



NATIONAL REGISTER
OF HEALTH SERVICE PSYCHOLOGISTS

CLINICAL WEBINARS

FOR HEALTH SERVICE PSYCHOLOGISTS

TRANSLATING RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

Psychologist Self-Care and Renewal

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An internationally recognized authority on psychotherapy, **John C. Norcross** is Distinguished Professor of Psychology at the University of Scranton and Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at SUNY Upstate Medical University. He has published more than 400 publications and scores of books, including the *APA Handbook of Clinical Psychology*, *Psychotherapy Relationships that Work*, *Handbook of Psychotherapy Integration*, *Insider's Guide to Graduate Programs in Clinical & Counseling Psychology*, and *Systems of Psychotherapy: A Transtheoretical Analysis*, now in its 9th edition. He recently published (with Gary VandenBos) the second edition of *Leaving It at the Office: A Guide to Psychotherapist Self-Care*.



Webinar Description

What about **you** – the psychologist? Conducting psychological treatment places additional and special burdens on the person of the therapist. This webinar puts the Socratic dicta of “know thyself” and “heal thyself” into practice. We shall focus on 13 self-care strategies that are clinician-recommended, research-based, and practitioner-tested.

(2 PDF handouts: these PPT slides & an extensive self-care checklist)

Disclosures/Conflicts of Interest

- I do **not** have relevant financial relationships with any corporate organizations to disclose regarding this presentation.
- The only possible conflict of interest is that I do receive royalties on authored/edited books.



Learning Objectives

- Identify the ethical imperative of psychologist self-care & reinvigoration
- Describe self-care strategies supported by the empirical research
- Demonstrate how to conduct periodic self-assessments of your self-care



How We Will Roll

- Traverse accumulating research on self-care
- Focus on its ethical imperative where the personal is the professional
- Emphasize self-care principles or strategies
- Embrace multiple strategies associated with diverse theoretical orientations
- Individualize your self-care to your own dynamics and vulnerabilities

Paradox & Irony of Self-Care

- **The Paradox:** No time to sharpen the saw
- **The Irony:** Not availing ourselves of what we provide/recommend to clients
- **Esalen's Law:** We always teach others what we most need to learn ourselves (Each of us is our worst student)

Ethics of Self-Care

- All ethics codes include provisions on self-care (except medicine)
- APA: “take appropriate measures, such as obtaining consultation or assistance, and determine whether they should limit, suspend, or terminate their work-related duties”
- ACA: “engage in self-care activities to maintain and promote their emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual well-being to best meet responsibilities”

Bottom-Line Ethics

- Who will heal the healer?
- Without attending to our own care, we will not adequately care for others
- Not only a personal matter but also an ethical imperative



13 Self-Care Strategies

- Principles or strategies, not techniques. Dozens of techniques for each strategy
- More effective to use multiple strategies than to extensively use a single strategy
- Must tailor to your own resources and vulnerabilities to ensure long-term success



1. Valuing the Person of the Psychotherapist

- Easier to be wise and available for others than for ourselves
- Self-care begins with valuing the person of the therapist
- Alas, this runs against the tide of managed care, procedure codes, and interchangeable “providers”

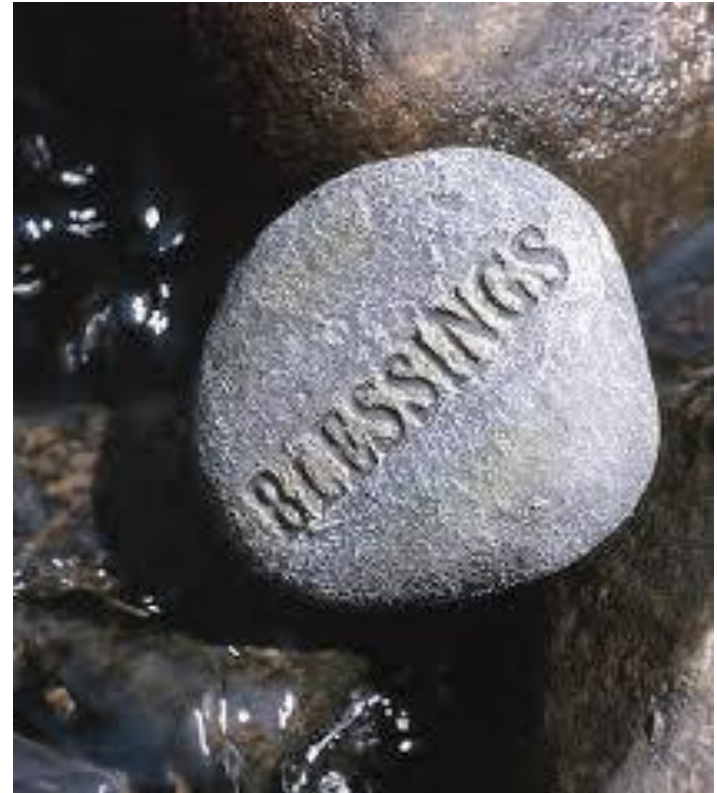


Self-Awareness & Commitment

- Top-ranked in studies of optimal functioning
- Assess your self-care & satisfaction as a patient's
- Writing, journaling, logging, self-monitoring, tracking
- Begin from position of strength (what works)
- Honest feedback from loved ones, friends, coworkers
- Making self-care a priority (before other demands)
- *Quis custodiet ipsos custodiet* (Who will guard the guards?)

