

A close-up photograph of a hand with light skin, using a red marker to draw a heart shape on a white surface. The heart is partially completed, with the top and right sides visible. The background is a solid, light gray.

Taking Care of Self: Before, During, and After Trainings

The Meaningfulness of Our Work
Jonna Morse Fries, PsyD



What Is Self-Care?

- Usually, we think of self-care as planning for the storm or recovering from it
- This is an institutionalized version of self-care, as though we do not own our bodies and spirits during work hours
- Professional self-care: Integrating self-care as part of our work

Miller & Grise-Owens (2020).

We Are Courageous

- EMDR Trainers are exposed to a lot of trauma
- Vicarious trauma is a significant risk for mental health professionals.
- However, EMDR therapists may experience themselves as more successful in treating clients which may protect therapists' longevity in the profession (compared to PE and TF-CBT therapists)

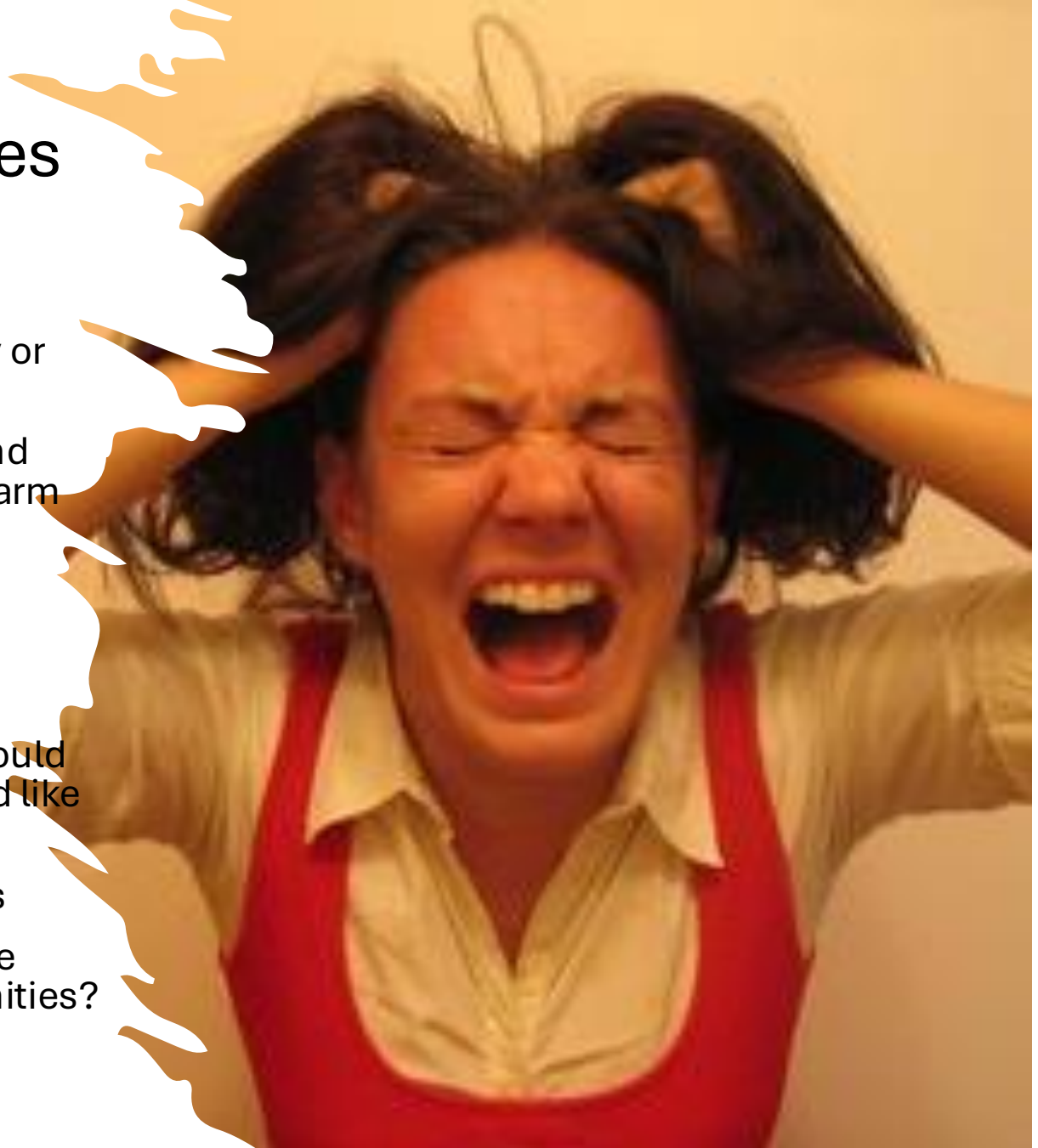


Torres, Ignacio and Gottlieb (2023)

What stresses us out?

Feeling Judged and Judging Ourselves

- Being evaluated
- Other trainers or facilitators observing, perhaps critically or with an agenda
- Concern about saying something that someone might find offensive; that this could harm someone; that this could harm one's reputation
- Fear of being asked something that would make me feel stupid
- Not explaining things well (confabulating)
- Time pressure, not having time to teach everything we would like to teach, not having time to cover in the detail we would like to
- Pressure to train properly so as not to harm future clients
- Reputation: Will the participants represent you well in the EMDRIA community? In their local psychotherapy communities?
- Pronouncing participants' names



What stresses us out? Participants!



Asking irrelevant questions

Asking questions to challenge EMDR

Saying something that might be offensive to another participant

Coming unprepared (no prior reading EMDR material, not reading your communication before the training)

Not practicing EMDR between training weekends

Participants not being able to take instruction

Participant abreactions

Needing to monitor participant attention

Needing to monitor participant engagement, presence, understanding



What stresses us out? Facilitators!

- Doing something that offends a participant
- Undermining the trainer
- Interrupting the trainer to offer their knowledge or perspective during the didactic portion of the training
- Not doing work such as managing attendance, the chat, or tech problems
- Lacking proper training to work with diverse participants



What stresses us out?

