

Sustaining Ourselves in Challenging Times: Ethical and Risk Management Perspectives

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Leisl M. Bryant, Ph.D., ABPP is a licensed New Hampshire and Massachusetts-based clinical and forensic psychologist, with board certification in Forensic Psychology. Dr. Bryant frequently consults and lectures on forensic, clinical, ethical, and risk management issues and has maintained a private practice for nearly two decades. She is a Fellow with the American Academy of Forensic Psychology, and formerly served as President and Executive Director of the New Hampshire Psychological Association (NHPA). She also served on the NHPA Ethics Committee for over ten years, received the Margaret M. Riggs Award for Distinguished Contribution to Psychology, and was later awarded the Karl F. Heiser APA Presidential Award for Advocacy for her work related to the NH psychology licensing board.

Disclosures/Conflicts of Interest

The presenter does not have any conflicts of interest to disclose.

NOTE: The information presented in this webinar is not intended to provide legal advice or to substitute for the advice of an attorney, but rather to provide information about considerations when dealing with practitioner self-care.

Learning Objectives

- Describe what self-care is and why it matters ethically and from a risk management perspective.
- Identify at least six risks of not addressing self-care and four warning signs.
- Apply at least four strategies for prioritizing and practicing self-care in order to minimize risk to clinicians, their clients, and their businesses.

PAUSE





Why yes, I am a bit stressed.



Why do you ask?



Me trying to excel in my career,
maintain a social life, drink enough
water, exercise, text everyone back,
stay sane, survive and be happy

MEME GENERATOR



Whoo! What a Week!!!!
I sure am glad it's Friday!



“Self-care is not a narcissistic luxury to be fulfilled as time permits; it is a human requisite, a clinical necessity, and an ethical imperative.”

Norcross & VandenBos, 2018

What is Self-Care?

- The practice of taking an active role in protecting one's well-being and happiness
- Tending to oneself, getting to know oneself
- Being aware of and honoring one's own needs
- Mindfully paying attention to and caring for oneself
- Deliberately acting to promote our mental, emotional, psychological, and spiritual wellness

Why It Matters

- Legal Obligations and Ethical Imperative
 - Principle A: Beneficence and Nonmaleficence:
“Psychologists strive to be aware of the possible effect of their own physical and mental health on their ability to help those with whom they work.”
 - Standard 2.03: Maintaining Competence: “Psychologists undertake ongoing efforts to develop and maintain their competence.”

Ethical Imperative Continued...

- Standard 2.06: Personal Problems and Conflicts:

“(a) Psychologists refrain from initiating an activity when they know or should know that there is a substantial likelihood that their personal problems will prevent them from performing their work-related activities in a competent manner...

(b) When psychologists become aware of personal problems that may interfere with their performing work-related duties adequately, they take appropriate measures, such as obtaining professional consultation or assistance, and determine whether they should limit, suspend, or terminate their work-related activities.”

Ethical Imperative Continued...

- Standard 3.04 Avoiding Harm:

“Psychologists take reasonable steps to avoid harming their clients/patients, students, supervisees, research participants, organizational clients, and others with whom they work, and to minimize harm where it is foreseeable and unavoidable.”

- Vulnerability, loss of objectivity, impaired judgment

“Those who think they have no time for bodily exercise will sooner or later have to make time for illness.”

~ Edward Stanley



Risks of Not Attending to Self-Care

- Distress
- Burnout
- Vicarious Traumatization
- Errors in Judgment
- Failure to meet legal and ethical obligations
- Licensing board complaints and/or civil suits
- Harm to clients

Continuum

(APA Board of Professional Affairs Advisory Committee on Colleague Assistance)

