

# Compassion Fatigue:

*The Cost of Caring (An Occupational Hazard)*

NCG Institute: Quality. Education. Leadership



**National Counseling Group, Inc.**  
*Since 1993*

The Attitude is the Father of the Action!

# Let's Get Pumped Up!!!!

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# 4 “Ws” and an “H”: The other “W”

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- ▶ Who
- ▶ What
- ▶ Where
- ▶ When
- ▶ How

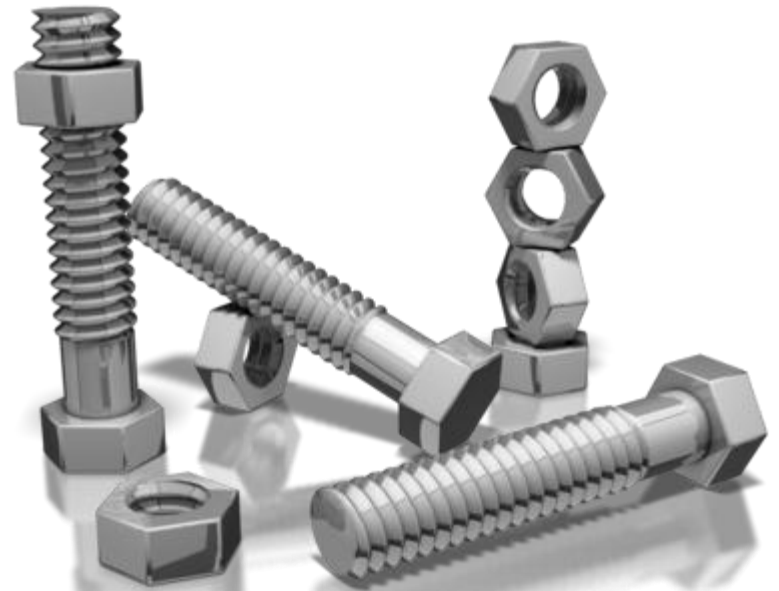
...and the...

# Why?

# Accept the fact...We're all NUTS!

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- ▶ Our choice regarding our profession, consider...



**COMPLAINT  
DEPARTMENT**  
PLEASE TAKE A NUMBER



# Your Team...?





# Compassion Fatigue

An Occupational Hazard: The Cost of Caring



# Compassion Fatigue

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Bad News?



Good News?



# Listening to the Stories...

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...we become part of the story

## COMPASSION FATIGUE: *Secondary & Vicarious Trauma*

The cumulative effect of exposure to the stories, the suffering, the horror, the hopelessness, and the other adverse consequences to others– the “cost of caring”...

...and the accumulation of numbers, caseloads, acuity of problems, time frames, deadlines, increased accountability...

...and less resources, diminishing pay and benefits, politics, “turf” wars, and (you complete the rest...)



# Types of Trauma

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**Direct Trauma:** direct personal exposure to situation involving personal risk during victimization, disaster, or war

**Secondary Trauma:** continued, frequent, or close contact with persons who have experienced direct trauma

**Vicarious Trauma:** Exposure to reports, descriptions, and photos



# Compassion Fatigue:

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- ▶ When you give out a great deal of energy and compassion to others over a period of time, yet are unable to get back enough to reassure yourself that the world is a hopeful place, consequences ensue.
- ▶ There is truly a discrepancy between what one is giving and what one is receiving.

