

Energizing Change: Transforming Compassion Fatigue, Finding Balance, and Sustaining Effectiveness



Equal Justice Conference 2010

Outline of this Workshop

- Introductions
- Staying Balanced for the Long Haul: Overview
- Personal Narratives
- Overview of Compassion Fatigue
- Discussion
- The Social Work Perspective
- Discussion
- Closing Exercise



The Blizzard of the World has crossed the threshold

And it has overturned the order of the soul

Leonard Cohen

An Essential Reflection

Why did you choose to do this work?

Why are you still here?

What is 'the rope' that keeps you from getting lost?

Ever Feel Like Sisyphus?



What are your stressors?

- What disturbs your sleep?
- What do you ruminate about? What keeps running through your mind over and over and over? And over?
- What do you worry about?
- What do you AVOID thinking about?

How do you stay balanced?



In Equilibrium

Mandala by Veeno

Obstacles to the Balanced, Reflective Life



Causes of Burnout

- Environmental
- Organizational
- Attitudes /Beliefs



Environmental Causes of Burnout

- Expectations
- Critical Self-Talk
- Nature of the work, e.g. filing deadlines
- Psychology of Hierarchy in Workplace
 - Lifestyles
 - Lack of Support or Outlets

Organizational Causes of Burnout

- Culture of Organization
 - Work Ethic
 - Personnel Policies/Practices
 - Criteria for reward/advancement
 - Community?

Organizational Dynamics, continued....

- Working with Traumatized People
 - See the work of Sandra Bloom:
www.sanctuaryweb.com

- Mission Dysfunction*
 - Light and Shadow
 - See: Pat Vivian and Shana Hormann, "Trauma and Healing in Organizations", *OD Practitioner*, Vol. 34, No. 4, 2002, 52-57

Attitudes and Beliefs

If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude.

Maya Angelou



Attitudes and Beliefs

- Boundary Issues
 - The dimensions and limits of compassion
 - Annoyance as a symptom
- Personal issues: needing to be needed
- Office cultural expectations
 - Overwork
 - Excessive involvement

- Work Ethic

- Workaholism as a virtue
- Self esteem tied to 'productivity'



On overwork:

“There is far too much work done in the world.
...(This) immense harm is caused by the belief that
work is virtuous.”

Bertrand Russell

“Nature requires us not only to be able to work well,
but to idle well”

Aristotle

Work Week and Vacation Comparisons

- United States

Paid Holidays/Year: 10

Vacation: 10 days
(not required)

Average Work Week:
Pre-recession*: 46 hours,
excluding travel time

- European Union

Britain: 25, Germany: 30

Minimum 4 weeks by law
Including for part-timers
Denmark: 31 days
Germany: 24 days

