

How to Work with Clients Who Have Experienced Sexual Harassment



Resources

- Presentation Slides
- Resourceful Links
- Additional Information



SCAN ME 



Learning Objectives

- Understand the definition of sexual harassment
- Recognize verbal, non-verbal, physical, and digital forms of sexual harassment.
- Identify laws that protect victims and how to file a report.
- Provide resources and referrals to assist clients
- Learn treatment implications and approaches

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment encompasses three categories of impermissible behavior:

- 1. Sexual coercion** – legally termed “quid pro quo harassment” (rarest)
- 2. Unwanted sexual attention** (more common)
 - May include rape/assault (both civil offense and a crime)
 - Must be “sufficiently severe or pervasive” to “create an abusive working environment,” according to the U.S. Supreme Court
- 3. Gender harassment** (most common)
 - Entails no sexual advance.
 - Included in term “sexual” harassment because the behaviors are sex-based, not because they involve sexuality.



Types of Sexual Harassment

- Quid Pro Quo
- Hostile Workplace Environment



Legal Aspects

- Form of discrimination under Title VII of the US Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Illegal (crime)
- Against company policies
- Civil suits
- Statutory Rape Considerations

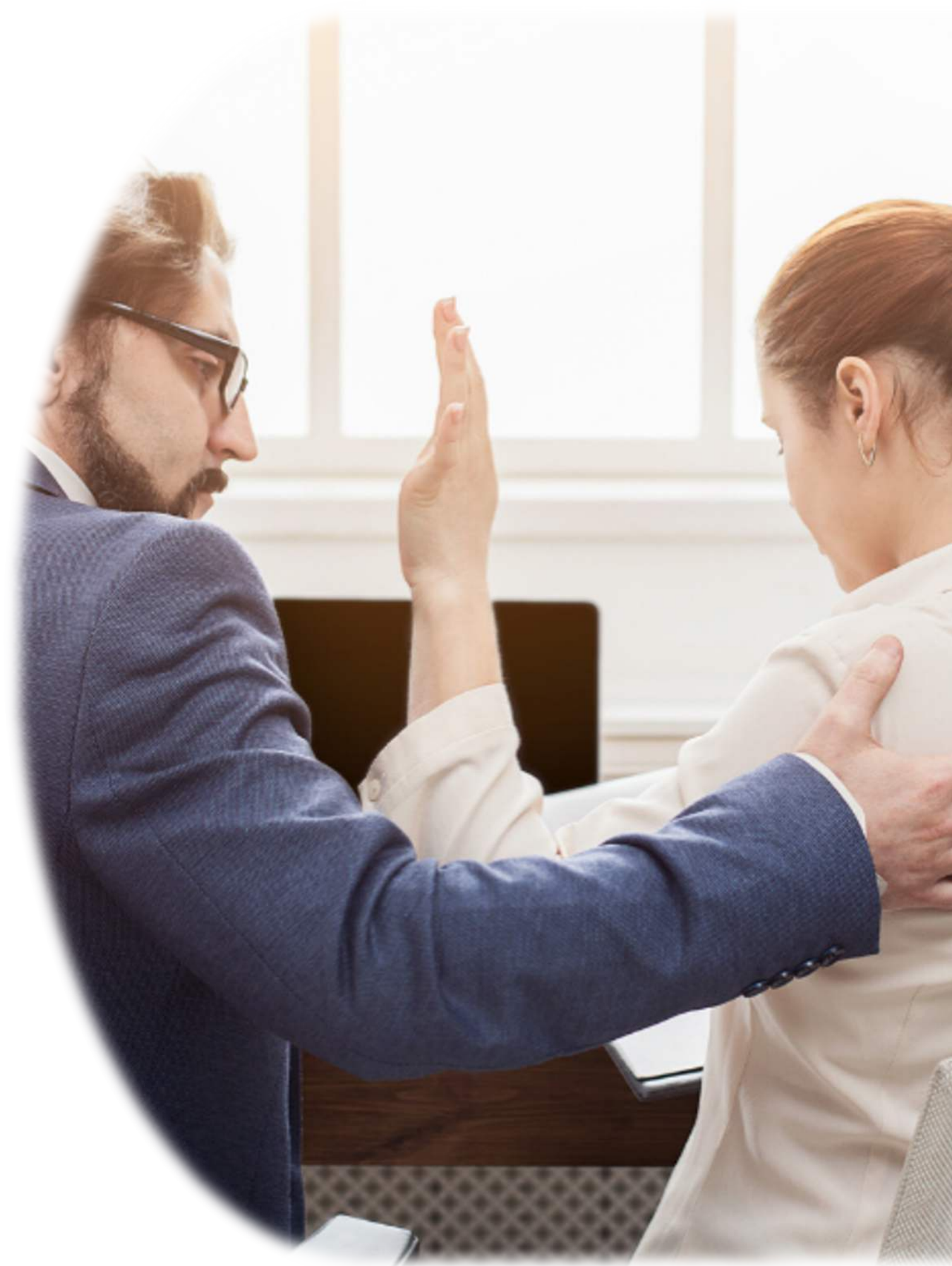


Workplace sexual harassment is common but is rarely reported.

- **38% of all women and 14% of men** have reported experiencing sexual harassment at work (Kearl, Johns, & Raj, 2019).
- **1 in 7 women and 1 in 17 men** have sought a new job assignment, changed jobs, or quit a job because of sexual harassment and assault (Kearl et al., 2019).
- **60% of women** say they have experienced unwanted sexual attention, sexual coercion, sexually crude conduct, or sexist comments in the workplace (Feldblum & Lipnic, 2016).
- In some industries, **more than 9 in 10 women** say they have been sexually harassed (Puentes & Kelly, 2018).
- **Over 85% of people** who experience sexual harassment never file a formal legal charge, and approximately 70 percent of employees never even complain internally (Feldblum & Lipnic, 2016).

