Now, More Than Ever: The Ethical Practice of Rehabilitation Professional Self Care

JOHN WALSH: I am joined by my colleagues today, Linda Hedenblad and Nichole Tichy as well as my colleague Dr. Rob Froehlich. And also, we are co-hosting today's training with the National Association for Rehabilitation Leadership. The center is actually funded via a grant from the Rehabilitation Services Administration and any opinions expressed herein and today do not necessarily reflect the positions or policy of the US Department of Education and no endorsement is implied.

Next slide, please. I would now like to take the opportunity to introduce our co-host for today's session, Ellen Sokolowski. She is currently serving as the President of the National Association of Rehabilitation Leadership.

She has served in various leadership positions within the National Rehabilitation Association. And she currently is working as a vocational rehabilitation counselor for the state of Iowa. So Ellen, I'd like to turn it over to you to provide a welcome to our attendees.

ELLEN SOKOLOWSKI: Thank you very much, John. I am very pleased and very happy that you all have taken your time today to join us for this excellent training that Dr. Robert Froehlich is going to be presenting in a few seconds. As John indicated, I serve as President of the National Association of Rehabilitation Leadership, which is a division of the National Rehabilitation Association.

For those of you that may not know, the National Rehabilitation Association is a professional member organization that advocates for the rights of persons with disabilities while promoting high quality, ethical and collaborative practice across rehabilitation professions. Our membership is made of counselors, educators, counselors serving in the private sector for both profit and nonprofit, support staff, transition staff, as well as placement specialists. I would like to take this time to encourage you, if you are interested in joining a professional organization, to take a look at the National Rehabilitation Association as a professional member.

And you can go to their website, which is NationalRehab.org. And if you have any questions, there is a place that you can ask questions. Or if you would like to join, you can join online.

Again, I would like to thank you for your attendance and the time and I'll give it back to you, John.

JOHN WALSH: All right. Thank you very much, Ellen. And I wanted to also just give a brief introduction to the Center for Innovative Training and Vocational Rehabilitation. Our center provides a number of training opportunities that you should be aware of. Your most easiest way to get access to this is to visit our website at trainVR.org.

We offer a number of trainings, like today, live events, but we also have a number of asynchronous trainings that you can engage with at your convenience and when you have time to do it. We also host a number of communities of practice. And we also maintain an online community at trainvr.ning.com.

As I mentioned, your entry point for all of that is trainVR.org. when you go there to check us out, make sure that you sign up for our mailing lists. So that way when there's future offerings, you could just get it in your email box and you can make a couple of easy clicks to get there to see what we have to offer. OK without further ado, I'd now like to introduce today's presenter and my colleague, Dr. Froehlich.

Dr. Froehlich is an associate professor of counseling at the George Washington University. He has extensive experience within the areas of ethics and VR and counseling settings. And Dr. Froehlich is currently serving as well on the CRC Ethics Committee and a member of the Virginia Counseling Association Ethics Committee.

Dr. Froehlich is really going to share some valuable information and resources so we can learn ways to care for ourselves as we care for others. And why ultimately developing self-care routines is an ethical practice. So at this point, let's turn it over to my friend and colleague, Dr. Rob Froehlich.

ROBERT FROEHLICH: OK. So before I even start on our topic today, I want to share with you that this is a little bit of an evolution. We had a similar training that we recorded in February of 2020, right before things started shutting down. And that took more of a peer review article type of approach.

Subsequent to that time period, things have really slowed down in the peer reviewed. Things have slowed down in lots of places. But what we thought would be helpful today was to take more of a real time, electronic materials, almost a pop culture thing to support some of the topics and the issues that we're all facing and that are ever evolving.

And I do want to thank Nichole Tichy who is one of our great docs students for providing some of the excellent resources to corroborate the topics that we're talking about today. What a roller coaster ride we've been on. Open, normal, things are normal, things shut down, things are partially normal, all sorts of health concerns, all sorts of business related concerns.

And I think we've all probably over the past 14 months or so heard the term unprecedented in an unprecedented amount of times. But basically, unprecedented is just never done or known before. And I think that describes our world over the past number of months. What our first resource is looking at 30 alternatives to unprecedented.

And this resource is a chart with corresponding spears going from more scientific to not. But we've got some things like uncommon, turbulent, stressful. Then a little bit less down, strange, weird whack. And of my favorite level was down to the level with bananas, hot mess and cray.

So all of these terms kind of are available for you to use as you're describing the unprecedented events that you're experiencing, which now include moving back to opening, going back to whatever the new normal is. So it's a really common question that I get a lot relative to self-care is, my goodness, so many people are hurting right now. Am I being selfish worrying about my own needs?

And that really kind of speaks to who comes into our profession. People really care about making a difference in the lives of others and sometimes to their own detriment. So what I would respond to you relative to with so many people hurting, why should I be focused on my own needs is, it's part of our professional code of ethics.

And I do want to start with a little bit of a disclaimer. I am the current chair of the CRCC Ethics Committee, but I'm speaking on behalf of myself today. This is not an official CRCC presentation. The facts and figures and thoughts and things that I share with you are from me and not on behalf of the CRCC Ethics Committee.

But, with that said, section D of the CRCC Code of Ethics looks at professional responsibility. And in the introduction piece-- Each of the sections has a little bit of an introduction statement. One of the things it says is, "In addition, rehabilitation counselors engage in self-care activities to maintain and promote their own emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual being to best meet their professional responsibilities." So this is a responsibility that we have, is to engage in self-care.

Further, section D1e looks at monitoring effectiveness. So from time to time, we should all be looking at our own professional effectiveness and looking and viewing in ways relative to, are there things that are making me less effective? Am I experiencing barriers that are within my control and what can I do about that?

That's us, but we all work in work systems, right? So there's also a responsibility to look at functional competence and impairment that may be relative to assisting colleagues who may be experiencing barriers, challenges, or who may be struggling. I mean, think about the charge of being a rehabilitation counselor, or leader, or a professional.

We want to help people. Well, people include those individuals that we work with as well. So it's a really important charge that we have in terms of thinking about engaging in self-care. I

also want you to know too-- I'm not sure, I don't think I'm repeating, because I don't think I heard this so far.

But as we're going along, is a Zoom, a Zoom-inar, if you will. If you have questions about a particular topic or if you want to engage, the best way to do that, there's a chat function but I think there's also a question and answer tab on the bottom. So I think if you put your questions or comments in there my colleagues are watching those right now.

And they'll gather those and when there's kind of a critical mass, they'll let me know and we can address some similar questions and what have you. If that doesn't generate a lot of discussion, we'll have some time at the end as well for some questions and answers. So when we think about self-care, let's think about the CRCC code's principles and values, right?

So and how do these relate to self-care and work balance? So some of those values, right? And this is in the preamble area of the code, look at respecting human rights and dignity.

Ensuring the integrity of all professional relationships. Acting to alleviate personal distress and suffering and enhancing the quality of professional knowledge and its application to increase professional and personal effectiveness. Well, my goodness, all of those are 100% in alignment with professional self-care.

Further, I'm talking about the CRC code so far, but when I teach our graduate courses in ethics as well, I like to include the American Counseling Association Code as well. And there's some similar verbiage in there. Section C.2.g. Impairment, counselors assist colleagues or supervisors in recognizing their own professional impairment and provide consultation and assistance when warranted with colleagues or supervisors showing signs of impairment and they intervene as appropriate to prevent imminent harm to clients.