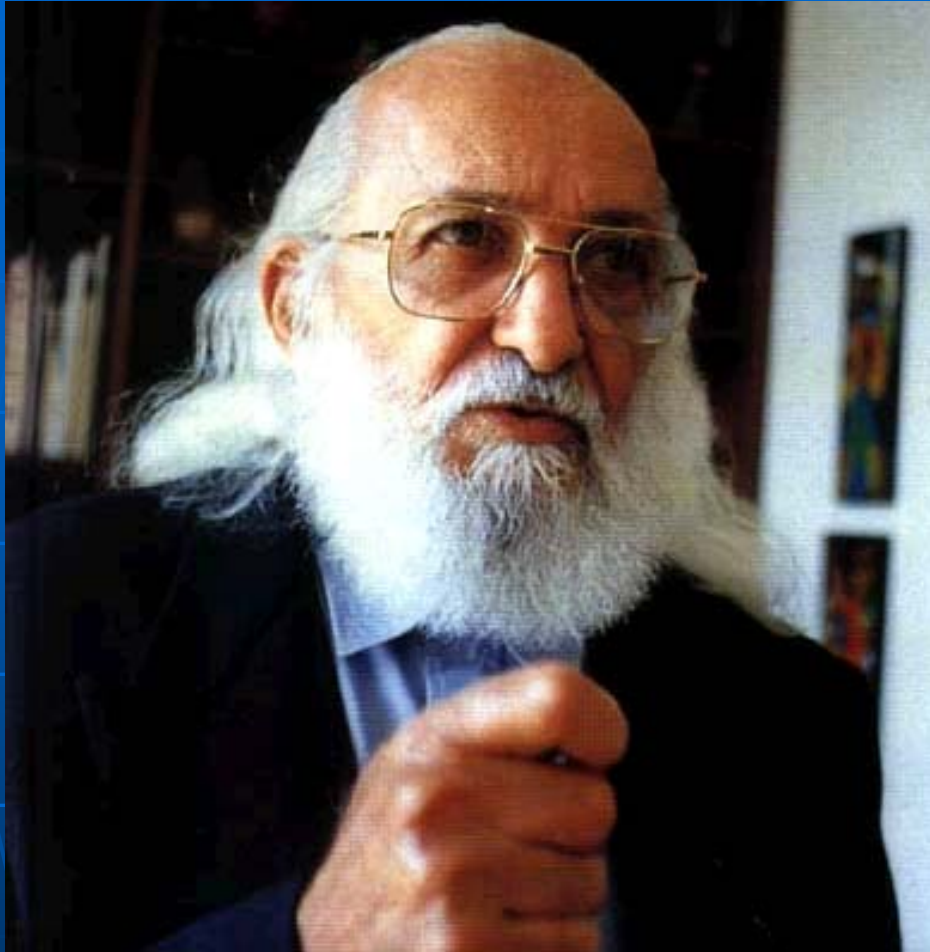
E.U. average 39, working on 35

*Due to higher unemployment in the current recession, this statistic was 33 hours/week (Sept. 2009)

“ One of the symptoms of an approaching nervous breakdown is the belief that one’s work is terribly important”

Bertrand Russell





“We are bigger than our schedules”

Paulo Freire, Brazilian Educator

- Who is the YOU that is bigger than your schedule?
- What are the essentials of your day, rather than the merely important?

urgent vs.
important vs.
essential

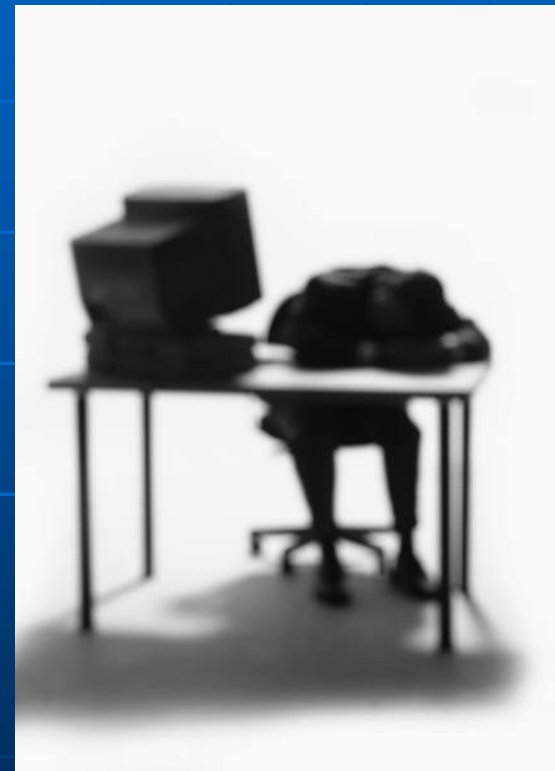


"We spend our days stringing and unstringing our instruments, but the song we came here to sing remains unsung."

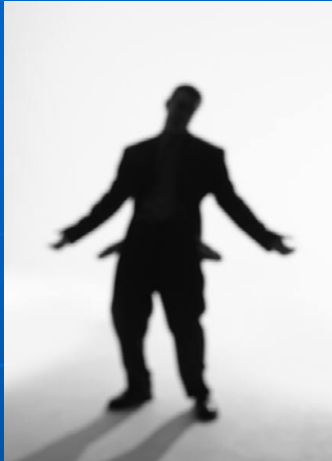
Tagore

■ Stress and Your Body:

