



COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE ASSOCIATION of New York State

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE (TIC) & WELLNESS

LUNCH ROOM MEETUP



Monthly Virtual Meetups + Community Care Wellness Resources

Moral Distress & Decision Fatigue

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What You Can Expect

Exploring Possible Impacts and Experiences in These Times

- Moral Distress
 - ❖ Signs and symptoms
 - ❖ Contributing factors
 - ❖ Preventing moral distress/supporting moral resilience
 - In yourself
 - Considerations for the work environment
- Decision Fatigue
 - ❖ Signs and symptoms
 - ❖ Strategies and tools to manage in this moment
 - Attending to yourself
 - Attending to decision fatigue at work

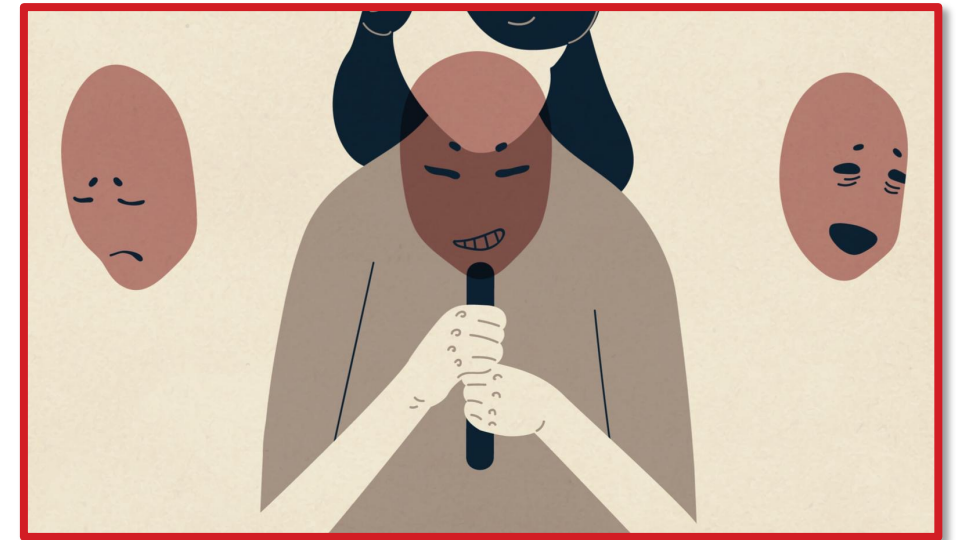




Moral Distress

Moral Distress

- An injurious experience that occurs when a worker engages in, fails to prevent, or witnesses acts that conflict with their values and/or beliefs.
- Stress experienced when workers are unable to base their practice on their values/beliefs
- Threatens integrity & authenticity



(Fenton & Kelly, 2017; Lachman, 2016; Weinberg, 2009)

This is not what I signed up for. **UNHEARD HELPLESS**

Nobody else seems to care. **PARALYZED** How can I be empathic and compassionate when there is so much happening? It's not my job to speak up.

I feel powerless. **HOPELESS** They won't listen to me anyway.

TIRED I'm feeling the administrative pressure to get my numbers up, but this doesn't feel right. I'm now part of the problem, not the solution.

One day they say one thing, the next day another. Why bother adapting at all? **POINTLESS**

I don't want people to think I'm a troublemaker. There is just too much; I don't know where to start.

UNSUPPORTED Why are we doing this? I feel like I'm **CAUSING** suffering.

OVERWHELMED **ABANDONED** **DISEMPOWERED** **DISCONNECTED** **ISOLATED**
I can't be part of a system that hurts people.

Signs and Symptoms of Moral Distress

PHYSICAL

Headaches

Palpitations

Chronic pain

Nausea/gastrointestinal upset

Impaired immune response

Feeling fatigued, weak, and/or run down

EMOTIONAL

Worry, fear, and/or overwhelm

Depressed mood

Numbing/empathic strain

Enhanced irritability and/or sensitivity

Feelings of shame, guilt, and/or remorse

Anger re: bureaucracy, systemic issues, etc.

