

Bouts with Burnout

MANAGING WORK-RELATED STRESS ACROSS THE SUICIDE PREVENTION FIELD

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Conflicts of Interest & Required Statements

- ▶ Our team has no conflicts of interest associated with the findings described in this presentation.
- ▶ The views expressed in this talk are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or the United States government.
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The Uniquely Wonderful and Challenging Role of a Suicide Prevention Coordinator

Monireh Moghadam, LCSW
Lead Suicide Prevention Coordinator
VA Portland Health Care System

“What do you guys do exactly?”

Role of a VA Suicide Prevention Coordinator (SPC)

- Consultant
- Educator
- Clinician
- Subject-matter expert
- Liaison and partner to community entities
- Outreach worker

Why do this work?

- VA as a Suicide Prevention field pioneer
- Passion for the mission

Unique Stressors of an SPC

- Work with near exclusively high risk individuals
- Provide postvention support to clinicians and patients' loved ones bereaved by suicide loss
- Meet expectations of facility, VISN, and VACO leadership
 - Implementation of SPP directives
 - Responsibility for performance measures
 - Lead facility suicide prevention efforts, drive cultural shift

Unique Stressors of an SPC

- Often under-valued and/or poorly understood role
 - Increasing workload
 - Limited recognition of support needs: “Who’s got our back?”
 - Limited promotional potential, given increasing program management responsibilities
- Siloed work environment
 - Limited understanding of role by non-SPC peers and leadership
 - *Narrows options for support, peer consultation*
- Limited resources for identifying and managing the emotional impact of the role

Signs and Symptoms of Burnout and Compassion Fatigue



- Feelings of helplessness
- Fatigue (physical and/ or emotional)
- Inability to maintain empathy and objectivity
- Emotional numbing and detachment
- Less engagement with colleagues
- Insomnia
- Low morale
- Feelings of failure
- Reduced productivity
- Increased changes to mood and/or anxiety

Strategies for Managing Stress and Burnout

- Connecting/debriefing with SPC team
- Consulting with VISN and national SP colleagues
- Prioritize self-care
 - Basics: Exercise, get enough sleep, proper nutrition
 - Taking breaks during work hours, “unplugging” from work after-hours
 - Connect with family and friends
 - Consider seeking therapy
 - Make time for what brings you joy
 - Travel, running, house projects

Strategies for *Managing Stress and Burnout*

Future Considerations:

- More research is needed in this highly specialized area
- Pathways for more support are necessary
 - Facility/VISN/VACO levels



One Burned Out Peer and What Helped

Aaron D. Barrow, QMHA

Peer Support Specialist

R RTP Program

VA Portland Healthcare System

Who Am I?



- AARON IS A **PEER SPECIALIST**, A VETERAN WHO IS IN ACTIVE RECOVERY AND WORKING TO SUPPORT AND ENHANCE THE RECOVERY JOURNEYS OF HIS FELLOW VETERANS
- AARON HAS BEEN WORKING AT THE VA FOR 8 YEARS IN A RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT PROGRAM FOR VETERANS
- AARON WORKED IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR FOR 4 YEARS AS A SKILLS TRAINER
- AARON EARNED HIS BS IN PSYCHOLOGY IN 2006

The Causes of Burnout

- ▶ Flood of Veterans
 - ▶ Constant influx of new stories and issues
- ▶ Negative Events
 - ▶ Death of some veterans
 - ▶ Trauma caused by confrontation
 - ▶ Watching people return to drinking and using



The Causes of Burnout

- ▶ Watch Revolving Door Process
 - ▶ Often the veteran with the best presentation would get hit the hardest
 - ▶ See the failures of the system in addressing the flood of veterans
- ▶ Not Taking Care of Myself
 - ▶ Practicing a lot of negative behaviors that were lowering my own quality of life



Burnout...

How it feels and felt



- ▶ Constantly felt overwhelmed, vastly unprepared and frustrated at the people I was working with
 - ▶ Self-confidence eroded over time
 - ▶ Lost faith in the system
 - ▶ Was having a lot of negative dreams centered around work
 - ▶ Dreaded going to work in the morning

- ▶ Began to use a lot of harmful coping strategies
 - ▶ Binge eating
 - ▶ Smoking
 - ▶ Often upset while at home
 - ▶ Excessive drinking and using drugs

Burnout...

