“Ask the Experts” Webinar Series

- Series of recorded webinars to be posted on the NASP website
- Webinars are designed to offer support to school psychologists, interns, and practicum students as they navigate the delivery of school psychological services during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Each webinar will be followed by the opening of a discussion thread on the NASP member exchange community
- Each webinar will:
  - Address critical questions emerging as a result of the need to provide virtual telehealth school psychological services
  - Provide advice and guidance from experts
  - Offer suggested strategies and resources for addressing professional practice issues
Paula Gill Lopez, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Psychological & Educational Consultation
Fairfield University (CT)
pgilllopez@fairfield.edu
What is Self-Care?

Self-care is the **intentional, proactive** pursuit of **integrated** wellness; **balancing** mind, body and spirit personally and professionally.*

- One person’s self-care should not be at the expense of another’s self-care
- If it feels stressful, it’s NOT self-care

*(GILL LOPEZ, 2016)*
Why Practice Self-Care?

1. To practice ethically (Do no harm)
2. To combat burnout (Do not wait until you’re sick and tired to replenish your resources)
3. To provide a model of self-regulated presence (Do it for the kids!)
A typical crisis has a clear beginning and ending.

There is usually a clear population of victims, survivors, and their family and friends.

We usually know who is likely to have acute stress and potential traumatic stress symptoms.

In a pandemic:
- We can’t predict the future.
- We are all vulnerable.
- We are all experiencing loss and/or grief.
- Maslow’s Hierarchy...loss of safety, and we can’t promise safety.
Increased Vulnerability

In this crisis, everyone is potentially a first responder AND a victim

**FIRST RESPONDERS**
DOCTORS/NURSES
PD/FD
GROCERY STORE WORKERS
TRUCK DRIVERS/DELIVERY PEOPLE
CRISIS TEAM MEMBERS
SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF
TEACHERS
PARENTS
STUDENTS

**VICTIMS**
DOCTORS/NURSES
PD/FD
GROCERY STORE WORKERS
TRUCK DRIVERS/DELIVERY PEOPLE
CRISIS TEAM MEMBERS
SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF
TEACHERS
PARENTS
STUDENTS

The indefinite, uncertain nature of this crisis can overwhelm individuals’ coping resources, exacerbating pre-existing conditions such as, addiction, depression, anxiety, PTSD, etc. exponentially.
Caring for the Caregivers

**Monitor:**

**Physical Symptoms:**
- Chronic fatigue and exhaustion
- Difficulty focusing or attending
- Confusion or jumpiness
- Headaches, stomachaches, tense muscles
- Trouble sleeping and/or eating

**Social Symptoms:**
- Difficulty with relationships
- Withdrawal, isolation
- Irritability, anger
- Needing to “rescue” others, control, responding to every crisis
- Excessive use of alcohol and other substances

**Emotional Symptoms:**
- Excessive worry or anxiety
- Flat affect or hopelessness
- Extreme anger or depression
- Compassion fatigue
- Disturbing dreams
- Inability to make everyday decisions
The Importance of Self-Care for School Psychologists

- Those with jobs in the mental health field have very high burnout rates due to the stressful nature of the work (Barnett, Baker, Elman, and Schoener, 2007; Shapiro, Brown & Biegel, 2007; Sherman, 1996; Wise, Hersh & Gibson, 2012).

- School psychologists have been found to have the highest burnout rates among helping professionals (Huebner, E.S., Gilligan, T.D., & Cobb, 2002; Mills & Huebner, 1998).
Defining Burnout

• Burnout is defined as "a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with people in some capacity" (Maslach, 1986, p.61).