Right? So we're caring about our colleagues. We're engaging in self-care, but also with the intent of providing the best possible services that we can for our clients. This also applies under Section 5fb for supervisees and students, right? So let's not forget about the importance of people in student roles or supervisee roles, and self-care for them as well.

JOHN WALSH: So Rob, thank you for that kind of introduction to the relevant codes of ethics. And I think one of the first questions we have is, why should rehabilitation leaders and counselors engage in that self-care?

ROBERT FROEHLICH: Yeah, absolutely, John. Not only because it's a part of our code of ethics, but when we think about what it is that we do, right? There's a certain difference in providing counseling services to individuals. There's a certain difference in other disciplines relative to supervising people and leading people who provide counseling services to consumers of their services and individuals with disabilities.

Self-care activities are intended to moderate or avoid burnout, right? And if you think about that concept of burnout, right? So you've got, on a continuum, you've got some challenges that

are potentially associated with providing counseling services. Vicarious traumatization, literally taking on the trauma that others share with us.

Compassion fatigue, becoming so empathic with individuals that it starts having a negative impact on us. We understand their situations and we take them on almost as our own. And burnout, just the inability to move forward in our profession, right? So you think about all of those kind of negative connotation things.

They're on one end of the spectrum. But when you think about other issues that self-care moderate, it's got kind of the lower end of the spectrum too. Frustration, sadness, just being cranky. I know that's not a scientific term, but I know when I say being cranky, you know what I'm talking about.

Tired, just the daily hassles of life, right? So self-care is really important for both ends of the spectrum and everywhere in between. It's important at all times, but especially when we're encountering unknown or unfamiliar expectations and challenges. So if we were in a room right now I would say, so over the past 14 months I've encountered unknown or unfamiliar expectations, and everybody's hand would shoot up.

I can't see right now, but I'm just going to imagine your hands are shooting up right now. So research has demonstrated that burnout can result in anxiety, depression drops in self-esteem, substance abuse, decreased performance, even increased health problems. A study from Alcorn in 2011, right? So clearly, we want to moderate and we want to avoid all of those issues.

But when I say self-care, we're going to talk a little bit about what is self-care and how is that operationally defined, et cetera. Sometimes we don't think about something that's really important. The term self-care refers not only to engagement in various practices but also having a caring attitude or being caring towards yourself. And that is so related to self-care.

There is always somebody, or there are always multiple somebody's who are going to be critical of the things that you do. Don't be that first person. Don't be overly critical of yourself. Have a caring attitude towards yourself.

And that's a huge piece of self-care. So I mentioned cranky and I mentioned burned out. How do I tell the difference? How do I tell if I'm on the right side or the wrong side of that? So let's just take a scenario.

Colleague or supervisor has asked me to include an additional task in my scope of work that's not typically my responsibility. When I communicate and I think about this, am I able to describe how I feel about this situation? Do my emotional reactions match the content I'm working with?

So am I enraged, even though it's just a small task? Am I able to find some joy and other activities that are unrelated to the situation at hand or do I keep coming back and perseverating on that topic? Am I perseverating on it or can I let it go, right?

So if I am perseverating and if I'm angry beyond what seems to match and whatnot, I'm not cranky. I'm kind of getting more towards burned out. But regardless, this situation is telling me I need to do something. We're going to talk a little bit about what are some of those somethings that you can do when you're in such a situation.

Many times, we think in our minds about the fact that we may work with people to us who are challenging. Well, that is really not unique to our work setting, that's work settings overall. I like to imagine-- and I don't know Jill and Joe Biden, but I would imagine this morning it's possible that they had a little conversation that went something such like this.

Joe would say, I have to meet with this guy today who's really all about himself. He really doesn't want to hear about facts and figures and whatnot and he really just wants to talk about the reality and his situation and I just don't want to go. And I would imagine Dr. Jill saying something like, well Joe, you're the leader of the free world. It's really relatively important for you to attend this meeting and to kind of go forward, right?

And so the difference between cranky and burned out, burned out would be, yeah, I'm done. I'm just not doing this. I'm calling in sick today. I don't even want to deal with this.

And cranky is, all right. I know you're right. I'm going to have to figure my way on going through. So it's a kind of a ridiculous example, but you see how I can relate to any type of work setting that we're dealing with here.

JOHN WALSH: And Rob, I think that was a beautiful example in real time. So let's get a little deeper. I'm worried I'm just not cranky. So what is self-care?

ROBERT FROEHLICH: Yeah. so let's segue into that a little bit too. There's lots of different definitions, but in both the ACA and the CRC Codes of Ethics, they note that self-care are "activities to maintain and promote counselors own emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual well-being to best meet their professional responsibilities." It is merely taking the time to take care of our own needs, not at the exclusion of others, but to enhance our ability to work with others.

Self-care is a broad term that's been referred to in the literature as any actions or experiences that enhance or maintain councilors well-being. So self-care is really an individualized process . What is self-care to some people is exactly the opposite to others, right? So in terms of physical realm, it can be anything from taking a chair push up, or just kind of moving around a little bit, to running a marathon.

It can be nutrition. Can be anything from having different goals of watching what I eat to foods that comfort me. I hate to admit this. It's not the healthiest thing, but I find a little piece of dark chocolates in the afternoon when I'm at my low point, and I don't recommend this for everybody. I'm just saying, it makes me feel a little bit better.

So everybody has kind of different descriptions relative to that. When I say running a marathon, some people would say, hey, that's crazy. Who would do that? And other people say, well, that sounds really great. So on the spiritual realm, self-care can be anything, all the way from being very involved in organized religion all the way down to being open to not knowing or having an experience of awe.

Or, here's a really important one for our leaders and for our followers as well on our webinar today. Try at times to not be in charge or be the expert. Do something where you're learning and you're the entry person. It's freeing and it gives you an opportunity to look at the world in a different way.

That can be self-care as well. If you are interested in doing a little more reading, I like to think of this one as the granddaddy or grand mama of all lit reviews on self-care. Posluns and Gall in 2019 have an extensive literature review of self-care broken down into categories of awareness, balance, flexibility, physical health, social support and spirituality. And they talk in great detail about all of those different categorizations as well.

JOHN WALSH: So Rob, that was really good information about how self-care is really an individualized and personal matter. And thank you for providing that additional resource so we could go a little deeper. So now, can you give us additional information about how you could develop your own plan of action around self-care?

ROBERT FROEHLICH: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. That's a good time for us to talk about this. You all know from the important work that you do with consumers of your services, if you don't have a plan, it's really hard to get to an outcome, right? So we can talk all day long about self-care and some possible options and things. But actually having to articulate a plan of action frequently leads to better outcomes, right?

So on this particular slide and a few of the ones that follow and in the resources list for this webinar, when it's posted to our site, you're going to find all sorts of different options for self-care assessments. I think like self-care, it's important to have options. Some of these will appeal to you.

The format of one will appeal to you more than others. So you should have some things to choose from. We included one from Therapist Aid, a self-care assessment worksheet. Something from the University of Buffalo School of Social Work and their own self-care assessment. A self-care inventory from the National Alliance on Mental Illness, NAMI.

And so, what do these all have in common? Each one of these is broken down into components and they're the physical component, the psychological component, emotional components, spiritual components, relationship dynamics, workplace and professional issues and overall balance. In terms of creating your own self-care plan, kind of take a look at the options.

But a really important one that I always like to say, make sure you put on the bottom, is so that's how they're commonly broken down. That's how self-care plans are commonly broken

down. But additionally, what other areas are relevant or important to you? Because all of these is going to have an extensive list of things to rate your own self-care on and conceptualizations of things that fall in self-care.

