

Managing Burnout in High Stress Low Resource Environments

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Overview

- ▶ Discuss Burnout
- ▶ Discuss Secondary Traumatic Stress
- ▶ Discuss Changes at WCCW
- ▶ Insight from Burnout and Secondary Traumatic Stress Tracking
- ▶ Changes to consider

Burnout

- ▶ Burnout – involves feelings of hopelessness and exhaustion that result from chronic stress in the workplace
- ▶ Adverse Occupational Health & Wellbeing Outcomes
 - ▶ Depression
 - ▶ Anxiety
 - ▶ Health conditions associated with chronic stress
- ▶ Negative Work Affect, Behaviors, & Cognitions
 - ▶ Performance
 - ▶ Turnover
 - ▶ Satisfaction
 - ▶ Low moral/motivation
 - ▶ Attendance concerns
 - ▶ Isolation from peers

Rauvola, R.S., Vega, D.M. & Lavigne, K.N. Compassion Fatigue, Secondary Stress, and Vicarious Traumatization: A Qualitative Review and Research Agenda. *Occup Health Sci* 3, 297-336 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41542-019-00045-1>

Sprang, G., Gusler, S.K., Whitt, A., Eslinger, J., & Hood, C.O. (2025). The role of secondary traumatic stress and implementation strategies in successful adoption of evidence-based approaches to address traumatic stress. *Traumatology*.

Impact of Burnout

▶ Institutions

- ▶ Financial strain on institutions due to high turnover
- ▶ 25-60% turnover rate annually for community mental health providers
- ▶ Strain on remaining staff who absorb clinical caseload and duties

▶ Ethical Impact to Clients

- ▶ Increased potential for clinical error
- ▶ Irritability or anger toward clients who are not getting better
- ▶ Not being able to see clients' strengths and resources (i.e. trying to “rescue” clients)
- ▶ Not being respectful of clients (cancelling, not following up)
- ▶ Loss of consistent, quality services

Burnout Statistics

- ▶ 2023 National Council for Mental Wellbeing survey:
 - ▶ 93% of behavioral health workers reported burnout
 - ▶ 62% rated it severe
 - ▶ 72% reported increased client severity
 - ▶ Nearly half said the conditions were pushing them to consider leaving the field
 - ▶ Third of the workforce reported spending most of their time on administrative tasks
 - ▶ 68% of those who provide care to patients say the amount of time spent on administrative tasks takes away from time they could be directly supporting clients
- ▶ 2025 Health Resources and Services Administration:
 - ▶ ~137 million Americans (about 40% of the U.S. population) live in a federally designated Mental Health Professional Shortage Area
 - ▶ Significant shortfalls across nearly every behavioral health profession projected through 2038

2026 Behavioral Health Report: Trilliant health. 2026 Behavioral Health Report | Trilliant Health. (n.d.). <https://www.trillianthealth.com/market-research/reports/2026-behavioral-health-report>

New Study: Behavioral Health Workforce Shortage Will Negatively Impact Society. National Council for Mental Wellbeing. (2024, June 21). <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/news/help-wanted/>

BURNOUT REDUCTION EFFORTS

- ▶ “Many available interventions narrowly focus on individual-led behavior change (e.g. self-care practices), placing the onus on individuals (providers) and overlooking workplace/organizational factors that contribute to wellbeing” -Kapa, et al 2025
 - ▶ Failure to provide longer term support or address team-based or organizational level changes

Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)

- ▶ Symptoms that develop after repeated exposure another person's traumatic experience
- ▶ Symptoms include:
 - ▶ Repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic events of others while in the role of a first responder or helper.
 - ▶ Three major sets of symptoms:
 - ▶ heightened arousal
 - ▶ avoidance
 - ▶ intrusive symptoms
 - ▶ Duration of symptoms
 - ▶ Impairment due to symptoms

STS Impact

By Profession

- ▶ Emergency Nurses - 65%
 - ▶ Nurses (in general) - 30%
- ▶ Therapists - 6-26%
- ▶ Child Welfare Workers - up to 50%
- ▶ Doctors - 67.7%
- ▶ Emergency Medical Technicians - 59.3%
- ▶ Paramedics - 53.8%