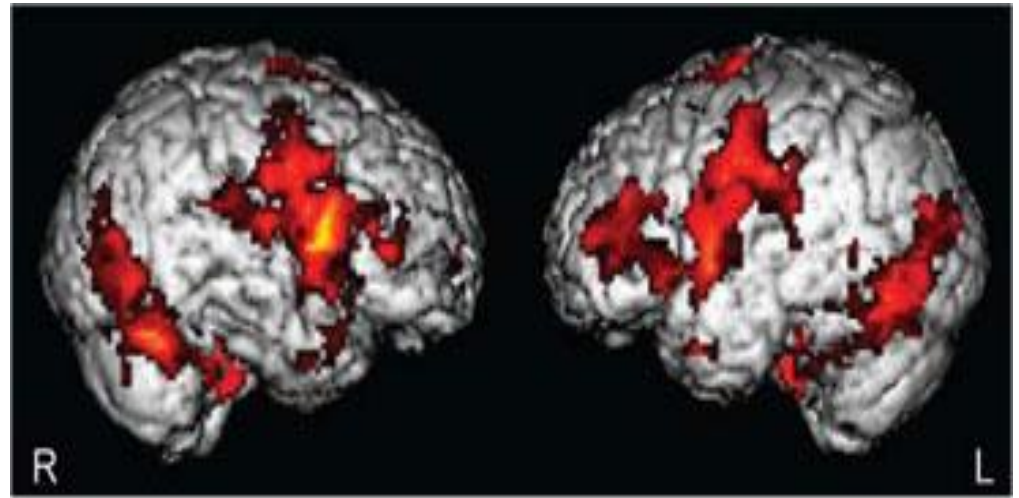
# C.F.: Who is at Risk?

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- ▶ Healthcare Professionals and Caretakers
- ▶ Rescue Workers
- ▶ Police Officers
- ▶ Firemen
- ▶ Probation Officers
- ▶ Dentists
- ▶ Attorneys
- ▶ Teachers
- ▶ Nonprofit Professionals
- ▶ Religious Workers
- ▶ Hospice Workers
- ▶ Veterinarians
- ▶ Soldiers
- ▶ Family Members of infirmed loved ones
- ▶ Judges



## Feeling the Pain - Literally



- Even when we simply observe others, “mirror cells” in the brain activate to reproduce the actions of the other person
- When we hear vivid stories or see intense reactions our own brain produces emotions expressed by the other person
- These occur unconsciously
- Suppressing our empathic response does not eliminate it
- The role of Cortisol (hormone)



# Compassion Fatigue

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- ▶ Lessening of Compassion
- ▶ Hopelessness
- ▶ Decrease in Experiences of Pleasure
- ▶ Constant Stress and Anxiety
- ▶ Pervasive Negative Attitude
- ▶ Decrease in Productivity
- ▶ Increase in “Righting Reflex”
- ▶ Inability to Focus
- ▶ Feelings of Incompetence and Self-Doubt
- ▶ Imbalance of Empathy and Objectivity





# Compassion Fatigue unchecked...

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Not knowing what's going on with clients (and own families) – and not caring

Apathy

Substance Abuse and other “process” addictions

Anger

Blaming

Chronic Lateness

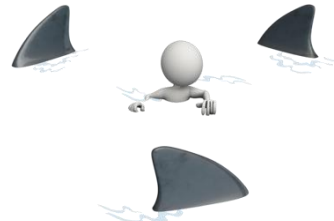
Depression

Exhaustion (physical/emotional)

Frequent Headaches

Gastrointestinal Complaints

- ▶ High Self-Expectations
- ▶ Hypertension
- ▶ Increased Irritability
- ▶ Low Self-Esteem
- ▶ Sleep Disturbances
- ▶ Workaholism
- ▶ Frequent daydreaming and Escapist Fantasies
- ▶ Preferring Passive Entertainment and Distraction
- ▶ Reduction or Elimination of Best Resources to Cope



# Contributing Factors: *General*

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- **Work overload:** heavy workload, insufficient support, long hours
- **Employer-employee** relationships & conflicts
- **Case characteristics:** long cases, interruptions, concern for personal & family safety
- **Significant decisions:** precedents, prominent cases
- **Isolation:** confidentiality, adversarial relationships
- **Exposure:** specialty courts, extensive information of traumatic details, exposure to impact on victims
- **Probation culture:** collegial vs adversarial, expectations of sacrifice in personal life
- **Policy Requirement:** non-impaired workers must take action on impaired workers