(Berthold, 2017; Fenton & Kelly, 2017; Janssen, 2016; Reamer, 2020)

Signs and Symptoms of Moral Distress

BEHAVIORAL

Avoidance

Absenteeism

Social withdrawal

Over-identification with patient situations

Challenges maintaining boundaries

Agitation/outbursts with little provocation

Use of unhealthy/harmful coping behaviors

SPIRITUAL

Absence of sustaining values/beliefs

Lack of a sense of meaning

Compassion fatigue/burnout

Existential questions/spiritual crises

Guilt/shame

Disconnection from practice/rituals

Altered views of self/others/the world

(Berthold, 2017; Fenton & Kelly, 2017; Janssen, 2016; Reamer, 2020)

Signs and Symptoms of Moral Distress

COGNITIVE/PSYCHOLOGICAL

Sleep dysfunction	Intrusive thoughts
Cynicism/pessimism	Diminished creativity
Defensiveness/judgmental	Negative sense of self
Hopelessness/discouragement	Reduced confidence in capability/capacity
Perception of being trapped by one's work	Lack of sense of fulfillment/meaning
Loss of sense of personal safety/control	Hyperarousal/increased startle response
Loss of ability to trust others/institutions	Sense of disillusionment/resentment
Preoccupation/rumination	Perception that one can't make a difference

(Berthold, 2017; Fenton & Kelly, 2017; Janssen, 2016; Reamer, 2020)

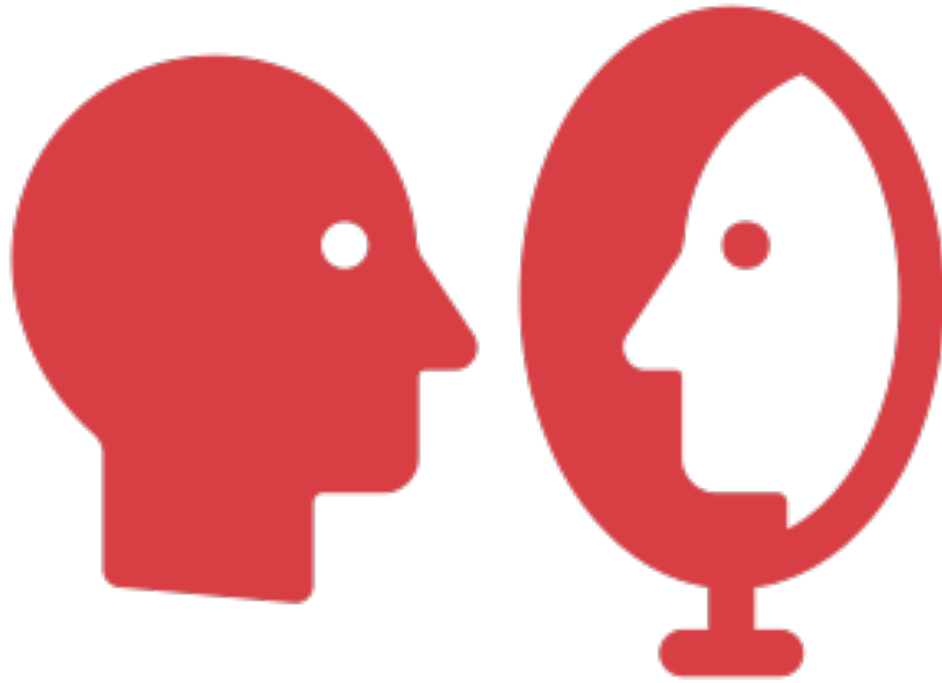
Factors that Contribute to Moral Distress

- Safety concerns
- Excessive workload
- Difficult working conditions
- Value conflicts/ethical dilemmas
- Lack of leadership and/or guidance
- Perceived or actual resource insufficiencies
- Uncertainty and/or lack of transparency/clarity
- High-stress work, e.g., being on the front lines
- Perceived or actual powerlessness/lack of control
- Inadequate workplace supports/growth opportunities



(Janssen, 2016; Mänttari-van der Kuip, 2016)

Reflection Point: Moral Distress



- When have you had to make choices that did not directly align with your values/beliefs?
- What, if anything, have you noticed shifting in you over time?
- What has helped you remain as present and grounded as possible?

