

Mental Health Awareness for Directors: Tools for Psychological Wellbeing

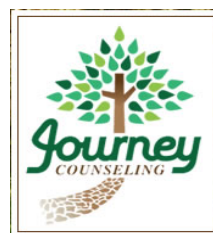


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FOUNDATIONAL PREMISE

- “If we want to grow as teachers, we must do something alien to academic culture: we must talk to each other about our inner lives—risky stuff in a profession that fears the personal and seeks safety in the technical, the distant, the abstract.” (Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*)

STRESSORS

- Physical: long/unconventional hours, mostly on our feet, diet/exercise, juggling family/work
- Relational: parents, administrators, students, colleagues, mentors/teachers, family members
- Societal: expectation to “fix” children, bureaucratic policies/laws, emphasis on perfection
- Academic: standardized testing, non-teaching assignments, administrator evaluations
- Mental/Emotional: ability/inability to recognize, cope, act, and adapt to stressors

AUTHENTIC SELF / DIFFERENTIATION

- “The most practical thing we can achieve in any kind of work is insight into what is happening inside us as we do it. The more familiar we are with our inner terrain, the more surefooted our teaching—and living—becomes.” (Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*)
- Authentic Self model—see p. 4
- Differentiation model—see p. 5

PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL HURDLES

- Vulnerability
- Criticism
- Perfectionism

VULNERABILITY

- “Teaching is a daily exercise in vulnerability.” (Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*)
- In ourselves = weakness and inadequacy / In others = courage and empowerment
- Conflicting connotations (Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly*)
 - Negative: fear, self-doubt, comparison, anxiety, uncertainty
 - Positive: love, belonging, joy, trust, empathy, creativity, innovation
- Teddy Roosevelt speech (“The Man in the Arena”)—April 23, 1910
 - “It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly....”
- Educators’ arenas
 - Classroom/ensemble settings; Parent/teacher conferences; Meetings with administrators; Relationships with colleagues
- “Vulnerability is not weakness, and the uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure we face every day are not optional. Our only choice is a question of engagement. Our willingness to own and engage with our vulnerability determines the depth of our courage and the clarity of our purpose; the level to which we protect ourselves from being vulnerable is a measure of our fear and disconnection.... We must walk into the arena, whatever it may be—a new relationship, an important meeting, our creative process, or a difficult family conversation—with courage and the willingness to engage. Rather than sitting on the sidelines and hurling judgment and advice, we must dare to show up and let ourselves be seen. This is vulnerability.” (Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly*)

CRITICISM

- Creative Arts: Performance-based endeavors; Critics present (“professional nitpickers”)
- Balance is key: 1) impossible to avoid; 2) not healthy to ignore, 3) shouldn’t be defined by it
- “I don’t care what people think, I don’t worry about the critics in the arena’ sends a huge red flag up for me. We’re hardwired for connection. When we stop caring what people think, we lose our capacity for connection. When we become defined by what people think, we lose our capacity to become vulnerable. Not caring what people think is its own kind of hustle.” (Brené Brown)
- “Resistance wants us to cede sovereignty to others. It wants us to stake our self-worth, our identity, our reason-for-being, on the response of others to our work.... The professional cannot allow the actions of others to define his reality.... The artist cannot look to others to validate his efforts or his calling. He must do his work for its own sake...not for fortune or attention or applause.” (Steven Pressfield, *The War of Art*)
- Common Critics:
 - Shame: “I’m not worthy...”
 - Scarcity: “I’ll never be _____ enough”
 - Comparison: “I don’t measure up”
- Additional Critics
 - Parent/co-worker/administrator; Yourself; One or more supporter(s) (invited into the arena)
- Traps of Criticism—We become the critic...
 - To feel better about ourselves
 - To create an inauthentic sense of self-value
 - “If you find yourself criticizing other people, you’re probably doing it out of Resistance. When we see others beginning to live their authentic selves, it drives us crazy if we have not lived out our own.” (Steven Pressfield, *The War of Art*)

