QUICK-GUIDE SUGGESTIONS PREVENTION/INTERVENTION WITH THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF CAREGIVING

B. Hudnall Stamm, Ph.D.

1. **Individual Level**
   a. **Self Assessment**
      i) History of traumatic events
         - If you have a history, welcome to the 50% who do 😄
      ii) What are your triggers?
      iii) Can you reduce their potency by therapy or other positive means?
   b. Stressor load outside of work environment
      i) Do you do things that refresh you?
      ii) What tasks do you have to do that use your energy?
         1) Is there a way to share the load with friends or family?
         2) What can you “not do” e.g. should you alter your expectations of what is “necessary”?

2. **Health behaviors**
   a. Sleep—most people are sleep deprived which makes you more physically and psychologically vulnerable
   b. Exercise: even 20 minutes 3 times a week makes a difference.
      i) Consider exercising with people who help “refresh” you, multi-tasking!
   c. Diet
      i) Do you eat at regular intervals, skip meals?
      ii) Do you eat enough fresh foods?
      iii) How about your caffeine, nicotine intake?
   d. Interpersonal Relationships
      i) Do you have unfinished business with others that uses energy?
      ii) Can you tell your friends and colleagues about how your work affects you (not your client’s details) and ask for their support?
      iii) Can you tell your friends and family not to expect you to solve their problems since you are “so good at it”?

3. **Other Assessment**
   a. What would your friends and family tell you about your work?
   b. Can you use them to help monitor your exposure, let you know when you start to seem stressed?
   c. What do you learn from your supervision?
      i) Is your supervision “safe,” or do you monitor what you tell your supervisor? If it is not safe, can you change supervisors? Should you add an “outside of work” supervisor?

4. **Work-Group Level**
   1. **Caseload**
      a. Can you vary your caseload?
      b. If you cannot see a variety of different patients/clients, can you:
         i) Intersperse patients/clients with administrative tasks
         ii) Distribute the level of distress of cases, mix people who are doing well and nearer completion of their therapy, or more stable cases for case management with those who are more volatile and struggling.
   c. Try to end the day (if at all possible) with a positive activity so that you don’t head home with fresh feelings of distress that you have not had time to dissipate in the work-setting where they belong. Otherwise, it is all too easy to imagine that they belong in your home/personal sphere.

2. **Collegial and Professional-Peer Support**
   a. Can you count on your colleagues to help
      i) Listen if you are struggling
      ii) Tell you when you are struggling more than a conversation by the coffee-pot can contain; when you need to seek supervision or professional support to deal with your feelings about work?
   b. If you cannot count on your work-colleagues
      i) Find a collegial group you can trust
         1) This may be in person, for example, a professional “lunch” group that meets for support
         2) Alternatively, it can utilize technology, e.g. telehealth, and be virtual community
      ii) Set basic ground rules for confidentiality
         1) Client confidentiality—you don’t have to tell their story; you really need to deal with how working with them made you feel! This is about you, not them.
         2) Provider (e.g. your) confidentiality—what you share should be considered confidential unless the group agrees to share particular information. It is a necessary part of feeling safe to share.

3. **Professional Hope**
   a. Burnout eats your ability to envision a better life.
   b. Professionals who have hope are far better at offering it to others!
During this time, you and your colleagues may be experiencing different reactions. There are several ways you can find balance, be aware of your needs, and make connections. Use this list to help you decide which self-care strategies will work for you.

- Practice brief relaxation techniques during the workday
- Check in with other colleagues
- Prepare for worldview changes that may not be mirrored by others in your life
- Increase leisure activities, stress management, and exercise
- Pay extra attention to health and nutrition
- Self-monitor and pace your efforts
- Maintain boundaries: delegate, say no, and avoid getting overloaded with work
- Pay extra attention to rekindling close interpersonal relationships
- Practice good sleep routines
- Make time for self-reflection
- Find things that you enjoy or make you laugh
- Participate in formal help if extreme stress persists for greater than two to three weeks
- Increase experiences that have spiritual or philosophical meaning to you
- Keep a journal to get worries off your mind
- Access support from colleagues routinely by sharing concerns, identifying difficult experiences and strategizing to solve problems
- Stay aware of limitations and needs
- Recognize when one is Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired (HALT), and taking the appropriate self-care measures
- Increase activities that are positive
- Practice religious faith, philosophy, spirituality
- Spend time with family and friends
- Learn how to “put stress away”
- Write, draw, paint
- Limit caffeine and substance use

