

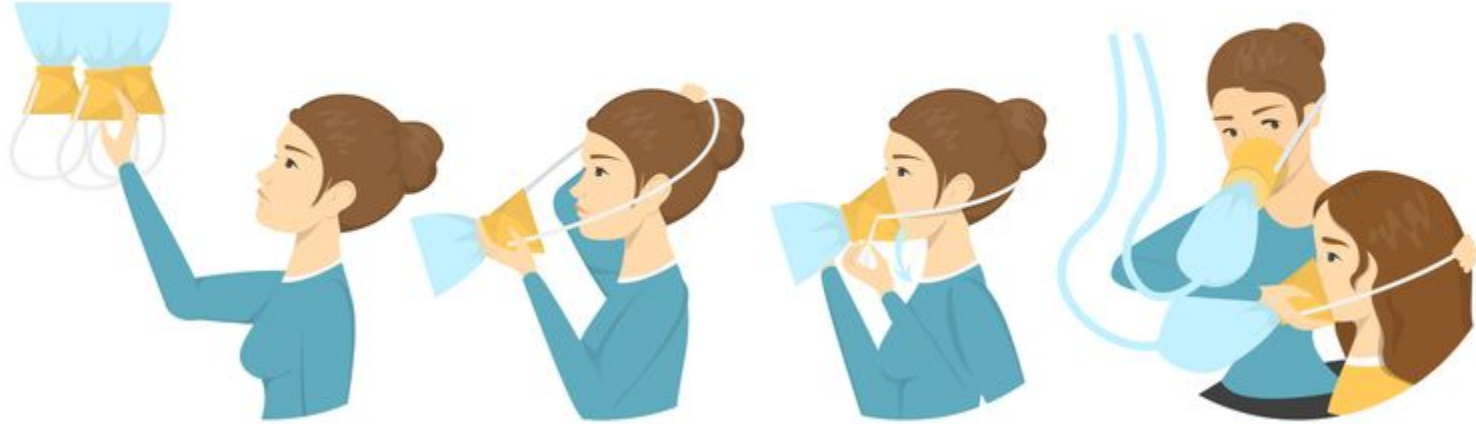
# The Oxygen Mask Project



Veterinary Wellness

Christy L. Langwell-Millett, CVT, BASVT, VTES  
Veterinary VITALS

# Put Your Oxygen Mask On First



Airline Industry: The Oxygen Mask Principle



# Outline

Trauma

Impacts of Trauma

Compassion Fatigue

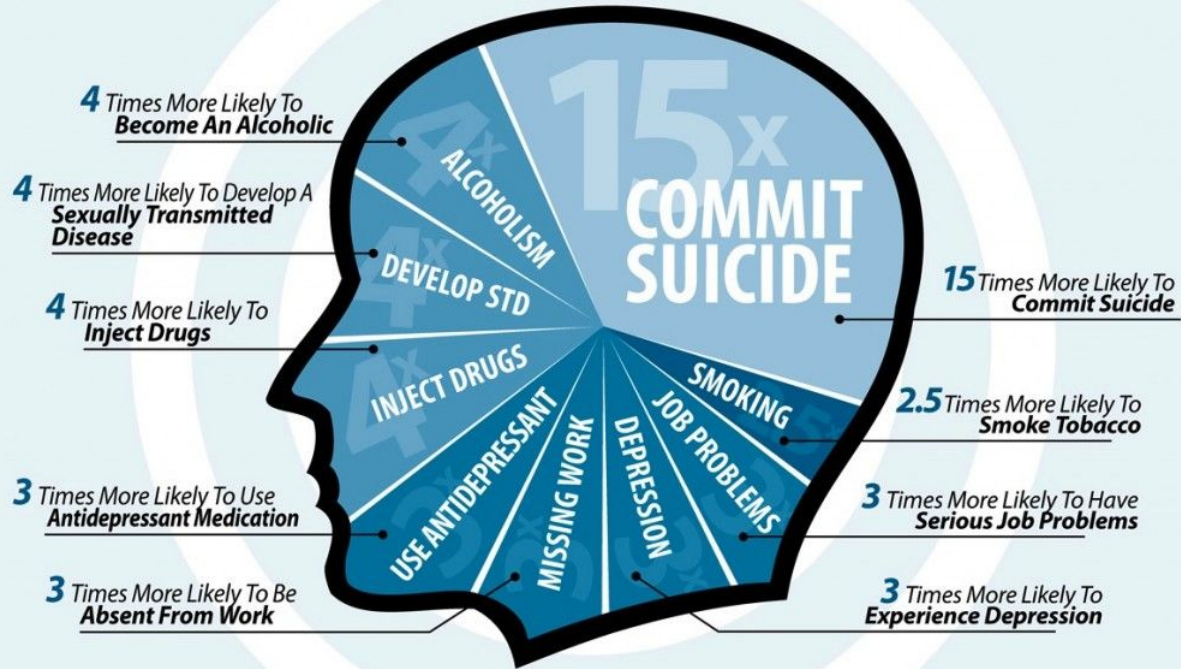
Trauma-informed Wellness

Physical Wellness

Not your father's benefit package

# Trauma

## PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED TRAUMA ARE:





# What is Trauma?

A disruption in expectations—a gap between the way someone expected or wanted the world to be and what is actually happening.

- Expected vs unexpected
- Minorly traumatic vs deeply traumatic