Stress

Distress

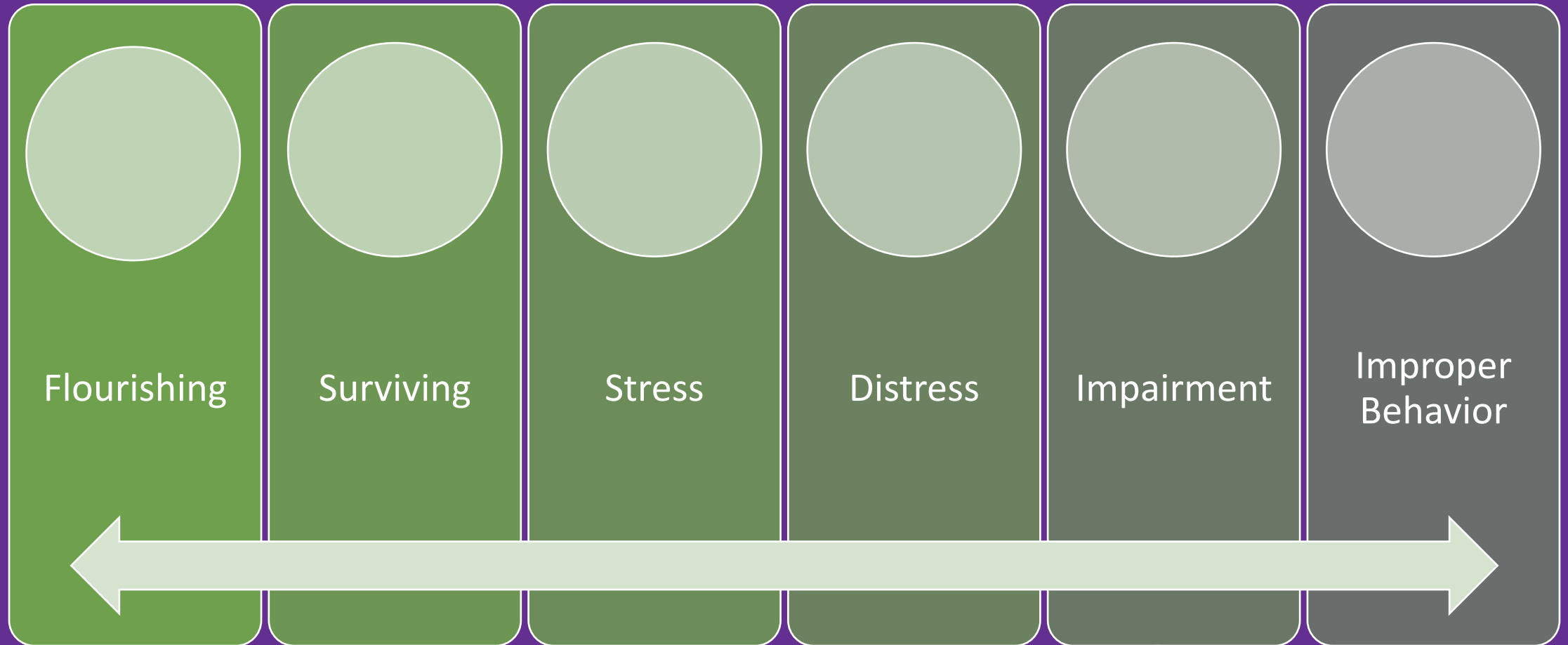
Impairment

Improper
behavior

Limitations

- Starts at neutral and spirals down
- Envisioning a positive continuum (Wise, Hersh, & Gibson, 2012)
- Allows for spiraling up
- Enhancing functioning and greatly reducing likelihood of progression through the negative stages

Broader Continuum Concept



Foundational Principles

(Wise, Hersh, & Gibson, 2012)

- Emphasis on flourishing (rather than merely surviving)
- Intentionality
- Reciprocity between care of self and care of others
- Integrated

First Steps

- Self-awareness
- Self-monitoring
- Self-assessment



Warning Signs

- Unable to acknowledge the possibility that one may experience distress
- Ignoring the signs of distress or assuming one can simply push through them
- Physical signs (disturbed sleep/eating/concentration, headaches, stomachaches, lethargy, exhaustion, recurring colds/illness)
- Emotional signs (sadness, prolonged grief, anxiety, depression, agitation, mood swings)
- Isolation, cynicism, feeling overwhelmed or stretched to thin

Warning Signs continued...

- Overworking, not taking breaks, less enjoyment of one's work
- Boredom, disinterest, easily irritated
- Wishing patients would not show up or daydreaming during sessions
- Experiencing and/or minimizing significant life stressors
- Self-medicating, overlooking personal needs and health
- Seeking emotional support or nurturance from clients
- Friends/family tell you you work too much (50-60 hour weeks)
- Violating boundaries

Effective Self Care Is...

- Personal
- Replenishing, nourishing
- Deliberative
- Sustainable
- Integrated into daily life
- Comprehensive and flexible
- Characterized by a complex differential pattern of strategies

In Times of Intensity

- * Amp up self-care
- * Practice genuine self-compassion

Simple techniques:

- * Breathe deeply
- * Inquiries: What is real?
What is needed?
What do I need?
What is the action to take now?
- * Surround yourself with Beauty
- * Nature
- * Humor
- * Mindfulness and/or spiritual practices



Strategies for Living Self-Care

(Norcross & VandenBos, 2018)

- Strategies vs. techniques
- Research stresses the need to create, strengthen, and utilize *multiple* strategies

Strategies...

- Value and grow the person of the psychotherapist
- Refocus on rewards
- Recognize and be realistic about professional hazards
- Tend the body
- Nurture relationships both in and out of the office
- Set boundaries

Strategies...

- Restructure Cognitions
- Sustain healthy escapes
- Maintain mindfulness
- Create a thriving environment
- Make use of personal therapy
- Cultivate spirituality
- Foster your own creativity and growth

Additional Considerations

- Assessment:
 - What are you already doing
 - What needs strengthening
 - What needs creating
- Start small
- Changes over time
- Common humanity
- Challenges and opportunities



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Q&A



- Dr. Sammons will read select questions that were submitted via the Q&A feature throughout the presentation.
- Due to time constraints, we will not be able to address every question asked.