But there may be something that's really important for you that's not on there. So make sure you include that on your self-care plan as well. A couple of other options. A particular project at Princeton University. It's an initiative at Princeton University to build greater sense of community and sense of support within the community is the Umatter.

And you can take a look a little at that, some self-care plans in there too. And an Australian resource to ReachOut.com. There's some worthwhile information in there too. So these are things for you to consider.

Take a look at what works best for you. I don't think one is better than another. Do you what's the best one? The best one is the one you're going to actually follow through on. So find what's congruent for you.

But we wanted to add beyond these traditional resources some other, more recent pandemic related self-care resources. So at this particular site, you can find an extensive list of self-care during a pandemic activities. And I'm going to give you a couple of options that jumped out at me. I can't remember the exact number, but there's like 100, 150 of them in here.

Leave stress inducing foods in not so convenient places. I saw that and I thought, well, that is just brilliant and makes a lot of sense. Because if I can't get to it, I'm less likely to use that as a less than positive coping mechanism. Develop a don't do list.

Aren't we great at to do lists? We're awesome. But this is actually, hey, don't do this. Don't work beyond whatever the hour is that you put in there. Don't respond to that email that infuriates you until you wait an hour.

It's not that important. A list of don't do things I think is awesome. Change your passwords to be your mantra. Change them on a regular basis to, I'm going to have a good day 21 exclamation point. And no, that's not my password, but you got the point of have it be something uplifting.

You have to type that in to unlock your computer every day. How about you make it something happy and good and positive, right? Talk about it. We're counselors.

We should totally understand that or we're in the field of working with counselors, or supervising counselors, but sometimes we are excellent at talking with people about, here's some great options for you to resolve your problem, but we don't apply them to ourselves, right? So talk about what kind of stresses you're having. And when we first started doing this, pulling together resources, it was an earlier phase of things opening and what have you.

We're really in a different phase now too, but people are still struggling with, what that's going to look like? And I'm going to talk about that a little bit further on. It's not you. You're not the only one that when the CDC said, hey, you can take your mask off. Don't worry about it.

You're like, what? Right? So talk about that.

And then practice kindness and gratitude. The author put in like Lady Gaga, but I mean, I just kind of got a giggle out of that too and I like Lady Gaga, so I put that in there too. But there's a whole bunch of other options for you to review in this resource as well.

JOHN WALSH: So Rob, you shared with us resources that we could address on a personal level. So how we're taking care of ourself. Now I'd like to move a little bit on how does self-care relate to some of our responsibilities as a leader, a supervisor, and the responsibilities that we have for maybe modeling behavior for our colleagues?

ROBERT FROEHLICH: Yeah, absolutely. I'm really happy to talk about this too. And anything that I'm saying here is not said in the you're doing something wrong. It is said in the, let's think about the model and evolve it a little bit. So just know that that's the spirit this is coming from.

But some general questions to think about and to respond to are, do you send emails way beyond work hours to those people who report to you? And what kind of message might that give? Would those that you manage or supervise-- and this can go both ways too. Would those that you report to or that you collaboratively work with, would they describe you as overworked?

And how would they have come up with that thought? Would those you supervise or manage indicate that you're interested in their professional development? And these kind of go hand in hand. Are the behaviors that you're modeling saying, I'm too busy and that professional development, you're kind of off limits?

Because that's something you can easily flip around. And that's a way that people will become much more engaged in their jobs and with you. If you're able to demonstrate that you're really interested in their professional development. That opens a whole bunch of doors.

And it doesn't cost anything to do that. Do your practices reflect cultural competence? And what's your operational definition of cultural competence and has that changed and evolved over time and most recently?

When's the last time you glanced at the American Counseling Association Multicultural and Social Justice competencies? Sometimes it just takes a little bit of a spark to go back and review and think about the excellent work you're already doing and how can you turn the flame up just a little bit and get excited about adding something in that's going to be incredibly helpful to those that you work with and to the clients that they work with as well. How do you manage generational diversity within your office?

Do you allow this to figure and relative to your means of contact with those you supervise and manage? We're going to talk in a little bit about technology, and different preferences, and generational diversity and maybe even ways to bring together groups that seemed more divergent earlier in the pandemic and adjusting to technology. So we're going to talk a little bit about that. But you all as the leaders in the group, and you all ask the followers in the group too, know generational diversity is a really big topic for us to consider at this point in time as well.

JOHN WALSH: So we now live in a digital world where we're connected 24/7. And a really important question arises as we look at our life is, where does my life start and my work life end and vise versa?

ROBERT FROEHLICH: Yeah. Yeah, I think a lot of people have been struggling with that. I want to go back to an oldie but goodie first and then kind of go more contemporary. Donald Super, when I teach career counseling is one of the theorists that I talk about. And he's the guy, if you'll remember back in career counseling, the Career Rainbow guy, right?

So this goes back to the 1950s. But it's worth some consideration relative to role strain during the pandemic and as we emerge from it, right? So there's all these kind of graphical representations. But one, it looks at the roles that we play in life and those roles are broken down to child, student, leisurite, which really isn't a word.

Good on him for creating one, but it's sort of, what do we do for fun? Right and to relax, and self-care care and all that sort of stuff. Citizen, worker, parent, spouse and homemaker. And homemaker is a 1950s word, but what's really meant by that is, how do we take care of the activities that we need to function in our life?

How do we maintain our life space, right? At various different times in life are percentages of effort vary. So you think about where when you were in high school, as opposed to where when you were in college or graduate school, and then when you're in your '40s and whatnot. As a child, your percentage can go way down when you become more independent, but then it can go way back up when you're caring for parents at a different phase, right?

So the unplanned events over the past years have made many people feel like, even though they don't have 100% available and all of those roles, that each one of them, trying to figure out how to keep people safe and healthy, trying to figure out how to educate people at home, trying to figure out how to stay employed while they're doing all of that, and then leisurite, really? Like, who had time for that over that period of time? But so I just want to superimpose an oldie but goodie, but boy, it's been really different over the past 14, 15 months.

So some pandemic related topics beyond burnout for medical professionals. And this slide and the next relate to a Harvard Massachusetts General Hospital tool kit and study. But what they found was in the midst of care and the pandemic, health care workers were having what they called moral injury. An injury caused by being involved in actions that transgress our deeply held moral beliefs.

Having to make decisions about who goes on a ventilator, who doesn't, and so many other pieces created moral injury. It's kind of related a bit, in my mind, when I teach interview skills. The textbook, Ivey, Ivey, and Zalaquett textbook that I use uses a term "soul wound". And soul wound kind of talks about multicultural issues and the lack of addressing such topics in counseling and the impact that, that can have.

Racial trauma was another topic indicated in this study that's emerged as a major chief complaint among health care staff of color. Concerns about discharging people to quarantine in overcrowded living situations and being worried about that. Asian-American health care workers being accused of starting the pandemic was a major source of stress and burnout for medical professionals as well. So this Harvard Mass General self-care website that we're sharing with you has a 10 point toolkit and pocket card for self-care during the COVID-19 crisis.

And one of the areas looks at take care of your family, friends, and loved ones first, right? And so that kind of does have a very big self-care. That's not saying, we don't care about people, but it's saying, you have to really kind of prioritize and think about where your energies go and how to direct them appropriately to provide the best client care as well.

So know your personal and organizational mission statement. Let's see if clinical and cultural excellence. Engage in peer supervision and consultation. Monitor and regulate empathy. That's a really big one and it kind of goes back to what we were talking about earlier, about taking on vicarious traumatization and what have you.