Individual

- ▶ Feelings of helplessness
- ▶ Confusion
- ▶ Avoidance
- ▶ Decreased quality of life
- ▶ Burnout

Organizational

- ▶ Increased tardiness
- ▶ Absences
- ▶ Increased Turnover

Current Suggested Interventions

Organizational

- ▶ Ongoing Supervision
- ▶ Trauma caseload balance
- ▶ Workplace Self-Care
- ▶ Enhance Physical Safety of Staff
- ▶ Flexible Scheduling
- ▶ Train Staff on STS
- ▶ Train leaders on implementation/assessment
- ▶ Incorporate STS training into EBP training for clinical staff

Individual

- ▶ Utilize Supervision
- ▶ Increase self-awareness
- ▶ Work/Life Balance
- ▶ Exercise/Good Nutrition
- ▶ Practice Self-Care
- ▶ Use Employee Assistance Programs

WCCW Mental Health

A Brief History

Prior to 2020

- Primarily Case management
- No trauma treatment
- Primarily psychoeducation groups

2021-2022

- Research review and connection to pathway to prison for women

2023

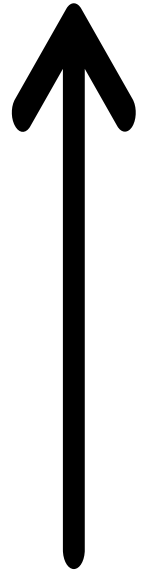
- Implementation of various EBT's

2024-2026

- Full-time Trauma treatment clinic
- Focus on Staff Health and Wellness

Why Train Staff and Implement EBTs?

Increases:



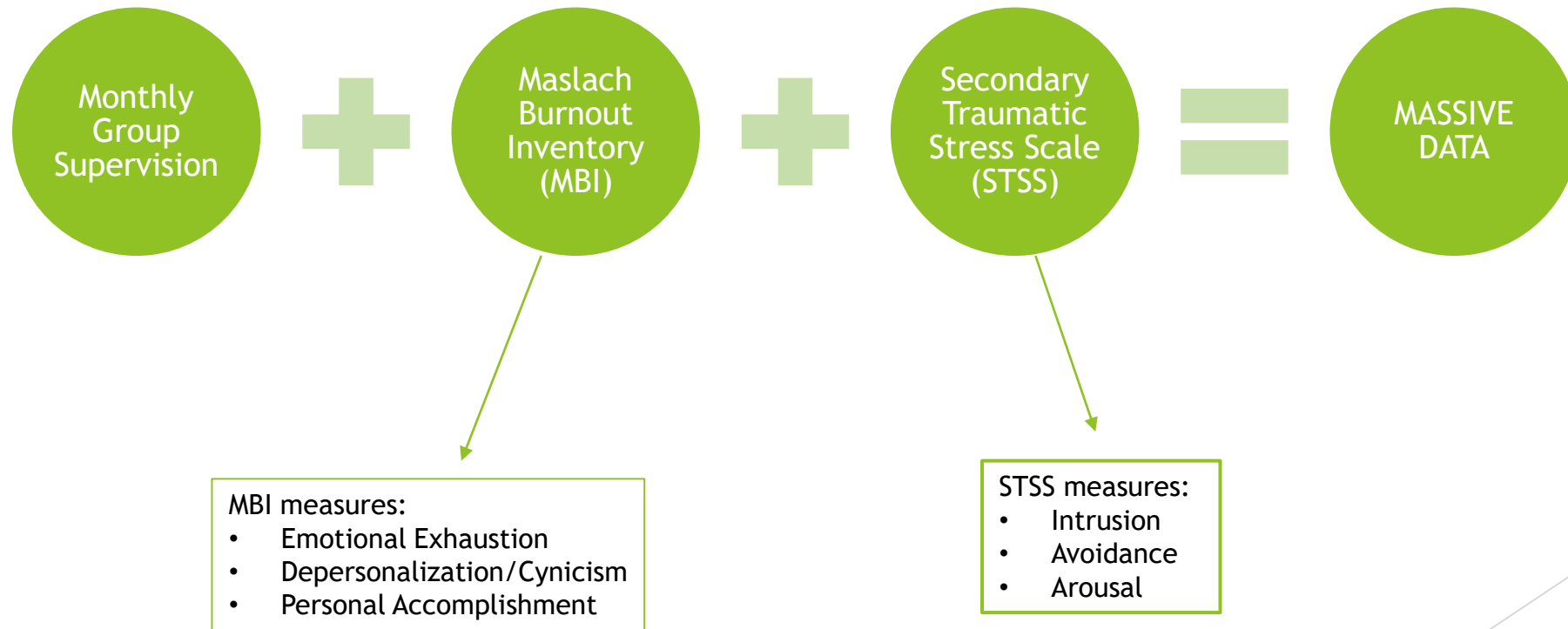
- ▶ Effectiveness in service delivery
- ▶ Provider resiliency
- ▶ Compassion satisfaction (positive feelings such as the sense of accomplishment and fulfillment associated with doing the work)

