

Improving Staff Wellness and Job Satisfaction

Nydia Ntouda: On today's webinar we have Dr. Javier Rosado, and he will introduce himself. Dr. Rosado, take it away.

Dr. Javier Rosado: Thank you so much, Nydia. Hello to everyone, and welcome to today's webinar. It's great to see so many of you are here and participating today. The title of today's webinar is "Improving Staff Wellness and Job Satisfaction." We're going to spend about an hour or so today talking about you and about your well-being, as it relates to work.

As Nydia said, my name is Javier. I am a clinical health psychologist working with pediatric patients. My work really focuses on early childhood and the impact of childhood trauma and stress and other adverse life experiences on the mental health and well-being of young children. Related to that, I provide some professional development for other professions that work with young children, including early childhood educators, other health care providers, as well.

And that's what brings me here to spend some time with you today. In this webinar, we are going to discuss what is self-care, well-being in terms of your profession. Why it's important. I feel like I should make a self-disclosure before we continue. Typically, whenever we do these presentations, there's always a slide where you have to share any conflicts of interest or anything like that.

I don't have any conflict of interest, but a little bit of self-disclosure here is that at one point in my professional life, I probably would have been like the least likely person to facilitate a webinar like this because I, myself, was that caring for me the way that I should. Really, I have had long moments of time in my professional work where I have let the stress of my work get to me. I've even prioritized that work and the stress over my own well-being.

During those times in my life, I would always stay away from webinars like this about self-care. If I'm being completely honest, many of the webinars about self-care that I would listen to were oftentimes frustrating to me because number one, they would sometimes make me feel guilty that I wasn't doing a good enough job of carrying for myself. Number two, a lot of times, the recommendations for how to care for myself just didn't live with me and who I was and the kinds of things that I thought made sense for me to do in terms of caring for myself.

Stereotypically, when I thought of self-care, I always envisioned in my head somebody telling me, you need to take deep breaths when you're feeling stressed out. You need to breathe in and breathe out. Those strategies would always frustrate me because I didn't feel like they would help me. Not that taking deep breaths isn't helpful. It is very helpful for a lot of people and I, myself, in my work, recommend it for folks to use, but just for me, it wasn't relevant.

But through the course of time, I've learned, especially over the last couple of years, exactly how important self-care is. How important it is for each of us to figure out what works for us. By the end of today, I really hope that you walk away, yes, with some ideas and strategies of how you can care for yourself. But more importantly, that you walk away convinced and knowing that number one, you are important, self-care is important, and number two, that it is possible for us to do the work that we do that could be very stressful at times, but at the same time, be healthy and well. Just imagine that for a second.

Imagine you being able to function in a healthy way within your current work environment, feel satisfied, and know that you're making a difference without feeling overwhelmed and overly burdened. That's really my goal for today. Just like any good house has a firm foundation, our presentation for today, also, has a foundation. There are kind of three premises that we're going to talk about today that are going to guide everything that we talk about today. Premise number one is that staff wellness is important because you matter. We're going to dive into a little bit of detail on each of these, but we are here today because you are important, and because you matter.

Premise number two is that self-care is not entirely an individual endeavor. We're going to talk about how, while there are things that we, as individuals, need to do to care for ourselves, the organizations that we work in, also, have a responsibility to facilitate our self-care and to ensure that the organization is, also, well. The third premise for today is that self-care strategies have to be inclusive, relevant of your work and the demands of your work. We want to make sure that the recommendations that are provided make sense for the work that you do.

Let's dive into premise number one. Staff wellness is important because you matter. Unfortunately, a lot of times when we talk about wellness, particularly wellness in early childhood education, what we oftentimes hear is you need to be well because if you're not well, the child isn't going to be well. That is very true, and it is very important for us to know that. However, you're important, also. The child is important. You're important.

Your wellness matters. Your wellness matters in your current position, but your wellness also matters if you were not to be in your current position. Your wellness is important during your workday, but your wellness is, also, important after your workday is over. It's important for us to recognize that what happens during the workday can impact your wellness not just during those work hours, but even after the work hours are over. Again, the premise for today is you are important, you matter, and we are going to think of strategies and ways that you could better take care of yourself, that you can experience satisfaction in the workplace, but also, even beyond the workplace.

Our premise number two is that self-care is not entirely an individual endeavor. I mentioned earlier that at one point in my life, I really stayed away from self-care presentations. I really wasn't drawn to any kind of recommendations about how to care for myself. Part of that was because I felt like I was being told I needed to do one more thing. I was being asked to do yet another thing in my already busy schedule. I saw self-care as a task or an additional duty, and it became overwhelming at times.

