PRACTICING SELF CARE THROUGH MINDFULNESS: A MODEL TO DECREASE BURNOUT AMONG MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS: A GRANT PROPOSAL

Caitlyn Caldwell
Cal State University of Long Beach
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Introduction

Problem
- According to Linnerooth, Mrdjenovich, and Moore (2011), mental health professionals, versus other health providers, are at an increased risk of experiencing burnout.
- A study conducted by Acker (2008) found that the levels of burnout among mental health workers was disconcerting as 56% of the participants reported moderate to high levels of emotional exhaustion and 45% reported low levels of personal accomplishment.
- Another study reported that 13% of their sampled mental health service provider population was at extreme risk of experiencing compassion fatigue or burnout, and the authors suggested the need for burnout prevention models (Sprang, Clark, & Whitt-Woosley, 2007).

Overarching Goals
- To examine burnout and propose a model to teach best practices to mental health professionals in self-care in order to prevent and decrease burnout rates.
- To decrease mental health provider burnout rates, improve job retention, increase job satisfaction, and improve overall services provided to clients.
Social work professionals should be aware of the importance of self-care in regards to preventing burnout and improving the quality of service they provide to their clients.

Acker (2008) reported that mental health providers with higher levels of education displayed higher levels of emotional exhaustion.

Social workers need to be informed that burnout can have severe consequences if the symptoms are repressed.
Acker (2008) concluded that non-white mental health providers reported lower levels of emotional exhaustion than white mental health providers as they were shown to have more realistic perceptions of life and higher levels of appreciation due to their own more challenging life experiences.

According to Kim et al. (2011), female social workers had a higher number of physical health complaints due to job demands than male social workers.
a) Target population
   * The target population this grant intends to serve is mental health service providers or professionals employed at the MHA Village and its sister agency, the TAY Academy.

b) Strategies used to identify and select a funding source
   * The primary step in search of an appropriate funder involved visiting the Long Beach Nonprofit Partnership, a local nonprofit library.
   * Then, the writer focused on using Internet search engines such as Google and Google Scholar to gather information regarding types of funding resources.
   * Key words and phrases, as well as searches on the following topics were used: mental health, mental illness, mindfulness, child welfare, children, family intervention, and human services.
c) Funding source selected
   * The Weingart Foundation was identified as the best possible funder based on the criteria for this grant project.

d) Sources used for the needs assessment
   * An informal needs assessment was conducted at the MHA Village with staff by asking staff members questions regarding their understanding of burnout.

e) Projected budget range and categories
   * **Salaries.** Curriculum development support for 4 MSWs at $250 each for a total of $1000. Compensation for development and coordination of in-house training for MHA Village employees (4 MSWs @ $500 each for a total of $2000). These funds will be used for the cost of materials for an in-house curriculum that will be developed for a 3-day employee training at the MHA Village.
   * **Registration and training fees.** Total registration fees for 4 MSW employees ($2500 each) which equals $10,000 and the total registration deposit of $2,000.
   * **Indirect Program Costs.** The MHA Village will provide administration and oversight costs for the project @ 20% of the budget ($3000). These costs will include coordination of the project, additional resources for the in-house training and supervision for employees after receiving the mindfulness training.
a) Program summary and description
   * The project will provide a forum for mental health professionals to increase awareness of burnout and its consequences, and to learn how to utilize mindfulness practices as a means for prevention of burnout.
   * The project will also encourage the incorporation of mindfulness techniques into individual supervision between team leaders and direct service staff.

b) Population served
   * The focus of the project will be on the direct service staff at the MHA Village in the city of Long Beach, California.
   * The indirect population served will be the clients whom are receiving services from MHA Village.

c) Sustainability
   * The Practicing Self Care Through Mindfulness project is a short term program that, if successful, may be incorporated into the regular annual budget of MHA Village dependent upon evaluation of outcomes.
d) Program objectives

* To train and certify 4 MSW employees from the MHA Village in mindfulness techniques and skills through a 10-month Certificate in Mindfulness and Compassion in Psychotherapy course at the California Institute of Integral Studies.
* To share and distribute the mindfulness based therapy skills, techniques, and materials with and to all agency employees.
* To develop a curriculum for an in-service training on using mindfulness based practices to decrease burnout for direct service providers.

e) Program evaluation

* A post-test will be administered to those mental health providers who have successfully completed the “Practicing Self-Care Through Mindfulness” training and received individual supervision and or therapy.
* The post-test will serve as a tool to gain insight on the effectiveness of the grant-funded training.
While social workers are aware of evidenced based practices and how to use them to improve the quality of life for their clients, most are unaware of how to improve their own quality of life.

It is vital that social workers become more aware of their emotions and the consequences of ignoring them, and in turn, they will be able to provide enhanced services to their clients.

Through writing this thesis, it was evident that research in the areas of burnout and mindfulness was limited.

The lack of burnout awareness among social workers may be contributed to the restricted amount of research on the topic specifically related to social workers or mental health professionals.
References