Think of self-care as having three basic aspects:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>The first step is to seek awareness. This requires you to slow down and focus inwardly to determine how you are feeling, what your stress level is, what types of thoughts are going through your head, and whether your behaviors and actions are consistent with the who you want to be.</th>
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<td>Balance</td>
<td>The second step is to seek balance in all areas of your life including work, personal and family life, rest, and leisure. You will be more productive when you’ve had opportunities to rest and relax. Becoming aware of when you are losing balance in your life gives you an opportunity to change.</td>
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<td>Connection</td>
<td>The final step is connection. It involves building connections and supportive relationships with your co-workers, students, friends, family, and community. One of the most powerful stress reducers is social connection.</td>
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Adapted from *Psychological First Aid for Schools*
Caring For Yourself in the Face of Difficult Work

Our work can be overwhelming. Our challenge is to maintain our resilience so that we can keep doing the work with care, energy, and compassion.

10 things to do for each day

1. Get enough sleep.
2. Get enough to eat.
3. Do some light exercise.
4. Vary the work that you do.
5. Do something pleasurable.
6. Focus on what you did well.
7. Learn from your mistakes.
8. Share a private joke.
9. Pray, meditate or relax.
10. Support a colleague.

For more Information see your supervisor and visit www.psychosocial.org or www.proqol.org

Beth Hudnall Stamm, Ph.D., ProQOL.org and Idaho State University
Craig Higson-Smith, M.A., South African Institute of Traumatic Stress
Amy C. Hudnall, M.A., ProQOL.org and Appalachian State University
Henry E. Stamm, Ph.D., ProQOL.org

Switching On and Off

It is your empathy for others helps you do this work. It is vital to take good care of your thoughts and feelings by monitoring how you use them. Resilient workers know how to turn their feelings off when they go on duty, but on again when they go off duty. This is not denial; it is a coping strategy. It is a way they get maximum protection while working (switched off) and maximum support while resting (switched on).

How to become better at switching on and off

1. Switching is a conscious process. Talk to yourself as you switch.
2. Use images that make you feel safe and protected (switch off) or connected and cared for (switch on) to help you switch.
3. Find rituals that help you switch as you start and stop work.
4. Breathe slowly and deeply to calm yourself when starting a tough job.

We encourage you to copy and share this card. This is a template for making the pocket cards. You may make as many copies as you like. We have heard from some organizations that they have made thousands of copies. Some people find that it is helpful to laminate the cards for long-term use. The ProQOL helper card may be freely copied as long as (a) author is credited, (b) no changes are made other than those authorized below, and (c) it is not sold.

www.proqol.org
### Guidelines for Burnout Prevention Using VICTORY

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<th>VICTORY Guideline</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<td><strong>1. Vary your routines for relief.</strong></td>
<td>&quot;Routine has pluses--predictability, reliability and consistency. Habits can also be mind-numbing, however. Avoid getting into a rut. Recharge by altering habits occasionally. Vary the commute to work. Breathe fresh life into your daily habits.&quot; (Quinley, K. M. 2000)</td>
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<td><strong>2. Invite your colleagues for reward and recognition.</strong></td>
<td>Rebuild your sense of community through rituals and celebrations. Seek the advice of others when you can’t reach a kid or family. &quot;Lesson study&quot; or exchange helpful ideas, materials, and tips. Take time at the beginning of your meetings to recognize one another. Be a little silly!</td>
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<td><strong>3. Close those open energy circles (unfinished tasks) for results and relief.</strong></td>
<td>Be realistic about the time you have. Pace yourself and your family by planning ahead for the hectic times. Make lists! Remember that your results may be in the distant future, not today.</td>
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<td><strong>4. Tackle one of the six workplace risk factors, with your colleagues for results, rewards, and recognition.</strong></td>
<td>Make burnout prevention a standing item on your agendas! Remember that the process is more important than a “happy ending.” The process re-engages you and renews your support system at work.</td>
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<td><strong>5. Open up to your support system for relief, reward, and recognition.</strong></td>
<td>Spend time with your family and friends. Ask for help during hectic periods. Resist the urge to blend work and home. Find a professional listener! Renew your spiritual supports. Find the recognition you need in non-work activities.</td>
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<td><strong>7. You are not your job.</strong></td>
<td>“Yes.” Say it less often. Set non-career goals. Write two or three nonprofessional goals or desires on a 3-by-5-inch card, carry it at all times, and look at it at least once a day.</td>
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# Your Burnout Prevention Planner

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<td>5. <strong>O</strong>pen up to your support system for relief, reward, and recognition.</td>
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<td>6. <strong>R</strong>echarge your batteries for relief, results, and recognition.</td>
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<td>7. <strong>Y</strong>ou are not your job. Write 3 non-work goals and text them to yourself every morning.</td>
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