Practice reflection, spiritual and artistic. And in self-care, spiritual, artistic and physical pursuits are commonly highlighted. And we're going to talk a little bit about a concept called FLOW in a little while and getting so engaged in something that challenges and worries kind of go to a different place.

So utilize deep breathing, mindfulness and meditation. And as counselors, I mean, those don't sound too far off for us, but we have to actually engage in them. Conduct daily personal health care activities, taking care of the body and mind.

This report even spells out the importance of self-care. Create beautiful, natural healing environments. Really, where we are and where we spend time really has an impact on our well-being as well. Not only create those goals, but evaluate your self-care goals. And finally, restore human dignity through kindness, compassion, and empathy. So those are some important things included in this particular toolkit.

Another-- I'm having a word finding thing right here. Another graphic too that may be helpful is this Health Matters 15 Ways to Practice Self-Care. They include things like, eat a healthy snack, diet things. But other things, like enjoy a cup of tea, take a walk outside and pay attention to what you see.

I was walking the dog this afternoon and we walked right past this-- it was kind of like a clump of weedy things, but they had the most beautiful flowers. Just take a minute and take a look at

that. Call a friend to chat, light an aromatherapy candle, get into bed 15 minutes early, notice the way water feels when taking a shower.

So really being present and really thinking. There's lots others included too, but I think you see the theme here to, that self-care activities don't have to be things that require a lot of time and effort. And those things that are, read a book for 10 or 15 minutes. 10 or 15 minutes out of your day, but it really can help you refocus and reframe the way that you're thinking as well.

A topic that kind of comes to mind to me relative to all of this is also practicing psychological flexibility. So developing a plan of action for the day and being realistic about that. Attempting to avoid becoming overwhelmed by planning details that may not lend themselves to being planned for at this point. As rehabilitation professionals and counselors and leaders, boy, planning really resonates with us.

But sometimes it can become, if we get too far ahead of ourselves, that can become the barrier. Particularly, if we're trying to plan things that we don't have all the information for right now. So in terms of reopening, you sort of have to take it a little bit as it comes. I know at the University we were told in multiple different meetings that once things shut down, not to expect that there would be such a quick light switch like there was at the beginning of the pandemic at the end, that things would kind of slowly kind of change and transition.

For instance, a lot of my colleagues travel a great deal. And they said, no way is it just that the switch is going to get flipped back on. I don't know if this is happening with other organizations too, but, the light switch did get flipped back on. We got a bad rule that said you can travel.

Today, in fact, the University reached a tipping point where 70% of all constituents have been documented to be fully vaccinated. So masks are no longer required in inside settings at the University. Nobody would have been able to prepare for those things, even last week, until they really happened. So this psychological flexibility, I feel, is an important concept at this phase, right now, where we are, Right? And also, that includes avoiding using permanent solutions for evolving or temporary demands.

Flexibility is really a hard thing for many people to engage in, but boy, it's really necessary more maybe now than ever. And before John asks this next question, I just want to check and make sure that if there's a critical mass of questions, I'm super happy to take them at the end, if my colleagues think that's great. But if there's anything that you want to interrupt at this point, that's OK too. Just let me know. Give me a little feedback.

LINDA HEDENBLAD: Well, Dr. Froehlich, this is Linda. And we did have a couple of questions around the feeling of almost selfishness when it comes to self-care, especially sometimes we just need to get away from the job. And now that travel is starting to open up and there's opportunities to get away from everything, it puts additional pressure on our colleagues and on our clients when we leave. And how do you get past that, that almost sense of selfishness?

ROBERT FROEHLICH: Yeah. And that really resonates with me and I really can imagine being involved in a situation like that. And what I would respond is, normally there's a flow in a year where you typically have time that you take off and you typically engage in activities that are different. Whether that's visiting family at the holidays, or whether that's taking a vacation or a long weekend somewhere. That all went away for quite a period of time.

Now that things are beginning to present themselves as opportunities, I think it would benefit us in our work settings if we are supportive of one another and realize that when I take that time and other people may have to pick up a few extra things, I'm going to give them that courtesy when they're scheduled to do that. Because we need that curitive. There's a reason why people take vacations.

It makes them feel better. I had one just a couple of weeks ago. We lived in my house on lockdown and kind of like under a rock. And I don't regret having done that. But a couple of weeks ago, I had the opportunity to take a week vacation.

And the build up to it, I know I got crankier, and crankier, and crankier. And my colleagues can probably attest to that to. Coming back I had a whole new world view. And it wasn't because we did anything particularly exciting or whatever, it was just being out of the routine and stepping aside.

So if you can somehow equate in your mind the importance of that refreshing activity and figure that you are going to kind of pay it forward to somebody else, if that works in your mind to make that easier for you, I say take that vacation and realize you need it. It's important. Linda, does that kind of help with that?

LINDA HEDENBLAD: I think that covers it. Thank you, Dr. Froehlich.

ROBERT FROEHLICH: OK. And we should just move on and you let me know. But do feel empowered to jump in at any point if there's something that you want me to cover.

LINDA HEDENBLAD: Thank you.

JOHN WALSH: So I think you've provided us with some really effective strategies. You've encouraged us to take action. So encouraging folks to get some of these resources and start developing an action plan.

I want to now take a look at some of the linkages. How does this all relate to ethics and self-care? Let's make a further connection there.

ROBERT FROEHLICH: Yeah, sure. Absolutely. Work at home and boundaries. So I happen to be a person who since 2004 have spent at least part if not a significant portion of my time working out of the home.

I have a home office and so that's not really a new concept to me. What was new was everybody being at home and the changes that revolved around that. And Zoom has been both a blessing and sometimes a bit of a challenge. And I say Zoom, but what I really mean is, platforms that allow for meetings, right? So again, the boundaries, like where does it stop and where does it end and whatnot have been-- I hate to use the term, but unprecedented.

Maybe we could use another one of the other ones, bananas, whack. Work at home meant something entirely different prior to these past two years. So really acknowledging that. What's so different than before, right?

So current demands for many folks, and whether your organizations have started going back to the office, there are not too many places that are fully 100% back, so it's some sort of combination. So finding space to work for you, your partners, your kids, your parents. Preparation for being on camera. I had many days in former activities where I was still fully engaged and doing research or doing preparing for presentations or it was a travel day for me to get there.

All that time, being camera ready is really an interesting type of a thing. For many colleagues, that initial separating, how do I walk out of the office at 5:00 and really walk out of the office? It's a learned skill set. You can do it, but you have to be disciplined.

You have to be disciplined and you have to kind of stick to it. There's a learning curve relative to technology. And we're going to talk in a little bit too about it appeals to some people and not to others. The speed of internet in your home and what does that impact.

Your privacy while work visits you and your home every day. Why does the dog have to bark all the time at the wrong time? And maybe it's just my dog. I don't know. I just feel like that happens all the time.

The Flip side of that is having your dog around all the time is facilitative pet therapy. And when you are having a bad day, you can just kind of rub the belly. But you know, you're in the middle of presenting and the UPS person comes up and, in my home, that's a big thing.

So all of these kind of demands, finding time and ways to connect with your colleagues. So even though you're on Zoom and you're in lots of sorts of meetings, when's the last time you really had the opportunity to take 15 minutes to have one of those conversations that you would have had if you were in the office? So these are all kind of different current demands. And finding ways to recreate or new ways to create that way to connect with colleagues.