2. Refocusing on the Rewards

- Re-experience the privileges
- Notice the life rewards
- Feel the career satisfaction
- Practice the mental set
- Gratitude attitude
- Recapture the magic & mystery of the work



3. Recognizing the Hazards

- The classic stressors of an “impossible profession”
- Freud: “No one who, like me, conjures up the most evil of those half-tamed demons that inhabit the human breast, and seeks to wrestle with them, can expect to come through the struggle unscathed.”
- The new and evolving distress



- Universality: recognize stressors as part & parcel of the common world of psychological work
- Acceptance – as a mindful attitude and as an active skill
- Self-awareness and self-care commitment (redux)
- Use the following self-care strategies

“Things I Wish They Taught in Medical School”

(John-Henry Pfifferling)

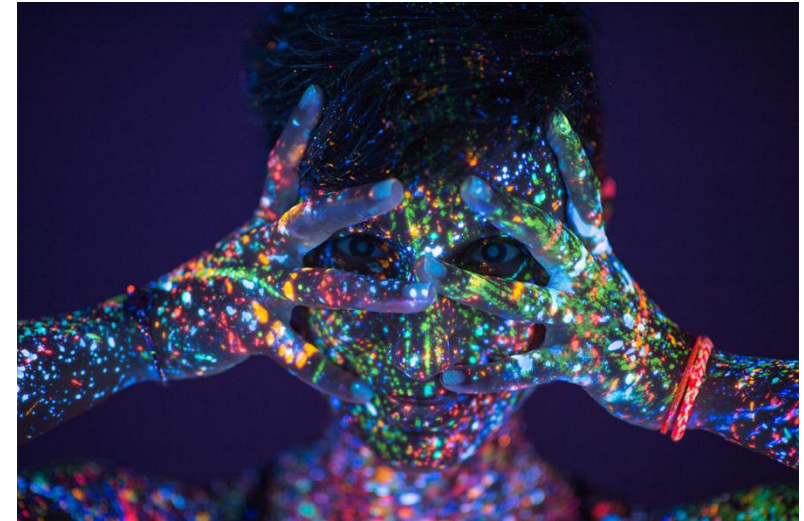
- How to say, “I don’t know” (without guilt & recrimination)
- The importance of saying “no”
- My need for comfortable alone-time
- The necessity of my sensual needs
- How to let go of “shoulds”
- The dangers of self-medication
- How to let go of self-sabotaging thoughts and actions
- How to manage, not control, uncertainty and ambiguity
- The consequences of overwork
- I have value regardless of my achievements

Source: *Resident & Staff Physician*, 2011

4. Minding the Body

Don't overlook the bio basics

- Sleep
- Bodily rest
- Nutrition and hydration
- Exercise
- Human contact



5. Nurturing Relationships

The lesson: Emphasize the human element

At the Office

Clinical colleagues

Peer support

Supervision groups

Clinical teams

Staff

Community professionals

Mentors

Clients (carefully)



- **Outside the Office**

Spouse/partner

Family members (including pets)

Friends

Colleague Assistance Programs

Personal mentors

Clergy/spiritual advisors

Personal therapist



6. Setting Boundaries

Boundary is limit or territory which is not to be violated.

At least 3 meanings

- between self and other
- between professional and personal life
- between effective or ethical and ineffective or unethical

Goal: clear yet flexible boundaries (leads to less stress, less fusion, more satisfaction)

- Boundary set (e.g., schedule breaks, restrict caseload, refuse certain clients, maintain fees)
- Pre-session mindfulness, stretching, or relaxation (Swift's multi-site RCT)
- 90% rule to allow emergencies, family demands, and self-care
- Delegate
- Balance client desires and self-preservation
- Say “no” to patients (e.g., no shows, cancels, unpaid bills, non-emergency calls)



7. Restructuring Cognitions

- Avoid wishful thinking and self-blame
- Monitor your internal dialogue
- Watch for selective abstraction, overwhelming tasks, and assuming causality (J. Beck)
- Manage countertransference: self-insight, self-integration, empathy, anxiety reduction, and conceptualizing ability (C. Gelso)



Therapist Musterbations (Ellis)

- I must be successful with my patients, practically all the time
- I must be 1 of world's outstanding therapists
- I should have no problems. After all, I am a therapist!
- I must be liked and respected by all my clients
- Since I am a hard-working therapist, my clients should be equally persevering

8. Sustaining Healthy Escapes

True happiness, we are told, consists in getting out of one's self. But the point is not only to get out – you've got to stay out; and to stay out you must have some absorbing errand (Henry James).