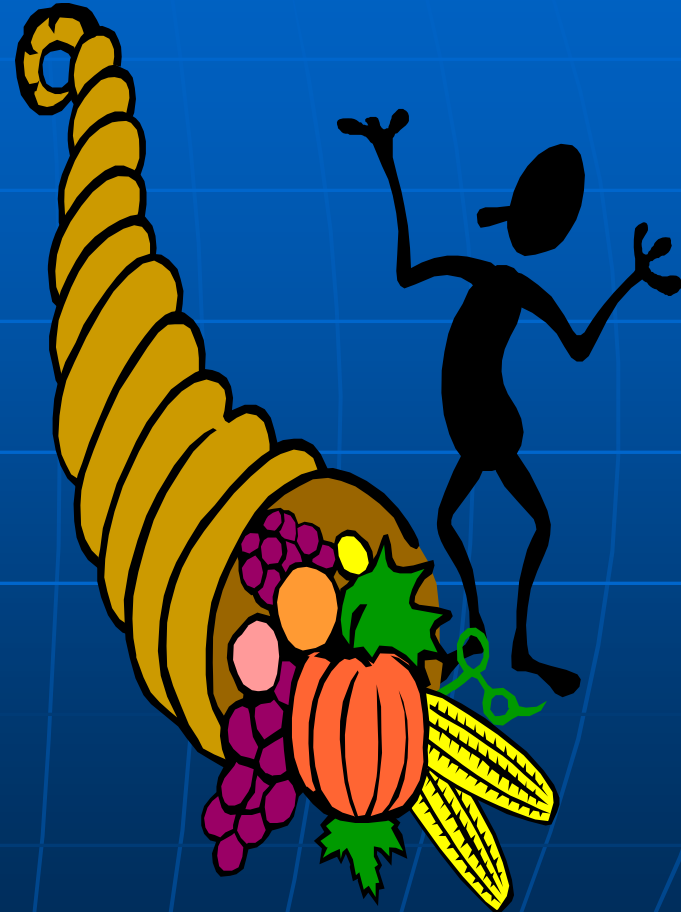
- Virtue: Don't 'stop 'til you drop?'
- Ignore illness: drag body into work?
- Sick every holiday?
- Chronic illness issues?



Beliefs.....

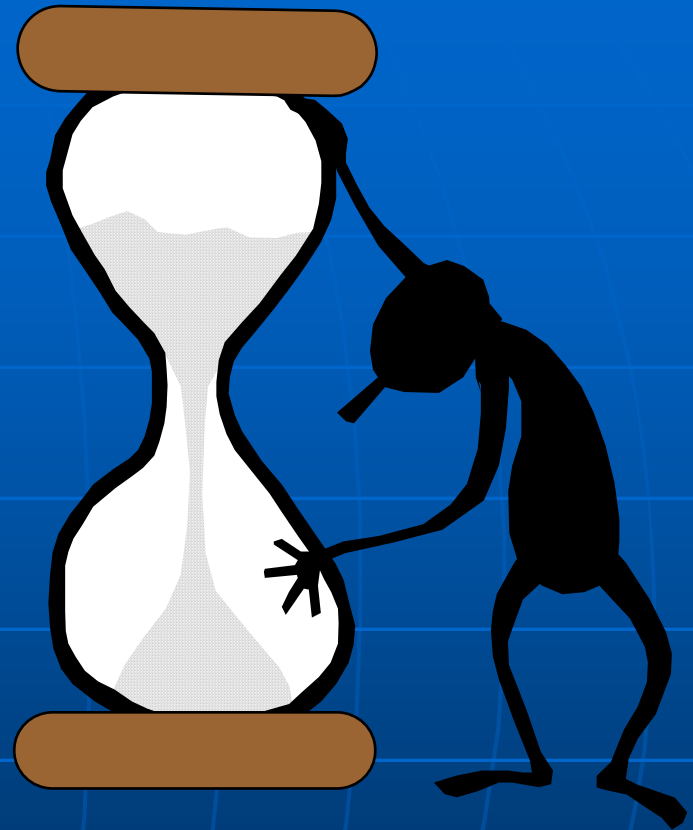


Is the world one of
Scarcity or
Abundance?



