

TIPSHEET

Wellness in the Movement Series

Welcome! We're glad you're here.

We hope this tipsheet and the entire Wellness in the Movement series will support your work as an advocate, and you as a human being. In the tipsheet you'll find an overview of the content presented in the five Wellness in the Movement video recordings, as well as supplemental information and resources that expand on the recorded content.

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The interconnection between radical self-care and organizational culture is inseparable.

The term “self-care” has become a loaded word that can bring on eyerolls and groans, and might make us feel like we have to spend money and take bubble baths in order to take care of ourselves. In this series, we shift away from popularized ideas of self-care. We intentionally use the term “radical self-care” to acknowledge that it is a radical act to care for ourselves in systems that demand constant productivity, poor work-life boundaries, and that contribute to feelings of burnout (watch Video 3: Radical Self-Care to learn more!). It is especially radical for individuals from groups that have been marginalized and historically oppressed.

We also acknowledge that it is difficult to engage in caring for our individual wellness without addressing the wellness of our workplaces and systems in our society. Therefore, in this series, we focus on radical self-care as a way to support our individual and collective wellness, and organizational wellness efforts that can help us build collective resilience, while buffering stress and trauma.

This tipsheet has three sections:

1. Definitions of terms used in this tipsheet and the accompanying videos.
2. Information related to understanding and engaging in radical self-care
3. Information to help you understand and take steps towards organizational wellness.

Terminology

- **Trauma-Informed Approach:** Or sometimes called trauma-informed care, is how a program, org., or community thinks about and responds to trauma. It is a strengths-based service delivery approach that is grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma, that emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both providers and survivors, and that creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration).
- **Principles for a Trauma-Informed Approach:** Safety, trust & transparency, peer support, collaboration, choice/empowerment, and cultural/historical/identity responsiveness (Center for Disease Control & Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration).
- **Historical Trauma:** The long-term emotional and psychological suffering spanning across lifetimes and generations, stemming from widespread group trauma. It can be related to major historical events and often impacts a specific cultural, racial, ethnic or identity group that has been systematically oppressed (VAWNET).
- **Intergenerational Trauma:** The passing of trauma and its effects from generation to generation
Complex Trauma: exposure to varied and multiple traumatic events that are often of an interpersonal nature, and can be ongoing over time (VAWNET).
- **Collective or Community Trauma:** The impact of traumatic events on a community and/or individuals with a shared identity (VAWNET).

Terminology

- **Secondary or Vicarious Trauma:** The emotional effects of witnessing, listening and empathizing with people who are sharing traumatic experiences (VAWNET).
- **Organizational Trauma:** Trauma can affect organizations just as it affects individuals, families, and communities. And just as silence and lack of understanding about trauma hurts individuals, so too does it hurt organizations. Looking at trauma from an organizational perspective helps in a few ways. It complements individual experience by exposing the systems and structures that influence individuals. (Organizational Trauma and Healing by Pat Vivian and Shana Hormann, 2013).
- **Burnout:** Characterized by depersonalization, exhaustion, and difficulties in dealing with one's job or doing an effective job. Feelings of burnout are often associated with very high workloads or non-supportive work environments (Stamm, 2005)
- **Compassion fatigue:** When repeated instances of hearing stories of trauma or abuse lessens our ability or capacity to show compassion and can lead to what looks like apathy. Sometimes this is called burnout but is more often one of multiple symptoms of burnout (VAWNET).
- **Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS):** A form of occupational stress described as job-related exposure to clients who have experienced extremely stressful and traumatic events (Stamm, 2005)
 - is sometimes described as an occupational version of PTSD
 - is a reaction to work that involves difficulties sleeping, intrusive thoughts or images, or avoiding reminders of clients' traumatic experiences (Stamm, 2005)



Organizational Wellness

Organizational wellness, within the context of radical self-care and organizational trauma, refers to a holistic approach aimed at creating a workplace environment that prioritizes the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of all employees. It involves addressing systemic issues, promoting self-care practices, and fostering a culture of support and resilience to mitigate the impact of trauma and sustain a healthier and more resilient organization.



Recognizing Organizational Trauma

Recognizing organizational trauma involves identifying and acknowledging the presence of collective distress, harm, or dysfunction within an organization, often stemming from systemic issues, toxic workplace cultures, or traumatic events. It entails understanding how such trauma affects individuals and the overall health of the organization, with the aim of addressing and healing these wounds to promote a healthier work environment.