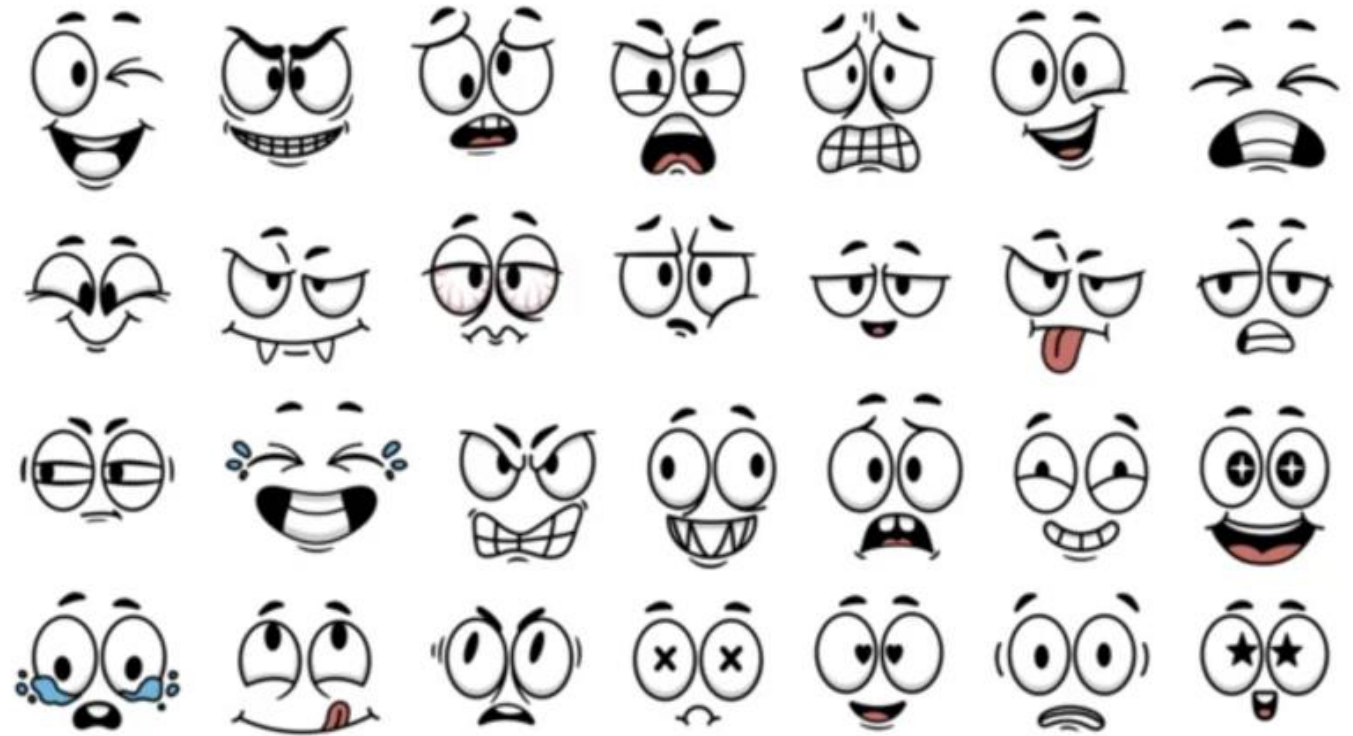
All the feels!

- Feeling separate from participants and facilitators
- Compassion fatigue
- Coming out of a workweek, hearing all the stories of perpetrators, then talking about it during didactics, then hearing about it in consultation, hearing about it in practicum, then going back into the workweek
- Feeling angry, feeling overwhelmed, feeling helpless, feeling impatient
- Inundated by too many people, needing to shield self either overtly or covertly
- Somatic complaints and/or health problems
 - Fatigue and/or exhaustion
 - Body posture during trainings
 - Zoom fatigue