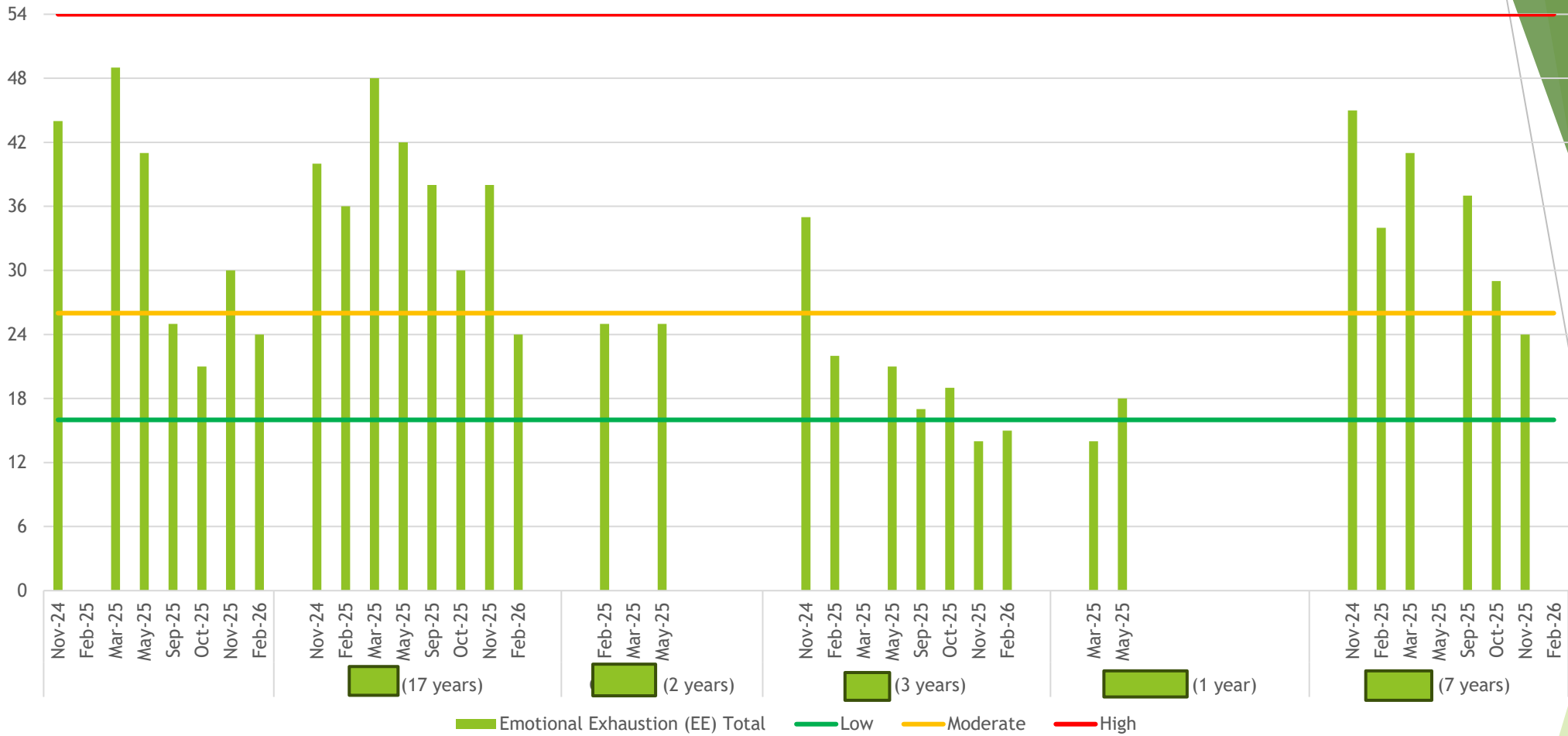
Decreases:



- ▶ Absenteeism
- ▶ Job turnover
- ▶ Levels of Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)

Our Process



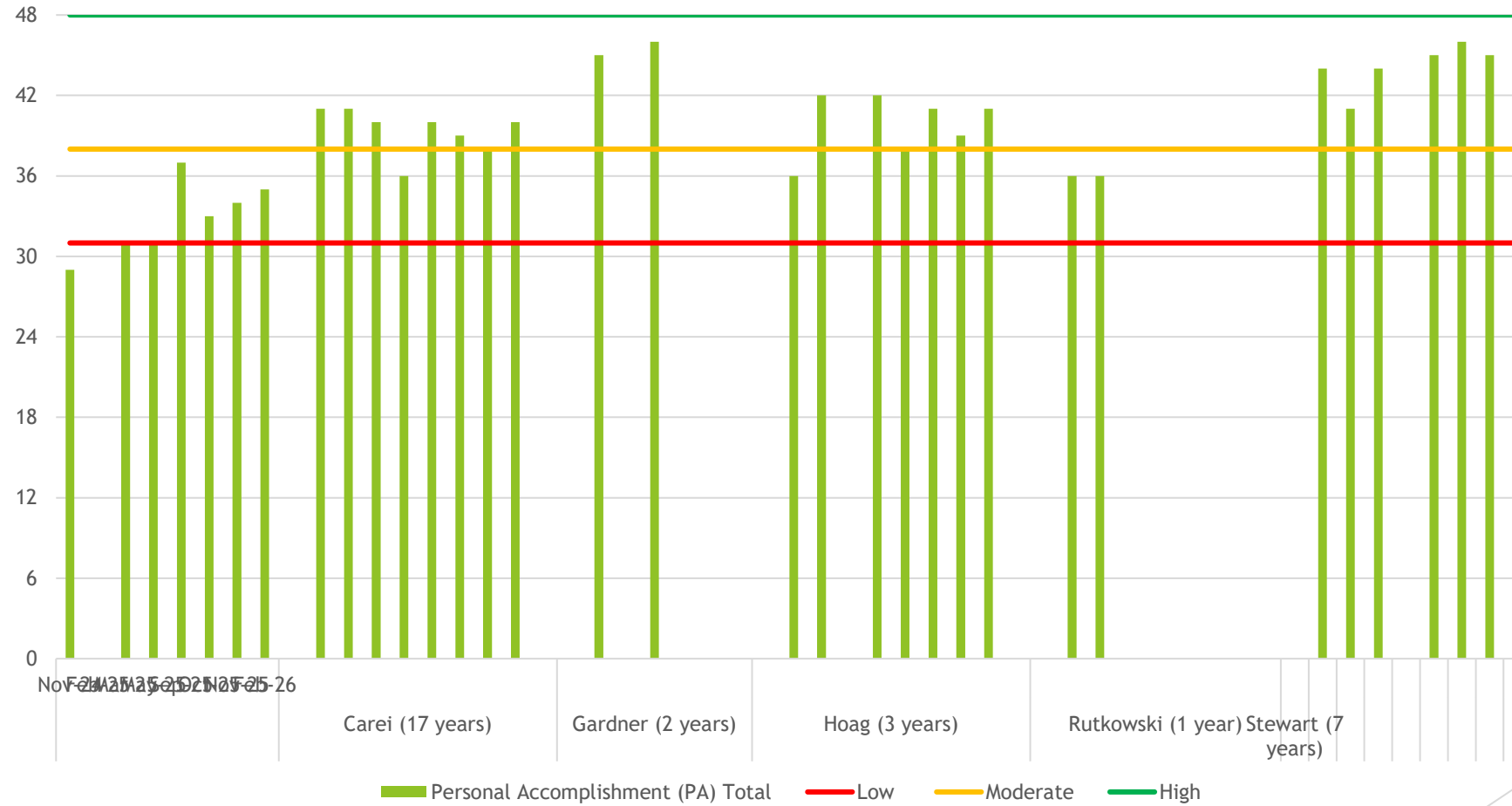


MBI - Emotional Exhaustion