Common Symptoms of Organizational Trauma:

- **Stress & anxiety contagion** - the phenomenon where individuals within an organization can "catch" or be influenced by the stress and anxiety of their colleagues, leading to a collective negative impact on the overall workplace well-being.
- **Disempowered staff** - employees who feel a lack of autonomy, control, or influence in their work environment, which can lead to decreased motivation, engagement, and overall well-being.
- **External ruptures** - significant disruptions or crises that occur outside the organization, such as economic downturns, natural disasters, or global events, which can have a profound impact on the well-being and functioning of the organization and its employees
- **Scarcity mentality** - refers to a mindset where individuals and the organization as a whole perceive limited resources, opportunities, or success, leading to fear, competition, and a negative impact on overall well-being and collaboration
- **High turnover** - refers to the frequent rate at which employees leave their positions, which can indicate underlying issues within the workplace environment that may be detrimental to overall well-being and productivity
- **Internal conflict** - refers to disputes, disagreements, or tensions among employees or within teams, which can undermine morale, collaboration, and overall well-being in the workplace
- **Organizational "amnesia"** - when we don't talk about the trauma—or the strengths of our agency—we might forget the incident. However, the effects of it live on in the organizational culture, now influencing the organization in ways that are not understood.
- **Burnout** - a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion resulting from chronic workplace stress, characterized by decreased performance, increased cynicism, and a sense of reduced personal accomplishment
- **Unethical Behavior** - refers to actions or conduct that deviates from accepted moral and professional standards within the workplace, potentially leading to a toxic environment and negatively impacting the overall well-being of employees
- **Depression, despair, loss of hope** - represent profound emotional states experienced by employees, often resulting from persistent stress, toxicity, or adverse working conditions, which can significantly deteriorate overall well-being
- **Lack of accountability** - refers to a situation where individuals or groups within the organization evade responsibility for their actions or outcomes, which can contribute to a culture of blame, mistrust, and decreased overall well-being

Creating an Organizational Culture in Promoting Wellness

The goal of creating an organizational culture that promotes wellness is to prioritize and enhance the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of employees, ultimately leading to a healthier, more engaged, and productive workforce. This fosters a work environment where individuals can thrive, reduces the risk of burnout, and contributes to higher job satisfaction, retention rates, and overall organizational success.

Additionally, a wellness-oriented culture can help mitigate the negative impacts of stress, trauma, and other challenges, leading to improved employee resilience and a more sustainable and positive workplace.

An Overview of Promoting Organizational Wellness:

- Establish a wellness committee- representative of diversity across team levels
- Offer opportunities for emotional and mental health support for employees
- Build Peer Support in Advocacy Organizations/ Create space for connection, building relationships
- Create space and time for clearing difficult dynamics or misunderstandings and normalize a healthy communication culture.
- Create space or opportunities to engage in holistic healing such as movement therapies, nature-based healing, etc.

Learning from Community

- Individual and collective factors have buffered the effects of collective trauma
- Cultural traditions
- Strong cultural identity
- Cultural stories
- Communities provide healing
- Individual strengths
- Collective knowledge and wisdom

Drawing on Traumatic Growth

- Address the barriers to wellness historically and systemically oppressed advocates and communities face
- Create equitable, collaborative & transparent work environments.
- Offer competitive pay & & benefits
- Provide consistent, reflective supervision & adequate training and onboarding
- Be intentional about the organizational structure & work distribution
- Have someone or a team to monitor indicators of organizational trauma and stress
- Focused on Opportunities
- Drawing Closer to Certain Groups
 - Other survivors of violence
 - Cultural groups
- Connection with Internal Strength
- Positive View Towards Life
- Drawing on Spiritual and Cultural Beliefs
 - Possibly a deepening or a shift in beliefs

A Culturally Relevant Lens in Organizational Wellness

The recognition that individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds have unique values, beliefs, and experiences that influence their well-being. It's important because it acknowledges the importance of inclusivity and tailored support for all employees, ultimately fostering a healthier and more productive work environment.

(Serrata, Notario, & Perez-Ortega, 2012)

Trauma-Informed Principles and Culturally Specific Approaches: Applying What We Know

1

Principle: Establish relationships based on mutuality and respect.

- a. Understand and honor a process that is fluid, where organizations and survivors are constantly learning from one another.
 - i. Tip: Be intentional about practices that embrace shared learning and uplift cultural wellness and wisdom.
- b. Be the change you want to see. The organizational culture reflects the work that it promotes in the communities. Staff and volunteers feel welcomed and part of the team. There is room to voice concerns and share ideas.
 - i. Tip: As part of the overall work of the organization, integrate practices that promote self-care, shared decision-making and opportunities for healing and growth across the board.
- c. Be humble. Engage in ongoing self-reflection regarding your own power, privilege, values, history, beliefs, experiences of trauma, etc. to avoid creating the abusive structures that you are trying to dismantle. Resist re-traumatization.
 - i. Tip: Be prepared to challenge your beliefs. Foster open dialogue amongst staff, volunteers and the individuals whom you work with. Create mechanisms that provide internal feedback and opportunities for evaluating the effectiveness of your program.