Ask

Am I feeling distressed or showing signs of suffering?
Am I noticing signs of distress in my team?

Affirm

Validate your feelings and perceptions,
Affirm the commitment to take care of oneself.

Four “A”s for Coping with Moral Distress

Assess

Identify distress sources - can this be changed?
How can you personally contribute to change?

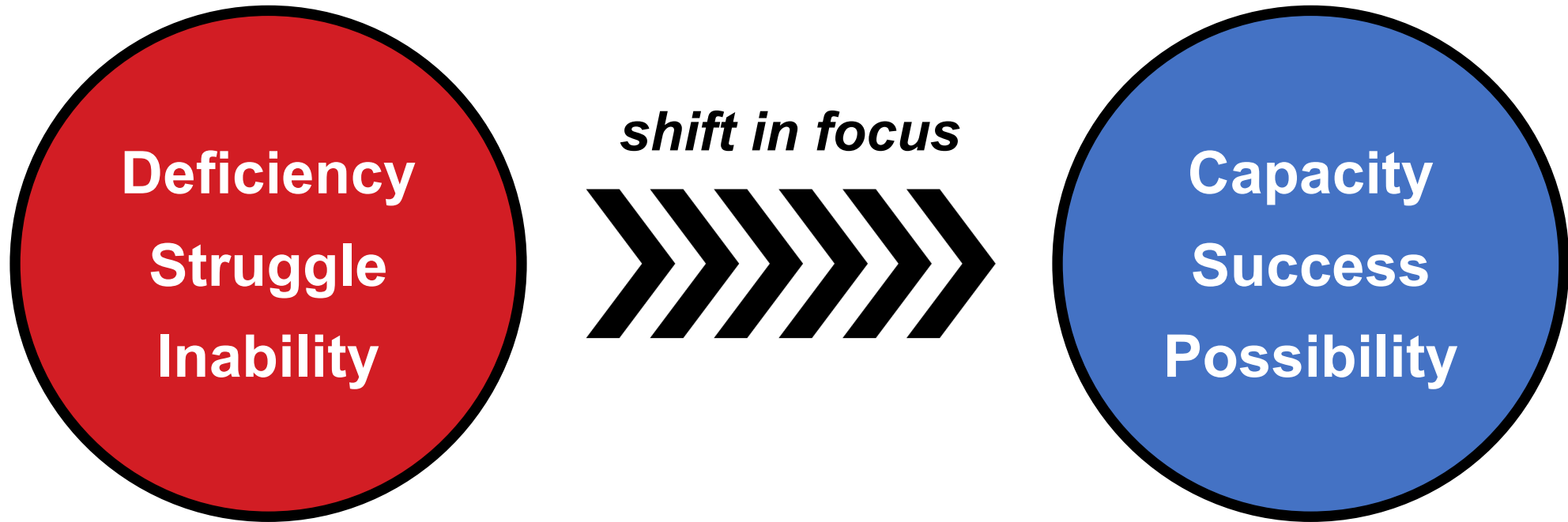
Act

Do what you can to implement and maintain the changes you want to see.
Be flexible & include strategies for wellness/self-care.

(American Association of Critical Care Nurses, 2012)



Moral Resilience



What we focus on gets **bigger**.