There are times where I have felt guilty when I've sat in on these self-care presentations and experienced just this thought that maybe I'm not doing a good enough job. Or questioning myself as if maybe I'm not in the right profession because every day, I seem to experience stress and burnout. I begin to doubt myself. Even though deep down inside, I know I'm doing the work that I'm called to do, I know I'm doing the work that I'm passionate about doing, but it just doesn't feel like that on a day-to-day basis. There have been moments where it's felt more like a burden than a reward.

At times, which has been, in part, because there have been some environmental factors in my workplace that have contributed to my work. But the sorry that had contributed to my stress. There were some factors within my environment, within my work environment, that we're contributing to my personal stress level. Whenever I heard recommendations for self-care, all of the recommendations were about things that I needed to do so I could be less stressed out.

There were never or rarely any recommendations about things that my workplace could do to help me be less stressed out. There were rarely conversations about what resources my workplace could provide so that I could manage the stress and the demand of my work better. Our second premise is an understanding that while there are things that we can do to care for ourselves better, there are, also, things that our organization needs to do to ensure that we have the resources in place that we need that we can better take care of ourselves.

Now, I know at times, I have worked in what appeared to be broken systems or systems that don't have it all together just quite yet or are working on improving certain areas and the resources for me to care for myself just haven't been around. That, while it impacts my self-care, it can never be an excuse for me to not try to care for myself better. Even if I'm working within a broken system, yes, that system needs to improve, but while it improves, simultaneously I need to continue working on my own self-care.

Then our third premise for today is that in order for self-care to work, in order for these strategies to be relevant to us, they have to be inclusive or practical of the work that we do. They have to be practical given the early childhood workforce, given the responsibilities that we have each and every day. Sometimes the recommendations that we get for self-care just are not practical given our schedules or given the demands of our daily life. And sometimes the recommendations that we get for self-care just don't align with our culture really well.

I remember some time ago, there was a recommendation to take a "me" day. To use some of your PTO time to really just take a day for yourself. I thought to myself, what would my family say if I came home and I said, tomorrow is a "me" day. I'm just not going to go to work. I come from a family and a culture that really values hard work. And from a culture that there's not really this concept of having me time and skipping work, even if it's planned, to have time off just to relax. That just isn't accepted in my family.

I think about that. When I heard that recommendation, I just kind of laughed and thought to myself, if I were ever to take a "me" day, I'd have to hide from everyone because it just wouldn't be well-received. Sometimes, we have to take our own values and culture into

consideration and think about what are some strategies that work well for us? And how do we fit that into our current structure?

Having said that, this is the foundation for the work that we're going to do today during this webinar. As we continue diving into this subject, I want you to take a moment to think about what are your biggest stressors in your current position? The current position that you're in today, what are your biggest stressors? If you could type in the chat box. Just briefly share with us, what are the things that contribute to your stress level? Share your thoughts with us.

I see, not having enough time. Maybe not enough support from staff. That's another common one. Overextending ourselves, absolutely. Sometimes we take on more than what we should. We're going to talk a little bit about that today. We're going to talk towards the end of today's webinar about resilience and what that looks like. Sometimes in our effort to be resilient, we end up taking on more than we should.

Staff shortages, absolutely. That's something that I think the majority of us would say that we're experiencing. Being shorthanded puts a lot more pressure and stress and contributes to us feeling burdened at times. I see that the same issue of not having enough staff and not having enough time are pretty popular among everyone. Deadlines, absolutely. Yes.

These are all great examples. Thank you for sharing your examples of all of these very common factors within our workplaces that contribute to stress. For early childhood education staff, one of the things that oftentimes contributes to this stress or burden that we feel in the workplace has to do with this juxtapose that exists. While, on the one hand, we know that early childhood education, you educators that work in early childhood are very valuable in our society.

You are the people who create safe environments for our young children. You are the one who ensures that children have a safe place to go. You teach community. You teach belonging. The work that you do every day is the foundation for the learning that's going to happen later on. You're the ones that really foster social emotional learning. You are one of the few professions in the world that literally impacts children's biological wiring. Their brain development is happening literally as you work with them on a daily basis. What more valuable work can exist in our society than the work that you do?