MBI - Depersonalization



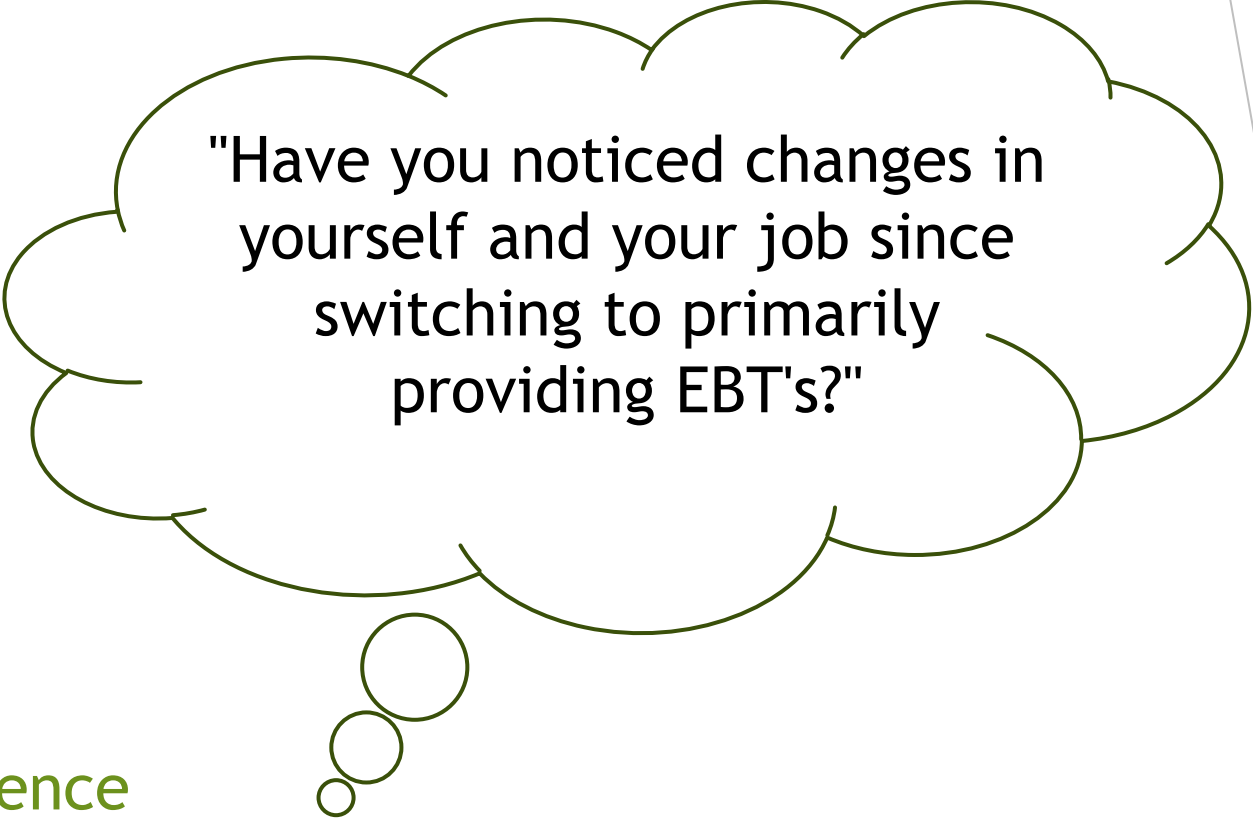
MBI - Personal Accomplishments



STSS Data



Staff Experiences

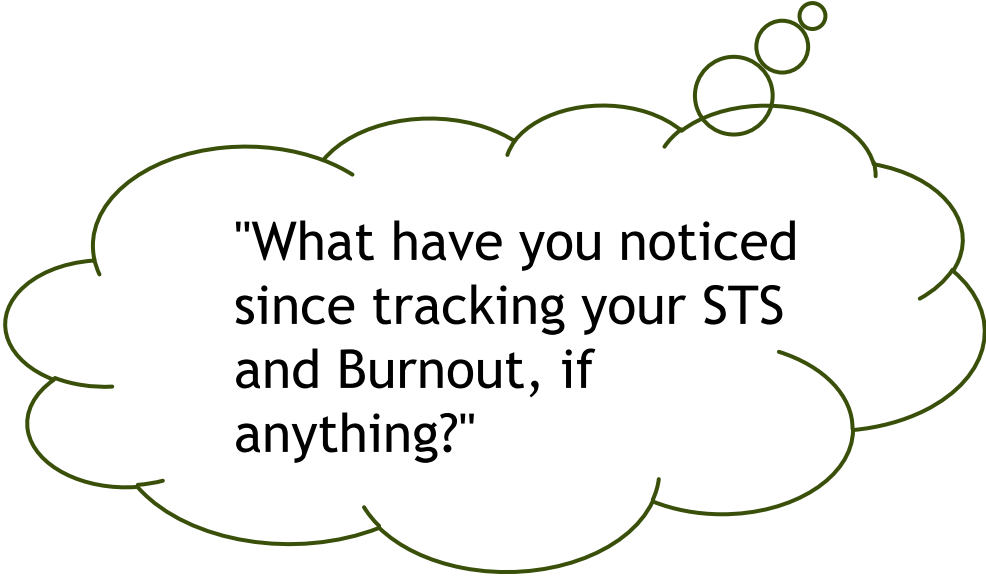


"Have you noticed changes in yourself and your job since switching to primarily providing EBT's?"

- Increased Job Satisfaction
- Increased Confidence and Treatment Direction
- Ability to focus on measurable progress