Bolstering Your Moral Resilience

- Focus on what is in your control
- Make time to meet your basic needs
- Hone self-regulation strategies that work for you
- Develop a routine for leaving work stress at work
- Establish a supportive network & remain connected
- Engage in creative & regenerative activities/hobbies
- Notice ways that you CAN act in alignment with your values
- Therapy/supervision/consultation to process challenges/personal reactions that linger after work



(Rushton et al., 2016; Rushton, 2017)

Supporting Moral Resilience in Your Role

- Be flexible as staff respond to evolving change
- Engage in and support open, transparent communication
- Distribute patient loads to allow balance (where possible)
- Provide meaningful supports for self-care and workplace wellness
- Increase training/education/professional development opportunities
- Contribute to a culture of ethical practice & model resilient behaviors
- Provide adequate opportunities for effective supervision/consultation
- Get creative to help staff rediscover/redefine their commitment to the work
- Pay attention to your framing – lift up realistic hope/optimism, notice what is working
- Focus efforts on implementing positive change to build resilience vs. “solving problems”
- Cultivate self-awareness to identify meaningful actions you can take and allow others to do the same for themselves without judgment/negative consequences



(Rushton et al., 2016; Rushton, 2017)



Decision Fatigue

In “normal” times, we make **~35,000 decisions per day.**

go to spin class or yoga class?
what Netflix series to binge
what to wear what to eat
save money vs. indulge on something I enjoy? coffee or tea?
where to get dinner and drinks
wake up now or hit snooze?
fold and put away the laundry now or wait until later accelerate to go through the yellow light before it turns red or slow down to stop?
what to listen to in the car on the way to work invite friends over or go out together
what to say and how to say it
what route to take what movie to see

(Hoomans, 2015)



seeing people in-person vs. video chatting

is this worth an email/Teams meeting or should I just try to figure it out?

see family members who are not vaccinated vs. uphold boundaries that can lead to disconnection

maintain life-work boundaries vs. respond to that email that came through at 10 PM

what can I do to help myself feel physically and emotionally safe?

is it safe to see my family for the holidays this year?