While we understand that your work is extremely valuable, there's this juxtapose. While what you do is extremely important to our society at the same time, within this workforce, there are limited benefits. Sometimes poor compensation. Limited to leave time. Taking time off is difficult. A lot of times, we are so overburdened that we end up having to take our personal time to get our professional work done. That includes things like not taking breaks and/or taking work home.

Especially, in the times that we're living in, we are exposed to trauma. We're doing this work. We're doing it because we care about children. We get to know the kids that we work with really well. When we know a child is facing adversity, we learn about it and that affects us. While our work is valued in society, that value isn't always reflected in the structure of our

work. Sometimes that can also contribute to stress and burnout at times. We have identified some things that contribute to stress, but what exactly is stress? There are three things that are really important to think about when considering stress.

Stress happens, number one, when there are changes physically, we experience physical changes when we are under stress, number two, we experience emotional changes, and number three, we have mental responses. Our thought patterns change when we're under stress. Usually, we see these physical, emotional, and mental responses when we are attempting to react to a demand that is on us and/or a change that is happening.

Think of the list of stressors that you placed in the chat box a few moments ago. Every time that you face one of those stressors, you're being required to adjust to it and/or to respond to it. If there's a shortage of staff, now you have to respond to that shortage of staff. As you're attempting to respond to these stressors, you're likely to experience physical, emotional, and mental changes and/or responses.

On the screen, you see an example of what some of these may look like. Difficulty concentrating. Stomachache. Tense muscles I know most of us when we're under stress, we feel that tension in the back of our necks and maybe in our shoulders. Wanting to be alone. Feeling worried. Being irritable. These are all kind of signs and symptoms of stress.

Now whenever there's this demand on us to adjust to or respond to the stress that exists in the workplace, oftentimes there is a physiological response that occurs. I'm sure in your training working with children and in particular, children who have been exposed to trauma, you have learned about the fight, flight, or freeze reactions. These are typical reactions that we see in children, but not just in children, in adults as well, whenever they are triggered. In particular, if you have a child who has gone through a traumatic experience, if there's a reminder of that experience that oftentimes will trigger a flight, fight, or freeze response.

Now while we learn about the fight, flight, freeze response in children, we can also, apply that same response to ourselves. Whenever we are experiencing stress and it's getting to the level of burnout, one of our responses to that stress may be to go into fight, flight, or freeze mode. Here on the screen, you see some examples of what that may look like.

A fight response could include things like raising your voice easily or another one is being directive and overly corrective. I know someone really well that does that a lot when they're under stress. What that means is when they're experiencing a lot of stress, they get really picky, and they're very sure to point out things that you do wrong or that are incorrect. Even if they're the slightest little thing. If you're wiping down the counter, let's say, and you left a tiny streak of soap or water, that person is going to let you know hey, what about that streak of water?

Sometimes when we see that type of response happening over and over again, that could be a fight response to stress. It makes sense, right? Whenever we're under stress, it's a little bit harder to be calm and relaxed, we're more prone to have that sort of fight response.

Other fight responses includes physically redirecting children. Sometimes when we're under a lot of stress, we may have those sorts of mishaps where we use that physical redirection with a child, especially if there's a behavior that needs to be corrected. You have to be really careful about those types of responses. Or sometimes, being very quick or sternly. Rushing to protect other children. If we see that one child is perhaps being aggressive with another, we may be overly stern in trying to protect the child who is potentially receiving aggression.

Next, you'll see some flight responses that we may see in ourselves. When we're reaching stress levels that are higher than they should be, we may be more prone to call out sick from work. Walk away from kids who have challenges. Maybe, if we see some inappropriate behavior happening in the classroom, we might kind of turn the other way and pretend we didn't see it. That's a flight mode type of response. That can happen whenever we're under high levels of stress.

It could be avoidance behaviors as well, avoiding children or avoiding colleagues, as well. Making excuses to avoid certain tasks. That could happen just because we're feeling overwhelmed. Then lastly, there are certain freeze responses that we need to be aware of. A freeze response includes shutting down emotionally or just not being tuned in to others or to children. In order to do our job well, we need to be present every moment. We need to make connection with the kids that we work. With our colleagues, as well. When we're in freeze mode, we're just unavailable. We're not making those typical connections that we need.

These are typical physiological responses that can happen when we're under high levels of stress. I want you to take a moment and just kind think to yourself, whenever you have been under stress, have you ever experienced these fight, flight, or freeze responses? Which, by the way, are natural responses. Sometimes, they're fairly automatic. It's a way to protect ourselves from those things that are causing stress.