How it feels and felt



- ▶ Reveled in the negative
 - ▶ Was quick to point out negative interactions to fellow staff members
 - ▶ In team meetings I would be quick to tear down a veteran and focus on what they were doing wrong
 - ▶ Began having a lot of negative dreams
- ▶ Did a lot of avoidance behaviors at work
 - ▶ Spent an excessive amount of time in the smoke shack
 - ▶ Tried to hide in my office and get lost online
 - ▶ Always leaving work early



How Did I Get Better?

OR, AND INJECTION OF POSITIVITY

Found Healing in *My Community*

- ▶ Change of Perspective
 - ▶ Realized that people are going to be people, no matter what I do
 - ▶ Started focusing on the positive instead of the negative
 - ▶ Practiced gratefulness in my own life
- ▶ Started Attending Self-Help Groups
 - ▶ Found safe spaces to share with understanding people

Found Healing in *My Community*

- ▶ Leaned on Coworkers, Friends and Family
 - ▶ Asked for Advice
 - ▶ Shared Challenges

- ▶ Began to Learn New Coping Mechanisms
 - ▶ Practiced Deep Breathing
 - ▶ Scheduled Time for Walks
 - ▶ Avoiding Isolating at Work
 - ▶ Making Quiet Times a Priority
 - ▶ Being Open to Getting Rid of Distractions

Wellness in Suicide Research



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²DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY, OREGON HEALTH & SCIENCE UNIVERSITY

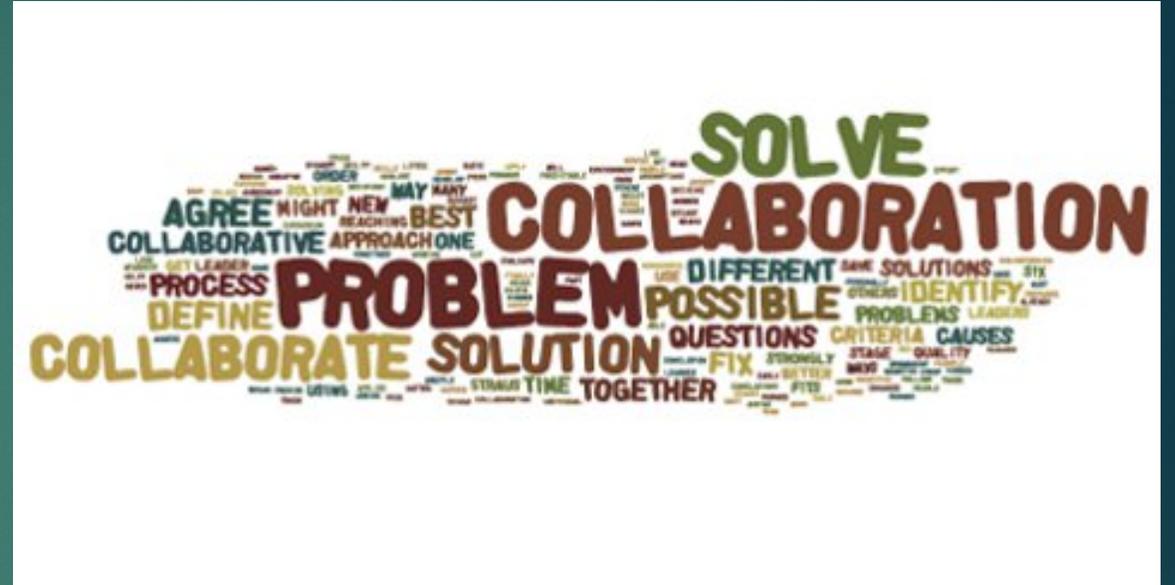
³DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION, PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY

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 - ▶ Alan Teo, PhD



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veteran suicide

how to commit suicide

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National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Phone Number
1-800-273-8255

Find out more on: Suicide Prevention Lifeline

What is the least painful way to commit suicide? - reddit
https://www.reddit.com/r/morbidquestions/comments/337ve7/what_is...
 use the following search parameters to narrow your results: subreddit:subreddit find submissions in "subreddit" author:username find submissions by "username"

How to Commit Suicide the Right Way | Points in Case
www.pointsincase.com/articles/how-commit-suicide-right-way
 Tips on sparing you unnecessary pain, making your suicide less gory, and minimizing the paramedics' laughter when they find you dead from a Flintstone vitamin overdose.