■ Beliefs about Time

- Time-slavery?
- Time as human construct
- Body Clock
- Seasonal/natural 'time'



“...When you’re traveling the terrain of time, the shortest distance between two points may be a detour. ”

Marjorie Kelly

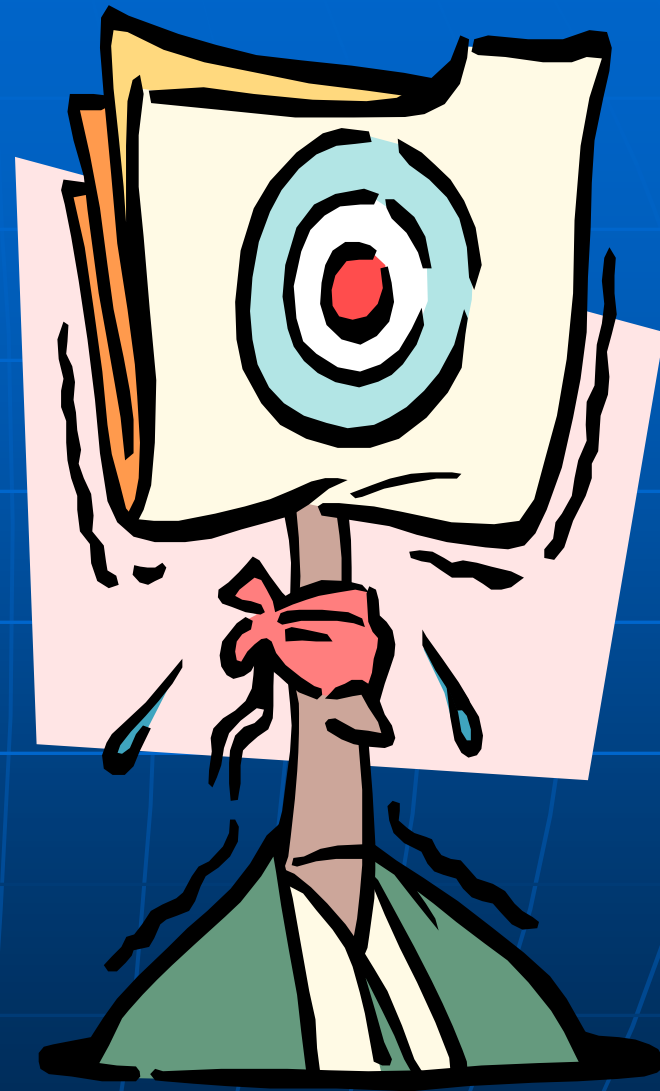
How do you ‘s t r e t c h’ time?

- Victimhood

- No choices
- Controlled by circumstances

Vs.

Every moment as
choice



- Beliefs about rest, contemplation, reflection

- Waste of time?

vs.

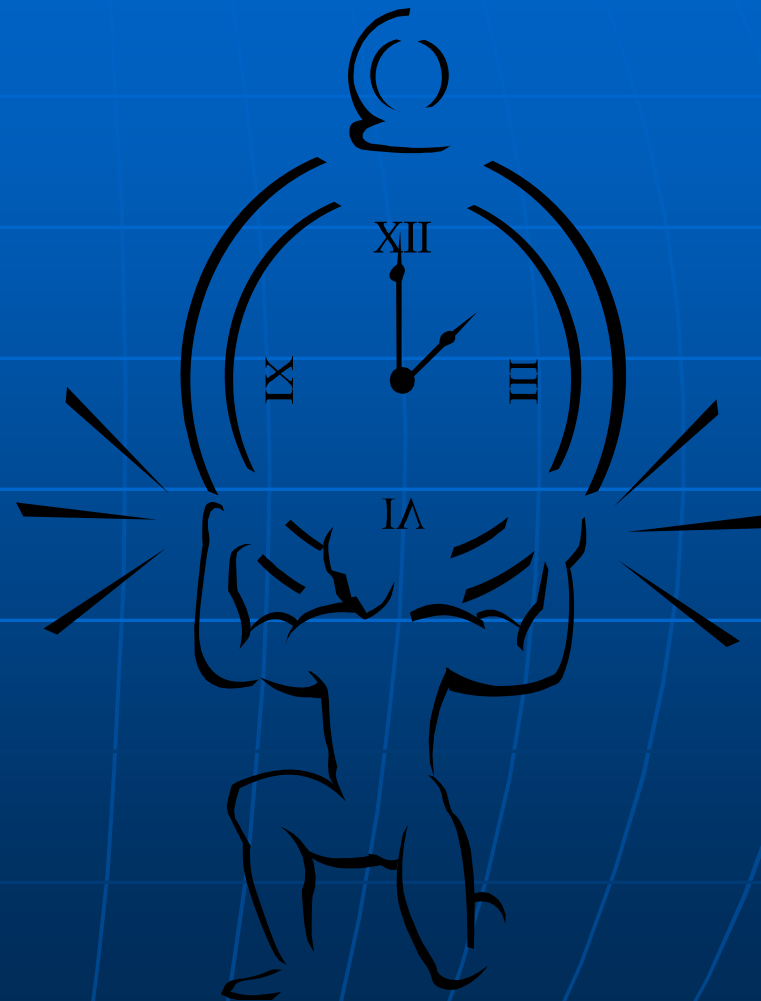
Value of dreaming, visioning, rest, renewal