Can you think of a time where you had so much stress that you displayed a fight, flight, or freeze reaction? Take a moment to think about that. You don't have to submit your responses in the chat box, but just kind of take a quick moment to think to yourself, have you ever experienced a time where you were under much stress that you potentially had one of those responses, fight, flight, or freeze?

I can relate to your answers. Some of you were saying every day, yes. It absolutely can happen very often. It's important for us to recognize those responses, to know that it is a natural response, but oftentimes, it's a warning sign that if this is happening too often, we need to be really careful about figuring out ways to address the stress that we're under.

Another question. Do you ever feel like an octopus, where you must give to so many people from the minute you wake up until the minute you go to bed? Does that describe you? How many arms does your octopus have? I know it's more than eight, how many arms does your octopus have?

1,000. Some of you are responsible for a whole lot. Too many to count. Absolutely. I can relate to that. Someone says 834. That's pretty precise. I think all of us experience times where there's more of a demand on us than we have the ability to give or to respond.

Think about for a moment, is there anything that you do for yourself in the middle of these octopus days to help you manage the stress and the demand that is on you? Is there anything that you do for yourself in the middle of an octopus day? If you have like a recommendation or something you do that you find particularly helpful, share it in the chat box so we can all consider it.

I see somebody says a chocolate shake. I could see how a chocolate shake might turn your day around. Going for a walk. Doing chair yoga. Absolutely. Someone is saying to take some deep breaths. Breathe in, breathe out. Dance. Listen to music. Absolutely. Therapy for some. Taking time to reflect. Vent to a coworker. Absolutely.

We have to be mindful of these octopus days. Whenever you are experiencing an octopus day, it is really important for us to take a break and think about, what do I need in the middle of this very stressful day to better care for ourselves? We'll be talking about some strategies that you can consider implementing.

Now that we know what stress may look like, what some of our stress responses could be like those fight, flight, freeze responses it's also important for us to understand that at times, we may be experiencing stress, but there may be other moments when what we're experiencing is more reflective of compassion fatigue. Compassion fatigue is emotional pressure that we feel when we're hearing about the troubles of or adversities of another person. For example, if you work with children who perhaps are vulnerable to some of their own stressors in life, like perhaps, children who experience extreme poverty or children who are exposed to domestic violence.

If you hear about the story of a trauma that a child has experienced, such as the death or the loss of a loved one like a parent, or you learn that a parent has been incarcerated, whenever we hear about the challenges that the children we work with are experiencing, if we're hearing about that all of the time, sometimes that emotional effort that we put into caring and worrying for those children can convert into what we call compassion fatigue. That's another thing that we have to be wary of.

Oftentimes when we're experiencing compassion fatigue, what happens is we take that worry, that feeling, kind of like that emotional discomfort that you have related to the experience of a child, you take that home with you. I don't know if you've ever experienced this, but I know I have. I have moments in my work where I have had to hear pretty horrific experiences that young children have dealt with. I go home, and in the middle of whatever it is that I'm doing at home, I feel a discomfort. It's this emotional strain that I feel inside.

There's not always a thought initially connected to it. It's just this emotional discomfort that then is followed by a reminder of, I wonder how is doing? I wonder if that child's, OK? I wonder

if they're safe? If I'm experiencing that repeatedly, that could be a sign of compassion fatigue. We absolutely have to be present for our children. We absolutely want to have that emotional connection. We want to be emotionally available.

We want to be compassionate and empathetic to the children that we work with. It's really important to do all of that when you're in the presence of a child. To offer that empathy, to show that compassion when you're in the presence of the child. Once you exit that child's presence and you go home, it's important to have that separation. Sometimes if we take that with us, what will happen is fatigue.

What are other signs and symptoms of compassion fatigue? This includes some symptoms that are similar to stress, such as difficulty sleeping, but it can also, include feelings of guilt. This is a little bit unique. Sometimes we feel guilt that is brought on by what we view as an unfair situation. We may see that a child is facing an unfair situation, and then we feel guilty or feel somehow responsible because there's an injustice that is happening to a child, and we feel we have a duty to do something about it. Sometimes when that sort of feeling grows and becomes hard to manage, it could be a sign of compassion fatigue.

Sometimes hopelessness. After doing this work for a while and experiencing multiple traumatic events or observing those in children, sometimes it can seem like things are hopeless. Like we can't find a solution. If we're starting to feel like we can't see the positive in anything, that could be another sign of compassion fatigue. These are examples of things to look for. Compassion fatigue doesn't just happen suddenly. It is a slow process. There are three phases that we go through when we experience compassion fatigue.