2

Principle: Seek a deep understanding of the communities you work with (socio-cultural and sociopolitical histories, as well as current context, intersections of oppression, trauma, etc.) and centralize this cultural understanding in your work.

- a. Understand intersectionality. Show evidence that your organization understands that trauma arises not only as an experience of isolated violence, but also from systemic oppression, discrimination, and significant hardships that survivors face. Understanding the intersections of these issues is tremendously important.
- b. Be ready to challenge your assumptions. Be aware of the diversity within communities and avoid making generalizations.
- c. Use cultural traditions and values for enhancing prevention and intervention efforts to end violence, always being careful not to “romanticize” or deify the culture. For example, a concept such as “Latino men are machistas” is an example used to erroneously generalize an entire group of individuals. Machismo is a form of male privilege which exists in all cultures (not only in the Latinoculture).
- d. Be flexible and honor the concept of family as defined by the individual. In some cultures, grandparents, godparents, close friends and others are given equal access within the family structure.

3

Principle: Understand the origins of trauma including historical, collective, and the inter-generational transmission of trauma. Do not minimize the resiliency, wisdom, and strength of survivors. They have much to teach on how to heal from trauma.

- a. Approach the work from a social justice perspective and pay close attention to your practices from this lens. This perspective will radically change your stances, ideas, expectations, and approaches to the work at hand.

4

Principle: Keep the realities of the survivors and their children central to your work, regardless of the specific work that you do.

- a. Make sure the intervention/prevention efforts reflect the realities of the people who will participate. This requires both knowledge and involvement with the local community.

5

Principle: Your organization alone will not be able to end violence. Believe in the power and collective wisdom of communities.

- a. Involve participants (including youth) in updating existing programming in addition to developing new topics, activities, research studies, advocacy, community education, and evaluation strategies. Ground your work in the community you are seeking to reach. Implement community engagement strategies where the process for obtaining information and sharing resources goes both ways and where communities and organizations always learn from one another. Avoid outreach strategies that don't produce any tangible results, mainly because the information goes only in one direction.
- b. Create and maintain strong networks with other agencies, organizations, and systems you can collaborate with to enhance the work for social change and justice.

Radical Self-Care: Tending to Our Individual & Collective Wellness

Radical Self Care is NOT ignoring systems like racism and capitalism that contribute stress, poor mental health, and burnout.

What does Radical Self-Care look like?

- Setting boundaries
- Understanding your own stress response
- Understanding your needs
- Allowing yourself to name what you are feeling
- Practicing rest as resistance
- Understand that radical self-care is a practice
- Tapping into the collective (radical self-care is collective)

Understanding Your Own Physical Stress Response

- Insomnia
- Irritability
- Tension
- Difficulty paying and sustaining attention
- Chronic Pain
- Headaches
- Gastrointestinal Issues (pain, bloating, discomfort, heartburn)

Window of Tolerance (WoT)

The "window of tolerance" is a concept often used in psychology and trauma therapy to describe an individual's optimal state of arousal or emotional regulation. It represents a range within which a person can effectively cope with stressors and emotional experiences without becoming overwhelmed or dissociated.

When an individual is within their window of tolerance, they can manage everyday challenges, process emotions, think clearly, and engage in healthy relationships. This state allows for flexibility and adaptability in responding to both positive and negative stimuli.

However, when someone exceeds their window of tolerance, they may experience dysregulation, hyperarousal or hypoarousal. Stress & trauma responses can send us into hyper/hypoarousal states. These states are involuntary - we don't choose to go into them and we can learn to manage it when we do.

Dysregulation: Dysregulation refers to the inability to effectively regulate or manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in response to stress or emotional triggers. It can manifest as emotional volatility, impulsivity, and difficulty in self-soothing.

Hyperarousal: This occurs when a person becomes highly activated and overwhelmed by stress, leading to symptoms like anxiety, anger, panic, and impulsivity. They are essentially operating outside their window of tolerance in an overly aroused state.

Hypoarousal: On the other hand, hypoarousal involves becoming emotionally numb, dissociating, or feeling emotionally shut down. This is also operating outside the window of tolerance, but in a state of under-arousal.