Maybe using smaller breakout rooms where you can have people. Maybe even defining, listen, here's 15 minutes. We're just going to check in with each other and see how everybody's doing. Moments to talk about life, right?

That's not always operationally defined in our job descriptions, but that's a huge part of the world of work and it's been missing. And I think it has an impact on productivity. So circling

back to ethics too, boundaries are something we have. Leaders and counselors have always been familiar with, a big part of what we do.

We talk about it and foundations classes, we talk about it in ethics. Those of you who are supervising people, this is a topic that comes up all the time about professional boundaries, duel relationships, boundary crossings in terms of evolves over the years. But the 2017 CRCC code language that I see is helpful to conceptualize this is extending professional boundaries. I really just see this as related, right?

So when we think about all of our colleagues are in our homes all the time and work 24/7 and all of that. Section A.5.g and h are important sections for us to consider. So extending professional boundaries and documenting boundary extensions. So these such boundary extensions are initiated with appropriate consent.

So we kind of talk about what's comfortable with us. In more clinical terms, a boundary extension would be you're working with transition aged student and they're graduating, they've done great work and it's really exciting, and they invite you to go to the graduation. Which again, I in a pandemic world is a whole different thing. But, that's the common example that we'll use.

We talked about, OK, it's initiated with appropriate consent. So you kind of talk with the student about that. It's time limited or context specific. It doesn't mean the boundaries go out the window and now we're in a different relationship. But there's also a documentation process too.

Rationale for such interaction. What's the potential benefit? What are the anticipated consequences? I don't think we did a really great job in our haste, because we really needed to create systems that didn't exist prior to the pandemic in ways of delivering services.

But if you think about this area of the code of ethics serving as a way to think about articulating this going forward and even setting appropriate professional boundaries that still allow individuals to be as productive and to have outcomes that are successful, but maybe kind of take all of these things into consideration as well and have it be more of a discussion. I think that's an important concept going forward. I don't have a perfect answer for that. But I do think that, that section can serve as an inspiration, if you will, for thinking about our world going forward.

Extending boundaries can be positive, right? So there's a particular article link that we provided. Your "Work Self" is Gone Now That Your Co-workers Have Seen Your Apartment. But it really discusses the humanizing aspects of inviting others into our living space for meetings.

And I know we all have backgrounds that we can use and what have you, but there really is a different dynamic when you're working from home and connecting with all sorts of other people. So interesting read for you. The StarTribune says, "You may be ready for a video conference for your videoconferencing close-up, but is your makeshift office? And there are

lots of things in this article that talk about considerations relative to your workspace and your camera positioning.

And your camera positioning on your workspace, but even some basics. And I know we've all kind of learned these over time, but making sure that the camera is facing in the right way, so it's not looking up your nose and all sorts of other basic considerations like that are important. I'd be remiss in not sharing some resources from our center, The Center for Rehabilitation Counseling Research and Education at GW.

But we have a counseling resource collection that's linked, which includes choosing a platform, preparing your office and counseling at a distance considerations. So beyond practices and a kind attitude to yourself, self-care plan is important. But a part of that plan should include activities that set yourself up for success and quite frankly make your job more rewarding.

So such items include getting to know those around you and expanding your approach to take others' needs into consideration. I'm preaching to the choir here. You're counselors, but one of the things that consistently makes people feel better about themselves is being able to help others. So when you're developing self-care plan and you're thinking about this, try to figure a way to honor this thought too and take others' needs into consideration relative to your work world. And how can you make that kind of a win-win where you're taking care of your own self-care needs but doing something positive as well?

JOHN WALSH: So as we're talking about how our world is changing and some of our daily routines are changing, some folks have expressed to me that they miss their old commute time of going into the office of having that time to whatever they do during the commute time. Is that normal?

ROBERT FROEHLICH: Yeah. So first thing on that, as counselors we know this, but now in 2021 more than ever based upon the experiences we've had up over the past 14 months with the pandemic, operationally defining normal is tough. But I would say based upon the number of resources that have been written relative to this topic, at the very least, you are not alone.

And I happen to be an individual who works in Washington DC and needs to drive through the Northern Virginia region on interstate 95 to get to work. So I never ever thought that I would miss any of that portion of my work world. But I have to tell you, I miss the decompression and some things as well.

So we've included a number of articles. 4 ways to decompress now that your commute is gone from The Seattle Times. Months of pandemic teleworking have left some missing commutes, from The Washington Post. Can I actually be missing the commute? From The New York Times.

Missing your commute? Here's how to recreate the golden hour during work from home, from The Economic Times. And, Missing quiet time during the commute? Microsoft Teams brings virtual commute time for users of rejuvenation, from The Financial Express.

So what do these commonly say? The Washington Post and The New York Times articles emphasize the amount of people who miss not the commute itself, but what the commute provided. The opportunity to separate work from home, the ability to engage in social activities, exercise, fresh air time, to wake up in the morning and time to relax before going home. I am surprised the Starbucks people have not sent me any type of communication.

Because that was a huge part of my commute. And even when they do, if they did reach out, I stopped using caffeine during the pandemic. I don't know if anybody else has done that too. So I'm going to have to create a whole new different commute practice on the way back.

And I a lot of people are going to be creating a lot of new patterns too. The Seattle Times suggest four ways to create a buffer, such as keeping traditions, going outside, setting a ritual to mark the end of the day and adopting quiet times. I don't think we fall very frequently into the practice of doing that. That literally, here's a half an hour where I'm not going to check my email, I'm not going to take texts, I'm not going to do any of those types of things.

Those are some considerations if you are missing that commute time to consider. Microsoft Teams has created a built in computer platform to help users tackle to do list as part of their virtual commute. But, the to do list isn't work related. It's much more personal. Like books to read, podcasts, exercise before or after work hours. So just something for you to think about there as well.

JOHN WALSH: And Dr. Froehlich, we know that our community is composed of a diverse array of individuals. And some of that diversity may relate to generational identity. So how does generational identity relate to your self-care needs?

ROBERT FROEHLICH: OK, yeah. Absolutely. One thing I do want to say first is humor is curative and the ability to laugh is kind of related to self-care. So I did get a good laugh a couple of weeks ago. Some of you may know my colleague DJ Ralston.

DJ pointed out to me that there's a new term and that term is geriatric millennial. And a geriatric millennial is someone who was born between 1980 and 1985. So you are the older group of the millennials.

What's funny to me about this is those of you who do know DJ would agree that they are the last person you would think about when you say the word geriatric. So applying this term to DJ just kind of makes me laugh. So some resources looking at generational differences and work life balance and whatnot, we're sharing those too.

Something called the Elite Content Marketer has a piece called, Work Life Balance That You Need To Know In 2021. It's an interesting read. I'm sure that you're not surprised by this. Hours of work have increased.

Surveys show that lots of work is occurring on the weekend. And yet, Deloitte Millennial Global Survey of 2020 that's cited in this resources 60% of millennials would like to continue working remotely post pandemic. And when they had various different scales relative to stressed out.

And the stressed out all the time category for millennials and Gen Z fell during the pandemic. Another resource for you to take a look at if you're interested in hearing or reading more in the conversation, the work-life balance in a pandemic, which they determine it as a public health issue. So individuals are increasing the numbers of hours of work, but they also talk about the sandwich generation.

And I think we've talked about the sandwich generation. We're taking care of kids, taking care of our parents. I think it took on a whole new meaning during the pandemic, because the levels of concern on both ends of the spectrum really left people polled in the middle. So generations and technology is a pretty common topic that we compare when we look at generational needs.