**Do you ever feel overwhelmed with keeping track of your caseload?**

# Contributing Factors: *Personal*

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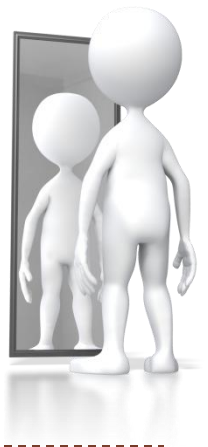
- **Personal history** of previous trauma exposure or sheltered from such events; resilience vs. oversensitized
- **Personality features** such as temperament, introversion-extraversion, mood, emotionality, etc.
- **Personal values & attitudes** that may conflict with requirements of the profession
- **Sense of control** vs. dealing with unknown & unpredictable factors; tolerance of ambiguity & change



# Contributing Factors: *Personal*

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- **Personal strength**, patience & resiliency vs. overload over time & willingness to ask for & accept support
- **Residual and cumulative stress** level vs. time for self care, relaxation
- **General state of health** and level of endurance vs fatigue
- **Personal crises** such as substance abuse, health crisis, domestic concerns, etc.

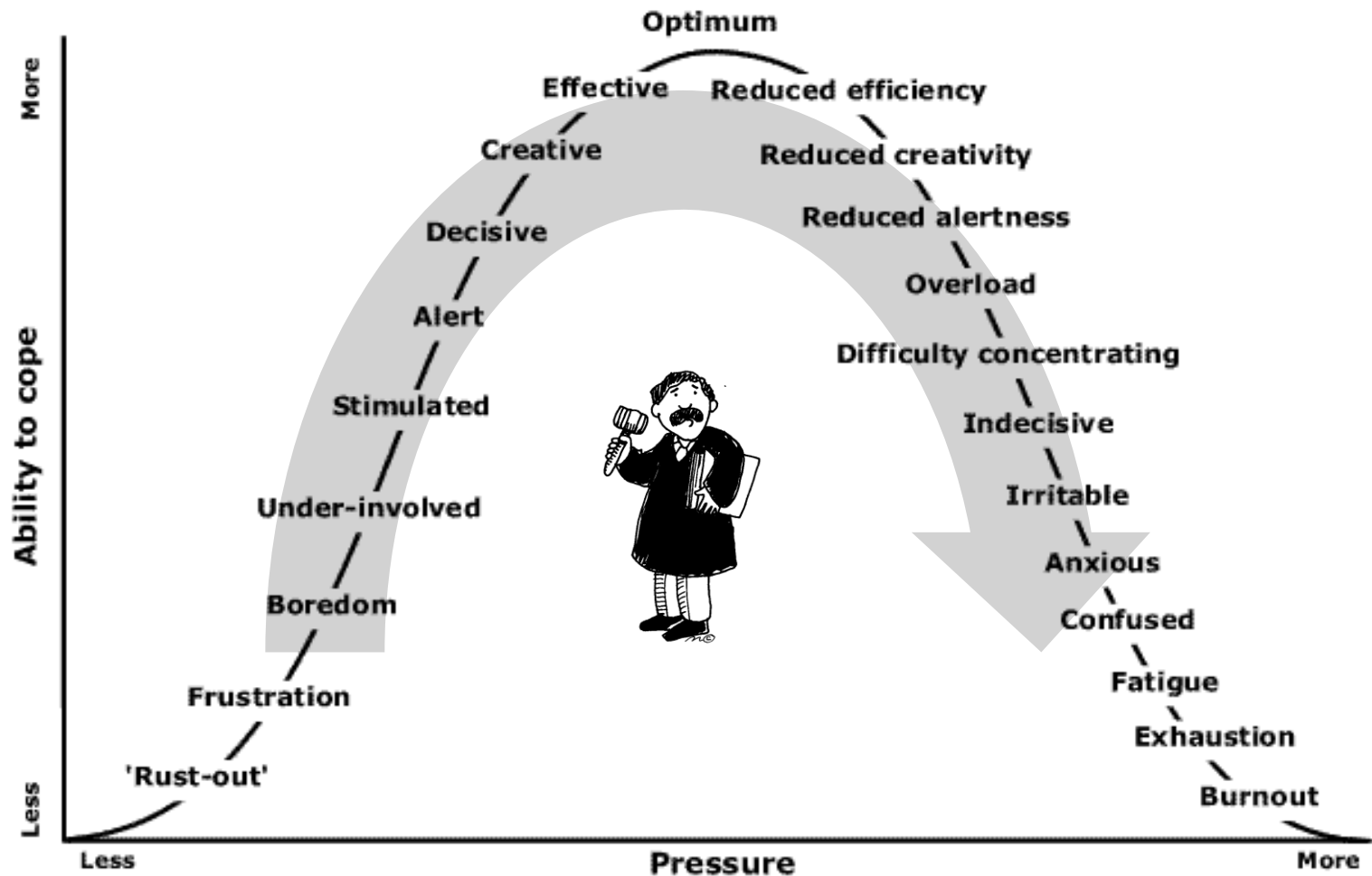


# Same 'ole song and dance or crisis?

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# Yerkes-Dodson Law: Too much/little = stress





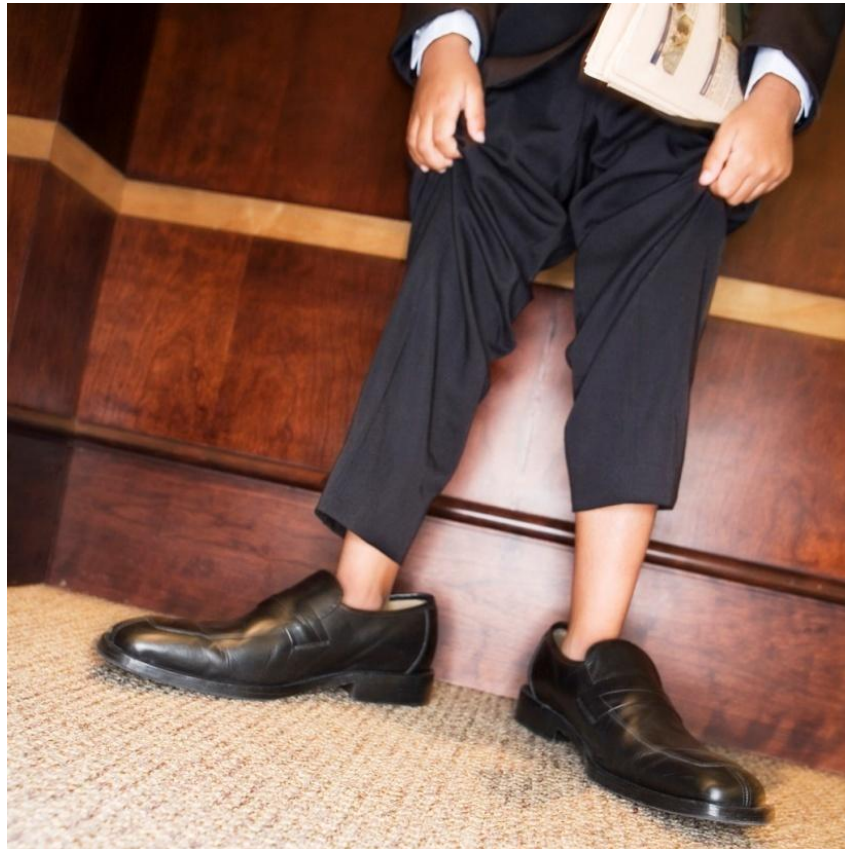
# Self-Care

Get out of your comfort zone and get yourself together...

# The Human Services Professional...

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Whether you like it or not, the decision to work in this field is also a commitment to your own growth.





**You have strong reasons not to change, but consider the trade-offs in immediate demands vs. long term consequences**



**“What fits your busy schedule better, exercising one hour a day or being dead 24 hours a day?”**



# 3 Principles of Self-Care in Practice

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We have an ethical responsibility to take care of ourselves as helping professionals.