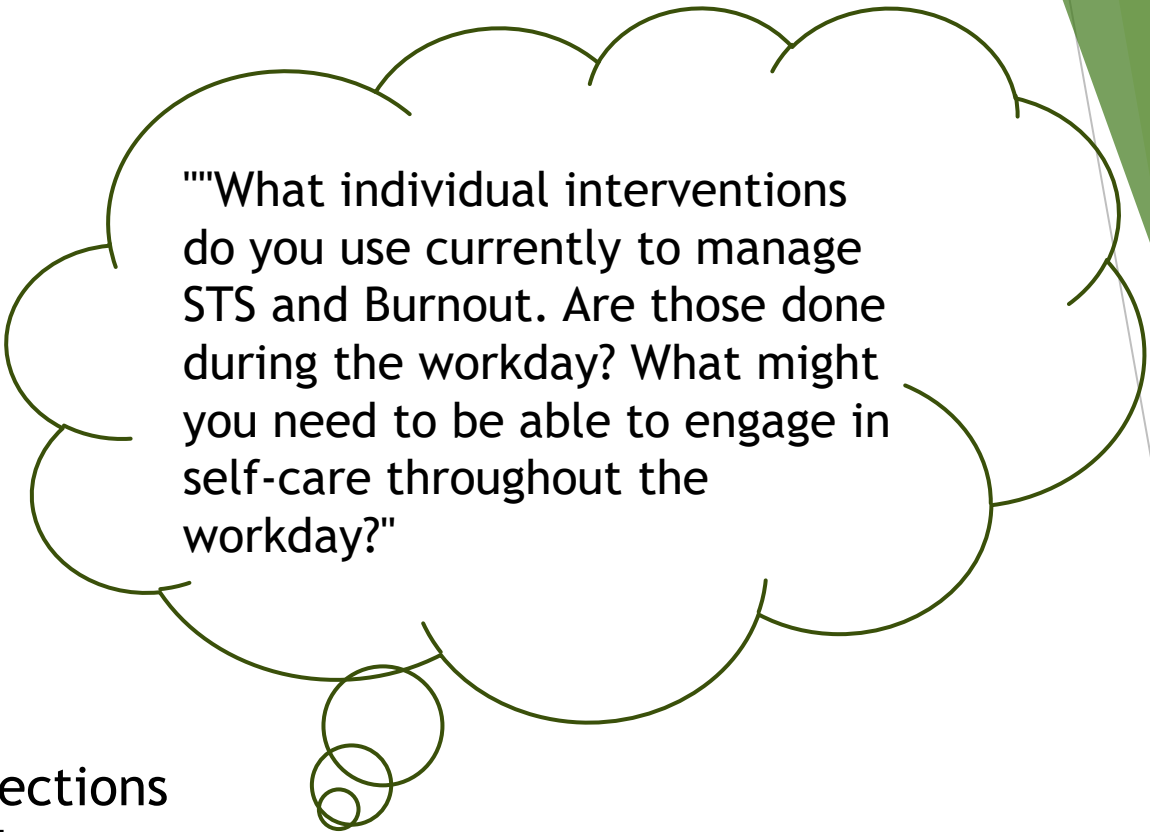
Staff Experiences

- Reduced Burnout
- Increased Clarity
- Increase Action towards self-care
- Structured setting reduces stress
- Renewed Excitement for the work



"What have you noticed since tracking your STS and Burnout, if anything?"

Staff Experiences



""What individual interventions do you use currently to manage STS and Burnout. Are those done during the workday? What might you need to be able to engage in self-care throughout the workday?"

- Workplace Connections
- Leaving the workspace
- Using Coping Skills
- Non-work related reading
- Setting Boundaries
- Time in Nature
- Spiritual Practice

Organizational Changes to Implement EBTs and Reduce Burnout/STS

- ▶ Team-based care
 - ▶ Manage stress responses
 - ▶ Leads to better patient outcomes and higher clinician satisfaction
- ▶ Supervision structures
 - ▶ Provide ongoing support
 - ▶ Improve confidence and fidelity to EBT
- ▶ Resource Allocation
 - ▶ EBT training is expensive but saves money in the long run
- ▶ Workload management
- ▶ Leadership practices
 - ▶ Remove barriers
 - ▶ Connect staff through book clubs, huddles, and open discussions
 - ▶ Elevate the voices of staff and patients
- ▶ Organizational culture and climate
 - ▶ Team-buy-in
 - ▶ Start small
 - ▶ Each success increases likelihood of the next

“Truly addressing STS requires supporting individual workers, reforming organizational practices, and challenging systemic injustices that generate impossible working conditions”

- Bride, Ferreira, and Figley 2025

Bride, B. E., Ferreira, R. J., & Figley, C. R. (2025). Advancing secondary traumatic stress research and practice [Editorial]. *Traumatology*, 31(4), 457–458. <https://doi.org/10.1037/trm0000646>

Carei, R., Morisset, K., & Curl, M. (2024, January 17). *Implementing Evidence Based Quality Indicators To Improve Treatment Outcomes & Job Satisfaction*. Slideshare. https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fyour.wa.gov%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2025%2F07%2FResults-WA_-Draft_12-17-24-1.pptx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK

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Kapa, H. M., Daniel, E., Axtmayer, C., Myers, R. K., & Vega, L. (2025). “I just dried my tears ... and went about my day”: Implementing a secondary traumatic stress group intervention with a multidisciplinary health care team. *Traumatology*, 31(4), 677–689. <https://doi.org/10.1037/trm0000624>

Barriers and Future Considerations





Questions?