

Region 3 & 4 PTAC Conference

Developing Compassion Resiliency

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WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Tony Evers, PhD, State Superintendent

Thank You!

This presentation was adapted from modules, webinars, and resources from the following:

- WI DPI Student Services Prevention and Wellness Team
- Monica Whiteman, Elizabeth Cook, Sue McKenzie

Presentation Outcomes

- Practice strategies to maintain our physical, emotional and mental well-being while compassionately supporting families who are in great need of support
- Identify and address barriers between families and schools to be able to effectively partner on behalf of children
- Identify and plan strategies to minimize compassion fatigue within ourselves

Why Discuss Compassion Resiliency?

People who work closely with our most vulnerable families may experience . . .

- Compassion Fatigue
- Burnout
- Secondary Trauma

From Compassion Fatigue to Compassion Resilience

- **Compassion Fatigue:** Feelings of depression, sadness, exhaustion, anxiety and irritation that may be experienced by people in their work and/or personal life.

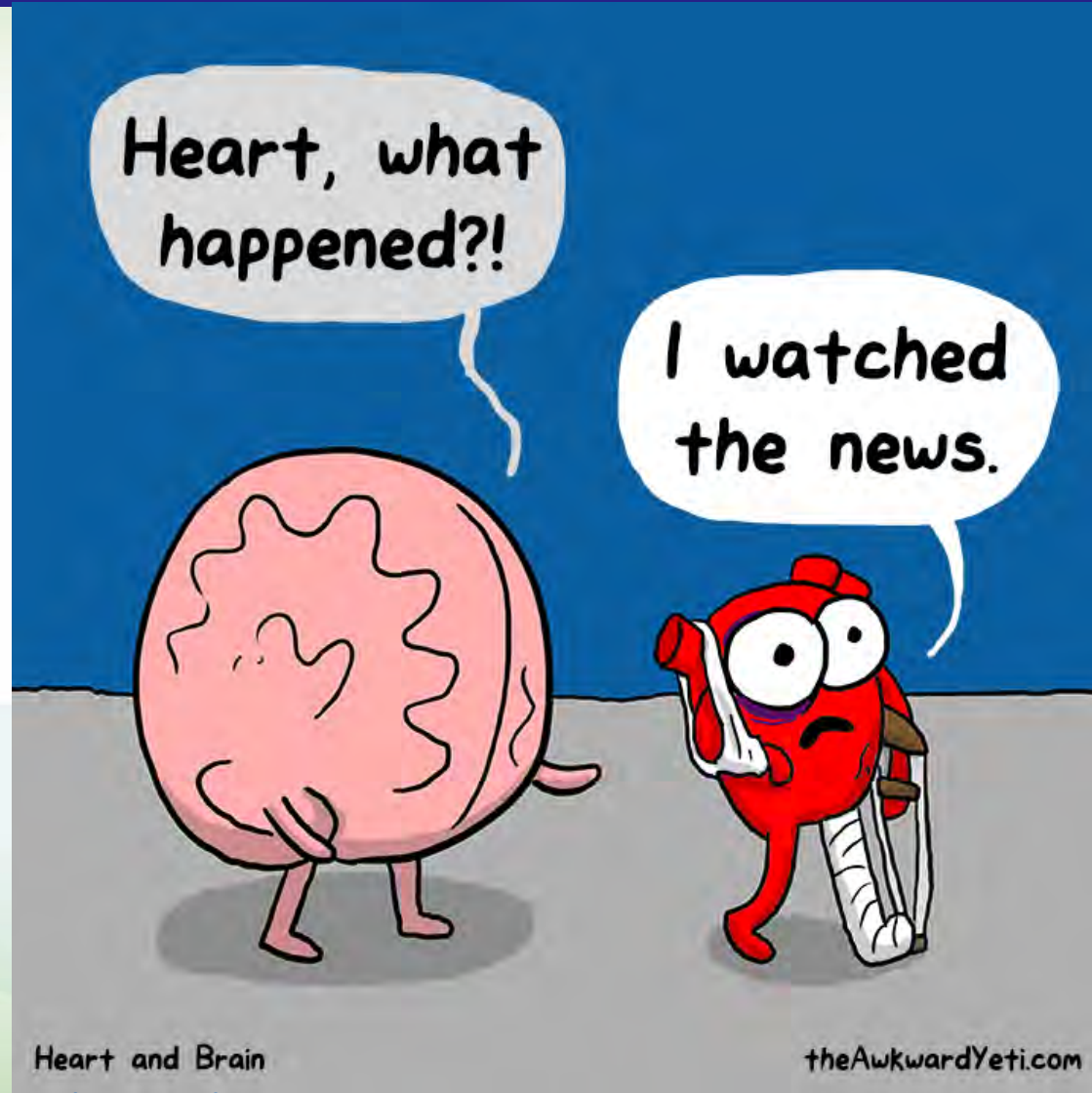
From Compassion Fatigue to Compassion Resilience

- **Burnout:** Exhaustion of physical and/or emotional strength or motivation often as a result of prolonged stress related to very high workload, non-supportive work environment, and/or feeling that our efforts make no difference.