It's a pretty common topic to come up. So if you're interested in learning a little bit more about ethics technology and supervision, please tune in the Quality Management Technical Assistance Center is recording a webinar on this very topic. And it should be available in July of 2021. And you'll probably recognize a familiar presenter on that one as well.

JOHN WALSH: And we'll be sure to have links to that presentation on trainVR.org so that you can get linkage to that valuable training. You bring up great points about technology. We know that's played such a critical role in how we've conducted business during the pandemic and we moving forward probably some of our business models are going to change. So what are some of your thoughts about how technology relates to self-care?

ROBERT FROEHLICH: Yeah, absolutely. The very first thought I have is the section of our code of ethics at the CRC Code of Ethics that deals with technology is section J. And section J1a refers to competence, right? And so when we're using technology in a counseling relationship or counseling setting, we're held to the same level of expected behavior and competence as defined by the code.

So it really doesn't matter what type of technology we're using. Whatever the standards are apply. So when we think about technology, some important questions include, what's helpful?

What creates overload and what's distracting? So let's talk a little bit about some topics that relate to that. Yeah, OK. First off, you're going to have different people in your organization that have different interest levels in technology.

You're going to have the people, do I have to? You're going to have the, just give me the basics. You're going to have the inquisitive, how does this work? And then you're going to have the, I love this stuff kind of group.

Think about, are there ways that you can connect people with these various approaches to enhance their own self-worth and to benefit your group? I have to say, I'm the, I need the basics. I really don't want to know how it works out and I don't want to program it.

But getting somebody who's super excited about it is going to tell me details I would have never looked into on my own. I will guarantee you that this laptop does all sorts of stuff I have no idea and getting somebody who's the I love this stuff to work with me would be such a great experience for me. So just kind of think about that.

JOHN WALSH: So I know that we all had days where we're moving from one virtual meeting room to another. Is Zoom fatigue a real thing or is it just me that's feeling that?

ROBERT FROEHLICH: Well, if I'm a judge, yeah, it's a real thing. There's multiple resources that talk about those too. So the Introvert Sisters Podcast kind of describes the why, how, and what of this, right? So why Zoom fatigue happens?

In part, because it's a constant reminder of how much the world has changed. How? You have to make much more of an effort to appear friendly and switched on. You have to do so much performing that we didn't really feel burdened by before in real life. And then the what, take breaks, set limits, establish boundaries.

It's really all about mental health care and self-care. So for instance, I serve on a particular board and a few days ago, we had a board meeting. Seven hours of Zoom is too much. Seven hours is too many.

How can you break that up into chunks of time? How can you get people into smaller breakout rooms or something? Because that's a lot. So some Zoom fatigue fix steps from the Stanford News.

Oh I'm sorry. Reasons for Zoom fatigue. Excessive amounts of close up eye contact is highly intense. Seeing yourself during video taps constantly in real time is fatiguing. I'm sorry, I'm going to get to the fixes in just a minute. These are explaining, yeah, zoom fatigue is a real thing.

Video chats dramatically reduce our usual mobility. If you're sitting on a chair for seven hours, you're feeling cranky. And the cognitive load is much higher in video chat. So here's the one that I want you to remember.

If this is the only take away, I still will feel success that you got something from these 90 minutes. But the 202020 rule. For every 20 minutes you spend looking at a screen, take 20 seconds to look at something 20 feet away. And I will tell you, I tried that in an lengthier meeting and it really did help me refocus.

Simple things too. You might even tell consumers of your service when you're in a stressful meeting or whatnot. One of those stress cush balls can help you refocus during a challenging time. I said humor can be self-care.

Boston Globe had a piece on the 12 most annoying co-workers you face on Zoom. And maybe annoying is the wrong term, but it's there, so I couldn't change that. Just kind of a funny look at people's approaches towards their Zoom environment, and what they're comfortable with, and technology and how they manage that and some other common things. So some of them are a little PG-13, but it's kind of a funny read.

So if you have a moment to look at that, might be helpful for you to identify who are the faces in your Zoom neighborhood. What's the best platform or approach? Comes up a lot as a question. But to me, what I would say is, many times you don't necessarily have a choice.

Your organization has chosen this is the one or this is the one. But let's not forget about good practices and meeting management. What's the need for this at this meeting as opposed to address? Are there other ways to engage colleagues instead of a meeting?

And can you have roles for each participant for each meeting participant? And if you can't, do they really need to be at the meeting? So just some leadership things to think about as you are developing your meeting agendas. And more on that, do you have an agenda?

Is the agenda the same every time? Because if that's the case, you don't have an agenda. Because people just stop paying attention to that. Minutes, these can help avoid having the same meeting over and over and over, because you're going to find out what occurred and who followed up and what happened.

How will you engage in meeting attendees in this virtual world? How can you kind of engage and check in with them and make that in a manageable way? Are smaller subcommittees and breakout rooms going to generate more interaction? So just some general meeting thoughts too as we're talking about this.

Some thoughts on rules you have for yourself. Do you text those you manage or supervise? And that may be a perfectly fine practice. But what kind of limits do you put on?

And how do people feel about the way that you contact them? Have you asked? Have you found out what people prefer? Do you have work hours in mind and do you hold yourself accountable for those hours?

So if you're saying, I'm going to walk out of the office at 5:30 PM or 6:00 PM and it's 8 o'clock and you're still there, you're really not holding those work hours. Do you have a no email or text block of time when you don't check either? And reasonable, because I understand there's emergencies and people are expected to be responsive.

But you have to not have to. It could benefit you a great deal to have a little bit of downtime. Think about when you're communicating with people, what's your message? How can you deliver it in a manner that's clear and professional? And how can you deliver it with positivity?

Sometimes we create our own barriers relative to topics like these. So I do want you to just kind of consider that. Oh, and a couple of other ethics things for me to jump into, I am cognizant. I know we're at 3:00-- I can't tell if it's 17 or something like that.

We have about 13 more minutes. So I want to go through a couple of things and then ask if there's questions. I have probably way more for us to cover than 13 minutes, but you're going to have this presentation and the resources that go along with it. So I might kind of jump around a little bit at the end. About that chat function in your meeting.

The code of ethics section D.5. Is responsibility to the public and other professionals. And section D.5.h. is disparaging remarks, right? So it's really super easy to think that your private messaging, it even says that in the chat, it's so wonderful, private message. It's super easy to hit the wrong thing and to email out your private message to the world.

Maybe keeping a scratch pen and paper, writing down what you're thinking rather than sending it might really kind of be helpful. Also, when you think you're texting somebody, but if they have the feature turned on and they're screen sharing where your text comes across, that could be a potential challenge for you. So I'm just saying, consider the implications of screen sharing and text notifications and what have you.

And sometimes all this technology is super wonderful and great, and sometimes we really need to put some containment around it for ethical reasons. Consider disabling Alexa, who probably just turned on back there, when you're in meetings and when counseling clients. It can be easily triggered. Also, the functions when your phone connects with your car.

And if your phone is close by your office and somebody else gets in, and the last phone was the person who's counseling. I'm just saying, you can turn on the car and then violate people's confidentiality by doing that. So maybe think about turning Bluetooth off any time you're in sessions with clients, because then it won't go to that phone.

Just a thing to think about. I want to ask my colleagues too, because I know we do have a few minutes left. Are there important questions that we should be handling right now or should I keep going on?

LINDA HEDENBLAD: We do have a few questions, Dr. Froehlich.

ROBERT FROEHLICH: OK.