- Passing quickly vs lingering effects

“Whenever your expectations are disrupted, you use energy to close the gap. You may be able to change what’s happening, or you may need to adjust to an undesirable reality.

Either way, you draw on your mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual energy. If the disruptions you face are too large, or you encounter several of them at one time, you may run out of energy and start to break down.”



# The ACE Study

## Adverse Childhood Experiences

Initial Study: 1995-1997      Expanded Study: 2012-2013      17,000 Participants

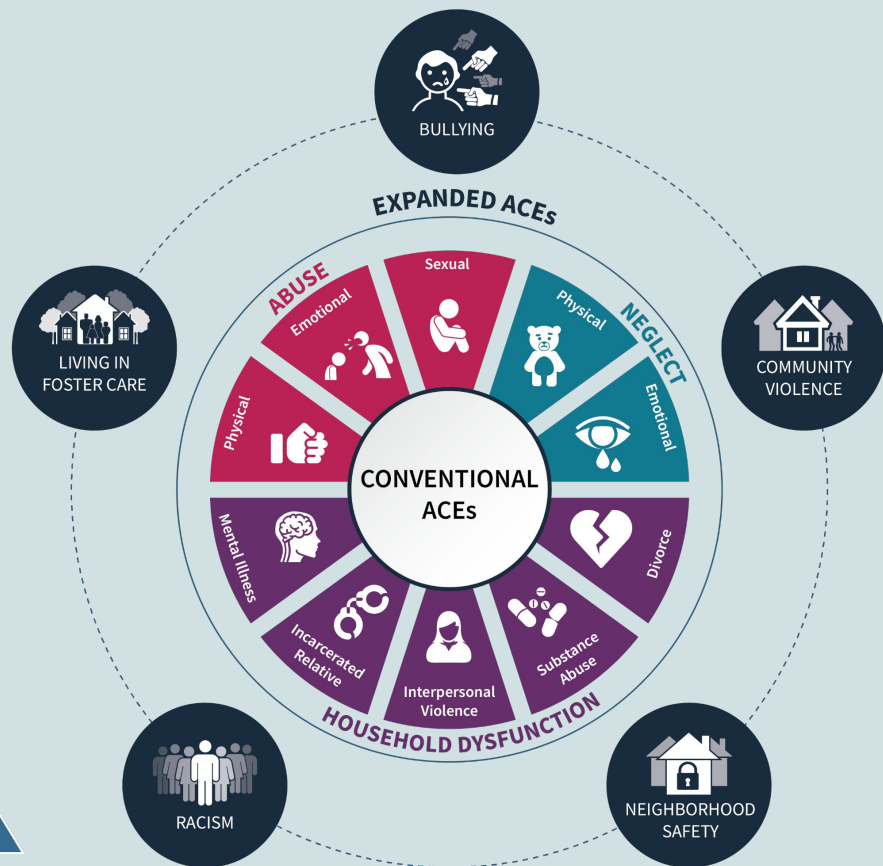
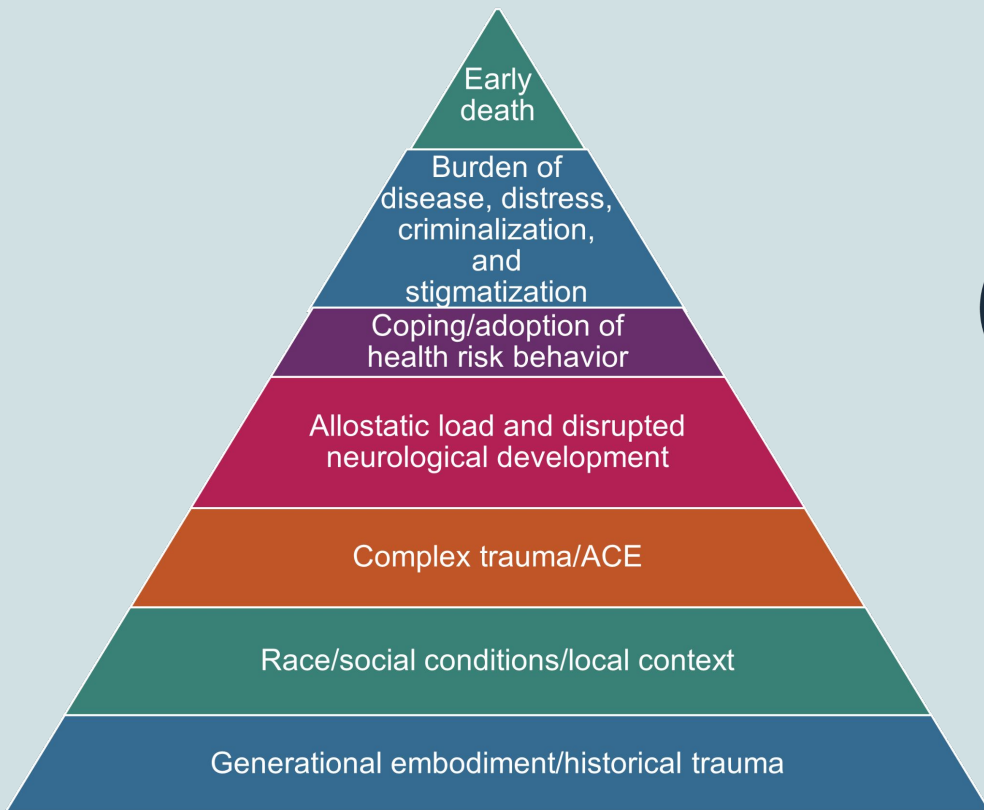
**Study focus:** how traumatic childhood events may negatively affect adult health