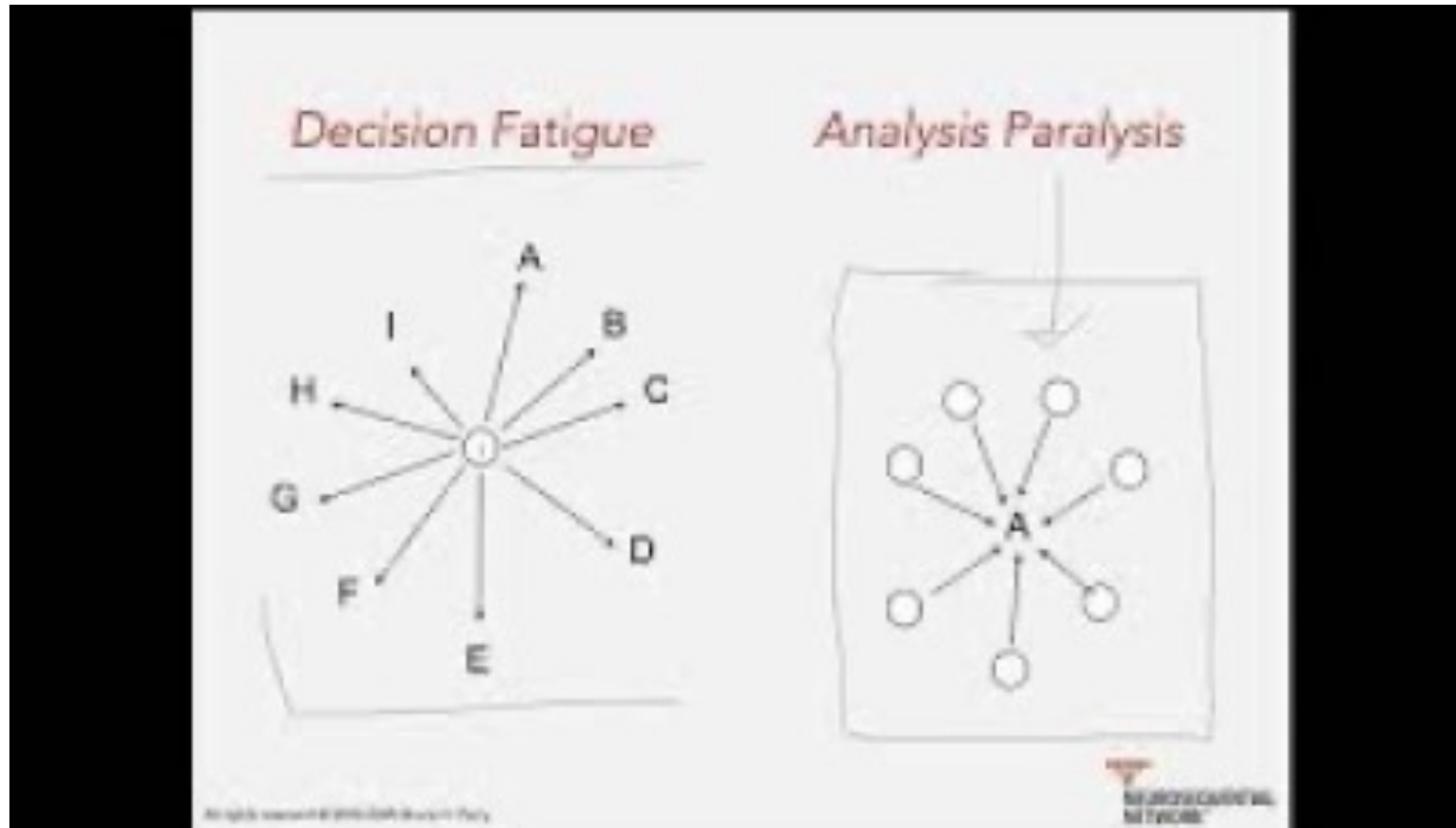
assume risk by shopping for groceries in-person vs. paying more for delivery to stay feeling safer

do my kids attend school fully in-person?

what do I wear for this Zoom call?

Decision Fatigue

Decision fatigue refers to the deteriorating quality of decisions made by an individual after a long session of decision-making.



