

# Taking Care of DSPs: 6 Strategies for Promoting Resilience

PRESENTER

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# Learning Objectives

- The six strategies for promoting resilience in your DSPs
- The importance of a strong supervisor-supervisee relationship is critical for creating a safe space for staff
- Ways to help staff maintain a healthy work-life balance
- The importance of building a resilient organization

# Agenda

DSPs and stress

Impact of COVID 19 on DSP stress

What is DSP resilience?

Six Strategies for Promoting DSP Resilience

Resilient Organizations

Q&A

# How Stress Impacts the Work of a DSP

# Types of Stress



# Causes of Stress & Trauma

- Witnessing property destruction
- High case loads/short-staffed
- Low wages and living in poverty
- Working closely with populations that have a high risk of trauma history
- Witnessing abuse and neglect occurring to persons served
- Having to restrain or becoming injured by a client expressing challenging behavior
- Witnessing self-injurious behavior that results in injury to persons served

# Causes of Stress & Trauma

- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
  - 70% of DSPs have at least 1 ACE
  - 30% of DSPs have 4 or more ACEs
  - Had a higher than average ACE score
  - Were twice as likely to have four or more ACEs than the general population

# Impact of Stress & Trauma

- Allostatic Overload
  - "Wear and tear" on the body due to prolonged or chronic stress
  - Effects of stress are cumulative
  - Can negatively affect your immune system, metabolic processes, and your cardiovascular system.
  - High allostatic load correlated with higher likelihood of poor physical health outcomes



# Impact of Stress & Trauma

- Emotional/Behavioral Impacts
  - Feeling depressed, hopelessness, helplessness, self-doubt
  - Cynicism, unmotivated, detached from the work
  - More likely to engage in negative coping strategies