**Study findings:** direct link between childhood trauma and adult onset of chronic disease, incarceration, and employment challenges; higher number of ACEs = greater risk of negative outcomes

**69% of people in the original ACE study reported at least 1 ACE**

**Study determination:** You can better respond to survivors in a person-centered, trauma-informed manner when you recognize and acknowledge the impact of childhood trauma and subsequent adult trauma. Carefully tailored interventions can successfully shift the outcome trajectory.

# Types of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)



What are ACEs?

# THE TRUTH ABOUT ACEs

## WHAT ARE THEY?

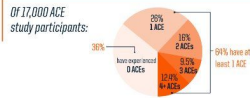
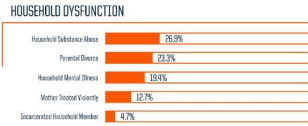
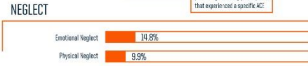
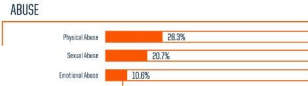
ACEs are  
ADVERSE  
CHILDHOOD  
EXPERIENCES

The three types of ACEs include

ABUSE	NEGLECT	HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION	
Physical Abuse	Psychic Neglect	Mental Illness	Uncared-for Member
Sexual Abuse	Emotional Neglect	Mother-treated violently	Substance Abuse
		Divorce	

## HOW PREVALENT ARE ACEs?

The ACE study\* revealed the following estimates:



## WHAT IMPACT DO ACEs HAVE?

As the number of ACEs increases, so does the risk for negative health outcomes



Possible Risk Outcomes:

**BEHAVIOR**

- Lack of physical activity
- Smoking
- Alcoholism
- Drug use
- Mixed work

**PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH**

- Severe obesity
- Diabetes
- Depression
- Suicide attempts
- STIs
- Heart disease
- Cancer
- Stroke
- EDVD
- Broken bones