How to Convince Yourself Not to Commit Suicide: 13 ...
<https://www.wikihow.com/Convince-Yourself-Not-to-Commit-Suicide>
 Dec 30, 2017 · How to Convince Yourself Not to Commit Suicide. Suicidal thoughts happen when the deep pain you're feeling seems ...
 Views: 671K

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 bing.com/videos

1:09

12:06

7:50 HD

"HOW TO COMMIT SUICIDE" IN JUST 1:09
 YouTube · 11/19/2017 ·

How to commit suicide. (How to kill yourself)
 YouTube · 5/9/2012 ·

Do You Want To Commit Suicide?
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National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-8255

Find out more on: 1

Home — AFSP
<http://afsp.org>
 The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention is the nation's largest non-profit dedicated to saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide. Saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide.
 Give a Gift · About Suicide · Find Support · Take Action · Our Work · Find Your Chapter

News about Suicide Prevention
 bing.com/news

Supreme Court: Mazama student stands for suicide prevention
 Herald and News · 1h
 Seventeen-year-old Ella Hand is no stranger to suicide. She lost her uncle and a close friend, and nearly lost another, to suicide. At the beginning of ...

Sliders faces up to suicide risk
 Wuggel Newspaper · 21m
 Winebarger hopes that one day the topic of suicide will have the same level of level of attention as breast cancer awareness. "The color pink ...

The Next Big Storm to Rock Puerto Rico: Suicide
 Albenet · 4h
 The figures were reported by the Commission for the Prevention of Suicide, a part of the Puerto Rico Department of Health. While the ...

suicide

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Suicide Prevention Lifeline Phone Number
1-800-273-8255

on: Suicide Prevention Lifeline

- Wikipedia
 Wikipedia.org/wiki/Suicide
 the act of intentionally causing one's own death. Risk factors include mental dis... bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, personality ...
 thods · Definitions · Risk factors · Methods · Pathophysiology · Prevention

g Signs of Suicide - WebMD
 www.webmd.com/.../depression-recogn...
 WARNING -- Depression carries a h... intentions should be taken very se

how to kill yourself

of suicide ideas



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NAME
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Gunshot of head
 97.0%

Shotgun to chest
 96.4%

See all 29 rows on lastallhope.com

Top 10 Common Methods of Suicide - Frater Perfumes
frater.com/suicidelist.html
 Top 10 Common Methods of Suicide. As originally posted at listserve.com. The unfortunate and depressing issue of suicide has become a staggering piece of harsh ...

What's the best method for a painless suicide? - Salon.com
https://www.salon.com/2006/03/08/suicide_23
 Mar 08, 2006 - Award-winning news and culture, features breaking news, in-depth reporting and criticism on politics, business, entertainment and technology.

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depression

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National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-8255
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Depression Center: Symptoms, Causes, Medications, and ...
<https://www.webmd.com/depression>
 An estimated 19 million American adults are living with major depression. Here you'll find in-depth depression information including symptoms, medications, and therapy.

What Is Depression?
 WebMD explains the symptoms of depression in children, teens, and ...
 See results only from webmd.com

News about Depression
 bing.com/news



The First Drug For Postpartum Depression Could Be On Its Way
 The Huffington Post · 6h
 Untreated, PPD can hamper mother-baby bonding. It can affect childhood development. It can even lead to suicide. Most mothers experience some form of ...

No Proof At-Home 'Cranial Stimulation' Eases Depression
 WebMD · 4h
 MONDAY, Feb. 12, 2018 (HealthDay News) -- Devices that send electrical pulses to the brain -- in the comfort of your own home -- are a treatment option for depression and ...

Your Kid's Eyes Can Show You Whether She's Prone To Depression
 Your Tango on MSN.com · 8h
 No one wants their child to suffer, physically or mentally. So, if there was a relatively easy test that could predict your child's risk of developing depression, wouldn't you ...

How Not To Kill Yourself With Household Items
 digg.com/2014/ingestion-infographic
 Do you ever wonder, "How much of this can I accidentally ingest before I die?" Yeah, so do we. For your safety (and enjoyment) here's a bunch of stuff you should only ...