• “It represents an erosion in values, dignity, spirit, and will – an erosion of the human soul . . . burnout is not a problem of the people themselves but of the social environment in which people work” (Maslach & Leiter, 1997, p. 17-18).
Risk/Resiliency Model of Burnout

Protective Factors
(HUEBNER, GILLIGAN & COBB, 2002)

**ORGANIZATIONAL:**
- Good supervision opportunities
- Formalized Peer Support Groups
- Minimal Role Conflict
- Clear Delineation of Roles & Responsibilities
- Avoidance of Role Overload

**INDIVIDUAL:**
- Extroversion
- Flexibility
- Optimism and a Sense of Humor
- Willingness to Self-Evaluate Levels of Stress
- Commitment to a Personal Self Care Plan
- Participation in supervision and peer support
- Participation in professional associations and professional development
ADKAR Model for SYSTEM Change
(Hiatt & Creasy, 2003)

Hiatt and Creasy maintain that there are five steps for promoting successful change through individuals in a system:

1. **Raise awareness of need to change.**
2. **Nurture a desire to change.**
3. **Provide knowledge of how to change.**
4. **Develop ability to change.**
5. **Reinforce the change.**
Project Self-Care Results

POST-WORKSHOP, PARTICIPANTS REPORTED SIGNIFICANTLY GREATER:

- Psychological, Spiritual & Balance Self-Care practice
- Sense of Efficacy in Student Engagement, Instructional Strategies & Classroom Management
- Cognitive Reappraisal Emotion Regulation
- Observing Mindfulness

*Note: Even though there were no significant effects found for burnout, the increases in sense of efficacy and cognitive reappraisal could mitigate the reduced personal accomplishment component of burnout.

(Gill Lopez & Sheehan, in preparation)
WHAT CONTRIBUTED MOST TO YOUR LEARNING?

• Experiential activities – 41/108 (38%)
• Concrete tools and resources – 26/108 (24%)
• Sharing/listening to experiences of others – 21/108 (19%)
• Instructor/presentation format – 21/108 (19%)
• Research on self-care/mindfulness – 9/108 (8%)

OTHER SUGGESTIONS:

• Weekly Reminders
• Self-Care Accountability Partners
• Mindfulness Before Staff Meetings
• Modeling
• One Size Does Not Fit All

(GILL LOPEZ, PIERAGOSTINI, GOGLIETTINO, TAYLOR, KELLY, UNPUBLISHED DATA)
SELF-CARE CONSIDERATIONS

Loving Kindness

What brings you joy?

Minimum Effective Dose

Honoring Ultradian Rhythms

BOUNDARIES

TAKING IN THE GOOD/SAVORING

Self-care in the background

GILL LOPEZ, 2016
MINDFULNESS ANCHORS

MINDFUL BODY

MINDFUL TOUCH

MINDFUL EATING/TASTING

MINDFUL SMELLING

MINDFUL SEEING

MINDFUL BREATH

MINDFUL LISTENING
Empirical Results:
MINDFULNESS SELF-CARE MAY ALLEVIATE STRESS/BURNOUT

Educators' mindfulness is one aspect of social–emotional competence that may protect them from experiencing burnout and its negative consequences ... the protective effect of mindfulness was most pronounced among more stressed and more ambitious educators. This study adds to accumulating evidence that mindfulness promotes resilience in educators and may foster healthy educators, classrooms, and students. (Abenavoli et al., 2013, p. 57)

✓ There is an emerging literature demonstrating the benefits of educators avoiding burnout through practicing mindfulness. One study found that teachers’ mindfulness was negatively correlated with Maslach's burnout components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and perceptions of low accomplishment. (Abenavoli, Jennings, Greenberg, Harris, & Katz, 2013)

✓ Other researchers have found similar results using mindfulness as a primary self-care intervention for educators and therapists to effectively manage stress and combat burnout. (Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, Bonus, & Davidson, 2013; Jennings, Frank, Snowberg, Coccia, & Greenberg, 2013; Roeser, Skinner, Beers, & Jennings, 2012; Shapiro, Brown, & Biegel, 2007)
mindful gratitude
Gratitude Research Outcomes

✓ Gratitude brings us happiness, optimism, joy, pleasure, enthusiasm, and other positive emotions.
✓ Gratitude reduces anxiety and depression.
✓ Gratitude is good for our bodies, including strengthening immunity, reducing perceptions of aches and pains.
✓ Grateful people sleep better.
✓ Gratitude makes us more resilient.
✓ Gratitude strengthens relationships.
✓ Gratitude promotes forgiveness.
✓ Grateful people are more prosocial.
✓ Gratitude is good for kids and good for schools.