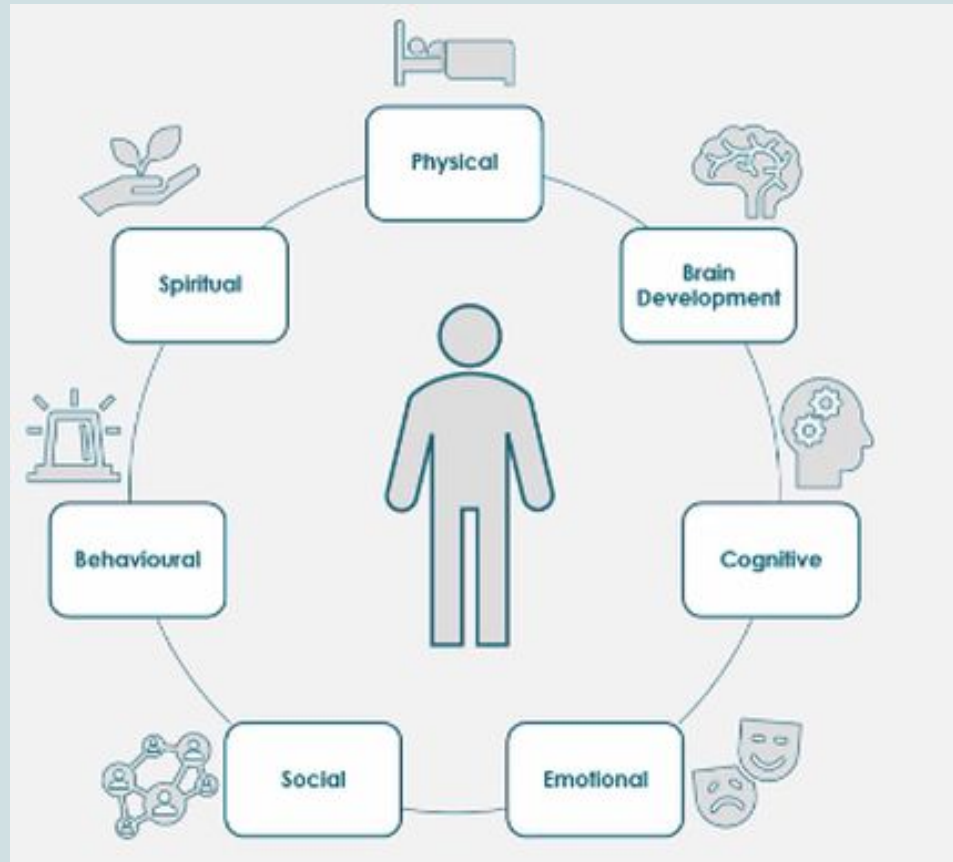
Types of ACEs

ACE Prevalence

ACE Outcomes



# Impacts of Trauma





# Impacts of Trauma on Communication

**Individuals with ACEs or those experiencing immediate/ongoing trauma, PTSD, or grief can experience:**

- Slowed or absent comprehension
- Difficulty retaining information
- Lack of concentration
- Inability to focus
- Fear and anxiety
- Unreasonable reactions (fight, fright, freeze response)
- Physical instability (lightheaded, dizziness, unsteady ambulation, GI upset)
- Panic attacks



# Impacts of Trauma in the Workplace

- High/frequent turnover rates
- Tardiness & absenteeism
- Fatigue, falling asleep
- Poor relationships with co-workers
- Difficulty completing tasks
- Difficulty committing to workflows and/or checklists
- Engaging in explosive or negative interactions with other team members
- Difficulty concentrating
- Demotivation
- Avoiding or hesitating to engage with colleagues
- Social isolation or circumstantial exclusions
- Feeling overwhelmed by the shifting demands of changing routines related to safety protocols, or other changes requiring people to adapt quickly, multitask, or take on additional responsibilities to cover multiple roles w/in the organization