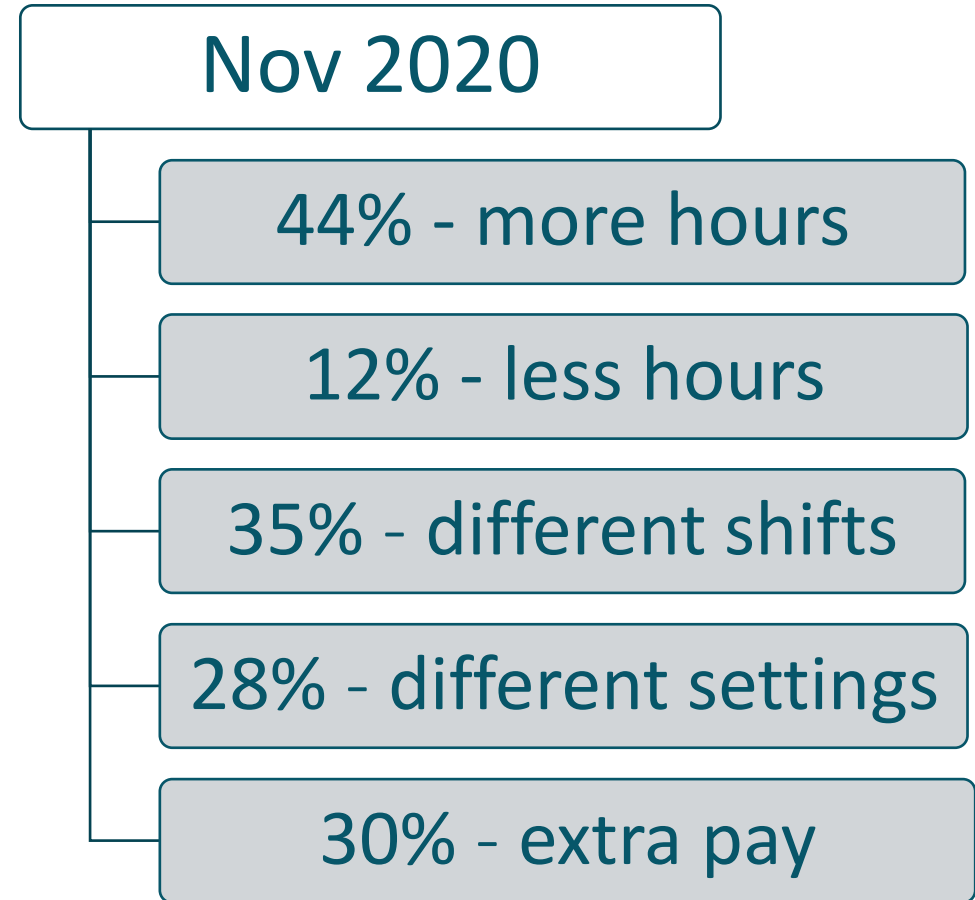
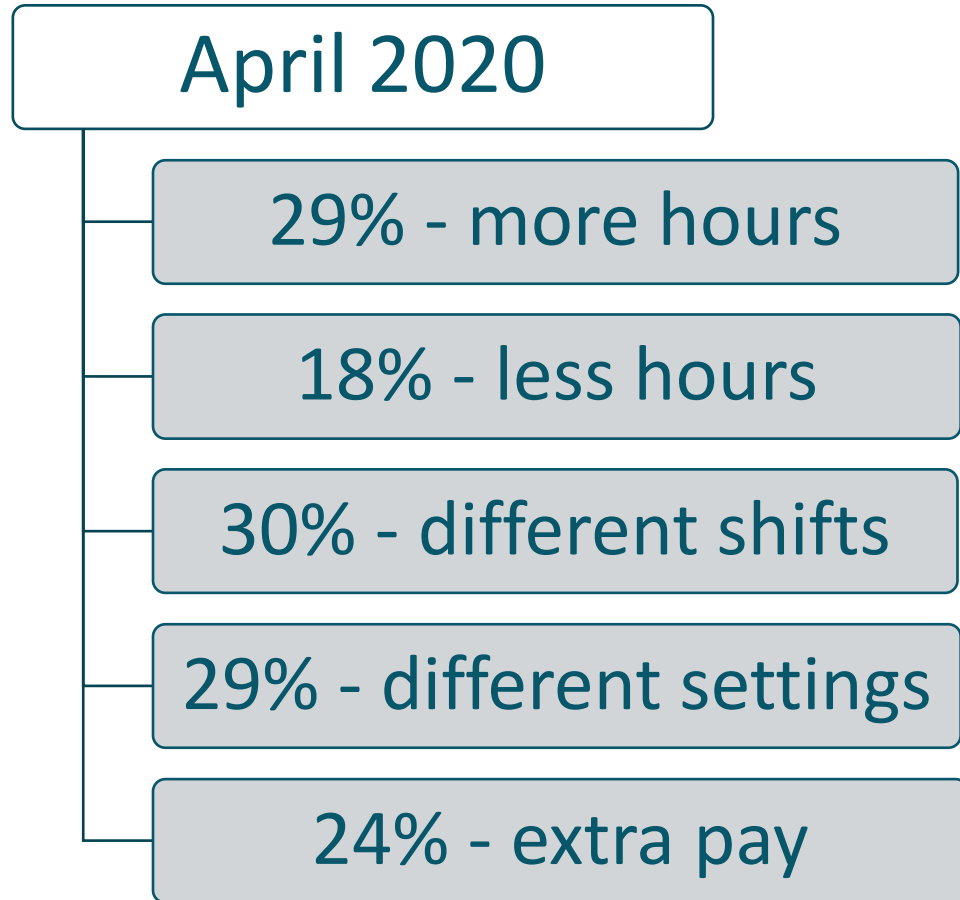
# Impact of Stress & Trauma

- Organizational Impacts
  - Lower productivity and quality of work
  - Higher turnover
  - Conflict between co-workers/supervisors
  - Negative impact to outcomes for persons served

Impact of COVID 19

# The Direct Support Workforce and COVID-19 National Survey Report

Survey conducted by NADSP and the  
Institute on Community Integration



## Additional Concerns

- Fear of being exposed to COVID 19
- Restricted movement in the community
- Stress and anxiety experienced by people supported
- Low pay increases hardship

“It is very hard to care for yourself because I am working 70+ hours a week.... I love being where I am but, it is a lot. I try to eat right and get sleep but due to extended shifts and my distressed home life it is a little hard.”



What is Resilience?

# What is Resilience?

# What is resilience?

- The ability to "bounce back" from adverse experiences
- Individuals or communities use available resources to deal with hardship or consequences from an adverse event
- Resilience is a skill that can be fostered; ANYONE can be resilient
- Involves learning new behaviors and thought processes and putting them into action