**Dr. Bruce Perry
on Decision Fatigue**

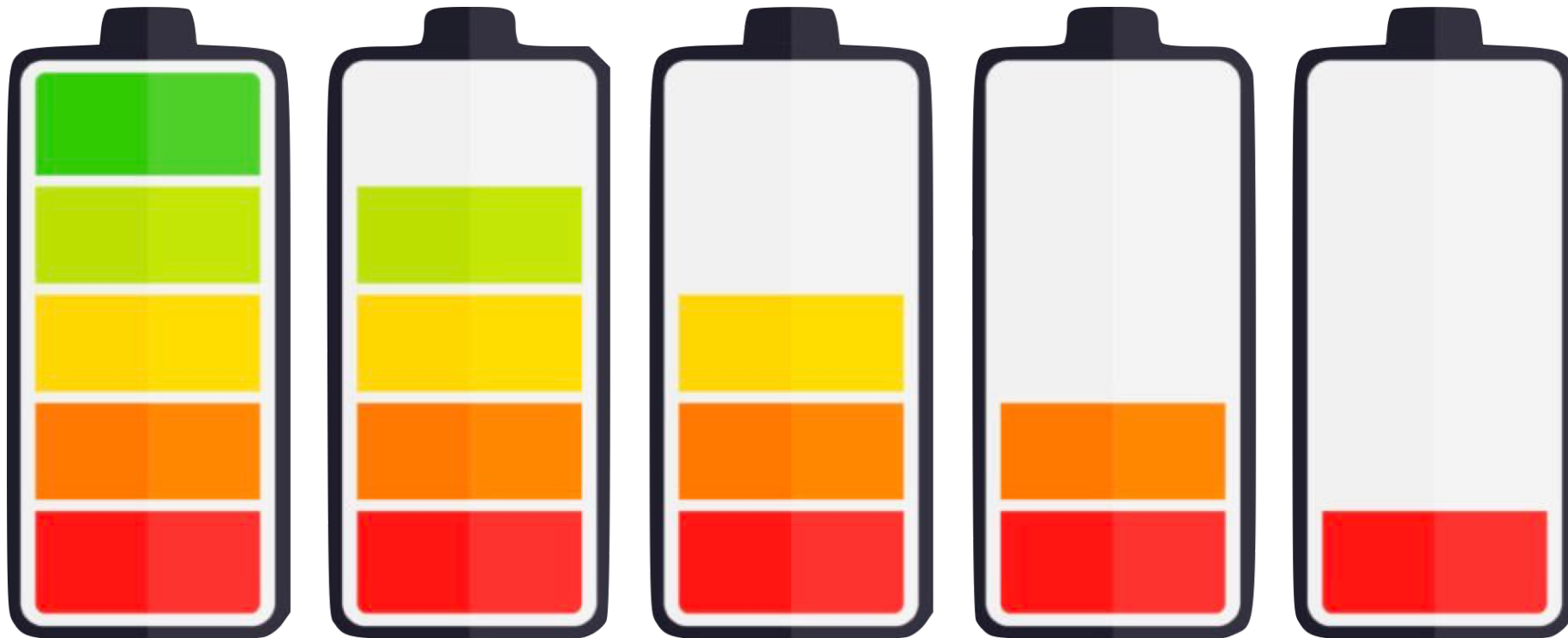
[Link to Full Video](#)

*Neurosequential Network
Stress & Trauma Series*

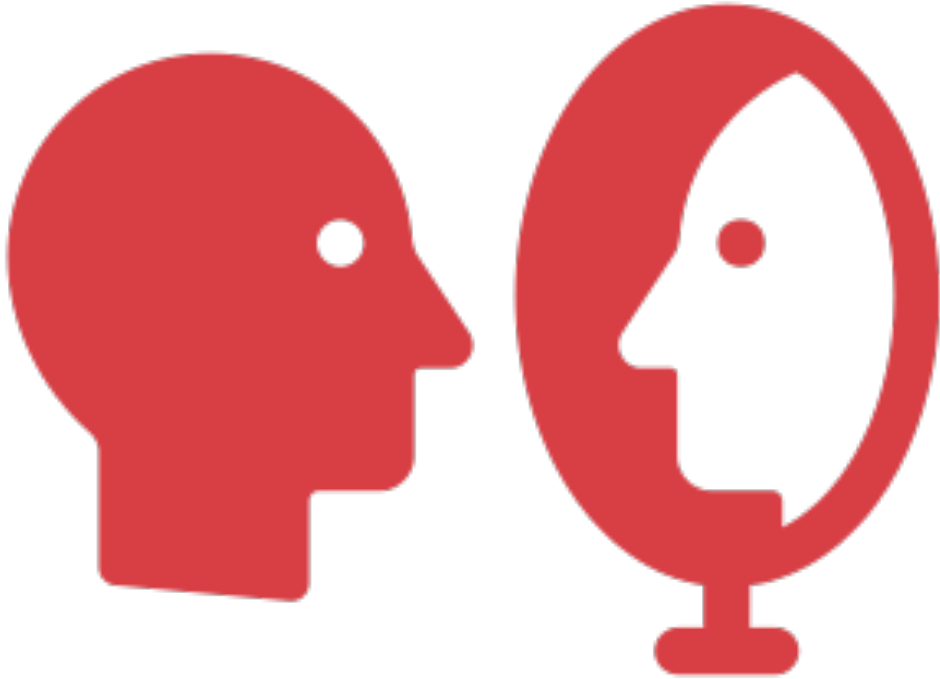
(Perry, 2020)

Zero Decisions

Many Decisions



Reflection Point: Decision Fatigue



- What decisions – new and old – do you find yourself making lately?
- What are signs of your decision fatigue? (Thoughts, feelings, behaviors – what do you notice?)
- When you noticed these signs in the past, what helped you recharge?