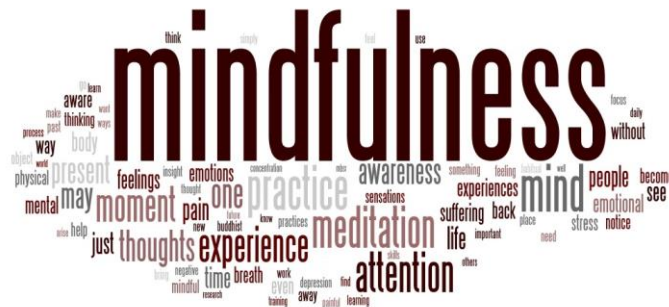
- Beware the prevalent unhealthy escapes: substance abuse, isolation, sexual acting out
- Variety in and outside of the office

Some Absorbing Errands

- Vital breaks
- Relaxation
- Humor
- Hobbies
- Days off
- Exercise
- Vacations
- Restorative solitude
- Personal retreats
- *Chop wood, carry water*
- Distractions
- Play: How do you play?

9. Maintaining Mindfulness

- Paying attention in a particular way: nonjudgmentally in the present moment
- Quiets and retrains our monkey/squirrel brains
- We possess some mindfulness skills, but frequently lose them as pt conflict, affective explosions, & CT envelop sessions
- Thus, the self-care need to *maintain* throughout the clinical day



- Taking a moment (e.g., microbreaks, 30-sec centering, pre-session mindfulness)
- Practicing mindfulness (meditation classes, MBSR, mind-body scans)
- Using meditative anchors (e.g., breathing, sun, movement, natural sounds, seeing)
- Cultivating self-compassion (kindness, common humanity, & mindfulness; Neff)
- Expressing gratitude



10. Creating a Flourishing Environment

- Harness the power of the environment
- Avoid fundamental attribution error (FAE)
- Use environmental control: most neglected self-care strategy
- Define the environment broadly: People, places, and things
- Take an environmental audit

A self-care village in a workaholic culture

- Work safety
- Business support
- Behavioral boundaries
- Institutional practices (high demands plus high constraints are toxic)
- Doing well \$ while doing good
- Should I stay or should I go?



11. Profiting from Personal Tx

- Commence pers therapy at beginning of career (90% plus benefit)
- Pursue couples & family therapy as well
- Confront your resistance *not* to pursue it
- Supplement therapy with self-analysis
- Return to tx periodically **without shame** (52% to 65% reinitiate)

Alternatives

- Obtain annual satisfaction checkup
- Pursue other forms of self-development (e.g., creative arts, meditation, yoga)
- Assume the patient/student role in which you are served, taught, and nourished



12. Cultivating Spirituality & Mission

At the Office

- Remember your calling
- Reclaim your “mission” in life (Maslow)
- Care for others
- Commitment to growth
- Spirituality in clinical work



Spirituality Outside Office

- Pursuing ultimate questions
- Becoming a citizen-therapist (*Tikkun*)
- Taking real social action (Kottler book)
- Integrating religion/spirituality into your personal life
- Letting your life speak (Palmer book)

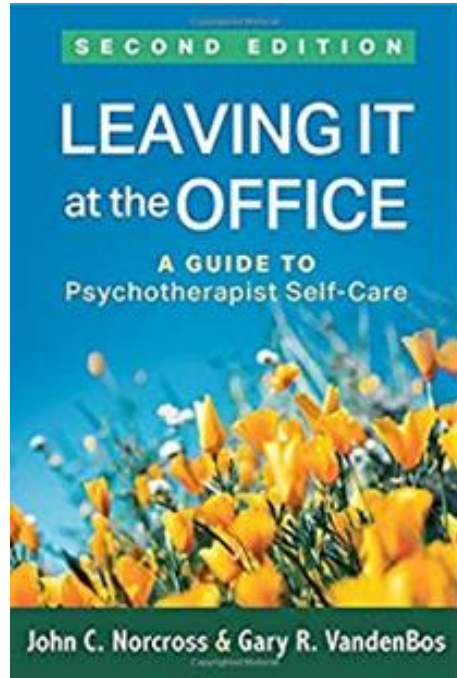


13. Fostering Creativity & Growth

- Passionately committed: adaptive & open
- Everything comes together in creative process
- Diversify: your practice, clients, professional activities
- Growth (e.g., CE, deliberate practice, video-tape, prof organizations, learn new language)
- In the end, do more than survive: **Thrive**



In Closing: A Curious Blend



1. How to
2. You should
3. Chill out

Ave Atque Vale

(Hail and Farewell)

Please

- ♥ Be gentle with yourself (self-empathy)
- ♥ Remember that your life is a work in progress (temper corrosive expectations)
- ♥ Recall that you cannot master or profit from all self-care strategies
- ♥ Individualize self-care to your dynamics, vulnerabilities, resources
- ♥ Practice self-care as a skillful attitude and lifelong commitment



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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.

Thank You for Joining Us!

- If you have comments or feedback regarding this webinar, please email CESupport@nationalregister.org
- We hope you can attend our next webinar on October 10: [TOPIC] with Dr. [NAME].



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