



# MILITARY FAMILIES LEARNING NETWORK

## *Wellness Strategies, Burnout Prevention, & Mindfulness Part 2*

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U.S. DEPARTMENT  
OF DEFENSE



This material is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Office of Family Policy, Children and Youth, U.S. Department of Defense under Award Numbers 2010-48869-20685 and 2012-48755-20306.



# MILITARY FAMILIES LEARNING NETWORK

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Thursday, April 23 at 11:00 am EDT  
120 minute session  
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- Trauma in Young Children Under 4-Years of Age, Attachment, Neurobiology, and Interventions
- Effects of Visible & Invisible Parent Combat Injuries on Military Families

**Wellness Strategies, Burnout Prevention, & Mindfulness-Part 2**

Thursday, April 23 at 11:00 am EDT  
Link: <https://connectcol.dco.dod.mil/milfamlearningnetwork>

This 2 hour webinar will explore not only current research findings linked to wellness and mindfulness but also how mental health clinicians and those in helping professional roles can utilize this information to implement preventative and restorative practices in their work and personal lives. The presentation will also include practical examples that individuals can provide to families dealing with stress, anxiety and other difficulties that can provide barriers to wellness.

**How to obtain CEUs:**

- We provide National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and Georgia Marriage and

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**FAMILY DEVELOPMENT**  
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  - Questions/concerns surrounding the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) CE credit certificates can be emailed to this address:  
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# Today's Presenters:



## **Adrienne Baggs, Ph.D.**

Assistant Professor at Argosy University Denver and a restorative yoga teacher. She is passionate about contributing to a more holistic paradigm in Counselor Education and Supervision. While pursuing her doctoral degree at the University of Florida, she specialized in spiritual issues in counseling and holistic therapeutic approaches, such as mindfulness and yoga. Her current research agenda is focused on 1. The effects of restorative yoga and trauma, and 2. The psychology of suffering. Clinically, she's worked in schools, prisons, substance recovery centers, and college counseling centers.



## **Isabel Thompson, Ph.D., LMHC**

Assistant Professor in Mental Health Counseling at Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. She holds a Ph.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision from the University of Florida and is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor in Florida. Her areas of research include wellness, mindfulness, and the application of contemplative approaches in clinical practice. Isabel has examined how counselor coping practices impact reported levels of burnout and compassion fatigue. In addition, Isabel integrates meditative and self-care practices into her day-to-day life. When not working, she enjoys spending time with her husband and son and being in nature.



# Wellness Strategies, Burnout Prevention, & Mindfulness– Part 2

Adrienne S. Baggs, PhD  
Isabel A. Thompson, PhD, LMHC

The following presentation is not endorsed by the Department of Defense and the information, as well as any opinions or views, contained herein are solely that of the presenter.

# Wellness Strategies

- Self-care is an important strategy – may support counselor well-being (Venart, Vassos, & Pritcher-Heft, 2007; Skovholt, 2001)
- Practicing self-care by using positive coping strategies (e.g. using humor, exercising, meditating, gardening, and listening to music) (Wallace, Lee, & Lee, 2010)

# Burnout

- As discussed in Part 1 of this webinar, burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization/cynicism, and lack of feelings of personal accomplishment  
(Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001)
- "the process of physical and emotional depletion resulting from conditions at work or, more concisely, prolonged job stress"  
(Osborn, 2004, P.319)
- Feeling 'bogged down' by the system

# Factors Associated with Burnout

- Lack of needed resources (Maslach, 2003)
  - Large client caseloads also associated with burnout (Lawson, 2007)
  - Providing counseling to clients with severe diagnoses and presenting problems (Young & Lambie, 2007)
  - Counselor use of maladaptive coping strategies (Thompson, Amatea, & Thompson, 2014)
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# Protective Factors Against Burnout

- Social support – seeking emotional and instrumental support (e.g. talking with friends and family, consulting with co-workers and supervisors) (Wallace et al., 2010).
  - Experiencing support from coworkers (Ducharme , Knudsen, & Roman, 2008)
  - Being engaged in your work role – engagement has conceptualized as the opposite of burnout (Maslach et al., 2001).
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# Wellness and Burnout

- Sample of 506 professional counselors, all members of ACA
- Positive correlation between total wellness and compassion satisfaction scores
- Negative correlations between total wellness to both burnout and compassion fatigue scores (Lawson & Myers, 2011)