When do you get your most creative ideas?



Relationship to Technology

- 24-7 availability
- Blurring of work/leisure
- Increased expectation of rapid response
- The tyranny of e mail
- The frenzy of multi-tasking



To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything, is to succumb to violence. Frenzy destroys our inner capacity for peace.

Thomas Merton

Unacknowledged Grief



- People who do not care, do not burnout
- Tension between professionalism and human care and compassion

The importance of our personal
narratives.....

"The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet."



*-Rachel Naomi Remen in Kitchen
Table Wisdom: Stories that Heal (1996)*

Secondary Trauma Stress (STS)

Also known as compassion fatigue

- Natural consequent-sudden onset-no/little warning
- Behaviors & emotions resulting from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other
- Stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person
- Results as synergistic affect of exposure to trauma and your degree of empathy

Figley, Charles R., "Compassion Fatigue as Secondary Stress Disorder: An Overview" pp., 7, 9 (1995)

Vicarious Traumatization (VT)

- The experience of bearing witness to atrocities committed against another
- The result of absorbing the sight, sound, touch, and feel of the stories told in detail by victim
- Instant physical reaction
- A disruption of deeply held schema
 - Professional comes to doubt deeply held beliefs about safety and the inherent kindness of others

A client is standing in a river raging with current and has a boulder fall right in front of her and resulting splash knocks her over. The boulder is trauma. The attorney is standing some distance behind in the same river and experiences the after wave. It is smaller, it is nowhere near what the client experiences, but it is the same shape and nature that the client experiences.

Jean Koh Peters, Stress, Burnout, Vicarious Trauma, and Other Emotional Realities in the Lawyer Client Relationship, 19 Touro L. Rev. 847, 857 (2002-4).

The Quotidian Character of Chronic Stress

- Much of the stress that adversely affects our lives stems from the structure of our daily experiences
- It is not a one-time happening but emerges over time
- Stress begets stress

Pearlin and Schooler, J. Health Soc. Behavior, 19:2-21, 1978. The Structure of Coping

Seven Factors that Enhance Stress

1. Feeling the pain-empathizing
2. Disparity between attorney expectation and realities of work
3. Disparity between how we perceive ourselves as advocates/champions and how our client's family members perceive us
4. Fear of expressing/showing our emotions as a sign of weakness
5. Our own trauma retriggered by clients' traumatization
6. Chronic exposure/nature of work we do
7. Lack of control over our work life

Alcohol abuse:

10% of general population suffers from
alcohol abuse

15-18% of lawyer population suffers
from alcohol abuse

Would these numbers be higher for
attorneys who work with traumatized
clients and do not practice self
examination?

Would depression and anxiety rates be
higher as well?

Survey found that attorneys, who were recruited from domestic violence and family law and legal aid criminal services, experienced more symptoms of secondary trauma and burnout compared with comparison groups of mental health providers and social workers. In the study, attorneys “demonstrated higher levels of intrusive recollection of trauma material, avoidance of reminders of the material and diminished pleasure and interest in activities, and difficulties with sleep, irritability, and concentration”.