The first phase is empathetic concern. Usually, this is when we use emotional energy to care, to teach, and to help. I think most of us have gone through this empathetic concern. We do it every day. We use our emotional energy to do our job. There are other jobs that people do that requires a lot of physical energy, physical demands. There's certainly some physical demands to the work that we do, but the majority is the emotional energy that we put towards caring, teaching, and helping. That's the first phase.

The second phase is compassion stress phase. Compassion stress can happen when we are unable to let go of our connection to a child's adversity or pain in between contacts with them. This is what I was mentioning a moment ago. It is really important for us to be emotionally available and connected to a child when we're in their presence, but in between those contacts with the child, we have to learn ways of letting go to some of those connections. If not, we are carrying that pain with us. Over time, what could happen is fatigue.

The last phase is prolonged exposure. What this has to do is if we've been doing this work for a long time and we've been feeding this compassion stress over an extended period of time, there's a higher risk for fatigue. The longer we've been doing the job, the higher the risk that we could experience fatigue. I want you to reflect on your work, reflect on some of the more difficult cases that you've had to deal with in your job, and reflect on some of these questions. These questions are meant to measure if we're experiencing compassion fatigue. They're really

just reflection questions. I want you to take a moment to consider your responses to some of the questions in red here.

These are questions across three categories your career or your job, the administration or organization you work with. Remember, there are things within your organization that can contribute to stress. There are things within your organization that can contribute to compassion fatigue. Personal coping, these are ways that you cope with stress or compassion fatigue type of symptoms in your own way. Answer a few of the red questions. Think to yourself, how often does this happen? Never, rarely, sometimes, or always? Take a moment to answer those two yourself.

As you're answering those questions, if your responses to the questions in red are sometimes or always, if you're finding the majority of your responses are sometimes or always, that could be an indication that you're experiencing some compassion fatigue. It's something that we need to monitor. We've learned what stress looks like. We've learned what are some typical stress responses, like those fight, flight, or freeze responses. We've also learned that compassion fatigue could be something that we experience on top of, in addition to, next to, besides stress. We've learned some signs and symptoms of compassion fatigue, as well.

We know these are our stressors, but what do we do about it? That's where self-care comes in. Now, I'm not going to attempt to define self-care for you, I think self-care means something different to each of us, but on the screen, you see some examples of what some of your colleagues would define as being self-care.

Being aware of what I need when I need it. Putting myself on a schedule. Being reminded of the joys in life. Taking care of myself mentally, physically, emotionally. Acknowledging that we experience hardships and knowing we are all related and interconnected. This is how some of your colleagues would define self-care. You have to define it for yourself. Come up with your own definition of what self-care means. But it's important for us to know what are some of the benefits of self-care?

When we care for ourselves, our anxiety goes down. There's less depression. There's less stress, obviously. Less health problems, as well. The better we care for ourselves, the better our health outcomes are things like blood pressure, which then reduces reduced blood pressure, which reduces the risk for things like heart disease. But there's even some research that says that people who care for themselves regularly are at less risk for things like stroke and even cancer.

Some other benefits of self-care include just feeling happy and being able to adapt to change. We have learned over the last couple of years, change is inevitable. I know several of us, many of us, if not all of us, have gone through times where every time we come to work, there's something new, there's a change, and we have to adapt to that change. The more we self-care, the better we are able to adapt to those changes. We're better able to build relationships and recover from setbacks, as well. These are all things that we benefit from if we are able to self-care regularly.

We have to come up with our own definition of what self-care means and come up with strategies that work best for you. We're going to start now thinking about, what are those strategies that are most effective for caring for ourselves? But remember that one of the premises for today's presentation is that not only is self-care an individual thing, but self-care is, also, an organizational thing. There are things within your organization that need to happen so that you can better take care of yourself.

What you see in the diagram in front of you is just a model for how we can understand how organizational factors contribute to our own stress level and contribute to our way of dealing with stress. What you see here are multiple layers of our environment. This is things that are external to our person, external to our being. These are things about our workplace. Things about our organizations. These are factors that contribute to stress.

If you see over here to the right-hand side, we see that there's educator burnout. There are factors within our organization that can lead to or contribute to my burnout or my stress. Now, these organizational factors what's happening in my workplace is mediated by me and the things that I decide that I'm going to do to manage some of the stress that is happening. There are multiple layers to this. There's, again, what's going on in my organization. What the structure is like. The order. What resources they're providing for me. If they're providing the right resources, I can experience professional well-being.