# Prevention

- Mental health counselors are a risk for burnout and compassion fatigue, which may lead to professional impairment
- Empathy is a double-edged sword – we need to demonstrate our empathy to our clients in order to be effective...
- Differences in the quality of interpersonal interactions between therapists experiencing burnout and those not experiencing burnout  
(Renjilian et al., 1998)

# Compassion Fatigue

- As discussed in part 1 of this webinar, compassion fatigue is understood as emotional fatigue that emerges after mental health professionals are exposed to traumatized clients (Figley, 1998)
  - It is associated with providing clinical services to trauma victims (Devilley, Wright, & Varker, 2009)
  - Mental health professionals who work with military families are likely to work with people who have experienced trauma
  - Being alert to possibility of experiencing compassion fatigue is important for mental health professionals in general, and even more so for those working with military families
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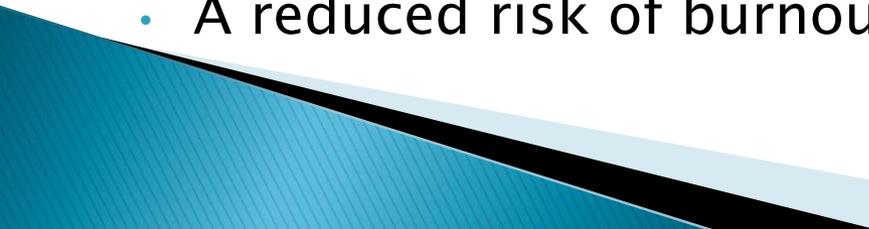
# Self-Reflection

- Are you currently working with clients experiencing trauma?
  - Do you notice yourself feeling drained or emotionally exhausted?
  - Is your social support system at work meeting your needs? How about your personal social support network?
  - Are you implementing wellness strategies in your daily life?
- 

# Implementing your Wellness Strategies

- Increase your positive social contacts, both at work and your private life
  - Make supervision and consultation a regular part of your schedule
  - Select an aspect of your wellness plan to focus on and follow through!
  - Apply a preventative approach in your own life – using wellness strategies to manage stress before it takes over
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# Benefits of Implementing your Wellness Strategies

- Serving as a role model of wellness for our clients
  - Increased energy and emotional resilience to assist our clients
  - May lead to increased joy in our own lives
  - Building our emotional reserve to handle crisis when they come up – and, as you know, they will!
  - Increased congruence – mental health professionals frequently encourage the individuals and families we work with to implement wellness strategies.
  - A reduced risk of burnout (Lawson & Myers, 2011)
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# Increasing Need for Services

- “Houppert (2005b) reported that there has been a 300% increase in overseas deployments in the past decade in a military force that has been cut by more than one third” (Hall, 2008, p. 4).
- “The National Military Family’s Association (NMFA) *Report on the Cycles of Deployment* (Juniper et al., 2006) confirms there is a profound need for more professional counselors” (Hall, 2008, p. 4).

# Increase in Civilian Counselors

- Military and/or military families seeking out independent services for various reasons
  - Reduce stigma associated with seeking help
  - Expand training for working with active military, veterans, and military families
- 

# Explore your own views...

What is our own experience with the military?

- Where are your knowledge gaps about the military?
- What stereotypes do you have about the military?
- How do your personal political views impact your understanding of the military?
- What do you think about the concepts of self-sacrificing, supporting a mission, or doing something for the greater good?
- How do handle being with enormous levels of trauma and potential guilt associated with some experiences of veterans?

(Hall, 2008)

# Each Military Client is Unique

Religion/Spirituality

Political Affiliation

Race and Ethnicity

Family  
Structure/Dynamics

Sexual Orientation

Relationship to Military



# Mindfulness

Paying attention to  
the present  
moment without  
judgment



# Wellness

“Wellness is an active process through which people become aware of, and make choices toward, a more successful existence.”

(National Wellness Institute, 2015)



# Case Study

- Amber and Jack are in their 20's and both actively serving in the Marine Corps.
  - They have a 3 year old daughter and a 2 year old son.
  - Amber is being deployed in 3 months (for approximately 1 year).
- 

# Presenting issues

Amber's pre-deployment— the family is under a lot of stress related to the Amber's deployment.