From Compassion Fatigue to Compassion Resilience

- **Secondary Trauma:** Also known as secondary traumatic stress and vicarious trauma can happen to us when we come to know the traumatically stressful events that students or families we serve have experienced.
- While it is rare, some helpers experience some of the same symptoms of trauma as if the experience had happened to them. Those that are in a **position to hear about trauma on a regular basis** are particularly susceptible.

Compassion Fatigue



Compassion Fatigue's Path



Leave Profession

Zealot

We are committed, involved, and available, Ready to problem solve and to make a difference, We are willing to go the extra mile.



Compassion Resilience

Renewal vs Pathology

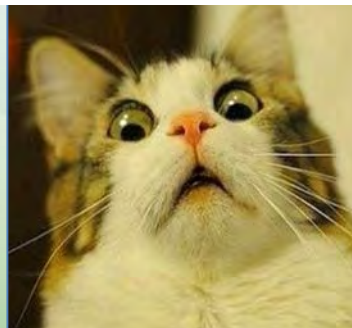
Irritability



Anger and cynicism, Diminished creativity, Sadness, Feeling helpless or hopeless

Leaving the profession, Physical and Mental illness, Chronic symptoms or Hardiness, Resiliency, Transformation

Withdrawal



Overwhelmed by complexity, Chronic exhaustion, Physical illness, Difficulty empathizing, Feeling numb to other's pain, Absenteeism



(cycle is from work of Eric Gentry, PhD 2012)

Group Activity: Compassion Fatigue

- Look at page 5 of the handout “Compassion Fatigue Cycle”
- Discuss with people around you an experience you may have had in any of these areas

An Important Reminder

Compassion fatigue is a _____ response to
_____ circumstances.

abnormal

normal

Compassion Fatigue

“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.”

Strategies to maintain our
physical, emotional and
mental well-being while
compassionately supporting
families who are in great
need of support



Active Listening

- How we choose to listen can affect how we feel in a conversation
- Expansive listening (Aguilar) provides us with strategies for listening

Ways of Listening (Aguliar)

Listen for . . .