High caseloads and lack of supervision around trauma and its effects predicted higher scores

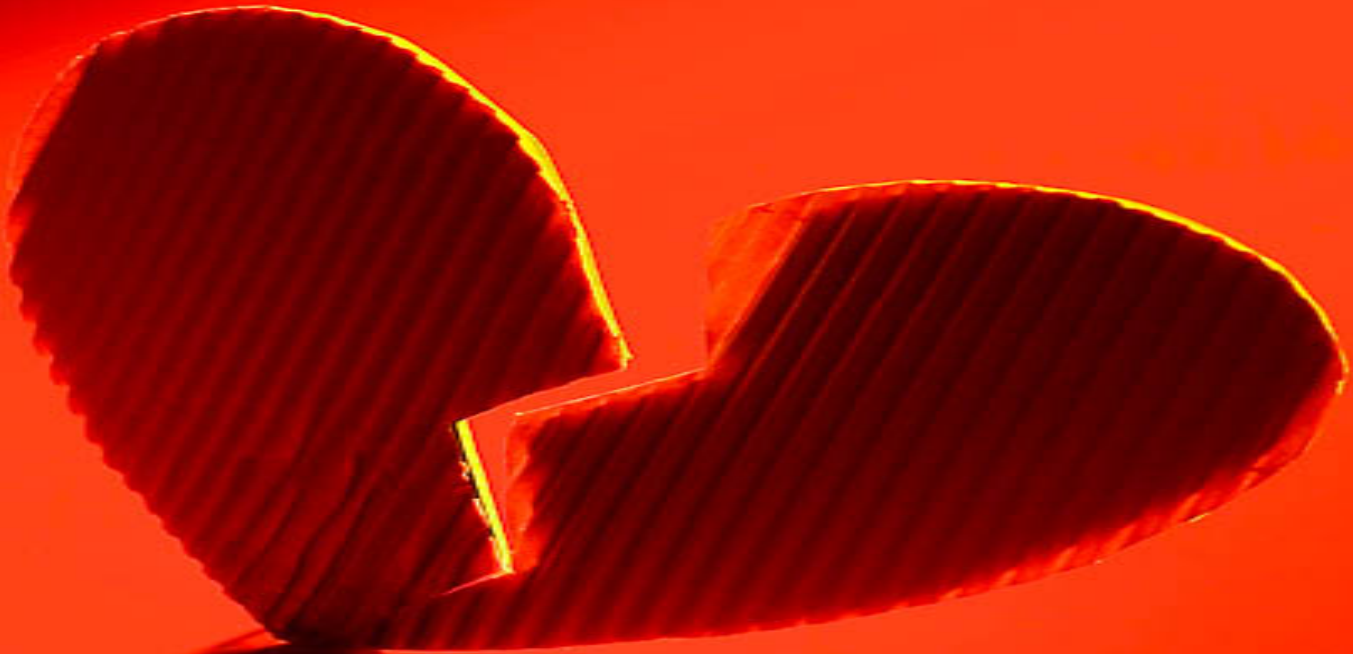
Symptoms of VT, coping, and prevention were investigated and explored with 105 judges.

Majority (63%) reported one or more symptoms that they identified as work related to VT.

Females reported more symptoms, as did judges with 7 or more years of experience.

Female judges were more likely to report internalizing difficulty, while judges with more experience reported higher levels of externalizing/hostility symptoms.

Jaffe, Peter et al, Vicarious Trauma in Judges: The Personal Challenge of Dispensing Justice, 54 Juv. & Fam. Ct. J. 2 (Fall 2003)

A heart shape is cut out of a piece of corrugated cardboard. The heart is positioned in the upper half of the frame. The background is a solid, vibrant red. The entire scene is set within a blue border that has a subtle grid pattern.

“There are places in the heart that do not yet exist, and it is into these that suffering enters, that they may have existence.”

Leon Bloy

What is your experience?



Your Thoughts?
Your Insights?
Questions?



Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL)

Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue

© B. Hudnall Stamm, 2009. *Professional Quality of Life: Compassion Satisfaction and Fatigue Version 5 (ProQOL)*.
www.isu.edu/~bhstamm or www.proqol.org.

Making a Commitment to Yourself

- Write down three things you could do to achieve Balance in each arena: professional, organizational, and personal.
- Professional
 - 1. _____
 - 2. _____
 - 3. _____
- Organizational
 - 1. _____
 - 2. _____
 - 3. _____
- Personal
 - 1. _____
 - 2. _____
 - 3. _____

Adapted from Saakvitne & Pearlman (Norton 1996)

- Next, place an asterisk besides every strategy you could implement during the next month.
- Then, circle one in each category that you will try to do during the next week.
- The list might look like the following:
 - Personal
 1. Take a vacation
 - 2. Exercise ***
 3. Have lunch with a close friend *
 - Professional
 - 1. Go for a walk ***
 2. Schedule supervision *
 3. Eat Lunch
 - Organizational
 1. Have supportive "compassion fatigue, balance, self-care" discussions*
 2. Reading Group
 - 3. Staff Tea ***

How do you stay balanced?

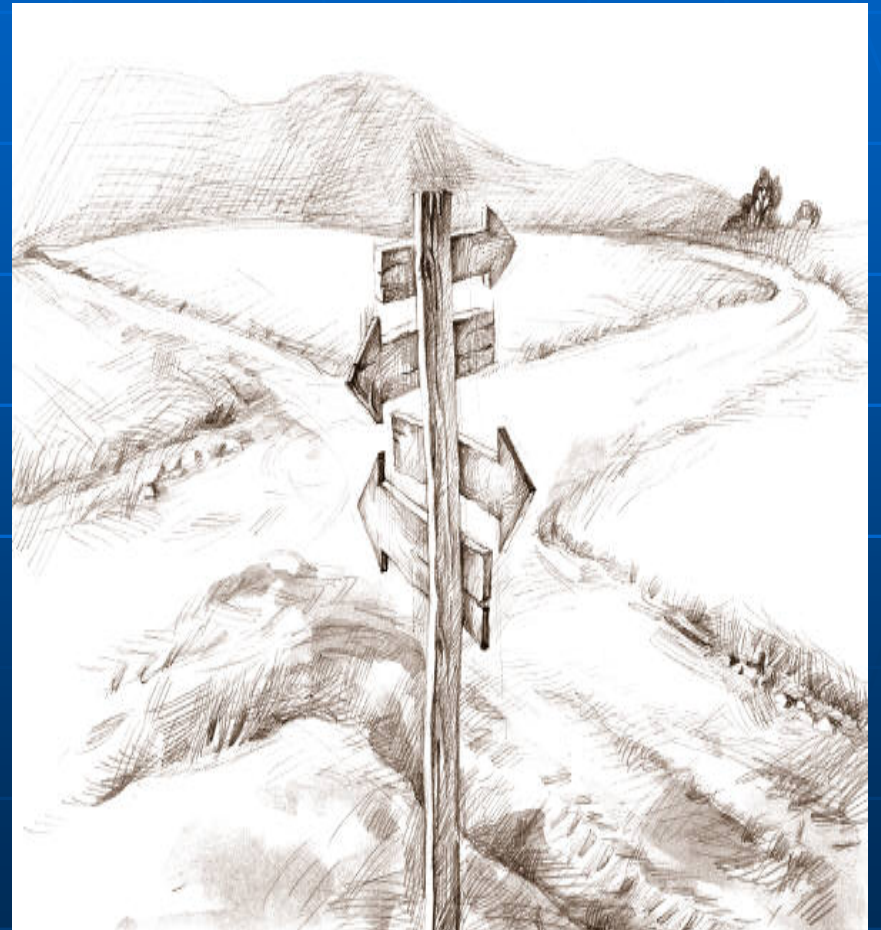


In Equilibrium

Mandala by Veeno

“Where your talents
and the needs of
the world cross,
there lies your
vocation.” Aristotle

“We are called to be
where our deepest
joys and the
world’s greatest
needs intersect.”



GRATITUDE



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