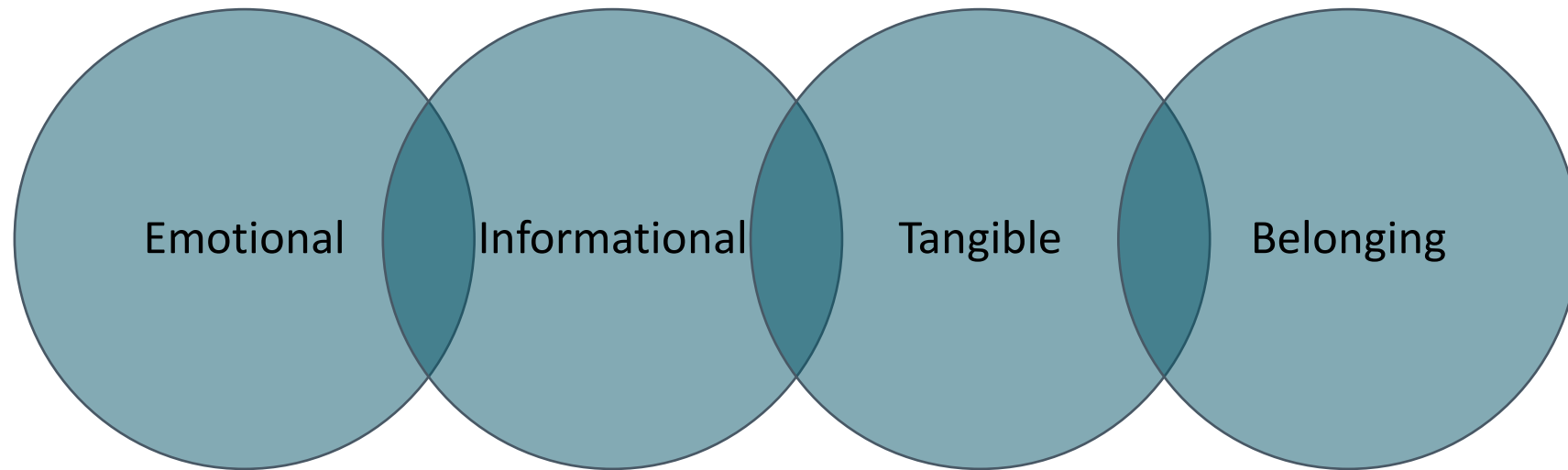


6 Strategies

# 6 Strategies to Support DSP Resilience



# Social Support



# Mentoring Relationships

Formal and informal peer relationships:

- source of advice and guidance
- opportunity to build job proficiency
- build networks
- increase job satisfaction
- reduces stress and anxiety



# Supervision

- Improve team relationships
- Improve employee relationships
- Improve work environment
- Monitor work loads
- Boost career happiness



# Training

- Job knowledge, skills and abilities
- Changes to policies and procedures due to Covid
- Wellness training



# Personal Counseling

- Individual therapy can help DSPs process psychological or emotional distress
- Help practice healthy coping mechanisms that promote resilience
- Create self-awareness of how stress can be affecting day-to-day job performance



# Organizational Methods of Supporting Personal Counseling

- Employee Assistance Program
- Paid leave/sick time for therapy appointments
- Use of company equipment for telehealth appointments
- Company discount for online therapy programs
- Hotline/warmline for caregiving or mental health providers