The Who

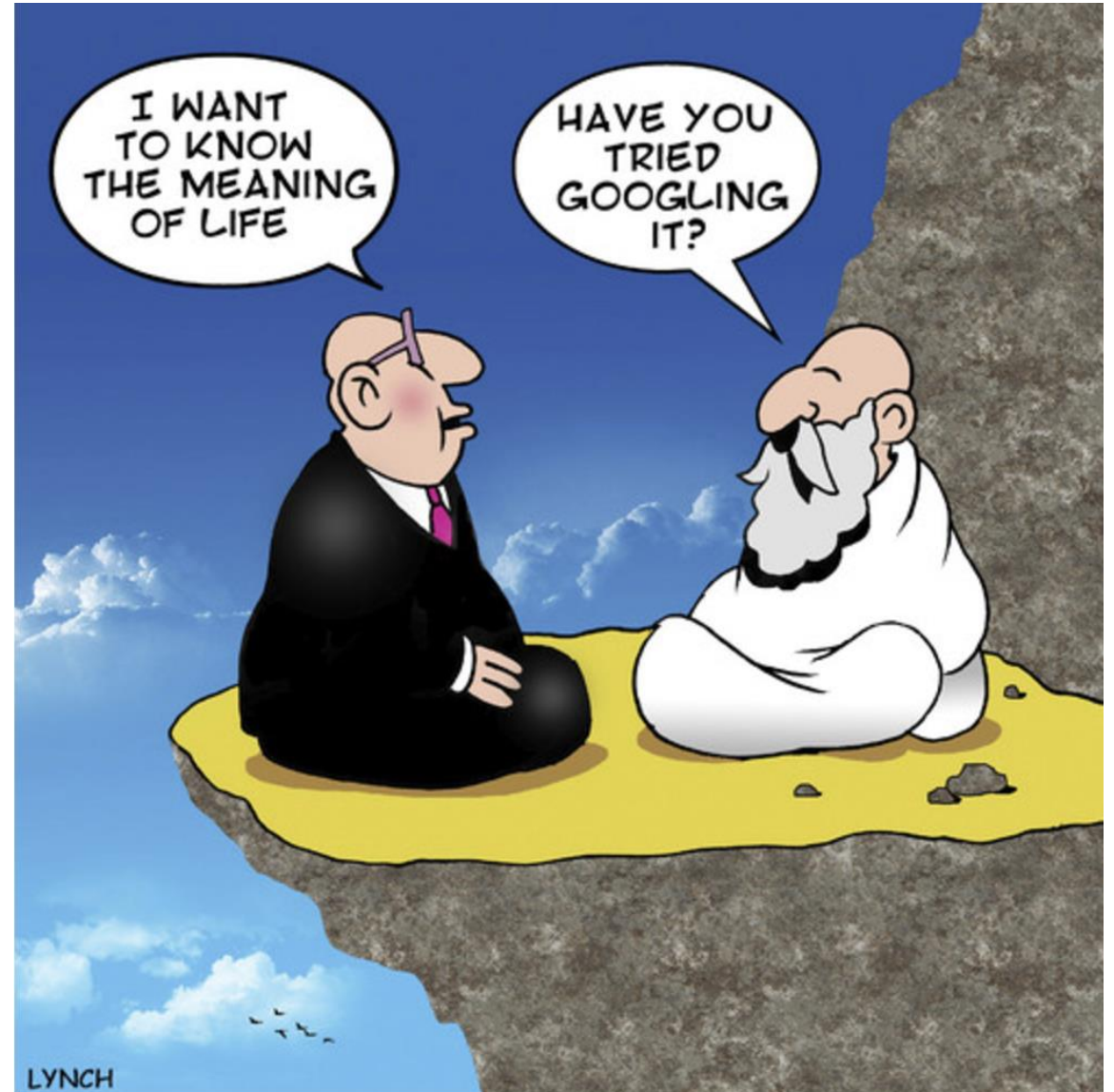
“I regularly remind
myself that
as important as
WHAT I am teaching,
is WHO is showing up
as the teacher.”

(Susan Wendelborg, LCSW,
responding to the EMDRIA trainer
listserv query on trainer self-care)




What makes our work meaningful?

- Authenticity
- Self-efficacy
- Self-esteem
- Purpose
- Belongingness
- Transcendence
- Cultural and interpersonal sensemaking



Authenticity

- Self-concordance: My (work) behaviors are consistent with my interests and values
- My work promotes a deep feeling of authentic connection to myself
- My work is connecting me to a fundamental/core part of who I am and what I am intended to do
- My organization is socially responsible
- My work activates/affirms/verifies part of my identity which is highly valuable to me
- This congruence with my values and interests leads to a greater sense of meaningfulness in my work



**Authenticity is
the daily practice
of letting go of
who we think
we're supposed to
be and embracing
who we are.**

Brené Brown

Self-efficacy



- I have the power to make a difference
- I have personal control and autonomy, agency
- I am learning and growing
- I am successfully responding to challenges
- I have control over my (work) fate
- I have control over my (work) environment



Self-esteem

- I am worthwhile, I have value, I am an achiever
- I can do challenging things
- I am a valuable contributor to my group and organization
- Affirmations of value and success enhance our perceptions of the meaningfulness of work; our favorable view of self is a strong motivator
- My training company is fantastic, EMDR is superior (positive in-group comparison to other groups)



Purpose

- My work is meaningful because it gives me a sense of directedness and intentionality in my life
- My sense of purpose is externally or spiritually motivated (I feel compelled or called to fulfill this purpose)
- My work moves me closer to my goals/to fulfilling my sense of purpose
- My work is important to society/to my community
- The mundane aspects of my work serve a higher purpose, making the mundane more meaningful
- My values provide me with a compass for right and wrong and my work allows me to act in accordance with these values; my work generally minimizes moral guilt, anxiety, and regret

What is your why?