# Compassion Fatigue

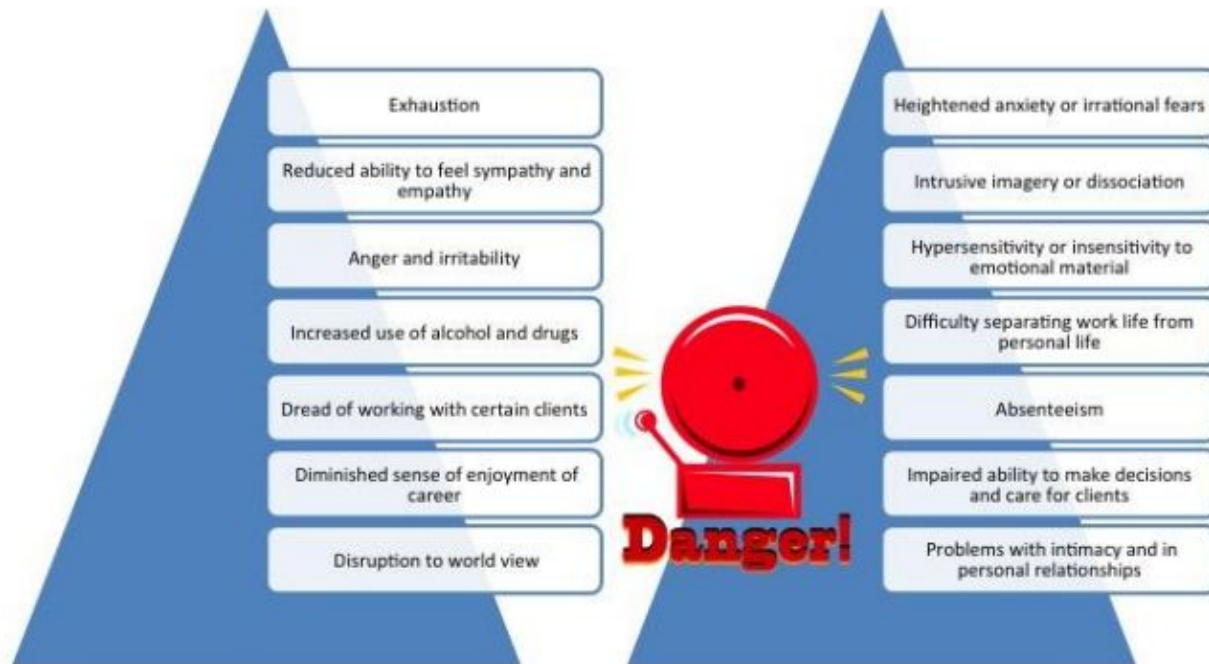


**No one can drink from an empty cup.**

# **BRENÉ BROWN**

Compassionate people ask for what they need. They say no when they need to, and when they say yes, they mean it. They're compassionate because their boundaries keep them out of resentment.

# Warning Signs of Compassion Fatigue in Staff



Developed by Christina Clarke, MS, HS-BCP, Coordinator of Continuing Medical Education and faculty, Wake Forest School of Medicine, Northwest AHEC



# Coping with the Vocation of Caring

Support individuals and teams through:

1. Training & awareness
2. Frequent review of training concepts
3. Allowing consistent times for debriefing after crisis

## **Rational Detachment:**

- Control your own behaviors and reactions
- You are not responsible for the behavior of other individuals
- Remind yourself not to take other people's behaviors personally

**Integrated Experience:** our behaviors affect the behaviors of those around us

**Self-care:** proactive and intentional care for one's body, mind, and emotional well-being leading to the prevention of compassion fatigue



# Debriefing Strategy

## COPING Model

**C**ontrol: ensure individuals have regained physical and emotional control

**O**rient: review basic nonjudgmental facts of incident; gain perspective

**P**atterns: determine trends and causes leading to incident or behavior

**I**nvestigate: determine what needs to change; find available resources

**N**egotiate: commit to changes and improvements

**G**ive: express trust, confidence, and respect through support and encouragement





# Resiliency Muscles

**Positivity:** ability to see hope and possibility

**Confidence:** willingness and ability to take action

**Priorities:** ability to quickly decide what is important & to tune out distractions

**Creativity:** ability to consider ranges of options; finding humor

**Connection:** community support; crisis intervention is a team effort

**Structure:** developing processes in an attempt to decide how to respond

**Experimenting:** ability to take action without having all the necessary info and ability to make adjustments along the way

## The Ten Laws Governing Healthy Caregiving

1. Sustain Your Compassion
2. Practice Authentic, Sustainable Self Care Daily
3. Build a Support System
4. Create a Work/Life Balance
5. Apply Empathic Discernment
6. Recognize the Humor
7. Learn to Let Go
8. Acknowledge Your Successes
9. Remain Optimistic
10. Elevate Levels of Compassion Satisfaction

