

Dealing with Difficult Clients and Building Resilience

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What we will be discussing today

- How to self-protect when dealing with clients, especially difficult clients
 - Dealing with overwhelm and burnout
 - Setting boundaries with clients
 - Avoiding internalizing the problems of others
 - Avoiding and dealing with secondary trauma
- Building resilience
 - Reducing vulnerability to painful emotions and burnout

Self-Protection when Dealing with Difficult Clients

- Learning ways to skillfully deal with difficult clients is important
 - Effective communication
 - *Refer to CLE 3 for information on communication with difficult clients*
 - Preventing burnout
 - Setting healthy boundaries
 - Avoiding internalizing the problems of others

Burnout

- Common symptoms of burnout:
 - Fatigue
 - Dissatisfaction and detachment from job
 - Difficulty concentrating
 - Feeling mentally and emotionally exhausted
 - Compassion fatigue
 - Apathy
 - Increased emotion dysregulation or anger/irritation
 - Low mood, depressive symptoms
 - Anhedonia (loss of pleasure)
 - Reduced motivation and productivity
 - Physical symptoms: sleep disturbance, headaches, gastrointestinal problems, etc.

Avoiding Burnout

- Take time to decompress after work
- Find ways to process work such as journaling or talking to a loved one/colleague
- Make designated places for work when at home
- Take care of your health
 - Especially exercise and sleep
- Try to be strategic with how you work (work smarter, not harder)
- Ask for help or delegate where possible
- Take vacation (and detach from work)
- Find a work/life balance that works for you
- Set healthy boundaries with clients and self
- Work and give according to your mental and emotional bandwidth
 - If bandwidth is low, do what is needed to bring it up instead of draining/pushing yourself more

Setting Boundaries

Boundaries with client

- Schedule times to talk, when possible, instead of being on-call
- Give clients a time limit for how long you may talk

Boundaries with self

- Set aside time when you will not work (and hold yourself to it)
- Set a boundary for when you will stop *thinking* about work
 - Give yourself allotted “worry time” and then put worry away
- Give according to your bandwidth
- Boundaries with checking emails/texts
 - Example: not checking email before bed, not checking email first thing when you wake up
- Set limits for time spent on social media/Netflix/other mindless screen activities

Use DEAR MAN to Set Boundaries

Formula for asking for something, saying no to an unwanted request or expressing concern

-
- Describe
 - Express
 - Assert
 - Reinforce

} Your initial ask/expression

- Mindfully
- Act Confident
- Negotiate

} How you respond and interact after your initial statements

DEAR

Your initial ask

DESCRIBE

- Describe the current SITUATION leading to your request. Tell the person exactly what you are reacting to. Stick to facts. Keep it short and simple.
- Example: "I have noticed that you have been calling me after 9pm lately."

EXPRESS

- Express your FEELINGS and OPINIONS about the situation (assume they are not obvious or common sense). Use phrases such as "I feel," "I think," "I want," "I don't want," instead of "You make me feel," "You should," or "I can't."
- Example: "I am deeply invested in your case. However, I need to rest to be able to continue to give you my best work."

ASSERT

- Assert yourself by ASKING for what you want or SAYING NO clearly
- Assume that others will not figure it out or do what you want unless you ask
- "I would like you to try to keep calls before 7pm unless it is an absolute emergency."

REINFORCE:

- Reinforce or reward the person ahead of time by explaining the positive and negative CONSEQUENCES without making threats
- Example: "If you could do this, I think that I will be able to be much more effective as an attorney for you."

MAN

Stay MINDFUL

- Keep your focus on your objectives
- Maintain your position and don't allow yourself to be distracted.
 - "Broken record"
 - *Ignore if...* person attacks, threatens or tries to change the subject.
- If the person becomes defensive, show understanding and stay focused on your objective

APPEAR CONFIDENT (even if you don't feel it)

- Appear effective and confident; not aggressive
- Use a confident tone of voice and physical manner, making good eye contact
- No over apologizing, stammering, whispering, staring at the floor, retreating, saying "I'm not sure," etc.