- Big picture
- Pain
- Relationships
- Possibility

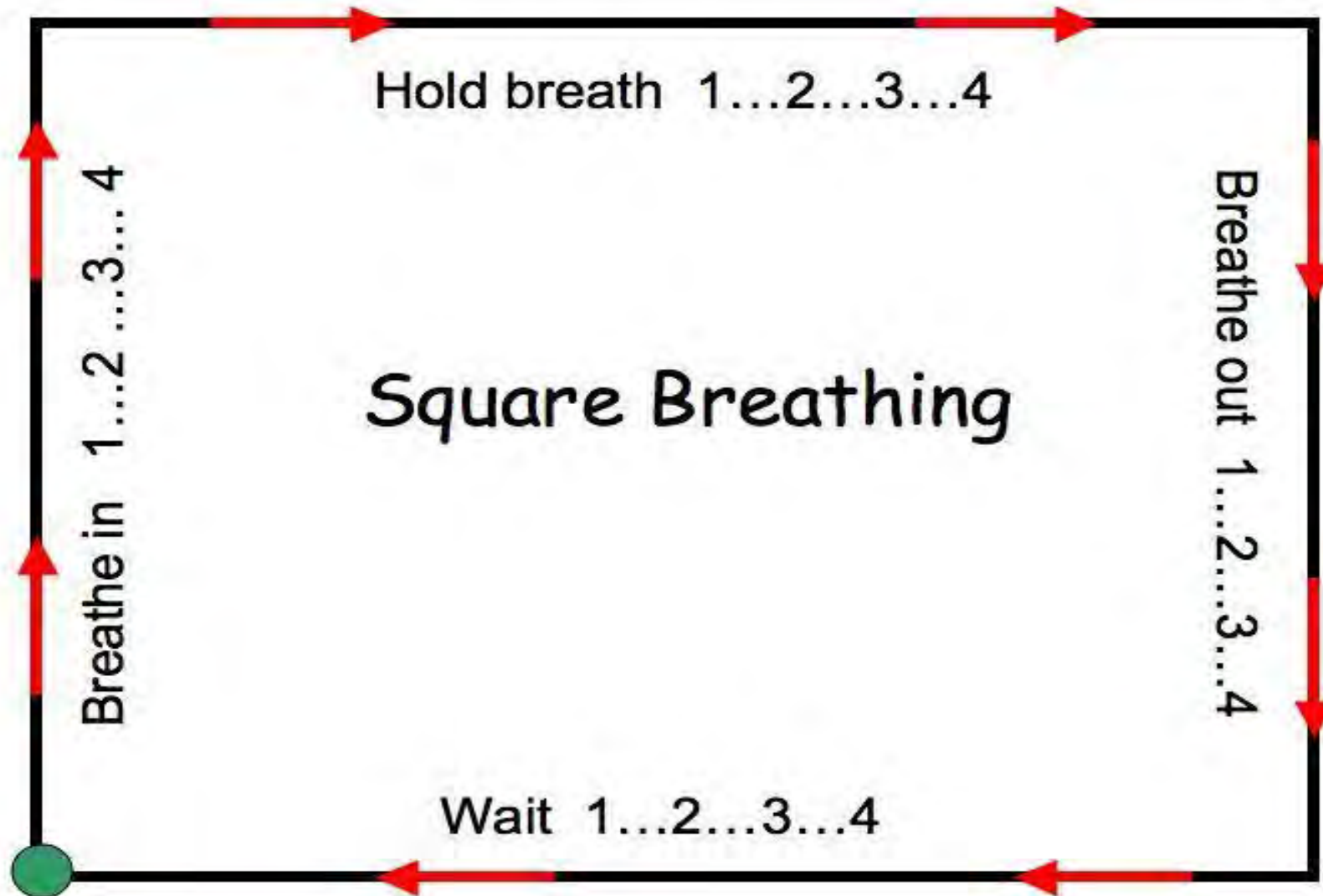
Listen with . . .