Possible Signs/Symptoms of Decision Fatigue

- impulsivity/hasty decision-making
- avoidance/procrastination
- all-or-nothing thinking
- jumping to conclusions
- over-compliance/choosing status quo
- reluctance to make trade-offs
- indecision/“analysis paralysis”
- burnout/exhaustion
- reduced functioning at work/home



(Curley, 2020; Perry, 2020; Thurrott, 2020)

Minimizing Decision Fatigue

- limit unnecessary/unimportant decision-making
- minimize group decision-making where possible
- “marinate” on major decisions when possible
- practice getting comfortable with the undecided
- avoid decision comparison
- regulate between decision-making “doses”
- make important decisions first (when rested & refreshed)
- be kind to yourself



(Brabaw, 2020; Curley, 2020; Jernigan, 2020; Hauck, 2020; Perry, 2020; Thurrott, 2020)

Managing Decision Fatigue at Work

- create and contribute to a regulated and regulating work climate
- establish “master” routines that narrow choice to equally acceptable options and depend on key triggers (*e.g., if x, then a; if y, then b; if z, then c...*)
- resist “micro-management”
- delegate decision-making
- understand the point of diminishing returns

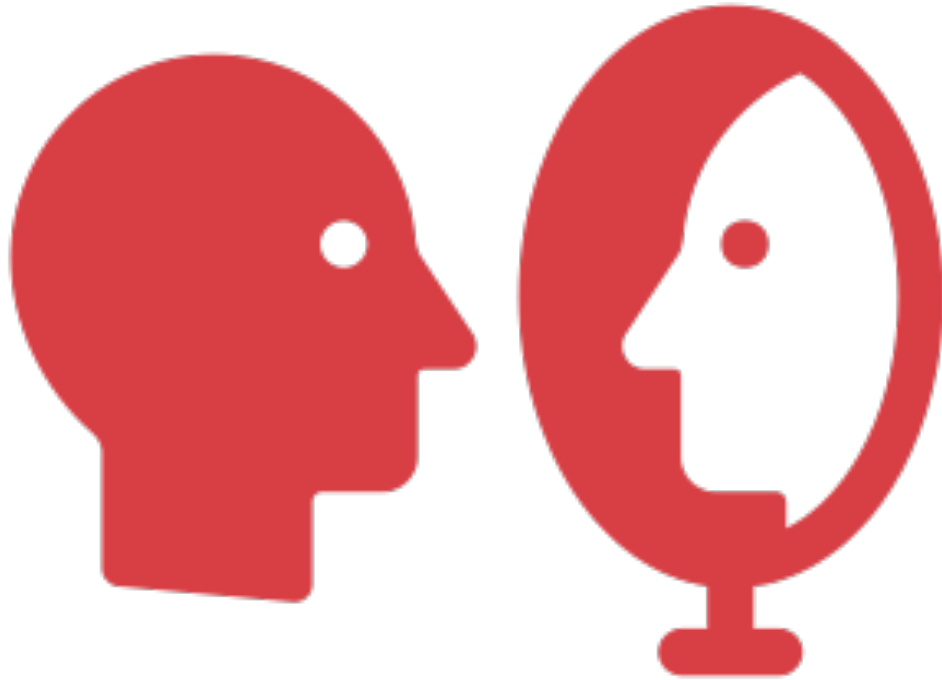
Remember: decision quality is “state-dependent...”

The decision of a **regulated person will reflect “better” thinking** than that of the same person when dysregulated.



(Perry, 2020)

Final Reflection Point



What resonated with you the most?

What is ***one small step*** that you can take to implement change to address these impacts at your health center?