LINDA HEDENBLAD: One of the areas of questions that's popped up is, some people just, whether it's because they're vulnerable or because maybe they're not as self-aware, but they just say, I don't need self-care. Self-care, it's a selfish thing. What can you say to that person?

ROBERT FROEHLICH: Yeah. That's an interesting and good question. I think kind of approaching that in a demystifying the topic, that self-care is a lot of things. Self-care relates to so much of our professional work.

So I guess what I would not recommend is a shaming approach. What I would recommend is I know when I engage in blah, blah, blah, whatever my self-care practices are, I feel so much more effective in all spheres of work. Ways to encourage that person to connect or maybe expand what their thinking is relative to self-care.

Because what I think I hear in that question is, I have a colleague who may not be in the best place right now and I want to encourage them to engage in self-care, but they say, I don't need self-care. I'm fine just the way that I am. Kind of engaging, finding a way to get that person somehow excited about a portion of something that could be helpful. That's what I would recommend.

LINDA HEDENBLAD: Well, thank you for that. We've also had quite a few people responding to how they have interacted in the last year with all of the technology. Whether it's been some people find it to have been very beneficial. Some people find it to have been burdensome. What a few people also commented on, the accessibility and having to find which platforms were accessible and somewhat of the struggle with that.

One person said that they just started their position in a remote world and they're getting a lot of negative feedback from their colleagues about the job. And it's a bit different when it's a water cooler conversation versus online. Do you have any advice for that person when it comes to self-care, being that they're new and they're getting some negative feedback about their employer?

ROBERT FROEHLICH: Yeah. I think an important piece, and sitting in this chair as I do, as a person with a number of years of work experience in many different settings, that is not an uncommon dynamic to occur. So here you are, you're a new person and everybody is kind of chatting about what are the difficult challenges and barriers. It doesn't matter if you're working in a state vocational rehabilitation agency, and in a bank, at the rocket science place or wherever.

Human dynamics are human dynamics and you're going to have a little bit of that. I wonder if, for that individual, because it is almost kind of like a vicarious traumatization piece where you're hearing all of this negativity and it's weighing you down. I wonder if you could potentially engage in those conversations. You're a counselor see or you are doing something related to counseling.

So you're good at hearing what people are saying. So kind of reflecting back, I'm hearing what you're saying, but I wonder what positive things there are for you in your job or what have been benefits for you? Trying to kind of engage in that. Or engaging in, tell me a little bit about the change you'd like to see.

Right, right? So you're not dismissing that person. You're saying, I totally hear what you're saying.

You're protecting yourself a little bit, because you're giving a little bit of the message that this is bringing me down and even doing a little problem-solving on, how can we make things better? I know that may not sound like a perfect response. But I would try some combination of that and see how it see how it rolls out.

LINDA HEDENBLAD: Well, that's great, Dr. Froehlich. Thank you for that. And I'd say the last thing as far as the types of comments--

ROBERT FROEHLICH: You know what, Linda? Can I just jump in for a second too about the--

LINDA HEDENBLAD: Yes, please.

ROBERT FROEHLICH: Because that is huge, right? And if there are people who are not able to access information and their colleagues and their consumers of their services, it's not an option. It's not like a, that would be great if they could access this. It must be, right? So I just want to underscore that I absolutely hear that message and that is a huge, important paramount first order thing for us to consider in our field, is making sure that what we're using is accessible.

LINDA HEDENBLAD: Thank you for that comment, Dr. Froehlich. And lastly I'd say that the boundaries portion of your presentation was very applicable. Many people were talking about with technology being available all the time. And one person even commented that because there was no commute, their agency expected their numbers to be higher, and just kind of the chaos of trying to reconcile people's time.

ROBERT FROEHLICH: Yes. Yeah, yeah. We are moving in all directions, in all spheres of the world of work towards quantifying things. Technology has made that possible and we can count a lot more things. And we can look at, wouldn't it be more productive if we do this, that, or the other?

In fact, my oldest son is just starting a graduate program in business analytics and it's all the number of counting and all of that sort of stuff. But I would encourage us as leaders to also still think about the human part. The numbers are really important. And I don't say to ignore them and to not use techniques that look at the numbers, but let's still think about the human interaction and the impact of attrition due to an over focus in that area too. So just that's me, again, my opinion.

JOHN WALSH: And I think that's a really good segue to talk a little bit, when we talk about the human component, when we talk about that work life balance. What's some of the current information that's out there in regards to that, Dr. Froehlich?

ROBERT FROEHLICH: Yeah, I do have a bunch of information, but I have a procedural question first for you all. Because it does seem like I have prepared a bit too much. Because we are

bumping up on 3:30, and I want to be respectful of people's time. I am super happy to continue and to go through, but I don't want folks to feel uncomfortable and if they only blocked the hour and a half.

So advice, team? Because I'm happy to keep going on, but I also find it frustrating if something is scheduled at a certain point of time. I know that there are folks who are like that. And if they'd like to not continue, that's OK too.

John, what do you have? What's a recommendation? Because I'm happy. I still have about 20 slides left. You tell me.

JOHN WALSH: Well, there are definitely more folks saying keep going, some folks saying I have another appointment. I have to leave, my apologies. So I think we're getting a little bit of a mix.

ROBERT FROEHLICH: So how about we do this. How about we just say, if you are engaged and interested in this is helpful for you, you are welcome to stay and I will ride it out for the next 15, 20 minutes, however long it takes. But if you do have something else, no one's offended that you have another schedule. Is that a fair way to go?

JOHN WALSH: I think that is. I think that is a fair way to go.

ROBERT FROEHLICH: OK. So going back to your question, John, about the current information and work life balance, We've got some information from the Pew Research Center on how the outbreak has and hasn't changed the way Americans work. So there's multiple messages. Socioeconomic disparities and information about how individuals with disabilities and low income workers are less likely to have opportunities for telework.

So that's been a huge impact. And I know that doesn't surprise you all, because you work in the labor market and you work with people with disabilities, so you see that firsthand. A large number of individuals are reporting a strong desire to remain engaged in a teleworking environment post pandemic, at least in some capacity.

We've mentioned that a couple of times. teleworkers are feeling a sense of accomplishment in terms of work life balance and increased productivity. But so here's the rub, right? So that's the good, and then the downside is, but they're experiencing a disconnect between co-workers and missing that inter-office social activity.

So I don't think we've come to that sweet spot. I think that's an opportunity for leaders to consider and for followers to also see just how the world kind of shuffles out. But I do think there's that sweet spot. I think we are learning. Telework wasn't all bad.

But there's a downside and how do you how do you bring those together? Industry Week put out a little piece, 12 Key Strategies to Achieving Work-Life Balance. And one of them really, just the last one, know when to ask for help. That's totally self-care related.

Realizing, being able to be honest enough to say, I don't have that balance and I need some help. And ask for help from the people we work with, from our support network, the people that are important to us, those that we care about, those that we live with, all of those. knowing that something's out of balance and talking about it as an important piece.

SLATE talks about COVID Killed Work-Life Balance. So there's several practical tips, but potentially a good read to know it's not just you. Other people have experienced challenges and successes when transitioning to work at home. And it's really good.

Kind of back to the person who started the new job in the telework kind of position. Being able to find out kind of objectively the goods and the bads, and who's found things that work for them, and knowing that it's not just you if it feels a little bit off. Seven tips on pandemic redefinition of work-life balance, The Enterprise's Project. Remember, the pandemic will not last forever. And that seems kind of timely, because a lot of things are being rolled back just as we speak.