1. **Respect for the dignity and worth of self.** *A violation lowers our integrity and trust.*
2. **Responsibility of Self-Care.** *Ultimately it is our responsibility to take care of ourselves and no situation or person can justify neglecting it.*
3. **Self-Care and Duty to Perform.** *There must be a recognition that the duty to perform as a helper cannot be fulfilled if there is not, at the same time, a duty to self-care.*

Charlene Richard ([www.charlenerichardrsw.com](http://www.charlenerichardrsw.com))

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# Stress Reduction Kit



## Directions:

1. Place kit on FIRM surface.
2. Follow directions in circle of kit.
3. Repeat step 2 as necessary, or until unconscious.
4. If unconscious, cease stress reduction activity.





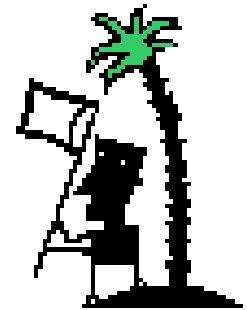


Challenging Compassion Fatigue  
Your Road Map

# The ABCs of Prevention and Maintenance

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1. **Awareness:** Recognize CF/Burnout when you see it or experience it.
2. **Balance:** Take Personal Responsibility...
3. **Connection:** Seek Consultation/Debriefing



# How Do I Get from A (“Here”) to B (“There”)?

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# Don't...

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- ▶ ...make big decisions
- ▶ ...blame others
- ▶ ...spend your energy complaining
- ▶ ...try a quick fix
- ▶ ...work harder and longer
- ▶ ...neglect your own needs and interests





# Want a New Life Skill? *4 Necessities*

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*How do any of us get better at anything?*

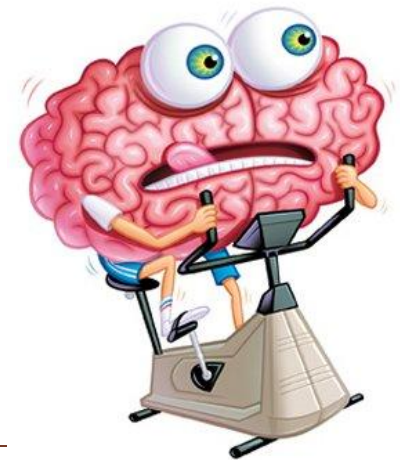
1. **Focus**
2. **Concrete**
3. **Realistic (Doable)**
4. **Consistency**



# Personal Stress Management: *Take Control of Your Stuff*

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- Adequate sleep
- Regular, frequent exercise
- Balanced nutrition
- Relaxation
- Hobbies, recreation removed from the “work” world
- Diverse socializing friendships



# Personal Stress Management

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- Mental quieting
- Sense of humor
- Social support, caring relationships
- Values, faith, philosophy
- Focus on positives (even when small)
- Protected time
- Self defense & security skills
- Vicarious resiliency



# Vicarious Resiliency: *Attitude & Perspective*

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- Originally developed by psychotherapists who worked with political survivors of trauma/torture
- Ability to see positives in an adverse situation; to benefit by learning and become stronger for it
- The “wounded healer”
- Appreciating how a crisis can become a pivotal point for change
- Noticing how trauma survivors demonstrate the vitality of the human spirit
- Witnessing the coping and mastery of others in crisis; what helped them survive



(Hernandez, Gangsei, & Engstrom, 2007)