If I live or work in a chaotic environment without the right resources, that can contribute to my burnout. But whether it's well-being, whether there are factors that help my well-being or factors that contribute to my burnout, they are mediated by me. I'm in the middle. I need to choose what I do with the resources my organization gives me. I, also, need to decide what I do to respond to the stress that I experience as a result of what's going on in my organization.

Depending on these factors, the consequence could be – or the consequence are then felt by the children. If I'm experiencing burnout, the children are going to feel that. We know that accidents happen whenever we are not at our best. We know that whenever we are not dealing with our stress and burnout, we're not able to make the connections that we need to at the level that is needed with the children who we work with.

There are implications for ourselves as the educator. Implications for our society. Remember at the beginning of today's presentation, we acknowledged how important our job is for the well-being of our society. Whenever we are not careful to mediate these things, our society ultimately is going to feel that and is going to experience it.

What we want to do, again, is at an individual level, figure out, what do we need to do to mediate what's going on in my organization? But our organizations, also, need to be really careful about creating an environment, creating a work environment that facilitates my well-being, that facilitates my self-care, and that gives me the resources to do my job well and to care for myself within the work setting. This is a process. We're all learning and improving.

We will fluctuate where we are here based on what's going on internally and what's going on in our work environment. Sometimes we're closer to the burnout area. Sometimes we're closer to the well-being area. That's all a learning and improvement process, but we need to make a commitment at an individual level for wellness. At an organizational level, that commitment needs to exist, as well.

Let's talk about at the organizational level, what are some things that need to happen? I would say the number one thing is that there has to be a written plan or commitment at the organizational level that includes input from staff and leadership. This is a written commitment to wellness. That is really important to include that as a goal for your organization.

What some organizations have done is including a kind of wellness champion or, like my organization has created, a wellness committee, which is just a group of people that are part of the organization that monitor the wellness of the organization, that organize activities, and respond with resources when needed. For example, our wellness committee will do things like Walking Tuesdays, where you get a buddy and you go for that outside walk on a Tuesday to manage your stress and to vent with a coworker.

Sometimes it's fun things like Ice Cream Sundae Thursday just as a celebration or a reward for doing a good job. Or also, when there are incidents that happen within our organization, like a sudden death, or like something happens to a child that we're working with and we need to mourn a loss, or we need to debrief about what has happened with that child, if there's an incident of aggression and a child is harmed or a staff person is harmed, we need to debrief that. Oftentimes, the wellness committee will come in and will facilitate those debriefing sessions and/or provide resources when needed, but there has to be a written mission and commitment to this at the organizational level.

Other things that can be done at the organizational level include using reflective supervision. What this means is that within your supervisory conversations, if you're in leadership, you talk about wellness. You check in with your employees, not just about the ins and outs of the workplace, but take time to ask, how are you? Is there anything that I could do to help you integrate that into your work? Having mental health consultants available to teachers and to educators and other staff.

I know, oftentimes, we have mental health consultants available for the work that we do related to the children we care for, but can some of that be directed for us, as well? Within your organization, you think about things that you value and that make sense for some. It's mindfulness activities or yoga for others. It may be spiritual services for others and maybe, just ensuring that everyone gets their sufficient time for breaks and lunch. But again, the message here is that something needs to happen at an organizational level in order for us to be well.

Those are some organizational ideas and strategies, but now, let's talk about individual things that we can do. Remember back to this diagram, there are these organizational, environmental, external, factors, but they are all mediated by us. What are some things that we can do? Let's

talk about, what are the strategies that we can use on an individual basis to better care for ourselves?

There are three different categories of strategies that I want to talk to you about today. One is awareness, the other is balance, and the third is connection. We share these ideas and suggestions, we'll pause that you have an opportunity to reflect if any of these make sense to you, if they fit in with the reality of your life and your work, and what are some ways in which maybe you can adapt some of those strategies?

Let's start off first, by awareness. First, we need to be aware that a self-care strategy needs to be implemented. Yes, self-care strategies should be used on a regular basis. However, there are moments in our day, especially on those octopus days, where we really need to be intentional about selecting and implementing a self-care strategy. In order to do that, you have to be aware. You have to know that the need exists. Self-awareness is the first thing that we can practice, is just taking a moment to have some insight about what you're going through. It's almost like an emotional temperature check.