Videos of how to kill yourself
 bing.com/videos

97.0%

2.5

1.4

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https://www.researchgate.net/publication/13901441_Suicide_by_jumping
 Suicide by jumping | This review summarizes the published literature on suicide by jumping, in particular focusing on the social and psychological characteristics of ...

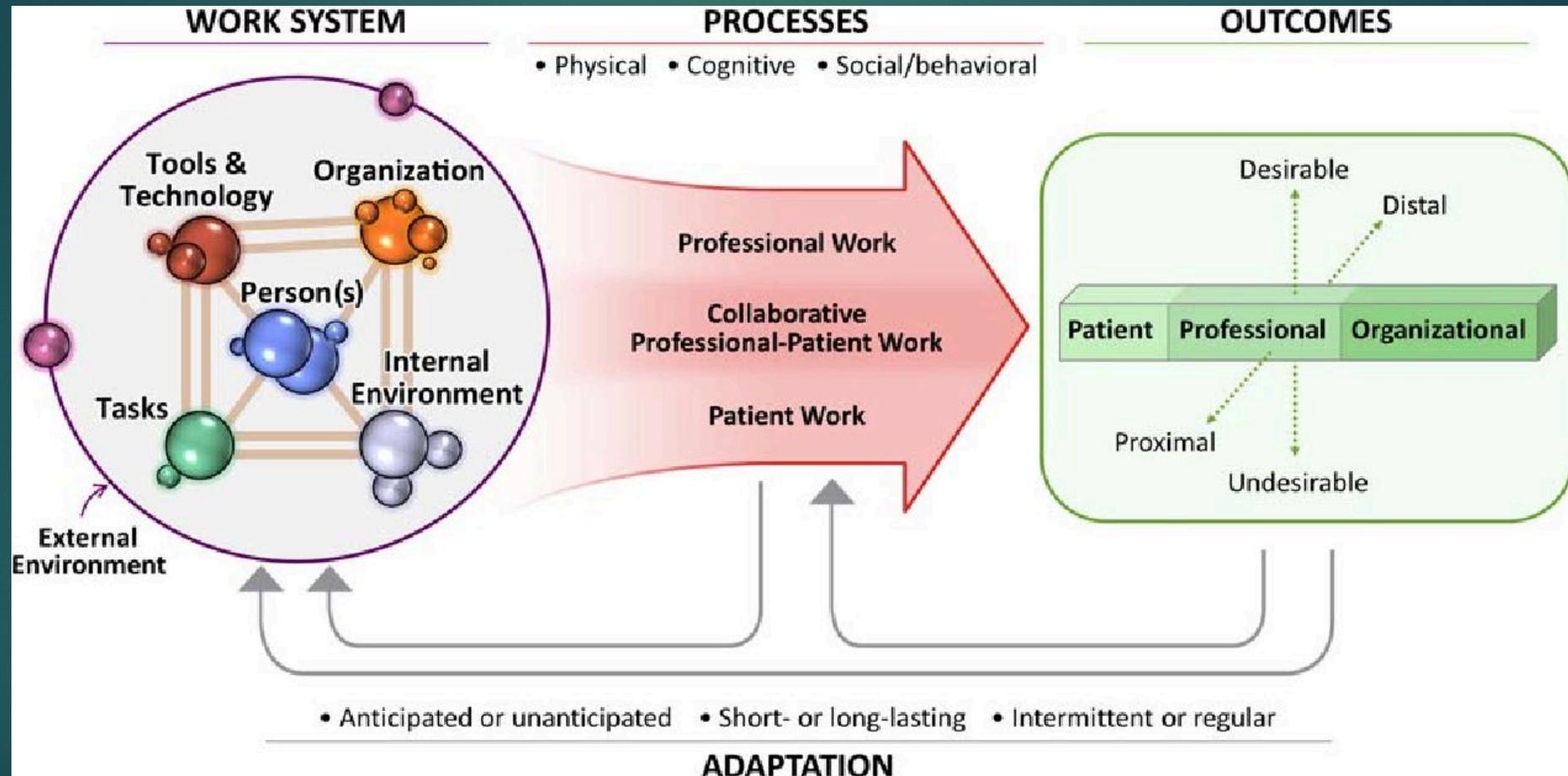
LiveLeak.com - The Moment 2 Addicts commit suicide ...
https://www.livelaak.com/view?m=4a2_1404041379
 Watch video - Warning - Item The Moment 2 Addicts commit suicide By Jumping Off a Building might contain content that is not suitable ...