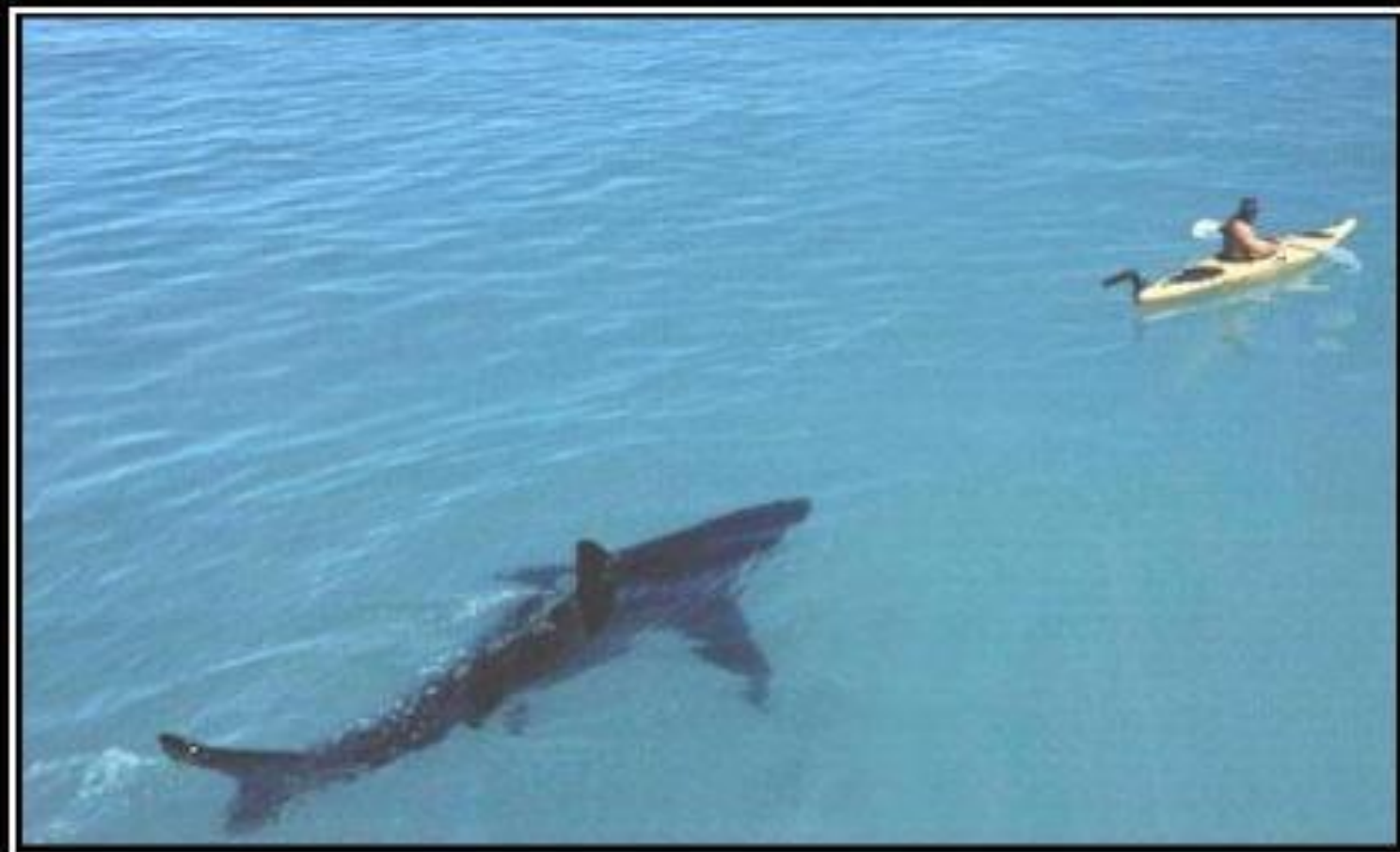
# Office and Staff Culture

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- Involve staff in planning, procedures, scheduling and feedback
- Hold periodic “state of the office” meetings
- Compliment staff on particularly good work
- Identify issues for staff meetings and discuss ways of handling them