Alcohol abuse— both partners frequently engage in alcohol abuse and have to face the implications regularly (e.g., infidelity, financial strain, etc.)

Family strengths—the couple loves their children deeply, and she is their first priority. Couple states they are best friends and are committed to making the marriage work.

# Pre-deployment

## Struggles

- Time variability in knowing about deployment (weeks to a year)
- Increased training requirements
- Deployed partner increasingly committed to deployment
- Home affairs to get in order
- Emotions—grief, anger, denial, frustration, fear, excitement

# Pre-deployment Mindfulness and Wellness Strategies

## Mindfulness

- Gaining awareness of emotion (e.g., anger, frustration, fear)
- Engaging in Mindful Listening
  - Both partners learn to be with emotion (their own and their partner's) rather than judging and/or avoiding it through destructive patterns and behaviors.
- Attending to deployment preparation and bonding
  - Amber cultivates the ability to be present with family and military training experiences and bonding.

## Wellness

- Prioritizing home affairs
  - Amber and Jack collaboratively decide which home affairs are most important (e.g., child care) and attend to only those.

# Alcohol Abuse

## Struggles

- Possible increased frequency of alcohol abuse among military as compared to civilians (possibly due to culture, alcohol availability, alcohol use as a coping mechanism, etc.)
  - Implications from alcohol abuse (e.g. physical health, mental health, financial strain, legal issues, infidelity, etc.)
- 

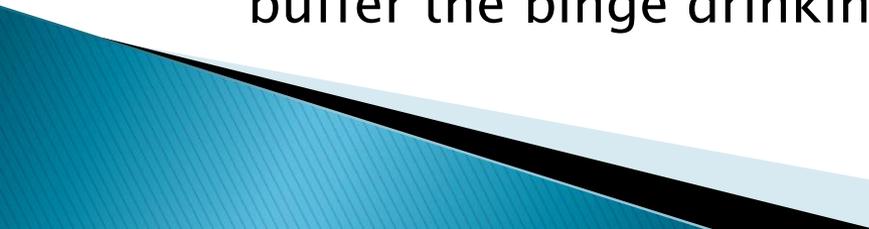
# Alcohol Abuse Mindfulness and Wellness Strategies

- First conduct an alcohol dependency assessment and refer for addiction recovery treatment as necessary.

## Mindfulness

- Becoming aware of drinking triggers through Mindful Observation
- Consciously choosing a way to address the real underlying issues leading to binge drinking

## Wellness

- Exploring ways to indirectly promote health as a means to buffer the binge drinking
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# Family strengths

- Resiliency—ability to endure and function in spite of severe psychological trauma, physical trauma, lengthy deployments, and family separation
  - Commitment and discipline related to their service
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# Strengths Mindfulness and Wellness Strategies

## Mindfulness

- Mindful appreciation—identifying resiliency factors and reflecting on strengths (e.g., parenting, commitment to service, overcoming trauma and separation in the past)
- Building on current mindfulness strategies—using mindfulness strategies already in place and applying them to situations that were more conflictual in nature.

## Wellness

- What wellness factors are going well?
  - How can we build on those?
- 

# More Treatment Applications

- **Total Honesty:** Couple commits to complete honesty about everything, even seemingly minor details about the day.
  - **Communication and Trust:** Create a plan on how the couple will stay in touch while Amber is away and ways to be present during those times.
  - **Couple/family bond:** Schedule intimate and family quality time together before deployment. Practice being present and attending to more conflictual matters at another scheduled time.
- 

# Mindfulness Resources

- [Irest](#)
- [Mindful Nation](#)
- [Mindfulness-based Mind Fitness Training](#)
- [Project Welcome Home Troops](#)

(Mindful, 2015)



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# Key Take-Away Applications

- Recognize the warning signs of burnout and compassion fatigue.
- Identify various types of wellness strategies.
- Understand the benefits of implementing wellness strategies when working with military families.
- Discover tips for clinicians and advocates to implement when working with families.





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  - Sometimes state/professional licensure boards for fields other than social work recognize NASW CE credits, however, you would have to check with your state and/or professional boards if you need CE Credits for your field.
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# **FAMILY DEVELOPMENT**

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## **Upcoming Webinars:**



**Links Between PTSD & Domestic Violence in Military Couples**

**Thursday May 28<sup>th</sup> @ 11 a.m. Eastern**

<https://learn.extension.org/events/1880>



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