NEGOTIATE

- Be willing to GIVE TO GET
- Offer and ask for alternative solutions to the problem
- Reduce your request if needed
- Maintain no but offer to do something else or to solve the problem another way
- Turn the tables:
 - Turn the problem over to the other person
 - Ask for alternative solutions

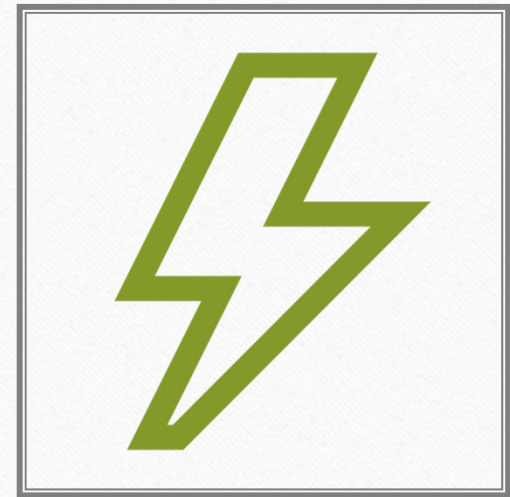


Avoid Internalizing Problems of Clients/Others

- Remember that you are not responsible for the problems of others
- Set personal limits with yourself for how much time you will spend thinking about your client
- Resist the urge to overhelp
- Personal protection meditation
 - Envision being surrounded by a white light or personal protection that keeps the problems of others out
- Validate your concern for others while also recognizing the need to protect yourself
- Spend time on the things that you value and your own needs

Secondary Trauma

- Attorneys and legal professionals may develop secondary trauma in response to hearing about the trauma of clients
- May happen to people with deep empathy
- May occur after frequent exposure
- May occur when there is a lack of personal resources to deal with trauma
- May occur after hearing about trauma that is similar or linked to personal trauma











Symptoms of Secondary Trauma

Trauma stored in the brain differently than other memories



- Intrusive thoughts
- Problems with sleep
- Nightmares about client's trauma
- Avoidance
 - Avoiding clients or their stories
- Hyperarousal
- Hypervigilance
- Increased anxiety
- Increased anger or irritation
- Apathy or depression
- Compassion fatigue
- Physical fatigue
- Use of maladaptive coping mechanisms
- Resentment of person or job

Dealing with Secondary Trauma

-  Show yourself kindness, compassion, and understanding
-  Practices to help the nervous system balance and feel safe: meditation, yoga, mindful movement, prayer, etc.
-  Journaling to process the trauma may be helpful
-  Set personal limits with self to decompress and leave work at work
-  Take time away from the case
-  Care for your physical and mental health
-  Seek support from colleagues and loved ones
-  **Seek help from a mental health professional who specializes in trauma**

Building Resilience

Reducing vulnerability to painful
emotions and creating a meaningful life



Reducing vulnerability to intense emotions



Everybody has times and circumstances that can make us more vulnerable to painful emotions and burnout



However, sometimes the ways that we are living our lives can make us chronically vulnerable to painful emotions and burnout



The skills that we will be discussing will help you to build a meaningful life and help you to become less sensitive and vulnerable to burnout and emotional distress

A B C PLEASE

Accumulating Positive Emotions

- **Short Term:** Do pleasant things that are possible now
- **Long Term:** Make changes in your life so that positive events will happen more often in the future
 - Build a “life worth living”

Build Mastery

- Do things that make you feel competent and effective to combat helplessness and hopelessness

Cope Ahead for Emotional Situations

- Rehearse a plan ahead of time so that you are prepared to cope skillfully with emotional situations

PLEASE

- Take care of your body to take care of your mind

Accumulating Positives

Accumulating positives can lead to a happier life

Why increase
positive events
in your life?

Continued...

- **Positive events prompt positive emotions as well as reduce painful emotions**
- **The lack of positive events can have negative effects on people**
 - Can increase sadness, reduce happiness, and make us more vulnerable to painful emotions
- **Negative events can have negative emotional effects**
 - It can be difficult to feel content or happy with too many negative events
 - Especially when someone has a deficit of positive events
 - Example: Too much (unenjoyable) work and not enough leisure time can lead to more painful emotions

Why increase
positive
events in your
life?

Continued...

We need short-term and long-term positive events

- Creating a meaningful life that feels worth living requires short-term and long-term accumulation of positives
- ***Short-term positive events***
 - Increase positive emotions right now
- ***Long-term positive events***
 - Involve creating a lifestyle that gives us more lasting positive emotions.
 - Continuously “churns” out positive emotions

Accumulating pleasant events can take effort, and it's worth it

- People often don't bother to develop positive events
- When too depressed, tired, stressed, or overwhelmed, it may feel like too much effort
- Sometimes people think positives should just “happen” instead of creating them for themselves
- People often don't recognize the importance of bringing positives into their daily lives

Build Positives in the Short Term

Start now!



