Radical Self-Care for the Director During an Era of Chaos and Challenge: Connecting with Resilience and Courage When You Are Running on Empty

L. MEGAN KERSTING, LMHC, PSYD
DIRECTOR, CLARK UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR COUNSELING & PERSONAL GROWTH
“I’m not just the President, I’m also a client.”
What the heck happened last year?

- FFTs  (effing first times)
- Zoom fatigue
- Feeling a sense of threat 24/7
- Disconnection
- Diffuse Boundaries
Quick definition of burnout

Herbert Freudenberger (1975) - Burnout has 3 components:

- **Emotional exhaustion** – the fatigue that comes from caring too much, for too long
- **Depersonalization** – the depletion of energy, caring and compassion
- **Decreased sense of accomplishment** – an unconquerable sense of futility; feeling that nothing you do makes any difference.
Giving credit where credit is due

Two things to learn before we talk about burnout

The nature of EMOTIONS

- They have a beginning, a middle, and an end
- Nagoski, E & A (2019): “Emotions are tunnels. If you go all the way through them, you get to the light at the end. Exhaustion happens when we get stuck in an emotion.”

One way that we get stuck in emotions is through HUMAN GIVER SYNDROME.

- Two categorizations of people – the “human beings” and the “human givers”
Nagoski & Nagoski (2019): “So emotional exhaustion happens when we get stuck in an emotion and can’t move through the tunnel. In Human Giver Syndrome, the giver isn’t allowed to inconvenience anyone with others with messy emotions, so givers are trapped in a situation where they are not free to move through the tunnel.”
The mechanics of the stress response

- Stressor ≠ Stress Response
- Fight, Flight, Freeze
Part II: Managing This Stuff
Completing the Stress Cycle

- Move your body
- Sleeping
- Breathing
- Positive Social Interaction
- Laughter
- Affection
- Crying
- Imagination & Creative Expression
Connection

- Vulnerability – strong back, soft front, wild heart
- “Move a Body” friends
- Frog in the pot
- Self-care Community care
Boundaries

- Real boundaries
- Expectations
Moral Injury versus Burnout

- What is moral injury and how is it different than burnout?
- Advocacy work is important
- Right versus privilege
Contact information and References

- If you have questions, feel free to email me at: mkersting@clarku.edu


