him... "having been is a kind of being and perhaps the surest kind"
 - Frankl felt that "someone" looks in on us at different times, whether a friend, spouse, whether dead or alive, or a Supreme Being and they would expect us to NOT disappoint them...

Summary of Frankl's Concepts

- “He who has a WHY to live can survive almost any HOW.” – Nietzsche
- According to Frankl – the WHY can be derived from work (doing something significant), love (caring for another person) and courage (be worthy of suffering)
- Forces beyond our control could take everything away from us, but we are never left with nothing. We always retain the freedom to choose how we respond. This is where we find our meaning. And meaning can change as life goes on.
- To really take care of ourselves, we must first identify our meaning, As MHP, our professional role is to assist others discover their own meaning. We can only do this if we first take care of ourselves

Benny's Place

SHOE SHINE

Regular Shine	\$6.00
Boots	\$7.00
Spit Shine	\$10.00

Off The Foot \$2.00 Extra

Stewart Friedman's Framework

- Just as Frankl stated that “meaning” is different for each person in different situations, Stewart Friedman shares a similar belief by providing a framework and not a “one size fits all” for self-awareness and self-fulfillment
 - One must assess oneself first to identify where there is need for attention
- Friedman is an organizational psychologist at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. His landmark book is “Total Leadership: Be a Better Leader, Have a Richer Life” (2008)
 - It’s really about taking leadership in one’s own life, not really about being a supervisor or manager

The Four Domains

- Friedman looks at our lives as being in four general domains:
 - Work
 - Family/Friends
 - Community
 - Self:
 - ❖ Mind
 - ❖ Body
 - ❖ Spirit

Socrates said it best... “The unexamined life is not worth living.”

- As a general overview, one must strive to embrace three principles:
 - **Being real** (acting with authenticity)
 - ❖ In order to take care of yourself, you must first be yourself
 - **Being whole** (acting with integrity)
 - ❖ In order to be content with oneself, do the right thing
 - **Being innovative**
 - ❖ In order to adapt successfully with change, try new things

Assessing Your Current Situation

- Four-Way View to assess current situation and identify opportunities for adjustment
 - Friedman suggests you begin by listing the four domains and then assign a percentage in an adjacent column to each one as to its importance to you (should add up to 100)
 - Then, in another column, assign a percentage to each domain as to the focus and energy you currently devote to each domain

Personal Assessment Continued

- Think about where you are in the four domains again, and assign a number from 1-10, with 1 being “not satisfied at all” and 10 being “highly satisfied.”
- Look at your numbers. This will give you some initial data on how to take better care of yourself with a specific focus. What needs attention? What is not the way you would like it to be?

Next Steps

- Friedman then outlines a process to follow that includes identifying peer coaches, consulting with stakeholders in each domain, designing and implementing experiments, re-assessing, etc.
- The experiments can affect one or multiple domains. A couple of examples include:
 - Rejuvenating and resting
 - Appreciating and caring

Ultimate Self-Care Goals

- It is in these experiments you would find “eat well, exercise and get enough sleep” somewhere!
- The over goal for self-care is to function well in connection with the three principles
 - **Authenticity**
 - ❖ Feeling more purposeful, genuine and grounded
 - **Integrity**
 - ❖ Feeling more connected, supported and resilient
 - **Creativity**
 - ❖ Feeling more curious, engaged and optimistic

"Please Put On Your Own Mask Before Assisting Others" / Ethical Self-Care in the Age of COVID-19 plus quarantine grounds, gaining pounds, isolation, zoom- ination, social distance, mask resistance , racial wrongs, impassioned throngs, contract tracing, NASCAR racing, heated tweets, blue/red seats, election tension, schools in question, global warming, post office alarming, economy sank, and Fill in the blank!