PERFECTIONISM

- Debilitating Disease or Helpful Habits?
- “The demand for the perfect is the enemy of the possible good. Be peace and do justice, but don’t expect perfection in yourself or the world. Perfectionism contributes to intolerance and judgmentalism and makes ordinary love largely impossible.” (Richard Rohr)

PERFECTIONISM	HEALTHY STRIVING
Other-focused	Self-focused
“What will others think”	“How can I improve?”
Seeking to earn approval/acceptance	Seeking to genuinely grow and develop
“I am what I accomplish”	“I will do my best”
Avoiding weaknesses	Identifying and refining weaknesses
“I am not/will never be good enough”	“I am enough, but am ever-evolving”
No flaws allowed	Embracing imperfections
Driven out of a fear of failure	Possessing the courage to risk
Defensive disposition regarding criticism	Positive response involving criticism
Unattainable goals	Realistic goals
Resentful of falling short	Pleased by progress
Addictive belief system	Nurturing life foundation
Self-destruction	Self-compassion
Protective measures	Transparent processes
Negative self-talk	Balanced self-evaluation
Hypercritical (of self & others)	Encouraging (toward self & others)

Adapted from the research of Brené Brown

- “Leadership does not mean perfection but rather a commitment to excellence whether as an artist or as a person. Failures along the way do not derail authentic leaders; they simply act as corrections and guides to something better—they are opportunities to learn and grow, to do things better next time.” (Ramona Wis, *The Conductor as Leader*)

HAPPINESS vs. MEANINGFULNESS

- Happiness—An emotional state consisting of positive affect (experiencing more pleasant than unpleasant)
- Meaningfulness—A cognitive and emotional pursuit of purpose and value (consistently rewarding life)
- Happiness & Meaningfulness are interrelated and overlap, yet they have differing roots and implications.

HAPPINESS	MEANINGFULNESS
Short-term satisfaction	Long-term fulfillment
Largely present-oriented (isolated events)	Integration of past, present, & future (linked events)
Having one's needs and desires satisfied	The ongoing pursuit of goals and dreams
Largely free from unpleasant events	Benefits of pleasant and unpleasant events
Being a "taker"	Being a "giver"
Interpersonal involvements that benefit the self	Personal contributions for the welfare of others
Short-lived and fleeting feelings/experiences	Lasting and permanent feelings/experiences
Carefree presence, lacking in worry and anxiety	Presence of stress, worry, argument, and anxiety
Finding life generally easy and straightforward	Finding life generally challenging and complicated
Achievements/accolades can take precedence	Relationships are more important than achievements
Experiences/activities that bring joy and satisfaction while performing	Experiences/activities which involve, encourage, and develop one's personal "voice" ("can be oneself")

Adapted from "There's More to Life Than Being Happy" and The Journal of Positive Psychology

- It's difficult to dispute the appeal of happiness, however, there are tangible benefits from unhappy experiences and negative feelings.
- A meaningful yet unhappy life is, in some ways, more admirable than the happy but meaningless one.
- Research has shown that having purpose and meaning in life increases overall well-being and life satisfaction, improves mental and physical health, enhances resiliency, increases self-esteem, and decreases the chances of depression.
- "For, in the end, it is impossible to have a great life unless it is a meaningful life. And it is very difficult to have a meaningful life without meaningful work. Perhaps, then, you might gain that rare tranquility that comes from knowing that you've had a hand in creating something of intrinsic excellence that makes a contribution. Indeed, you might even gain that deepest of all satisfactions: knowing that your short time here on this earth has been well spent, and that it mattered." (Jim Collins, *Good to Great*)