This could be an exercise that we do on a daily basis or on an octopus day to measure how am I today? Am I happy and content? Am I calm and peaceful? Am I sad? Is this a day where I'm irritable? Am I nervous? Am I worried? Am I overwhelmed? Just kind of self-check and measure where you are emotionally. If you are finding that you're kind of in this red, yellow type of zone, then it may be time to think about a self-care strategy in the moment. Another way to build awareness is to have a body scan.

We had this image earlier in today's presentation where we identified some signs and symptoms of stress. We've learned some signs and symptoms of compassion fatigue. Do a body scan in the morning or in the middle of your octopus day just to check in with yourself and figure out what is going on in my body today? I know for me, when I'm under stress, I could feel it in my heart rate. My heart rate goes up. There are times where I'm just maybe sitting, working on something, and I can feel my heart is racing. That doesn't make sense because I'm not running. I'm not jogging. I'm just sitting.

To me, that's a sign that my body is telling me, OK, you're stressing out about something. I need to stop, check in with myself, and figure out, OK, what's going on? Where is the stress coming from? Because it's not always coming from what's in front of you. It may be coming from other things that are going on around you or things that are upcoming.

Here is a tool to build self-awareness. This is called the ROCK Trigger assessment tool. It's just a kind of a questionnaire that you can answer for yourself and tally up your responses to help you figure out what may be some of your triggers. What are things in your environment that are particular stressors that when present, indicate the need to use a self-care strategy? There's a link there to that tool if you're interested in downloading it and using it for yourself.

This first strategy that we've discussed is awareness. It's just being aware that I may need to use a self-care strategy. We've given you some suggestions, such as the emotional thermometer,

the body scan, there's a questionnaire that you can answer for yourself, but take a moment to think, are any of these strategies realistic for you? Would any of this that we're recommending work for you in your environment?

Think of what are some strengths or things you like about these strategies? What are some weaknesses or things you don't like about these strategies? Are there any opportunities for you to do any of these in your workday? Or how would you adjust these strategies so they work for you? Is there anything that would get in the way?

Basically, I just want you to take a moment to reflect on these strategies. Think to yourself, will any of these work for me? If not, how can I adjust it or what can I do instead to build awareness? Take just about 30 seconds or so to think about that.

As we continue to work through some of these strategies, again always think about, will these work for me? How do I need to change and adapt them so that they're realistic to me? Awareness is one way that we can care for ourselves. We have to be aware of when there is a greater need to use a strategy to manage stress and to care for ourselves.

Another group of strategies can be known as balance. What does it have to do? We're not necessarily talking about work-life balance. That's not necessarily by what we mean by balance, but rather, balance has to do with the opportunity and the need to recover and recharge and specifically by activating your body.

I once heard someone say something that I found to be really powerful, and it has stuck with me. It's that we do this work in our bodies. They explain when you go to work, you take your entire body with you. You take your feet with you. You take the toes on your feet with you. You take your heart with you. You take your arms with you. You take your stomach with you. You take all of you with you.

Whenever you experience stress, it's not all in your head. It's not just an emotional thing. It's something that your entire body experiences because you have your entire body with you when you go to work. One way to have that balance is to activate your body. Exercise. By exercise, we just mean movement. It's not going to the gym or necessarily, running a marathon or anything like that. It's just being mindful that you need to include your body in your self-care strategies. That is really important, include your body in your self-care strategies.

I know for me; this is the thing that I have found the most helpful. What I do in terms of finding balance is I'll get on the treadmill. When I'm on the treadmill and my heart is racing, I start thinking about everything that stresses me out. I start thinking about all this stuff that I have to do that day or all the things that are getting on my nerves. I take a worry moment while I'm on the treadmill, and I worry about everything that I need to worry about.

I stress about everything that I need to stress about. I just kind of get it out of my system, and that helps me. For other people, it's the opposite of that. They may get on a treadmill or go for a walk and think about anything but work. Think about things that are more pleasant and not

stressful. But that may work for you, something different works for me, but the point is we have to include our bodies in our self-care strategies.

Now, another component of balance has to do with addressing this fight, flight, freeze response. Remember earlier in the presentation, we noted that whenever we're under stress, our behavior changes. We can become more irritable, we may raise our voice a little bit more easily, we may be on edge, or we may just be more avoidant of people and of children. This is a natural response to stress. One way to cope with these kinds of responses is through this exercise and getting our body moving.

A lot of times whenever we have this chronic activation of our stress response system and we're feeling these fight, flight, freeze responses repeatedly, the end result is burnout. Exercise, movement can block that burnout. When we move our bodies, we lower our stress hormones and our brain releases endorphins, which help us then be happy and reduce stress. It's very important to think about that.