- Humility
- Curiosity
- Compassion
- Confidence
- Hope
- Love

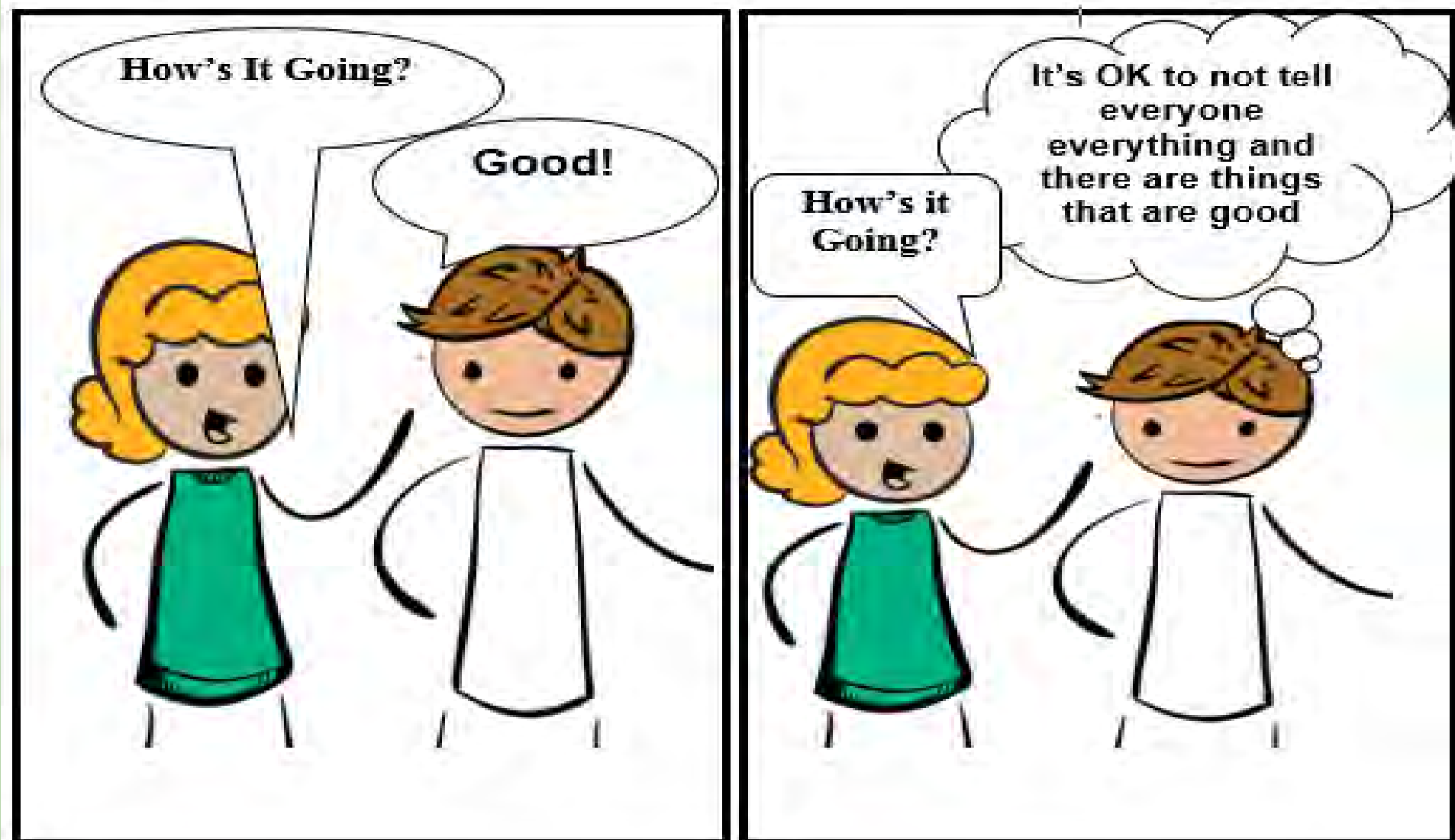
Active Listening Group Activity

1. Get in partner pairs
2. One person will play role of “family member”, the other of “PTI phone support staff”
3. Family member can pick any of the scenarios from activity handout
4. PTI phone staff will select one of the ways of listening from the expansive listening handout
5. Role play for 5 minutes
6. We will stop you at end of 5 minutes to switch roles

Simple Regulation Strategy



My Social Narrative Example



Identify and address barriers
between families and
schools to be able to
effectively partner on behalf
of children



Building Trust with and Between IEP Team Members and Support Staff

- Understand how emotions affect our communication
- Understand other's point of view through active listening
- Explore options
- Positions versus interests
 - Not just the “what” but the “why”

Positions and Interests



Positions, Interests, Responsibilities

Group Activity

Think of *Different* Points of View

What Might be Some Interests for the Following Positions?

- Requesting a 1:1 Support Staff
- Wanting to Go to a Specific School
- Using a Specific Type of Communication or Assistive Technology System

Identify and plan strategies
to minimize compassion
fatigue within ourselves



Group Activity

Taking Care of Yourself

- What Strategies do YOU Use to Stay Calm and Carry On?
- Who Supports You in School, Personal Life, Community?

Building Compassion Resilience

Expectations

- Realistic ones for yourself
- Realistic ones for others

Boundary Setting

- Know what you want/can say 'yes' to

Staff Culture

- Connecting with colleagues in a way that heals & helps

Self-Care

- Mind
- Spirit
- Strength
- Heart

From Unrealistic Expectations to Helpful Affirmations

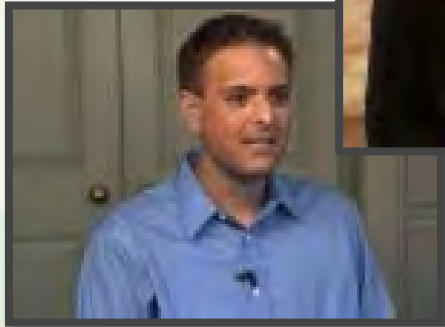
- Think of an unrealistic expectation you have of yourself.
- Write an affirmation you can say to yourself when you feel the expectation coming into play.
- **Unrealistic Expectation:** I should have my presentation completed a week before the deadline.
- **Affirmation:** I am a good presenter and am doing my best to provide the best presentation possible.

