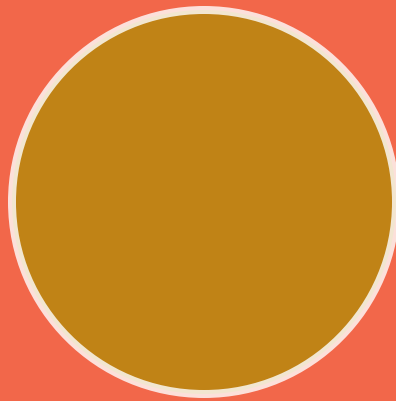


# Mindfulness as Self Care





# What is mindfulness?



“Mindfulness is a state of active, open attention on the present. When you're mindful, you observe your thoughts and feelings from a distance, without judging them good or bad. Instead of letting your life pass you by, mindfulness means living in the moment and awakening to experience.”

Psychology Today

# Benefits of Mindfulness



- Enhances focus and attention
- Increases self-awareness and the awareness of others
- Raises levels of resilience and emotional intelligence
- Strengthens cognitive effectiveness
- Listen more attentively
- Be more emotionally alert & Communicate more clearly
- Direct your thoughts more appropriately
- Focus more consistently & Empathize more readily
- Renew yourself effectively

# ○ What is Self Care



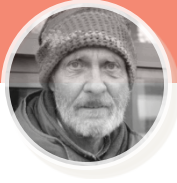
- Decisions and actions that facilitate coping with stress, improving physical and emotional health, promote relaxation and engage one in pleasurable activities.
- Self care is subjective, everyone's idea of self care is different.
- Self care is sustainable solutions for managing stress and promoting relaxation and fulfilment.
- Self care is putting up boundaries and sticking to them
- Self care is maintaining your physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual health.

# Why Self Care?



- Working in crisis management/case work can be highly stressful and can carry a heavy emotional load. Exposure to violence, addiction, trauma, illness, and mental illness can have a dramatic impact on our psychological well-being.
- Working long hours can be hard to manage on physical level because it often disrupts sleep, which can cause other problems with mental and physical health.
- It can also limit worker's time with friends and family and can cause disturbances in relationships.
- Case work can often make it difficult to schedule sustainable rest and recreation.
- Engaging in sustainable self care will help provide some balance between a stressful work life and a limited amount of free time.

# ○ Benefits of Self Care



- Extend your life (happier people live longer)
- Reduce stress
- Improve coping strategies
- Improve quality of sleep
- Gain greater sense of fulfilment
- More energy
- Improved performance

# Differences in Mindfulness & Self Care



Between stimulus and response, there is a space and within that space lies our power to choose our response and in our response lies the growth and freedom

Victor Frangle

# Autopilot



- Often we engage in routine actions or patterns of behavior throughout our day.
- The more familiar and routine these patterns of behavior become, the less we have to think when we engage in them.

e.g. Driving





# Autopilot has obvious benefits:



- Once we have mastered certain tasks, autopilot allows us to divide our attention and multitask.
- Autopilot replaces much of the active processing we have to do in a given situation, making tasks less intellectually taxing and reducing reaction time.





# BUT...



**Being on autopilot  
will reduce our  
capacity to be aware  
of:**

- Our surrounding environment
- Our individual actions
- Personal thoughts and feelings.

**When we are on  
autopilot,  
subtle yet important  
elements of our  
environment (including  
people we interact  
with), our physical  
condition, and our  
psychological state  
can be overlooked!**

# Stress and Mindfulness



There are two types of stress:

**Positive Stress:** Healthy, brings about feelings of accomplishment, fulfilment or other positive feelings.

**Negative Stress:** Experienced when we are overwhelmed by things happening in our lives. Often associated with negative emotions that may be difficult to manage.

Individuals are comfortable with different levels of stress. Being Mindful of your stress levels and how you interpret different types of stress will allow you to respond more appropriately and learn when you need to engage in self care activity.