# The Caregiver's Bill Of Rights

*As a caregiver I have the right...*

- ... to be respected for the work I choose to do.
- ... to take pride in my work and know that I am making a difference.
- ... to garner appreciation and validation for the care I give others.
- ... to receive adequate pay for my job as a professional caregiver.
- ... to discern my personal boundaries and have others respect my choices.
- ... to seek assistance from others, if and when it is necessary.
- ... to take time off to re-energize myself.
- ... to socialize, maintain my interests, and sustain a balanced lifestyle.
- ... to my own feelings, including negative emotions such as anger, sadness, and frustration.
- ... to express my thoughts and feelings to appropriate people at appropriate times.
- ... to convey hope to those in my care.
- ... to believe those in my care will prosper in mind, body and spirit as a result of my caregiving.

# The Ten Laws Governing Authentic, Sustainable Self Care

1. By validating ourselves, we promote acceptance.
2. By validating others, we elevate ourselves.
3. By meeting our own mental, physical and spiritual needs, we provide care from a place of abundance not scarcity.
4. By practicing self-goodwill, we manifest it throughout our lives.
5. By honoring past traumas and hurts, we allow ourselves freedom from the pain that controls us.
6. By naming and taking ownership of the core issues that limit our growth, we create authenticity.
7. By “doing the work,” we reclaim the personal power this is rightfully ours.
8. By defining our personal boundaries, we teach others how to respect us.
9. By creating a Personal Mission Statement, we define ourselves.
10. By managing our self care, we welcome happiness into our lives.

# Compassion Fatigue Resources

Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project:  
<https://compassionfatigue.org/index.html>

Your Oxygen Mask First: podcast for public safety professionals or anyone who cares for others in high-stress environments:

<https://www.podchaser.com/podcasts/your-oxygen-mask-first-674553>



# Trauma Informed Wellness



2022 Calm Business Survey: 61% of men and 51% of women report at least one traumatic event in their lifetimes. This put mental trauma at the top of the list of most common psychological health conditions.  
(coincides w/ ACE study)



# Relationships We Experience

Parent-Child

Teacher-Student

Caregiver-Patient

Veterinary-Client-Patient

Employer-Employee

Life Partners, Family, Friends

Provider-Consumer

Work Teams

Spiritual

Self



# Effect of Trauma on Relationships

- Feeling unsafe
- Difficulty trusting others
- Heightened emotions & reactivity (especially sadness, anger, aggression)
- Shame
- Numbing
- Isolation

Trauma can negatively impact bonds between individuals resulting in decreased levels of engagement, increased levels of resentment and isolation, leading to lower quality of care and absent means of support.

**BRENÉ  
BROWN**

when we are in pain and fear, anger and hate are our go-to emotions.



# Trauma Informed Care

Care implemented using a framework of thinking and interventions that are directed by a thorough understanding of the profound neurological, biological, psychological, and social effects trauma has on an individual with regard for the triggers specific to an individual's lived experience.



Trauma Informed Care recognizes each individual's needs for safety, connection, and effective ways to manage emotions and impulses.



# Principles of Trauma Informed Care

1. Understand goals, strengths, support needs, & cognitive processes
2. Recognize behavioral impacts of trauma
3. Create opportunities to find meaning & create a supportive environment
4. Promote a safe environment
5. Respect cultural differences & work toward cultural competence
6. Support choices, voices, autonomy & respect human freedoms
7. Share power in an inclusive way
8. Value safe & genuine relationships
9. Offer a family-sensitive approach
10. Ensure access to qualified trauma-specific treatment
11. Acknowledge recovery is possible & instill the importance of hope, joy, & support
12. Integrate holistic views & facilitate communication to support continuity
13. Acknowledge the need to be & feel safe

# Adopting Change

“Adopting a trauma-informed approach is not accomplished through any single particular technique or checklist. It requires constant attention, caring awareness, sensitivity, and possibly a cultural change at an organizational level.”

-Centers for Disease Control & SAMHSA’s NCTIC



**What you do makes a difference,**  
and you have to decide what  
kind of difference you  
want to make.

— *Jane Goodall*

AZ QUOTES





# Team Cultures that Prioritize Well-being Follow the 4 Rs

**Realize** the widespread impact of trauma

**Recognize** symptoms of trauma

**Respond** by fully integrating trauma knowledge into policies, procedures, & practices

**Resist** re-traumatization

**Create opportunities to become trauma informed and learning the reasons behind the ways people respond can improve staff, client, and community relations.**



Employees who believe that management is concerned about them as a whole person - not just an employee - are more productive, more satisfied, more fulfilled. Satisfied employees mean satisfied customers, which leads to profitability.