*" There seems to be some difficulty in locating the hidden agenda. "*



# MOTIVATION

Some People Need More Than Others

# Autonomy

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# Mastery

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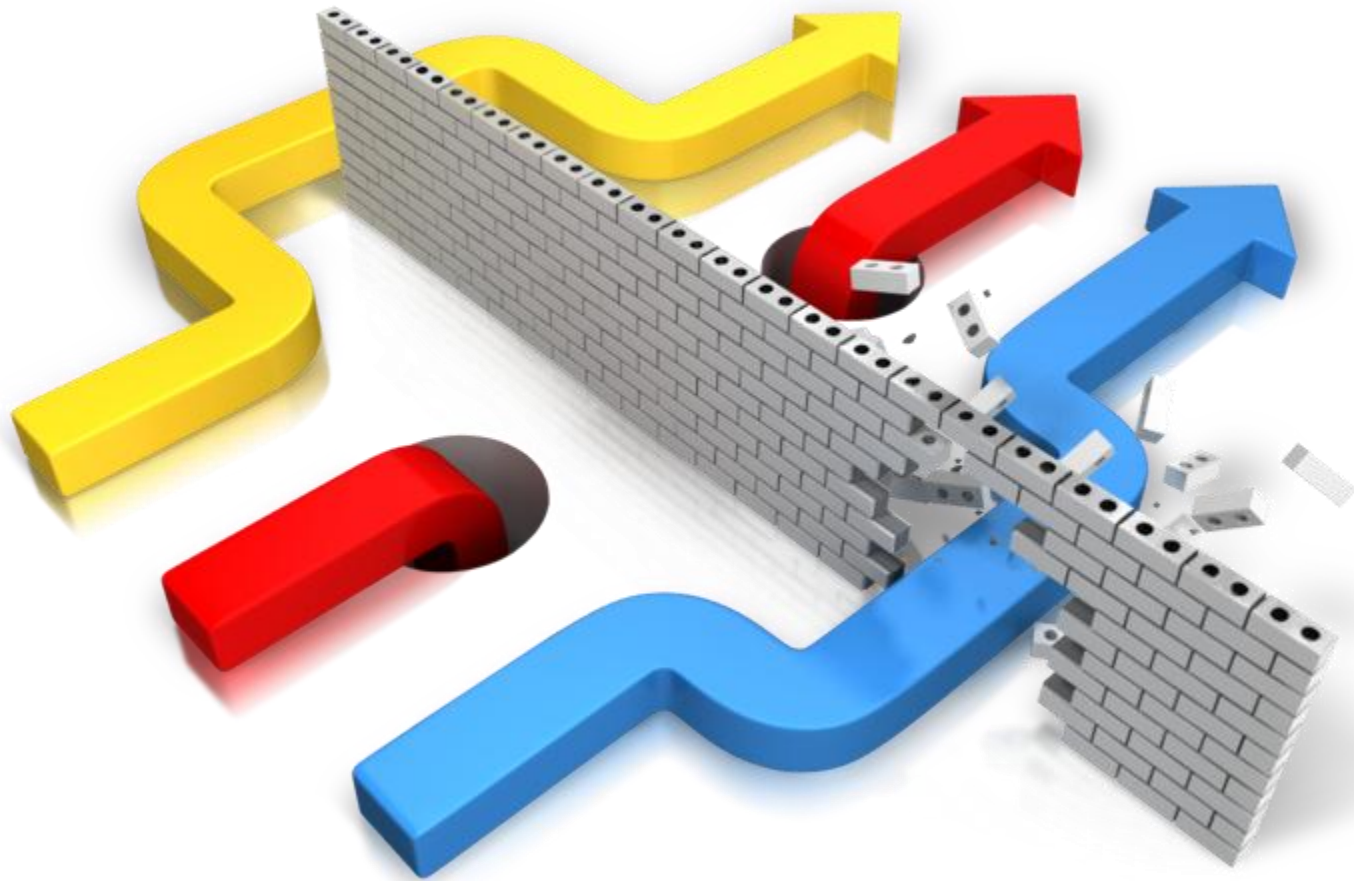
# Purpose

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# Find a Way...

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# Final Group Discussion

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- What do we do personally for stress management and how well does it work? What else are we willing to try?
- How can we better help stressed colleagues?
- What are some practices you would like to implement among your staff and/or in the office?



# Let's Revisit "Attitude" One More Time

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"First World Problems" YouTube

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vN2WzQzxuoA>



# *“Dedicated Service To Those In Need”*



**National Counseling Group, Inc.**

*Since 1993*

Our strong reputation keeps us increasingly committed to providing high quality services to youth and families in the community.