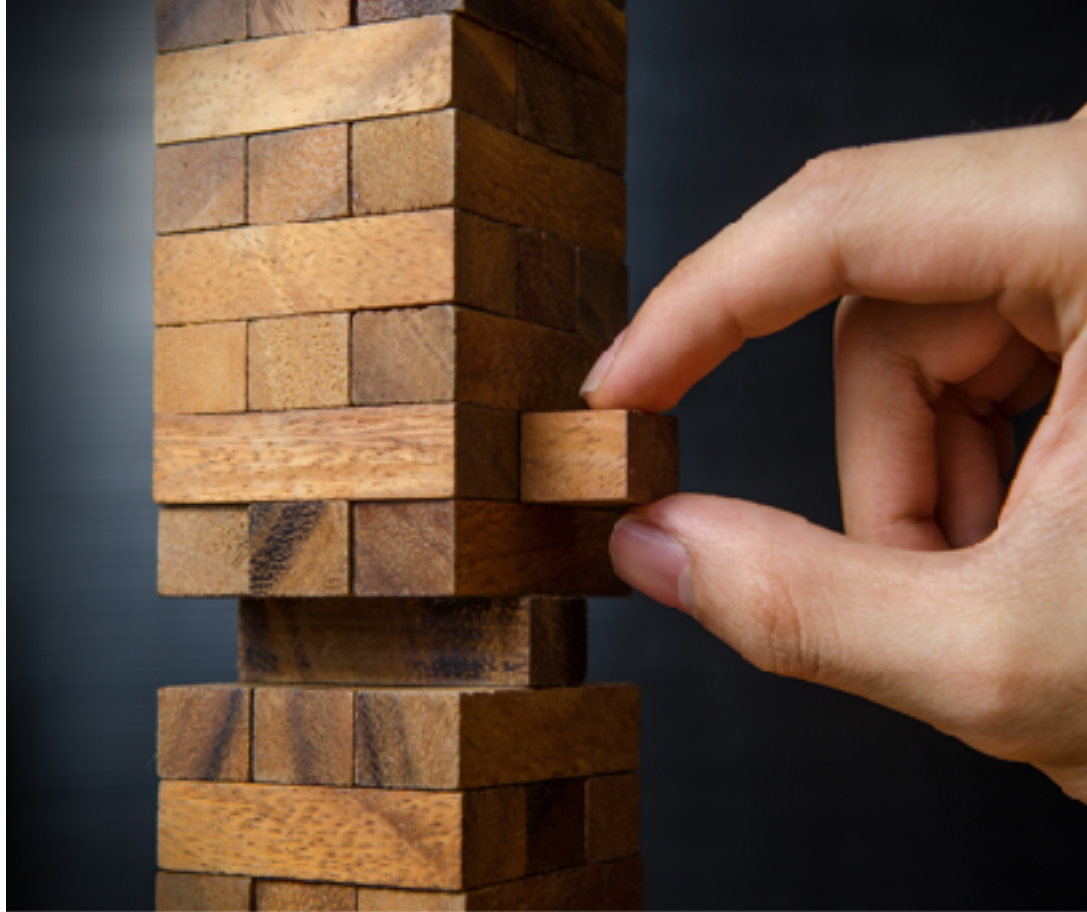
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Influencers on The Human Condition



- Physical
- Mental
- Emotional
- Financial
- Familial

Influencers on The Human Condition



- Occupational
- Social
- Environmental
- Cultural
- Spiritual

The Jenga of Life

Morning



Afternoon



“Wobble” Warning Signs



- Personal
 - Fluctuations in energy level
 - Changes in appearances or actions
 - Memory difficulties
- Interpersonal Relationships
 - Unpredictable or exaggerated responses
 - Withdrawn or avoidant of others
 - Disruptive behaviors
- Changes in quality & quantity of work

Resilience



Resilience is the ability to face and manage adversity, challenges and changes

- Some people seem to be naturally resilient, while others learn resilience as a skill.
- Resilient people are creative and use resources adaptively.
- Think of resilience as energy, it's dynamic.
- Resilience often requires intent & effort.

Characteristics of Resilient People



- **Purpose**
- **Attitude**
- **“Marie Kondo-it”**
- **Maintain Boundaries**
- **Sense of Humor**

Characteristics of Resilient People



- **Relationships**
- **Self Confidence**
- **Safe Haven (Happy Place)**
- **Learn from Experience**
- **Take Action**

Building Blocks of Resilience

- Learn to regulate your emotions
- Adopt a positive but realistic outlook
- Become physically fit
- Accept challenges
- Maintain a close & supportive network
- Observe and imitate resilient role models

Next Steps: Personal Action Plan



- Using the framework of Frankl and Friedman, identify an area (work, family, community, self) in which you can develop self-care and resilience skills for the remainder of 2020
- Identify specific & realistic daily, weekly & monthly action steps (keep them quantifiable and simple)
- Identify the people who can assist you and what resources would be helpful.
- Get going!!!

Quotes to ponder...



“Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and freedom.”

- Viktor Frankl (1905-1997)

“The grand essentials to happiness in this life are something to do, something to love, and something to hope for.”

-Joseph Addison (1672-1719)

“Without music, life would be a mistake.”

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)

“Stand by Me” – Playing for Change

- With over 150 million views on YouTube, this 2008 video was a cooperative effort filmed in the US, the Netherlands, France, Brazil, Russia, Venezuela, The Congo, South Africa, Spain and Italy. Playing For Change (PFC) is a movement created to inspire and connect the world through music. [https://
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Us-TVg40ExM&list=RDUUs-
TVg40ExM&start_radio=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Us-TVg40ExM&list=RDUUs-TVg40ExM&start_radio=1)

“Good afternoon. Ladies and gentlemen,
as we start our descent...”

