

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Remember, people who work in jobs that require them to witness pain, loss, or death have a higher risk of suicide. This includes medical workers—just like you!

When you care for a suicidal client, the focus of care and support is on them. And, it should be! You give them your time, your empathy, your energy, and the benefit of your professional knowledge and experience.

Although it is your job to help your clients, you are likely to get (at least a little) burned out.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO AVOID BURN OUT?

EAT WELL: You're busy, you may feel rushed after work and you stop for fast food for an easy dinner. That's okay every now and then. But take the time to fix meals at home most days.

Food you prepare yourself at home is lower in sodium, processed carbs and calories. Use the time it takes to cook a meal to reflect on your day and "let it all go."

Share home cooked meals with your friends and family. It will help you feel more connected to the living after you've been surrounded by depression and illness all day.

EXERCISE: It takes a lot of strength and energy to care for a depressed client. Exercise can help you build your strength and recharge your energy.

Exercise also helps boost your mood. Getting your heart rate up triggers the release of endorphins in your brain. These are the "feel good" chemicals that give you a sense of peace and well-being!

RELAX: Stress takes a toll on your body and mind. It's important to take time to relax. Whether you like to take a walk in the park, read a book, or "veg out" in front of the TV . . . take a little time every day to relax!

FEEL: Give yourself permission to feel sad if you lose a client to suicide. Denying your feelings will do you no good. But, remember: IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT. When a depressed person makes a decision to end his or her own life—it has nothing to do with you or the care you are providing.

You may feel a great amount of sadness and a bit of guilt if a client commits suicide. You'll be left wondering, *"What could I have said or done differently that may have made a difference?"*

It is healthy and normal for you to feel this way after a client's suicide. But, if you feel like you are dwelling on it, or can't shake it off, talk to someone. Your employer may have services available to help you deal with the loss.

RE-ENERGIZE: When you begin to feel like you are running out of steam, find a way to re-energize! Take a day or two off if possible, take a short vacation, plan a night out with friends, see a movie or take a bubble bath.

Remember you can't give away what you don't have. So, if your energy is low, you can't give the kind of care your client needs and deserves.

ASK FOR HELP: There may come a time when it just becomes too much to deal with. If this happens, ask for help! Tell your supervisor how you are feeling.