CONCLUSION

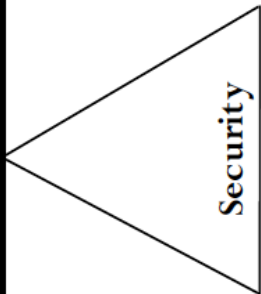
- "We come into this world with a specific, personal destiny. We have a job to do, a calling to enact, a self to become. Our job in this lifetime is not to shape ourselves into some ideal we imagine we ought to be, but to find out who we already are and become it." (Steven Pressfield, *The War of Art*)
- "Leaders are pioneers—people who are willing to step out into the unknown. They search for opportunities to innovate, grow, and improve.... Leaders know well that innovation and change all involve experimentation, risk, and failure. They proceed anyway. One way of dealing with the potential risks and failures of experimentation is to approach change through incremental steps and small wins. Little victories, when piled on top of each other, build confidence that even the biggest challenges can be met. In so doing, they strengthen commitment to the long-term future." (James Kouzes & Barry Posner, *Leadership Challenge*)
- "May the passion you have for music and teaching ever strengthen your purpose. May your dedication to your students be matched only by the joy they bring you. May you spend all the days of your life cherishing the wonder that is you, and the profound impact you have on all those you teach. Walk with them, excite them, empower them, make them curious, push them, and gently invite them to grow. For that is your passion, it is your calling, it is your mission, it is your purpose." (Peter Loel Boonshaft, *Teaching Music with Purpose*)

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AUTHENTIC SELF

<i>DESPAIR</i>	<i>Vulnerability</i>	<i>Ownership</i>	<i>CONTROL</i>
	<i>Humility Weaknesses</i>	<i>Confidence Strengths</i>	
			
Focus on Weaknesses	Embrace strengths & weaknesses		Focus on strengths
Imperfect	Perfectly imperfect		Perfect
Unworthy/Not valued	Value based on who you are		Value based on performance
Shame	Humility & Confidence		Pride
Self-condemnation	Self-compassion/Curiosity		Self-righteous
Self-defeating	Accept/Learn from others		Critical of others
Emotionally suppressive	Context-appropriate emotions		Emotionally reactive
Lacking boundaries	Set appropriate boundaries		Rigid/Inflexible boundaries
Self-loathing	Accepting self		Proving self
Depression	Peace		Anxiety/Panic

(Authentic Self model created by Don Arterburn)

DIFFERENTIATION

“Differentiation is the process by which we become more uniquely ourselves by maintaining ourselves in relationship with those we love.” (Edwin H. Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve*)

In other words: How do I be myself, and stay true to myself, while remaining connected with you.

DIFFERENTIATION IS:

- A lifelong process of striving to keep oneself in balance between internal and external influences
- Being clear about one’s own personal values and goals
- The capacity to take a stand in an intense emotional system
- Saying “I” when others are demanding “we”
- Remaining calm in the face of anxiety, conflict, criticism, rejection, or challenge
- Maintaining a non-anxious presence in the face of anxious others
- Taking maximum responsibility for one’s own emotional being and destiny rather than blaming others or the context

—Adapted from Edwin H. Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve*, and Murray Bowen and Michael E. Kerr, *Family Evaluation*

DIFFERENTIATION IN ACTION

“A well-differentiated [person] is not [someone] who tells others what to do or orders them around...rather, someone who has clarity about his or her own life goals, and therefore, someone who is less likely to become lost in the anxious emotional processes swirling about. [This is] someone who can be separate while still remaining connected, and therefore can maintain a modifying, non-anxious, and sometimes challenging presence. [This person] can manage his or her own reactivity to the automatic reactivity of others, and therefore be able to take stands at the risk of displeasing. It is not as though some can do this and some cannot. No one does this easily, [but] most...can improve their capacity.” (Edwin H. Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve*)

DIFFERENTIATION IN CLASSROOM / ENSEMBLE CONTEXT

“The higher the level of self-differentiation, the more [the group] can cooperate, look out for one another’s welfare, and stay in adequate contact during stressful as well as calm periods. The lower the level of differentiation, the more likely [they] will regress to selfish, aggressive, and avoidant behaviors.” (Murray Bowen and Michael E. Kerr, *Family Evaluation*)