Affirmations of Others

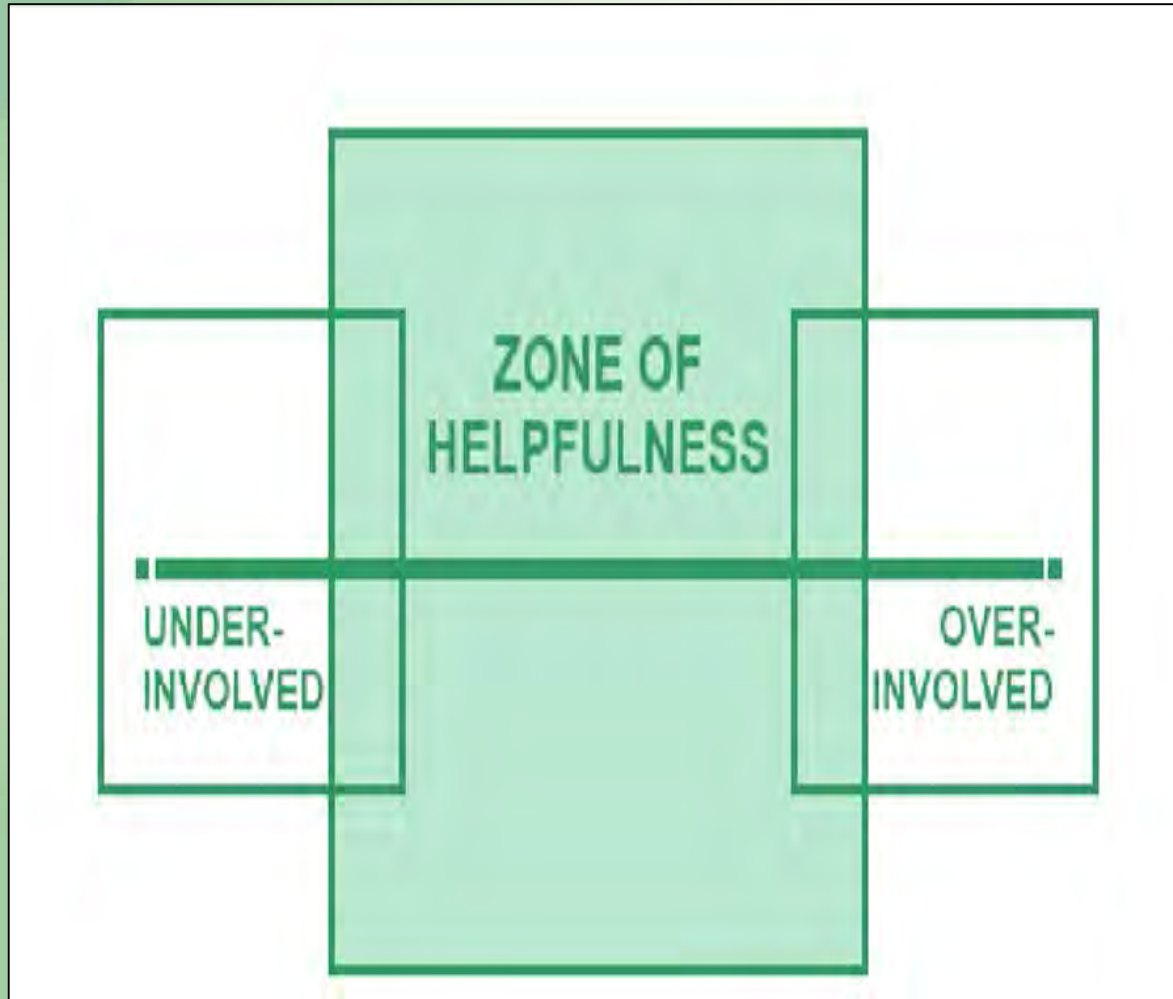
“Just like me, this person . . .

- is seeking happiness in life.”
- is trying to avoid suffering in life.”
- has known sadness, loneliness and despair.”
- is seeking to fill individual needs.”
- is learning about life.”

Expectations: Remind ourselves of the resilience in our families and colleagues



Boundary Setting Activity



When supporting families. . .

List attitudes or behaviors you have seen when supporting families that are:

Under-involved

Over-involved

In the middle

Tips for Setting Compassionate Boundaries

- Know what you want to say “Yes” to in your life (values and priorities).
- Be proactive. Have “meetings” to discuss boundaries. Structure offers safety for both sides.
- Just say it! Don’t make them guess. Use simple and direct language.
- Reinforce by pointing out the violations or near violations *IN THE MOMENT*.
- Give explanations that are specific, relevant to the other person, and offer shared solutions.
- Back up your boundary with action. If you give in, you invite people to ignore your needs.

Staff Culture - Connect with colleagues and others in the community

- What are my role, skills, and current capacity limitations?
- What colleagues or organizations can offer services that I cannot?
- What can I do to increase my knowledge of and belief in the capacity of colleagues?

Care for Self

Adapted from the Compass Model, Scott & Holly Stoner, Samaritan Wellness Foundation

<https://www.livingcompass.org/>



Additional Tips

- Take care of yourself / family first
- Trust in the strength and resiliency of families and students through your words and actions
- Connect with colleagues
- Immerse yourself in stories of recovery

Closing Activity

Share a success story of a student or family