STAFF DEBRIEF WELLNESS GROUP (CHEN, MASTARONE, & DENNESON, 2019)

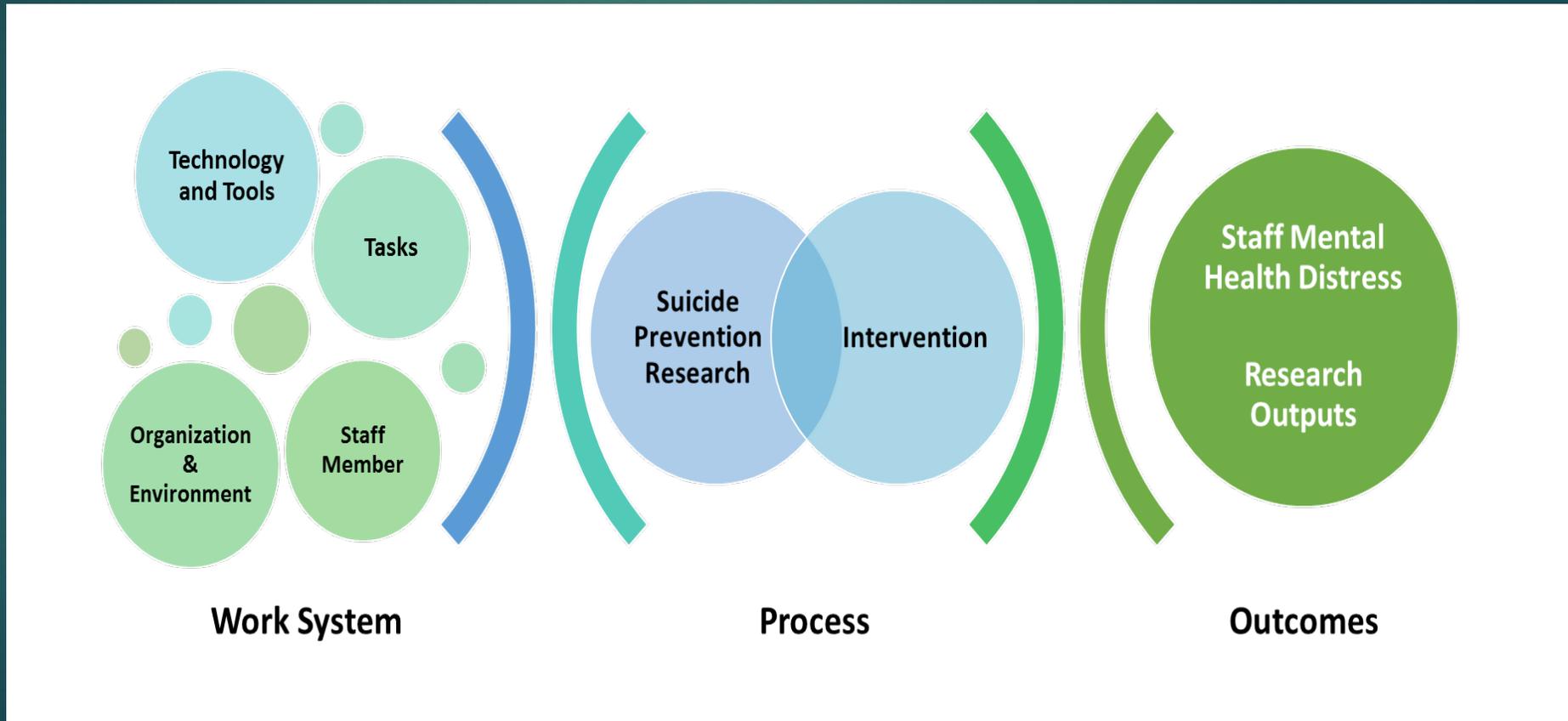
- ▶ Limited evidence base for current interventions
 - ▶ Critical Incident Debriefing → Iatrogenic effects
- ▶ Key components from the literature
 - ▶ Developing procedures throughout the research process
 - ▶ Helpfulness of social support
 - ▶ Promoting adaptive, personalized coping
 - ▶ Empowering staff to implement coping strategies