Again, take just a moment to reflect to yourself, how does this fit in with my life? You may not want to get on a treadmill, but what can you do to get your body moving? Someone mentions exercise has been a good outlet for them, that was Lisa in the chat box. Maybe it works for you. But what can you do given your demand, your time, your lifestyle to get your body moving?

How would it help you? How would it not help you? What would make it easier for you to get moving? What would make it harder? Kind of reflect to yourself. I want to talk about connection. Connection is yet another kind of category of self-care strategies that we can utilize. We've learned already that movement, exercise can block burnout. We know that there's this fight, flight, freeze response. Research lately has been focusing on something called tend and befriend. Tend and befriend, oftentimes, is spoken of in the context of fight, flight, freeze responses.

Tend and befriend is really, a coping mechanism where we can turn to others for support whenever we're observing in ourselves, these fight, flight, freeze, stress responses. Connection to each other is extremely important. A lot of times in our work, it can be hard to find those connections, but they're extremely important. One way for us to care for ourselves is to connect with each other at work. That will buffer our stress. At an organizational level, we, as leaders of organizations, need to find ways to allow our staff to connect with each other. Create opportunities for them to do that.

At an individual level, we need to reach out for support when we need it. We can be much more effective if we help each other. We can be much more effective if we have relationships with one another and turn to each other for support. That is really important to not to try to do our work alone. We all get stressed out. We should be able to talk about those moments. If we're having an octopus day, we should be able to acknowledge it and talk about it and ask for help. It's really important to make that connection.

We're giving you some recommendations of different types of self-care strategies that you can look for. Connection is one of them. Awareness, strategies to help you be aware. A strategies for balance, to get your body moving. If you're looking for other recommendations, the Center has a list of other self-care strategies that you can select from like using to-do lists, working with a supervisor to make your work demands more manageable.

You see the link here on the screen. Please, go to this website to get additional resources and ideas for yourself and for your organization. Other organizational strategies include things like activities that foster a fun work environment. Things like health and fitness challenges. I know in our workplace, we've done things like weight loss challenges. That's not always healthy, but sometimes, it's fun. A few months ago, we each put in, like, \$20 into a pot and whoever lost the most weight gets the money.

Doesn't have to be weight-related. It could be something fun or like, whoever walks the most miles. But things to keep things light and fun, those are ideas of how you can do that. There are additional strategies that you can link to in that website, as well. One last comment that I'll make about resilience. Sometimes or one last comment I'll make about self-care.

Sometimes we neglect self-care because we're trying to be resilient. What I mean by that is sometimes we try to be the best at all times. We try to be available for everyone and for everything. We're always operating up here in terms of resilience. We're going above and beyond. Making sure that we make the most of every moment. But sometimes if we are functioning way up here, we're doing everything for everyone, we're being super compassionate on and off the job, and we're just in this high zone all the time, what happens is we crash.

As you see here. resilience isn't about functioning up here, being the ultimate compassionate self 24/7. Resilience is really about charging and releasing and charging and releasing. There are moments in your life where you need to charge, and there are moments in your life when you need to release. You need to give, and that's what being resilient is about, is having those charge and release moments or phases in your life.

You want to avoid these crashes, and you want to avoid being way up here. Neither of those is going to be effective to do your job at your best. What I mean by at your best, I mean, at your best for the children you work with and at your best for yourself, you have to have those charge and release moments. That's really important.

I hope that this really helped you in thinking about how to better care for yourself. Again, remember, it is possible for you to respond to the very stressful demands of the work that we do and yet, be well and be healthy and find the job that you do rewarding. That's only going to happen, however, if we care for ourselves. If our organizations also take the steps necessary to ensure that we're given the resources and the environment that is necessary for us to succeed. Best of luck to you in the work that you do, and I'll pass it on to, Nydia.

Nydia: Thank you. Thank you so much, again, to Dr. Rosado. Thank you to all of you and your participation today. If you have more questions, you can go to MyPeers or write to health@ecetta.info. The evaluation URL, it has been placed in the chat and will appear when you leave the Zoom platform. Remember after submitting the evaluation, you will see a new URL, and this link will allow you to access, download, save, and print your certificate.

You can subscribe to our monthly list of resources using this same URL. You can find our resources in the Health section of the ECLKC or write us. Again, that email address is health@ecetta.info. Thank you all, again. Thank you Dr. Rosado. Kate, you can go ahead and close the Zoom platform.