Fill up your emotional Piggy Bank

Do daily practices that fill you up and bring you pleasure

This will help to increase your resiliency when faced with painful experiences or emotions



When doing those practices, try to be mindful and fully present

Let go of worries and throw yourself into the activity

Observe the positive feelings that arise

Remind yourself that you are worthy of positives

Giving yourself permission to engage in positives is a way to show yourself that you are worthy

List of Pleasurable Activities

1. Meditating
2. Making plans for the future
3. Finishing something
4. Talking with a friend
5. Browsing in a catalogue
6. Watching TV
7. Sitting/Lying in the sun
8. Listening to others
9. Drawing
10. Playing an instrument
11. Looking outside
12. People watching
13. Watching a movie
14. Meeting a friend
15. Repairing something
16. Memory of the words of loving people
17. Wearing nice clothes
18. Taking care of plants
19. Going to a party
20. Online shopping or browsing
21. Praying
22. Thinking "I'm a good person."
23. Writing a letter to someone
24. Cooking
25. Sleeping
26. Fixing your hair and makeup
27. Daydreaming
28. Making a list of tasks/goals
29. Watching sports
30. Thinking about pleasant events
31. Writing in a diary or journal
32. Reading a letter
33. Discussing books with someone
34. Having lunch with a friend
35. Solving riddles/puzzles
36. Looking at/showing photos
37. Learning to play a new game
38. Reflecting you have grown
39. Thinking I'm a person who can cope
40. Taking a bath
41. Paying bills
43. Remembering good times
44. Relaxing
45. Reading a book
46. Laughing
47. Painting
48. Singing out loud
49. Remembering beautiful scenery
50. Watching the birds
51. Eating
52. Gardening
53. Thinking about retirement
54. Doodling
55. Exercising
56. Having a quiet evening
57. Flower arranging
58. Drinking a favorite beverage
59. Going on a picnic outside
60. A day with nothing to do
61. Buying clothes
62. Going to the beauty salon
63. Making a gift for someone
64. Listening to music
65. Taking a walk outside
66. Playing sports
67. Watching/Listening to comedy
68. Dancing to music
69. Cleaning your house
70. Playing cards
71. Having a political discussion
72. Playing pool
73. Talking on the phone
74. Helping a friend



Accumulating Positives in the Long Term

It's hard to be content or happy in life if it doesn't feel meaningful

- Building a life that you experience as meaningful focus on one's values (what matters most) and prioritizing them in the long term
 - Requires commitment, time, persistence, and patience

Requires the following:

- Moving towards goals that are in line with our values
- Living in alignment with our top values
- Regular check-ins with values/goals

Steps for Accumulating Long-Term Positives

1. Avoid Avoiding

- A main problem in building a meaningful life is that people tend to avoid doing what is necessary to build it!
- Don't wait for things to be just right

2. Identify Your Values

- Values are the things that matter most to you; your highest priorities
- Values are not goals
 - Values are like our compass in life
 - Values are not things that we ever fully achieve, instead they give us direction and meaning
 - They are a guide for our goals
- Values tend to stay relatively stable, but can change over time

3. Take committed action towards goals that are aligned with values

Questions for figuring out your values:

1. What are my main priorities in life?
 - Make sure they are *actually your priorities*
2. What really matters to me in life?
3. In what direction would I want my life to go?
4. What in my life do I not want to lose?
5. What things that matter to me are not in my life right now?

***** Tip for improving outlook on work:**

Find a way to link your top values to your work and remind yourself of those values frequently

Values Examples

Category	Value Examples
Work/Education Includes place of work, career, money, development of skill/expertise, etc.	1. Make a lot of money 2. Productivity 3. Work hard towards goals 4. Achieve recognition 5. Leadership
Family Relationships Includes time with family, closeness with family, support, etc.	1. Close relationships with family 2. Be a loving and supportive parent 3. Repair relationships 4. Love and affection – receive or give 5. Feel belonging with family
Intimate Relationships Includes closeness/connection, time together, intimacy, support, etc.	1. Emotional intimacy with partner 2. Feel connection and belonging 3. Spend time with partner 4. To be treated with respect from partner 5. Reliability or Fidelity

Values Examples

Health and Wellness

Includes exercise, nutrition, fitness,
addressing health issues, etc.