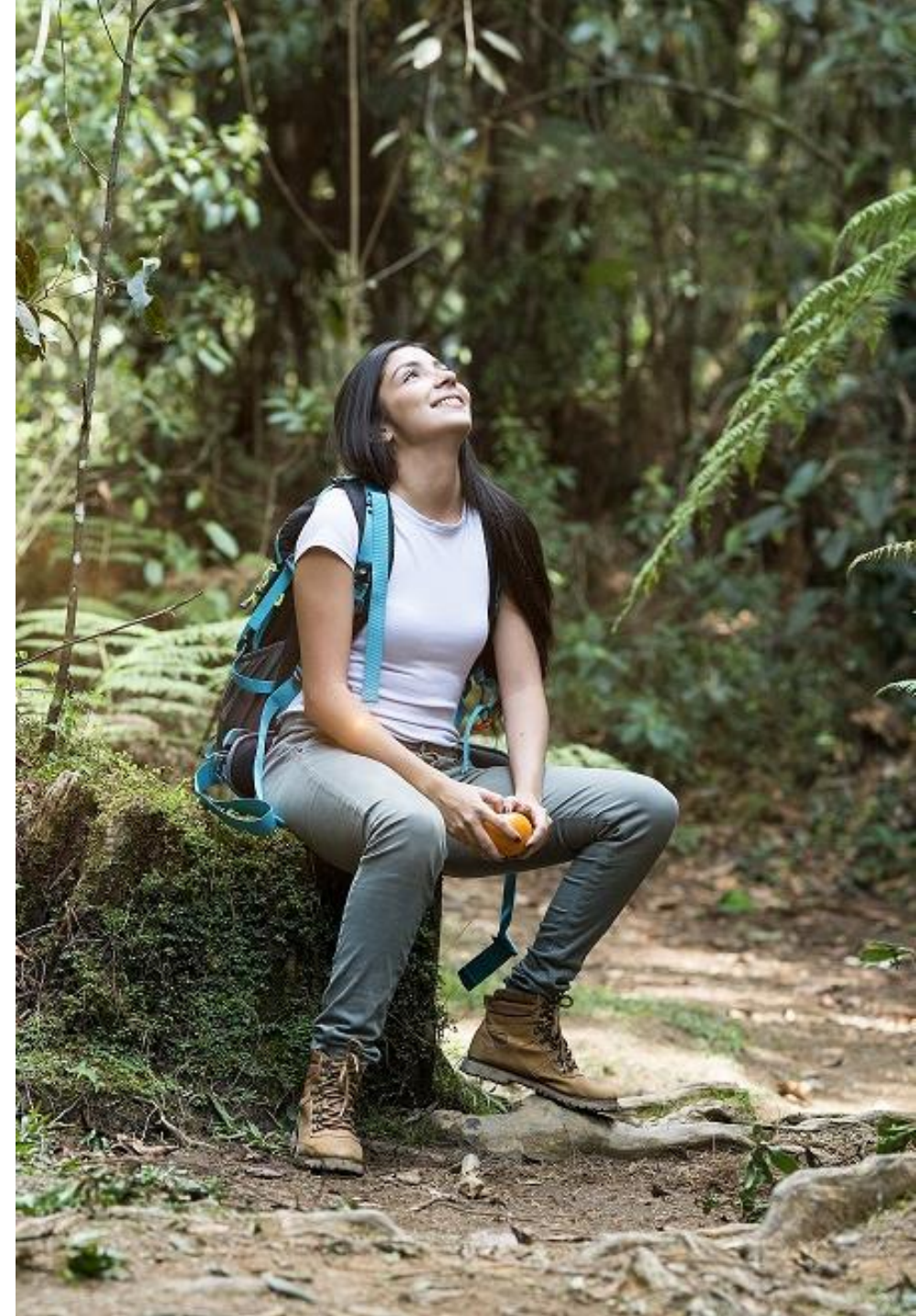
# Maintaining Balance

- Maintaining a healthy work/life balance as much as possible
- Organizational or supervisory help with managing workload/shifts
- Workplace benefits to support healthy balance (ex. Paid time off)



# Meaningful/Spiritual Activities

- Personal engagement in activities that are meaningful or spiritual
- Healthy spiritual beliefs can be a source of strength and resilience
- What "fills your bucket"?
- Take care not to promote or reject any particular religious belief system or spiritual practice



Resilient Organizations

# Resilient Organizations

# What is a resilient organization?

- Take a systems approach rather than just focusing on individual resilience
- Have a formal plan in place to care for staff during and after a crisis
- Have a forum to obtain regular feedback
- Ability to rapidly adjust the plan to meet the changing needs of staff



# Staff Care Plan: Domains of Need

Basic Needs

Communication  
and Leadership

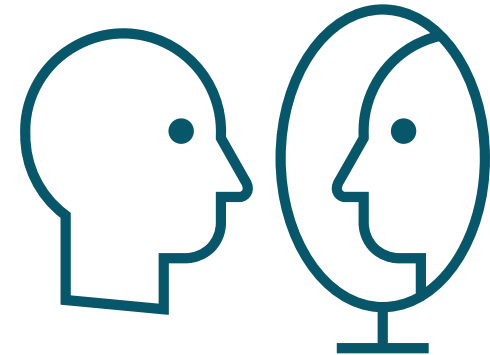
Psychosocial  
and Mental  
Health Needs

# Other Plan Considerations

- "training-up" staff who have been reassigned
- Suspending non-essential tasks
- Emphasize the importance of communication and leadership
- Ensure plan is flexible as new information arises

# After Crisis Plan Considerations

- DSPs will still need support after the crisis to help deal with the stressful and sometimes traumatic experiences
- Continue to provide confidential and accessible mental health support
- Normalize receipt of recovery aid
- Solicit voluntary input from staff
- Honor the dedication and commitment of staff!



# Key Takeaways

- There are many ways organizations can help bolster the resilience of their DSPs – not solely an "individual" responsibility
- Self-care and resilience building is an ethical imperative
- Ultimately leads to better care to the people you serve and better outcomes





# Q & A

THANK YOU

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# Resources

[Creating a Resilient Organization – American Medical Association](#)

[Social Support for Stress Relief](#)

[Direct Support Workforce and COVID-19 National Report: Six-month Follow-up](#)

[Relias – Free Wellness Courses](#)