# Mindfulness and Stress Reduction



When paying attention to how we are in any given moment:

- We can actively choose how we are going to respond to our current internal and external stressors
- We are empowered to have some control over the stressors we are experiencing
- We can actively choose to enact strategies to reduce our stress reaction

# How does this apply to the front line work?



- Being mindful allows individuals to Increases self-awareness and be more conscious of their thoughts, feelings, emotions, and actions.
- Mindful individuals tend to have an increased awareness of others and their surroundings.
- As a result, individuals are less likely to repeat behavior that they actively recognize as non-productive through being mindful.

# Repeated exposure to crisis situations can often have polarized effects:



## Sensitization

Physiological and emotional responses

- increase in frequency and intensity with repeated exposure
- Increased sensitivity to stress and trauma
- Resulting anxiety or stress can result in poor decision making
- BURN OUT
- COMPASSION FATIGUE

## Desensitization

- decrease in frequency intensity with repeated exposure
- Can potentially cause people to become complacent
- Can reduce empathy
- Can cause people to go on autopilot at inappropriate times

# ○ R.A.I.N. Exercise



Twelve years ago a Buddhist teacher began to share a new mindfulness tool, Intended to support people working through intense and difficult emotions and can be accessed in almost any place or situation. It directs our attention step-by-step





# **R = RECOGNITION**



- Recognize what is happening internally
- Focus your attention on whatever thoughts, emotions, feelings or sensations are present.
- You can spark recognition simply by asking yourself: “What is happening inside me right now?”
- Avoid judgment of thoughts, emotions, feelings or sensations.
- The purpose is to recognize the existence of thoughts, emotions, feelings or sensations, not to label them as positive or negative



# ○ **A = ALLOW**



- Allowing means “letting be” the thoughts, emotions, feelings or sensations you experience.
- Sometimes the thoughts, emotions, feelings or sensations you discover will be uncomfortable.
- Allowing these sensations to exist without judgment or attempting to redirect will help you become more comfortable with them.



# I = INVESTIGATE



- Investigation means directing a more focused attention to your present experience.

## Ask yourself:

- “What most wants attention?”
- “How am I experiencing this in my body?”
- “What am I believing?”
- “What does this feeling want from me?”

Unless brought into consciousness, these beliefs and feelings will unconsciously dictate your experience and maintain your identification with a limited, deficient self.



# N = NON-IDENTIFICATION



- Sense of self is not fused with or defined by any limited set of emotions, sensations or narratives
- Recognition that the emotion is just another passing mind state and not a definition of who you are
- Non-identifying with your story and seeing it as temporary, the thoughts, emotions, feelings or sensations you experience will have less of a negative impact.



# S.T.O.P. Exercise



- When we are present we have a firmer grasp of all our options and resources which often make us feel better. Next time you find your mind racing with stress, try the acronym **S.T.O.P.**
- S = stop what you are doing at the time, obviously, you need to choose an appropriate and safe place to stop your activity. E.g. Driving, The purpose of stopping activity is to avoid distracting yourself from your thoughts, emotions, feelings or sensations
- T= take a breath, inhale normally and naturally, follow your breath coming in and out of your nose ,You can even use verbal cues if that helps with concentration
- O= observe your thoughts, feelings, and emotions, remember that thoughts are not facts and they are not permanent ,notice any emotions that are there and just name them. Recent research out of UCLA demonstrates that just naming your emotions can have a calming effect. notice your body. Are you standing or sitting? How is your posture? Any aches and pains?
- P=proceed with something that will support you in the moment, small gesture of self-care ,take a walk, talk to a friend, family member, or partner, listen to a good song

# Wisdom From The Dalai Lama



**The Dalai Lama, when asked what surprised him most about humanity, answered "Man. Because he sacrifices his health in order to make money. Then he sacrifices money to recuperate his health. And then he is so anxious about the future that he does not enjoy the present; the result being that he does not live in the present or the future; he lives as if he is never going to die, and then dies having never really lived."**