JOHN WALSH: So the other piece of what's happened and many of us may have felt this ourselves or our colleagues have shared with us is I just feel blah all the time. And is it just me or is there something else going on that as a more communal phenomenon?

ROBERT FROEHLICH: Yes. So how do I stay alert and motivated when I feel sluggish and dull? The New York Times says there's a name for the blah feeling that you're having it's called languishing. Right, so languishing is a sense of stagnation and emptiness. It feels as though you're muddling through your days, looking at your life through a foggy windshield.

And it might be the dominant emotion of 2021. So it's somewhere between depression. I'm not really depressed, I'm just [GROANS]. And flourishing is the really, I'm actively engaged and feeling good. They determine that flow is the antidote, right? And

So flow is something that's just described in this article, Bradley, Whisenhunt, Adamson John & Kress. And they cite a particular article from-- I'm going to try this, but Csilkszentmihalyi in '96 used the word. And I apologize to Dr. C for butchering that name, but used the term flow to describe the experience of being fully engaged in the creative moment.

So during flow, the creator is so completely involved in the creative process that concerns and fears fade away from direct awareness. This function of the creative experience may be helpful for professional counselors who find themselves taking ownership of their client's issues. So we're looking for the antidote to languishing, which is flow.

The Atlantic also looked at late stage pandemic in the brain. And so this includes brain fog, forgetfulness. And you've noticed this several times with me.

I totally know this is happening, word finding challenges. So Mike Yassa, a neuroscientist at UC Irvine says that, "Based upon everything we know about the brain, two things that are really

good for the brain are physical activity and novelty. And a thing that's very bad for it is chronic and perpetual stress."

So think about the past, since March of 2020. What a combination. But there's reason for optimism because temporary context is not thought to be permanent. So we're going to be able to find those words again soon.

JOHN WALSH: So as we mentioned several times, as we receive our vaccinations, we've hit that critical mass at George Washington University where we have 70% of staff and faculty being vaccinated, and we're starting to lift the restrictions about gatherings. We really want to talk about how we're going to navigate our feelings and interactions as we re-engage with a larger pool of individuals, beyond those that were just in our bubble. So can you provide us some guideposts for navigating that territory?

ROBERT FROEHLICH: I can certainly share some thoughts, right? So the fears and concerns that you all have individually are likely shared by or similar to those that you work with. So we're all a little bit concerned about whether our social skills have atrophied during the pandemic.

How am I going to talk to people again? What I would say is reach out. When we're able to know that our concerns are shared by others and when we can hear different concerns and provide support, the process is really therapeutic, right?

So what we're talking about too and what we've been talking about since March 2020, before, since probably like-- Anyway, since January of 2020, is risk mitigation. Some counselors tend to be excellent at mitigating risks. So it may have felt uncomfortable for them when the CDC gave very different guidance in mid-May relative to masks.

Some counselors are excellent in terms of spontaneity. So their reaction was likely jubilation. So realize, you fall somewhere in there and you're going to have all sorts of the feelings related to this and you're not alone. Don't get in your own way. Manage your expectations.

Don't overthink things and become your own barrier. Accepting differing approaches to reopening is something you're going to have to consider. So some already are more brick and mortar, some are going to remain at a distance, some are going to be hybrid, some are going to change.

Everybody's going to change, but where they land is still a little bit of an unknown, right? So travel used to be a good portion of many careers in the past, what will that look like in the future? Interestingly, in my home, my wife's position requires a great deal of travel.

She hasn't been anywhere since March of 2020. Just got the notification she's got her first meeting she's going to next week. So things are going to kind of roll out in unexpected times. And just kind of be prepared. Use all of these self-care coping strategies.

We have provided lots of resources for you pontificating, what does the next phase look like? So there's a listing at the end of the presentation. There's also a listing of additional self-care resources. But the bottom line from the pontificating, what's it going to look like resources is, post pandemic world likely looks hybrid, implementing a variety of options, including shared workspaces, hoteling or something similar to something called WeWork which is or was a commercial real estate firm where it's shared space, right?

So you no longer have the office, because you're only there Tuesday and Thursday and you share it with other people. It's likely going to be something embraced in a lot of places. Not only do companies see the value in remote work, but they also understand that it saves an overhead cost to provide more flexible work options for employees. Think about post pandemic as a perfect self-care 101 group project. We're all kind of in this together.

There's a lot of unknowns. There's a lot of cumulative trauma from the period March 2020 until now. So I think a couple of closing recommendations would be, focus on what you can control, which is your reactions, your self-care, and try to get in touch with your ability to trust.

That's really been a difficult concept and trust has taken a really big hit since March of 2020. So try to think about, what did that feel like before and what are the possibilities for you? And use some past successes relating to your current demands.

So think about a time when you were feeling particularly overwhelmed in the past. What did you need? What did you want those around you to know? And how could others have been helpful to you?

Being able to articulate what it is you need and being able to say that to others makes them much more likely to be able to give you what it is that you need. So the last slide before our contacts is-- It looks really cool when it's not on the blue slide, because it's a burning question. Get it?

Clever, burning question, but now it just looks like a smokey question. So, I think we're 10 minutes over. I'm still happy, if there are other questions to entertain. Team?

LINDA HEDENBLAD: Well, Dr. Froehlich, I'm pretty sure we could stay here all day. Just so you know, we still have 458 people 10 minutes after the presentation was supposed to end up. I think that's a world record.

ROBERT FROEHLICH: It is something. What was the number at the highest?

LINDA HEDENBLAD: At the highest was in the high 600s.

ROBERT FROEHLICH: Wow, how about that?

LINDA HEDENBLAD: Yeah. That's pretty good. I just need to tell you that people are raving about this presentation. And I'm not saying that to be kind, it is really happening. So if you want

to go back and look at the chats, you're getting some very impressive comments on here. And I know that the ASL interpreters need to go soon, but I guess the last question would be, well, the last comment would be around vaccination and the fact that maybe some folks are challenged with wanting to be vaccinated and maybe feeling some pressure from their employers. I know that's an employer situation, but it has come up a couple of times.

ROBERT FROEHLICH: Yeah. I think that what's important for us to consider, and especially as counselors and as mental health professionals, is there are many reasons why that may be the case. And so I don't feel like part of self-care is making a judgment relative to those decisions. Because at the end of the day, it's a decision and employment related.

There are going to be regulations and some places are going to say you have to, but they are still going to have exceptions and what have you. So I guess, for me, I want to kind of take a step back and realize, there could be so many reasons why an individual chooses to get a vaccination or doesn't choose to get a vaccination. And I certainly don't want to be in the place or to have part of my job duty being making a judgment on that statement. I mean, that's what I would say. I don't think that, that necessarily helps to answer the question, but that just kind of clarifies my thoughts on it.

LINDA HEDENBLAD: And Starbucks called while you were presenting and they miss you.

ROBERT FROEHLICH: Thank you to everybody who put nice things in the chat box. I really do appreciate it. And thank you for taking time out of your day today to spend time with us. John, do you have any closing thoughts you want to share?

JOHN WALSH: Yeah. I just want to give my thanks as well to you, Dr. Froehlich, for an excellent presentation, for giving us really actionable information about how we continue on our journey of self-care. I want to thank Ellen Sokolowski from NARL for cosponsoring today's event. I also want to thank Linda Hedenblad and Nichole Tichy for helping to support this presentation today.

And last but not least, I also want to thank our audience for joining us today and for your participation and for hanging in there. If you have any questions, my email address is up, jcwalsh@gwu.edu. Please check back at trainVR.org for our future training offerings and be well and enjoy the rest of your day.