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/gratitude/definition#why_practice
Reducing Perceptions of Busyness

Busyness is indicative of “cognitive overload” which inhibits executive functioning and more.

**Strategies:**

- Be awe inspired - inspired people feel like they have more time and are less impatient
  [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBnseji3tBk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBnseji3tBk)

- Create flow – stop multi-tasking and create a distraction/interruption free workspace

- Enact an anti-busyness ritual – brains are calmed by repetitive behavior
AWE Research Outcomes

- Awe makes us feel less busy.
- Awe makes us feel a cascade of positive emotions such as joy and gratitude, which are linked to greater health and well-being.
- Awe makes us happier.
- Awe encourages curiosity and creativity.
- Awe makes us more generous.
- Awe is linked to better physical health.
- Awe sharpens our brains.

(https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/awe/definition#why-practice)
SELF-CARE

IN THE BACKGROUND

she believed she could, so she did.
Self-care is a mindset . . .
I'm half full

I'm half empty
Effective Self Care Requires:

- **Recognition** that self-care is not selfish - it’s a quality-of-life health imperative.

- **Intention** to commit to practicing self-care - make a plan

- **Self-awareness** to check-in to determine what you may need in any moment

- **Experiencing** practices fully with all your senses to burn new neural pathways of positivity & peace

(GILL LOPEZ, 2021)
The Self Care Triangle

**TIER 1.** Daily.
Self-care. Practiced once to multiple times a day.

- Read 1 bible chapter a day
- Sleep 7-8 hrs/day
- Hip exercises before arising in am
- Take supplements
- Eat at least 2 meals/day
- Walk puppy 2x/day
- Eat more protein
- Drink 90 oz. of water a day
- Self-care in the background: diffuser, instrumental classic jazz
- Set boundaries according to priorities
- Practice everyday mindfulness: showering, eating, driving
- Eat dark chocolate
- Practice gratitude & self-compassion
- Glass half full attitude
- Self-advocate
- Laugh

**TIER 2.** Weekly.
Self-care practiced regularly.

- Yoga w/Adriene 3-5 times a wk
- Elliptical 10-15 mins. 3-5 times a week
- Walk on Walnut Beach on Sundays to Bees Knees for breakfast
- Insert favorite photos in workshop PPTs
- Date night with hubby

**TIER 3.** Once in a while.
Self-care that requires more resources (financial, time, etc.)

- Visit CA & AZ family & friends
- *Catch up w/an old friend
- Create a dream garden
- Buy a car

Different levels of self-care practices

GILL LOPEZ, 2021
As much as doing mindfulness activities and meditations seemed silly and like a waster of time at first, it is now something I not only practice as a form of self-care but also something I use with all my students. ~ EB

By participating in self-care and developing an identity as a school psychologist, I have gained a newly defined self-confidence and my anxiety has subsided despite the increase in demands that I am responsible for in my day to day. ~JT

Before this program, I valued the opposite of self-care. I was definitely the kind of person who wore burnout and injury as a badge of honor signifying hard work. . . Looking back I recognize how sick those feelings were, but only because you taught me a better way to live and treat myself. ~ND
Science of the Greater Good – http://greatergood.berkeley.edu
The Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley sponsors groundbreaking scientific discoveries—and turns them into stories, tips, and tools for a happier life and more compassionate society. Since 2001, the GGSC has been at the fore of a new scientific movement to explore the roots of happy and compassionate individuals, strong social bonds, and altruistic behavior—the science of a meaningful life.

Greater Good in Action - http://ggia.berkeley.edu/about_us

The Just One Thing newsletter is a free, weekly offering that suggests a simple practice each week that will bring you more joy, more fulfilling relationships, and more peace of mind and heart. https://www.rickhanson.net/newsletter-signup/

http://marc.ucla.edu/mindful-meditations

https://www.smilingmind.com.au

https://www.calm.com

https://www.youtube.com/user/yogawithadriene
Other NASP Resources

- **NASP COVID-19 Resource Center**
  

- **Ask the Experts Webinar: Care for the Caregivers**
  

- **Self Care for School Psychologists**
  
Questions and Considerations