— *Anne M. Mulcahy* —

AZ QUOTES



# Impacts of Trauma-Centered Team

## When people feel cared for...

- Improved ability to care for others
- Higher levels of patience & understanding
- More tolerance for difficult communications
- Higher levels of creativity leading to enhanced quality, innovative service offerings, & greater opportunities
- More adaptable inclusivity
- Improved ability to provide continually evolving wellness care services
- Enhanced team satisfaction leading to enhanced team functionality
- Higher level of team sustainability
- Increased referrals (free marketing)



# Not Your Father's Benefit Package

## Benefits for real people in the today's world







# Wellness Care Benefits

## Expand the Standard Expectations

### Health Insurance Contributions

- Include dental, vision, & mental health
- Include coverages for dependants
- Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)
- Flex spending or health savings accounts
- Ability to earn contributions to out of pocket expenses

### Supplemental Coverages

- Paycheck protection
- Coverages for deductibles
- Life insurance

### Financial Planning

- Retirement plans with employer contributions
- Guidance in establishing living wills & trusts
- Access to a financial advisor
- Tax prep services

### Discounted Services

### Pet Insurance Contributions

#### Flexible or unlimited PTO

- 4 weeks minimum
- FT 30 hour work weeks
- Built in mental health days
- Bereavement pay for any close personal relationship
- Ability to earn additional PTO

#### Flexible scheduling

- Job sharing
- Rotational schedules
- Offering remote or hybrid opportunities

#### Incentives Programs:

- On-time arrival
- Covering for a coworker
- Not abusing unlimited PTO
- Referral programs



# Wellness Care Benefits

## Physical Health & Wellness

Get Up and Move Programs: Incorporate exercise habits into daily work schedules

- Teams who sit all day
- Teams who stand, squat, crawl, & lift
- Designated times for quick meditation, stretching, & deep breathing
- Fresh air breaks

Healthy Living Incentives & Friendly Competitions

- Daily step contests
- Gym membership reimbursements
- Non-smoker perks
- Biggest loser contests

Healthy meals & snacks programs



# Wellness Care Benefits

## Mental Health & Wellness

### Access to mental health coverages & support

- Social workers
- Counselors
- Mental health advisors
- Self care advocates
- Grief & trauma specific support
- Cultural & spiritually specific support
- Resource libraries
- Membership to mental health apps
- Animal therapy
- Compassion Fatigue Awareness

### Resources to access integrative therapies

- Acupuncture, chiropractic
- Reiki
- Massage

### Schedule consistent team check-ins

- Debriefing Rounds
- Casual Venting Sessions
- Solutions Planning

### Offer social/community opportunities:

- Coffee/tea/hot cocoa clubs
- Exercise clubs
- Celebrate families
- Celebrate personal accomplishments
- Travel or event experiences

### Develop wellness committees

- Internal support groups
- In-house charities
- Cultural & spiritual awareness
- Inclusio



# Wellness Care Benefits

## Professional Health & Wellness

- Utilize team members at levels equivalent with knowledge and skills
- Create advancement opportunities
- Develop mentorship programs
- Provide growth incentives
  - Contributions toward learning & development expenses
  - Continuing Education coverage
  - Tuition reimbursement
  - Student-loan incentives
  - Provide paid development time
- Create in-house training programs
- License renewal fees
- Cover costs of uniforms & supplies



# Changing Our Environmental Standards

- Create an environment where people are recognized for:
  - Tending to themselves
  - Slowing down
  - Stepping away
  - Taking perspective
  - Thinking before reacting or speaking
  - Effective & inclusive problem-solving skills
- Find ways to help people turn off from work
- Facilitate compassionate institutional responses by normalizing trauma
- Creating employee ability to care for physical and emotional needs
- Take action toward awareness & provide training to avoid toxic positivity
- Recognize that individuals & individuality matter

“

**Intelligence is the  
ability to adapt  
to change.”**



-Stephen Hawking



## Discussion, Questions, Comments

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Phone: 708-705-7608

Website: [veterinaryvitals.com](http://veterinaryvitals.com)

**Thank you and be well.**



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