Belongingness

- I feel special to others through my work as a trainer
- I have a shared sense of identity with others with whom I work as a trainer
- The company I work with is special and I feel like I belong
- I feel comforted and supported by individuals with whom I work as a trainer
- I have close personal relationships/I am part of a close-knit group in my work as a trainer



Transcendence

- My work as a trainer is meaningful because the work experience and/or the group itself transcends the self
- My work as a trainer connects me to something greater than the tangible self; I feel a sense of interconnectedness to something greater
- I am contributing to something divine or spiritual; through my work I feel connected to spirit or the divine
- Self-abnegation: transcending one's own self-interests





Cultural and interpersonal sensemaking

- Concerns how the meaning of work is constructed
- Sociocultural forces shape the meaning of our work
- What I hear from others about my work as a trainer adds to the meaning of my work
- What I observe in other trainers adds to the meaning of my work
- What I observe in participants and facilitators as it pertains to my work as a trainer adds to the meaning of my work
- I feel motivated in my work as a trainer because others imply that my work is meaningful

Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, (2010)

What We Love About Being a Trainer and How We Practice Self-Care

- Connecting with bright people who want to learn, who have a calling
- Relating over and over again to where we started our EMDR therapy journey and recognizing with gratitude where we are now
- Connecting with others who share our passion and enthusiasm for EMDR therapy and trauma treatment
- Teaching EMDR therapy in a way that expresses ourselves
- Improving our presentation skills, our teaching skills, and our interpersonal skills
- Learning more about EMDR therapy practice, being knowledgeable, being “in the know”
- Connecting with EMDR trainers, facilitators, and consultants/making friends, developing a professional support network



What We Love About Being a Trainer and How We Practice Self-Care

- Via the butterfly effect touching 1000s of lives by training others in EMDR therapy
- Practicing boundary setting (with life, trainings, participants, other staff, family members)
- Status within the EMDR therapy community, with potential clients, with colleagues outside the EMDR therapy community
- Touching a participant in a meaningful way (e.g., saying something about trauma that fills in a missing piece for them personally or professionally, pointing out to them what they are doing well, making them feel a part of something, making them feel hopeful about their career, making them feel competent as a student or therapist)
- Mentoring participants during the training; experiencing existential joy from knowing you exist beyond your physical presence



What We Love About Being a Trainer and How We Practice Self-Care

- Experiencing eustress, beneficial stress, a positive response to stress; an adaptive mechanism for optimal productivity and effectiveness; experiencing the self as competent, lively, resilient
- Contemplating the seven categories through which work becomes meaningful: authenticity, self-efficacy, self-esteem, purpose, belongingness, transcendence, and cultural and interpersonal sense making
- Setting ourselves up to avoid previously experienced stressors by communicating clearly to participants in the days or weeks before the training
- Honoring your time boundaries for breaks and ending of the training
- Using the chat and registration time to get to know people and connect



What We Love About Being a Trainer and How We Practice Self-Care



- Taking time to personally reflect/meditate/pray/use HeartMath/center ourselves
- Placing above our monitors an inspirational quote/motto/word/reminder to breathe specifically related to EMDR therapy trainings and idiosyncratically related to our needs
- Limiting the scope of teaching material to basic training so as not to overwhelm us or participants and remain within the scope of the training
- Lengthening the lunch break to 75 minutes
- Trusting that we know what we know
- Broadening view of self-care to include mid-training snacks/food, drinks, cough drops, chair, scented lotion, fidget toys, helpful technology, medication/supplements, stretches, pacing of the material, participating as much as possible in experientials provided during the training

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