1. Physical health and wellness
2. Have physical strength and/or endurance
3. Eat food to nourish body and brain
4. Develop healthier body image
5. Sobriety; Refrain from drugs/alcohol/cigarettes (this could be under health or mental health)

Social Relationships and Activities

1. Create new friendships
2. End unhealthy relationships
3. Participate in social activities
4. Deepen friendships
5. Be a supportive and reliable friend

Personal Growth and Development

Includes education, self-exploration,
etc.

1. Be responsible and independent
2. Honesty
3. Follow my own values
4. Commitment to personal goals
5. Self-knowledge

Values Examples

Mental Health Includes emotional self-care, self-compassion, addressing mental health issues, etc.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Emotional balance2. Self-compassion3. Healthy body image4. Courage to face fears5. Acceptance of reality
Spirituality	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Connection to higher power2. Connection with nature3. Develop sense of personal spirituality4. Time for spiritual or religious practice5. Gratitude
Community Engagement and Service	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Help or care for people in need2. Commitment to a specific cause3. Volunteer work4. Commitment to a group or community5. General kindness and compassion to others
Hobbies/Leisure Includes hobbies, travel, pleasurable activities, etc.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Develop a hobby2. Time with the hobby3. Travel4. Do exciting new things5. Spend time alone with things I find pleasurable

I am not living in line
with my value



Relationships

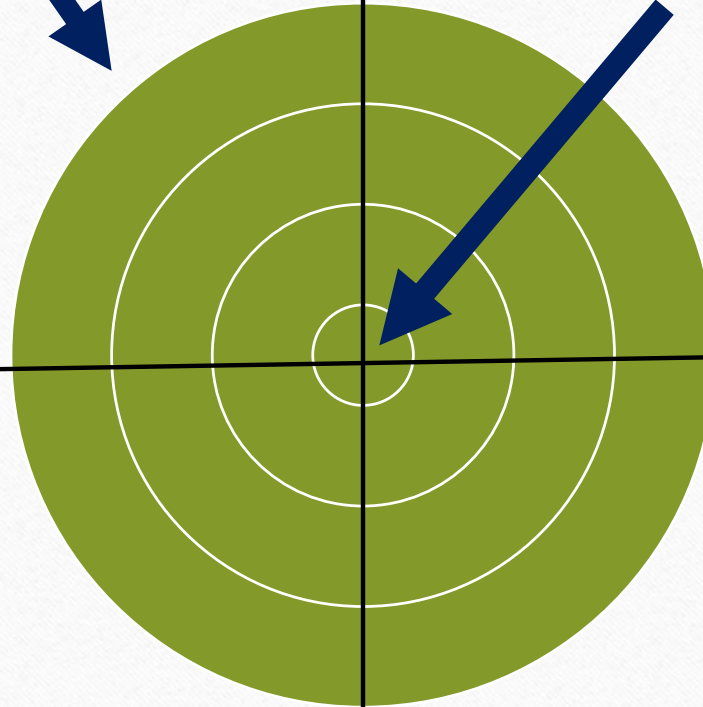
I am living completely
in line with my values



Achieve
important goals

Self-Love/Care

Physical
Health/Wellness



Building Mastery



Mastery = doing things that lead us to feel confident, competent, capable, and in control

We see in very young children and babies

- Tend to naturally work to increase mastery

If building mastery is not reinforced, that drive can reduce



Building mastery is important for the treatment of depression

Can help to prevent depression and be more resistant to painful emotions



Building mastery requires doing things that are a bit challenging

Builds a sense of accomplishment

- With time, can generate more positive self-concept, improved self-esteem, and greater feelings of happiness and contentment

Why Build Mastery?



