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In positive psychology research, gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with greater happiness. Gratitude helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve their health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships.

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/giving-thanks-can-make-you-happier>



As the holiday season approaches it's easy to lose sight of what's important and getting caught up in looking only at what we don't have. This brings extra stress which in turn makes us feel not good enough, sad and like a failure at times. To add to it, working in a field where the people we serve are struggling with emotional and financial instability and are not able to afford things that we can, may also bring us feelings of helplessness, guilt, sadness and shame over our more privileged status. Putting us all in a funk. I want you to know that those feelings are completely normal. If you are experiencing that, it's a reminder that you are a human being aside from being a teacher, case manager, therapist, social worker or whatever other title you hold in servicing families. The fact that you are experiencing those feelings it's a sign that you care and that brings the overwhelming sense of wanting to help and make things better. When we hit a wall in meeting that need to be helpful, we experience despair over it. So what do we do about it? How do we cope with that? Well, there are 2 things that have been proven to bring feelings of joy and purpose into our lives and those are GRATITUDE and GIVING. Applying gratitude involves recognizing how fortunate we are to have what we have (that our clients don't,) and being grateful for having it. For example "I am grateful for having a home, for having my health, for having food to eat..." An easy exercise to try involves making this part of our daily routine by being grateful for at least 5 things prior to getting up and prior to going to sleep. When it comes to giving, that can be done in many different ways. You can give through monetary or in-kind donations (food, clothing, furniture...) to charities or agencies that your families resort to and benefit from. You can give time through volunteering, listening to a friend or colleague, doing acts of kindness, providing a free service or class, giving knowledge by educating others/mentoring, advocating for underserved communities, etc. Now get creative, find what fits you best and start practicing it. Gratitude and giving are key in helping to diminish feelings of helplessness as we are actively and purposefully taking action. Let's practice them this holiday season and throughout the year as part of our self-care and our gift to humanity.

Marilyn Mejia-Peña, LCSW



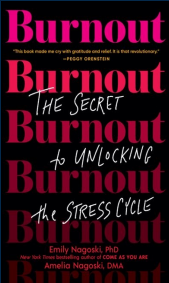
HAVE THE HOLIDAY BLUES?

Are you the one on the left or right?

*The holidays come with tremendous pressure to be happy and jolly and have the best decorations and parties.... This may cause some of us to experience anxiety and depression and look more like the snowman on the left wanting to punch the one on the right for being so happy and annoying. If that sounds like you, than you are probably experiencing the **Holiday Blues!***

Preparation in combating the holiday blues is key for ourselves and our clients. We should bring awareness by learning/ providing psychoeducation on what it is, what it looks like in behavior and in emotions.

Then coming up with a safety plan on how we are going to apply coping skills to get through the holidays. Finally, continue assessing and checking – in throughout the holiday season and adjust the plan and interventions accordingly.



CURRENT BOOK CRUSH

I've been reading this book called *Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle* written by twin sisters E. and A. Nagoski and I'm in love. (thank you Brene Brown for introducing me to it) I think it's a must read for everyone but especially for those of us working in the people/service industry as we are prone to burnout due to the stressors of our jobs. They go into the difference between stressor vs. stress, the stress response cycle and give us specific evidenced based tools we can begin applying today to help us beat burnout. So here its what I've read so far that caught my eye and how I understand it:

Burnout is what happens when we are stuck in an emotion and have not completed the stress cycle. For example, if we go to work and our paperwork is never ending, pressure of productivity is upon us, and our clients are in crisis (typical day at the office) and somehow we show up and then even comeback the next day and the day after but did not let go of the stress we accumulated before we go to bed each night. Then, we did not reach a point in which we relaxed and completed the stress cycle. Thus, we are stuck in the tunnel of helplessness, frustration, sadness, overwhelm... which if not dealt with, causes us to burnout and get sick. I know we all hear the way to avoid it is self-care, blah, blah, blah, but how do we do it when "nobody got time for that!" They tell us how and here it is:

1. Exercise-walk your dog, take boxing class, run, yoga, whatever gets you moving.
2. Breathing- deep slow breaths helps regulate the stress response. Try breathing in for a count of 5, hold for 5 and then exhale for slow count of 10.
3. Positive social interaction- casual friendly interactions reassure us the world is safe. So give compliments, say hi and chit-chat with your neighbor, pick up the phone and call a friend or say "have a nice day" to the cashier.
4. Laughter- laughing together or even reminiscing about past times we laughed helps increase relationship satisfaction. So go ahead and laugh deeply, helplessly and loud, it's free and it doesn't take much time!
5. Affection- a 20 second hug, 6 second kiss (go make out with your partner), pet your dog or cat, and spiritual connection counts too.
6. Creative expression- engaging in creative activities leads to more energy, excitement and enthusiasm. Journaling, music, poetry, coloring, painting, knitting, arts and crafts, sports, singing, dancing, are all examples.
7. Crying it out- watch your favorite tearjerker movie and go through the emotions with the characters and complete the stress cycle together!

The bottom line is that we have to choose what works for us and commit to doing at least one of these techniques daily so we can improve our sleep, be refreshed and go to work free of yesterday's stress. We may not be able to change or eliminate our stressor, but we can definitely take control of how it impacts us. So yes, we are back to basics...WE HAVE TO PRACTICE SELF-CARE people! There are tons of more helpful information in this book and totally recommend it. FYI, the LA county library has the e-book on Libby if you want to check it out.



ON-GOING GROUPS

Sharing is Self-Caring Therapist Group
Every other Tuesday at 7 p.m. 11/9 & 11/23.
Cost: You name the price!

Cool Calm and Creative Circle
Wednesdays at 6:30 11/3, 11/10, 11/17
working on making scarf and beanie continues.
Cost: \$5.00

Skill-Up Workshops

Holiday Blues Prep
Thursday, November 11, 10-11:00 a.m.
Cost: FREE

Understanding The Stress Cycle and how to use in trauma treatment
Thursday, November 18, 10-11:30 a.m.
Cost: \$20

Sign up at: <https://resiliencesocialwork.com/events>

Stressor vs. Stress

What activates the stress response and can be Internal-self criticism, body image, identity, memories, the future.. or External-work, \$, family, time, cultural norms and expectations, experience with discrimination...

The neurological and physiological shift that you encounter in your body when you encounter a stressor. Your entire body and mind change ex: faster heart rate, muscles tense, senses are heightened, more alert, vigilant, focus on short term here and now thinking...

FROM BURNOUT, BURNOUT, BURNOUT: THE SECRET TO UNLOCKING THE STRESS CYCLE BY E. AND A. NAGOSKI



THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!

I am extremely grateful for your support with my RSW project. Also grateful for the wonderful, extremely hard work that you do to help families thrive. Have a wonderful Thanksgiving and enjoy some well deserved time off.