Window of Tolerance (WoT) cont.

Think of WoT as a river that you are floating down

When the river **narrows**, it's fast and unstable:

- Stress and trauma can cause your window of tolerance to shrink

When it **widens**, it slows down and you:

- Are at a balanced and calm state of mind
- Feel relaxed and in control
- Are able to take on any challenge life throws at you

Hyperarousal

- Abnormal state of increased responsiveness
- Feeling anxious angry and out of control
- Experiencing fight/flight responses

Dysregulation:

- When you start to deviate outside your window of tolerance you start to feel agitate, anxious, or angry
- You do not feel comfortable but you are not out of control yet

Hypoarousal

- Abnormal state of decreased responsiveness
- Feeling emotional numbness, exhaustion, and depression
- Body shutting down/freeze response

Dysregulation:

- You start to feel overwhelmed, your body might start shutting down and you could lose track of time
- You don't feel comfortable but you are not out of control yet

Examples for hyperarousal

- Anxiety
- Impulsivity
- Chaotic Responses
- Defensiveness
- Racing Thoughts
- Rigidness
- Intense Reactions
- Over-working
- Not slowing down

Examples for hypoarousal

- Depression
- Auto-pilot responses
- Memory loss/slow responses
- Low levels of energy
- Can't say no
- Decreased reactions
- Shame/guilt
- Reduced physical movement
- Numbness

Visual Representation of the Concepts Above:



HYPERAROUSAL

- Abnormal state of increased responsiveness
- Feeling anxious, angry and out of control
- You may experience wanting to flight or run away

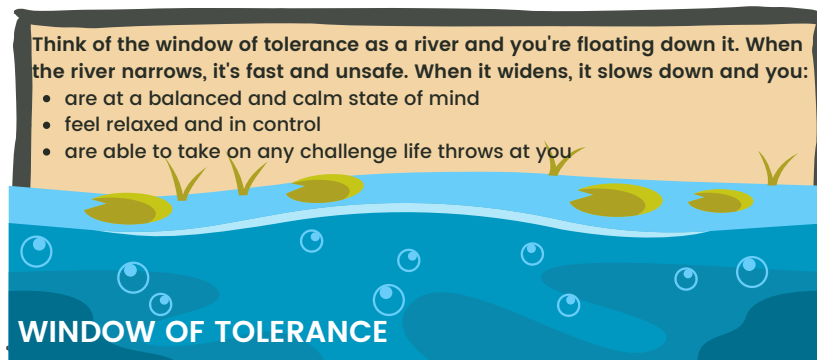


DYSREGULATION

- When you start to deviate outside your window of tolerance you start to feel agitated, anxious, or angry
- You do not feel comfortable but you are not out of control yet

SHRINK
your Window
of Tolerance

Stress and
Trauma can
cause your
window of
tolerance to
shrink



Meditation,
listening to music,
or engaging in
hobbies can
expand your
window of
tolerance

EXPAND
your Window
of Tolerance



DYSREGULATION

- You start to feel overwhelmed, your body might start shutting down and you could lose track of time
- You don't feel comfortable but you are not out of control yet



HYPOAROUSAL

- Abnormal state of decreased responsiveness
- Feeling emotional numbness, exhaustion, and depression
- You may experience your body shutting down or freeze

Recognize Your Needs!

Understanding how to recognize your needs is crucial for radical self-care as it promotes self-awareness, prevents neglect, allows customization of self-care practices, and fosters resilience and well-being while enhancing decision-making and self-compassion. It's helpful if you can pinpoint what you need in relation to that body sensation and/or feeling, but tuning into body sensations can feel uncomfortable or scary if this is a new practice or if you have limited experience with this. Moving at a pace that doesn't overwhelm your nervous system and practicing coping strategies that help calm your nervous system (See Video 5!) can help.