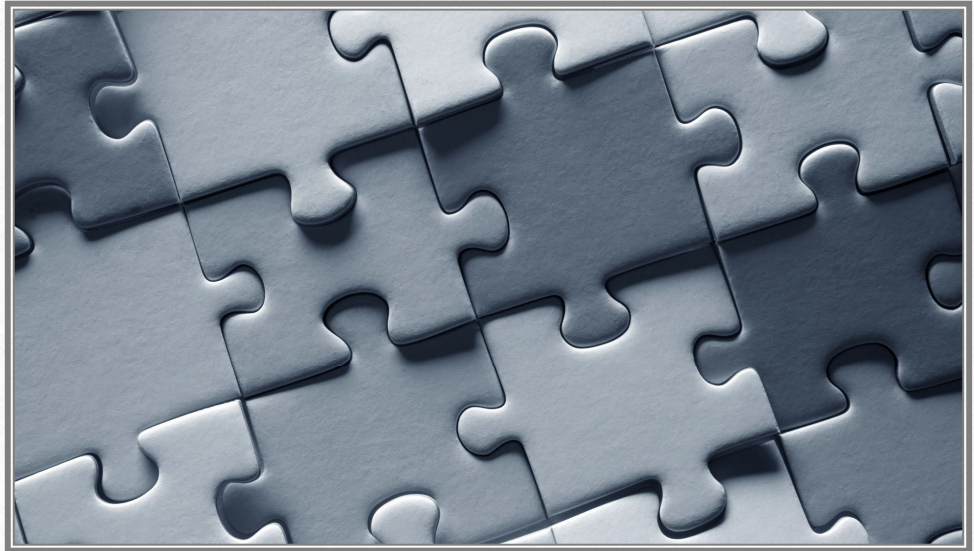
How do you build mastery?

1. **Do at least one thing per day to build a sense of competence and accomplishment**
2. **Plan for your success, not your failure**
 - Do something that is challenging, but not impossible
 - When expectations are too high, it can lead to feelings of failure
 - Example: If you decide that you are going to start exercising (and you haven't been previously), it is important to not start out by going out for a 10-mile run
3. **Over time, increase the difficulty**
4. **Look for a challenge**
 - Look for opportunities in everyday life to do something challenging
 - Overtime, you will start to feel more empowered and confident as you go out into the world

Building mastery examples:

- **You can build mastery from doing even simple challenges!**
- **Examples:**
 - Cooking a new meal
 - Going for a walk
 - Learning a song on the guitar
 - Cleaning out your closet
 - Taking small steps to face a fear
 - Calling a friend to have lunch (if that is challenging for you)
 - Learning a new skill

Coping Ahead



What is Cope Ahead?

- Coping ahead involves figuring out situations that are likely to be difficult, and then planning how to cope with expected challenges
 - It also includes imagining coping effectively (mental rehearsal)

Why cope ahead?

- Makes us better able to handle life challenges in an effective way
- Help us feel more confident and prepared going into situations
- Research shows that we can learn new skills just by practicing them in our minds!
 - Imagining ourselves doing something activates the brain in the same way as it does when we are actually doing the thing in real life
 - Used in many different areas:
 - Sports: basketball players may improve performance by envisioning different plays or shots in their heads
 - Interpersonal skills: you can practice using effective assertiveness skills by practicing in your mind
- Helps us to plan for how to deal with challenges so that we are prepared and not caught off guard
- Increases the likelihood that we will respond more automatically skillfully during a challenging situation

Coping Ahead for Difficult Situations

1. Describe the situation that may prompt emotional difficulty

- Check the facts and be specific as you describe the situation
- What emotions or behaviors may interfere with you being skillful?

2. Decide how you will cope, or problem solve

- Be specific about how you will cope
- Write out in detail how you will handle the situation to deal with your emotions and to refrain from problematic behaviors

3. In your mind, imagine the difficult situation as vividly as you can

4. Rehearse in your mind coping effectively in that situation.

- Rehearse what you will say, think, and do
- Rehearse effectively dealing with new problems that arise
- Even rehearse coping effectively with the worst-case scenario

5. Practice relaxation after rehearsing

- You can practice mindful breathing, taking a mindful relaxing walk, progressive muscle relaxation, do something soothing

Balanced Body for a Balanced Mind

A body that is out of balance will
increase vulnerability to emotion mind
and painful emotions.

By taking care of your body, you increase
emotional balance and resilience



PLEASE Skills

Our physical health impacts our emotional health.

Treat Physical Illness

Eating

Avoid Mood Altering Substances

Sleep

Exercise

Conclusions

- Dealing with difficult clients may lead to challenges such as burnout and secondary trauma
 - Learning to effectively set boundaries with yourself and clients is important to prevent burnout
 - Use DEAR MAN to communicate boundaries
 - It is also important to take steps to prevent internalizing the problems of others in order to prevent secondary trauma
- The way you are living may make you more vulnerable to intense emotions and burn out
 - To build resilience, it is important to accumulate positives, build mastery, cope ahead for difficult situations, and take care of your health

Questions?

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To learn skills and strategies for balancing emotions visit Jones Mindful Living, an online emotional wellness platform at

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