



POLK COUNTY DECATEGORIZATION

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IOWA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
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DEPT: POLK COUNTY DECATEGORIZATION

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Providers Advisory Minutes Wednesday, September 20, 2017 8:30 – 10:00 a.m.

Polk County-River Place Office- Conference Room 2

Attending: Teresa Burke, Tamra Jurgemeyer, Cindy Farnsworth, Kay Tannatt, Emma Parker, Andrea Wilson, Brooke Johnson, Ben Badgley, Sara Strom, Katie Kamienski, Andrew Anderson, Randy Jansen, Katrina Hart, Alejandra Alvarado, Nancy Wills, Julie Cackler, Danielle Wersher, Tony Reed, Joyce Bruce, Pam Gumm, Max Dayton, Wendy Havemann, Malcolm Blough, Darryle Bohanna, Tom Aldrich, Yvette Hermann, Brian Atkinson, Leslie Cran, Kacey Peterson, Cheryl Garland

Teresa Burke called the meeting to order at 8:30.

The meeting started with introductions.

Presentation: Cheryl Garland, Integrative Counseling Solutions, on the Mayo Clinic Stress Management Program

Due to a family medical crisis this past year, Cheryl spent quite a bit of time at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. It was there that she learned about their Stress Management approach, developed by Dr. Amit Sood, which introduces mind-focusing techniques practiced in the past, but with a neuro-science basis for application to our daily lives.

Cheryl started by showing Dr. Sood's TEDx video, "The Happy Brain – How to Overcome our Neural Predispositions to Suffering." Dr. Sood stated in the video that the human brain has a "default mode" of mind wandering. The more time we spend in the mind-wandering state, the more likely we will suffer depression, anxiety and even dementia. This default mode causes us to get used to the goodness we recognize when we first meet others and, after time spent with that person, we start to focus on the imperfections.

Dr. Sood states that "happiness" is more of an inner state, and introduced the 5-3-2 practice, which he encouraged us to engage in each morning before our feet hit the floor.

The "5" stands for visualizing 5 people in my life for whom we are grateful. We are to visualize each person, sending gratitude to them in our thoughts, and imagine that they are happy where they are at. Then we are to send gratitude to our younger selves, remembering who we were in years past. And then we are to send gratitude to someone who we loved who has passed away, giving them virtual hugs. The last part of this exercise is to visualize and think about 3 people who care about us.

“3” - The human brain is captivated by “novelty”. Dr. Sood’s example of this was for us to think about who we would be more interested in if we were in a room with our spouse of 10 years versus a friend we had not seen in several months. He stated that, “Novelty beats love 100% of the time.” Given that, what we should practice every day when we come home from work is to greet our loved ones as though we had not seen them for 30 days, and to spend “3” minutes with our loved ones in this state of attention. He also stated that we should practice “intentional praise”, such as starting a statement, “Honey, you were right about...”

“2” – Humans are wired to make initial snap judgements about others. The human brain will take 30 milliseconds to decide if we can trust someone. Rather than judge, Dr. Sood encourages us to take “2” seconds to wish someone well who we are meeting for the first time, or even who we run into on the street or in the grocery store, as long as it is in a safe environment. This approach allows our brains to avoid making snap negative judgements based on our intrinsic biases.

Dr. Sood mentioned that these activities are not new and have been practiced as part of spiritual journeys in various religions for centuries. He said that Buddha and Jesus were really neuroscientists based upon their teaching of mindfulness, prayer and meditation on gratitude and forgiveness.

After the video, Cheryl had us engage in an exercise demonstrating how negative thoughts can be over-ridden in our brains by thoughts such as gratitude, love, encouragement, forgiveness, etc. Cheryl indicated that when our minds wander, we build up amyloids, which are aggregates of proteins that become folded into a shape that allows many copies of that protein to stick together forming fibrils. In the human body, amyloids may cause various diseases, as previously healthy proteins lose their normal physiological functions and form fibrous deposits in plaques around cells that disrupt the healthy function of tissues and organs. (Side note: Stanford University research shows how beta amyloids bunch up to form plaques that travel to the brain, binding strongly to receptors on nerve cells, setting in motion an intercellular process that erodes their synapses with other nerve cells, thus causing Alzheimer’s disease.)

Self-care, such as restorative sleep and meditation, can combat amyloid build-up and help us to focus, especially in our busy lives.

Cheryl closed by showing a 10 minute meditation video, where the lights were turned low and we followed the guided instructions. A great personal demonstration of how even 5 to 10 minutes of meditation and mindfulness can calm us and help us regain focus.

Question & Answer

The group spent a few minutes discussing how we can introduce self-care and mindfulness into the workplace. In the human service professions, we experience secondary trauma just by working with those who have experienced great trauma in their lives. Their trauma starts to become our trauma. It is important for human service professionals to take time for self-care and mindfulness practices.

Recent articles and studies on workplace secondary trauma/stress reveal best practices in addressing stressors. One of the primary methods is to allow the processing of traumatic encounters by staff with their supervisors and managers. It therefore becomes important for our supervisors and managers to practice self-care in order to be able to assist their staff.

It is important that human service professionals have a life outside of work, meaning that they don't take their jobs with them where ever they go. Turning off our cell phones and focusing on family, friends or other non-work related activities help us to combat those stressors.

Lastly, it is important to introduce mindfulness activities at work, such as meditation and other calming techniques. The group discussed activities that they have implemented in the workplace to assist staff in reducing secondary trauma and work stress. Bringing "fun" activities into the workplace seemed to be a common theme. Other ideas included chair massages, quiet meditation rooms, food, etc.

Upcoming speakers and topics:

- a. Future meetings: Special session – Mike McInroy & Darin Thompson on current happenings with DHS, Dr. Amy Shriver – Practical applications of Trauma Informed Care especially in the Pediatric setting; Corinne Lambert – Results Based Accountability in the workplace; Jason Allen – DMPS on the African American Males project – B2B; Dr. McCann – recent developments in childhood trauma
- b. Who else would you like to see?

Adjourn – Teresa Burke 9:50 am