Systems Engineering for Patient Safety

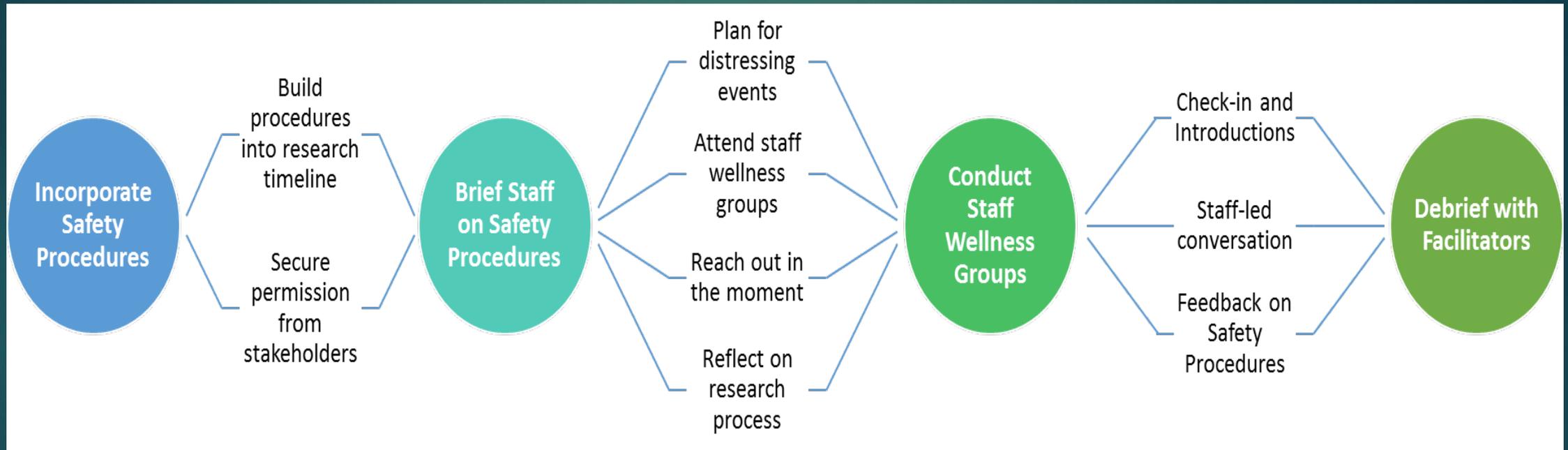
(SEIPS; Holden et al., 2014)



IT'S NOT EASY: STAFF WELL-BEING IN SUICIDE PREVENTION RESEARCH



Staff Well-being in Suicide Prevention Research





Vicarious Trauma and Wellness in Suicide Research

Kyla Tompkins, MA

HSR&D Center to Improve Veteran Involvement in Care (CIVIC), VA Portland Health Care System

Studying Veterans with Recent Suicide Attempts

- ▶ Population: Veterans who have attempted suicide within the past 6 months*
- ▶ Sample: 50 Veterans (25 men and 25 women)
- ▶ Method: open-ended interviews using a modified grounded theory approach

*6 months from screening participant

Studying Veterans with Recent Suicide Attempts

- ▶ Topics of the interviews: military background and experiences, reasons for suicide attempt, VA healthcare experiences, and implications for change and suicide prevention
- ▶ Interviewer background: MA in sociology, focus on qualitative methods, gender, race, class, inequalities, and intersectionality

Experiences as an Interviewer

- ▶ Aim: move suicide prevention forward and collect rich data on gendered experiences
- ▶ Knowing your role: research and not providing care
 - ▶ Feeling empowered through research
- ▶ Problem: Looking for resources, vicarious trauma and moral injury prevention strategies with little guidance

Experiences as an Interviewer

- ▶ Lessons learned:
 - ▶ Discussing self-care and appropriate sharing in the workplace
 - ▶ Awareness of the risks: harm to mental wellbeing (stress, lessened attention), moral injury, or burn out
 - ▶ Wellness group and mindfulness
 - ▶ Taking care of yourself at home and at work

Questions/Discussion