Physical

- Movement
- Food/
Nourishment
- Rest/Sleep
- Touch

Connection

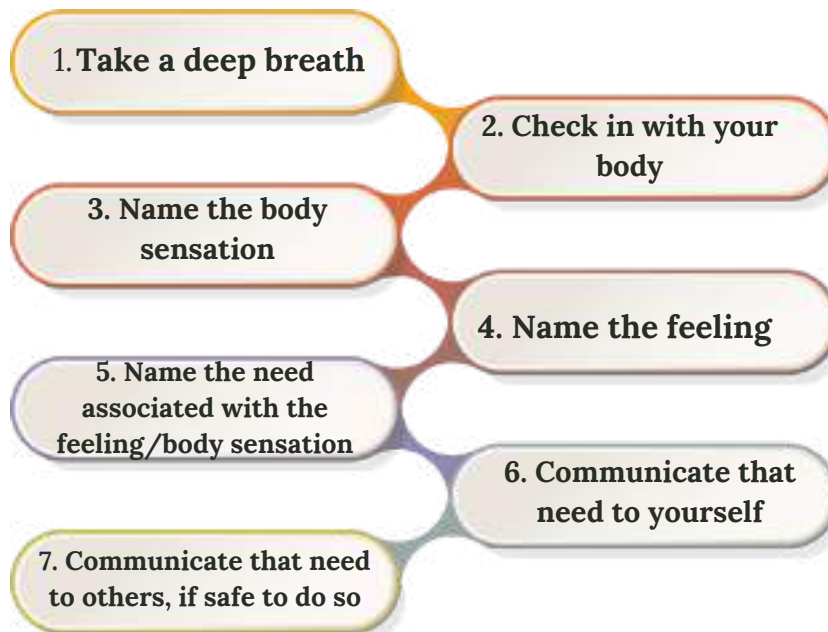
- Compassion
- Community
- To understand & be understood
- Trust
- To be seen

Play/Peace

- Joy
- Humor
- Communion
- Harmony
- Inspiration

Understanding Your Needs!

Understanding your needs is the foundation upon which effective self-care is built. It empowers you to take proactive steps to nurture your well-being, prevent negative outcomes, and lead a more fulfilling life. It's a vital aspect of practicing self-compassion and ensuring that you are the best version of yourself, both for your sake and for those you interact with in your daily life.



Setting Boundaries

Setting boundaries in the context of radical self-care is a vital practice that supports your overall well-being, fosters healthier relationships, and enables you to live a more fulfilling and balanced life. It empowers you to prioritize radical self-care and ensures that you are able to meet your own needs while maintaining a sense of control and balance in your daily life.

Identify what is in your control and what is not

Identify what might need to change

Communicate this to others - and to yourself (e.g., journaling)

Don't be afraid to say no

Radical Self-Care Practices to Treat Burnout

Radical self-care practices to treat burnout involve prioritizing comprehensive well-being by implementing profound and intentional self-care strategies, often including lifestyle changes, therapy, and self-compassion, to restore physical, emotional, and mental health.

- Start your day off with a well-being practice
- Change up your routine
- Find a creative outlet
- Focus on impact
- Soften your workspace & workflow
- Identify triggers
- Schedule time for rest

- Adjust your pace
- Talk about it with someone
- Exercise to release tension
- Connect with safe & supportive friends, family and community
- Connect with those that recharge your system
- Prioritize connection with those who respect your boundaries & offer support

Resources

Informational Resources

[Growth After Trauma](#)

[How to Foster Resilience](#)

[Important Definitions](#)

[Help Clients Understand Window of Tolerance](#)

[Radical Self-Care](#)

[Trauma-Informed Practice \(TIP\) Scales \(Scale and Webinar\)](#)

[Trauma Informed Principles Through a Culturally Specific Lens](#)

[Vicarious Trauma Toolkit](#)

[Window of Tolerance Resources](#)

[Window of Tolerance Article](#)

Wellness Consultants

[Prickly Pear Therapy & Training](#)

[Collective Capacity](#)

[Groundwork Co-Creative](#)

[Hillary Hittner](#)

[Organizational Trauma & Healing](#)

[Zoe Flowers](#)

Books

[Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle \(Emily Nagoski and Amelia Nagoski, 2020\)](#)

[My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies \(Resmaa Menakem, 2017\)](#)

[Set Boundaries, Find Peace: A Guide to Reclaiming Yourself \(Nedra Glover Tawwab, 2021\)](#)

[The Age of Overwhelm: Strategies for the Long Haul \(Laura van Dernoot Lipsky, 2018\)](#)

[Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others \(Laura van Dernoot Lipsky, 2009\)](#)

Websites

[National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health \(NCDVTMH\)](#)

[Resilience for Advocates Through Foundational Training-RAFT](#)

[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)

Wellness Practice Resources

[TCFV's Advocate Mental Health & Wellness Guide in English and Español](#)

[Breaking Isolation: Self Care and Community Care Tools for Our People](#)

[Compassion Fatigue PDF](#)

[Fight, Flight, Freeze, Fawn: Working with 4 Phases of the Nervous System](#)

[Grounding Resources from the Anti-Violence Project](#)

[Self-Care Wheel Bank](#)

[Self-Care Wheel Workbook](#)

[Survivor Sanctuary from the metoo movement](#)