Prevalence

- 1/4 women
- 1/10 men
- Minorities at higher risk
 - BIPOC
 - LGBTQIA+
 - Cultural & religious minorities
- Most common men to women, then men to men, then women to men, then women to women



Sexual Harassment

Vs.

Workplace Bullying

- Unwanted aggressive behavior that causes psychological or physical harm
- Observed or perceived power imbalance
- There's a repetition of behaviors or high likelihood of repetition
- Bullying does not involve a protected status—it is harassment when it does

The screenshot shows the top portion of a Psychology Today article. The header includes the Psychology Today logo, a 'Find a Therapist' dropdown menu, a profile picture of a woman, and the word 'Today'. Below the header, the article's publish status is listed as 'Published', with a 'Create Date' and 'Publish Date' of 11/09/2022 - 4:00 pm. The author's name, Joyce Marter LCPC, and her affiliation, Mental Wealth, are shown next to her profile picture. The article title is 'How to Stop Workplace Bullying', with a sub-header 'BULLYING'. The main text begins with 'Set boundaries and start reporting to stop bullying in the workplace.' Below the text, it says 'Posted November 9, 2022 | Reviewed by Vanessa Lancaster'. There are social media sharing icons for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Email. A 'KEY POINTS' section follows, containing three bullet points: 'Research finds an increase in bullying at work since the pandemic, with emotional, physical, career and financial implications for victims.', 'Workplace bullying can occur in the forms of relational, physical, verbal, and damage to property.', and 'A new study shows that bystanders exist in 88 percent of workplace bullying incidents but fail to say anything.' At the bottom of the screenshot, there is a 'THE BASICS' section with a sub-header 'How to Handle Bullying' and a link to 'Take our Anger Management Test'.

Sexual Harassment

Includes:

- The making of unwanted & offensive sexual advances, remarks or acts.
- Unsolicited verbal or physical behavior of a sexual nature.
- Sexually motivated behavior considered offensive by the recipient.





For some, #MeToo sexual assault stories trigger trauma not empowerment

by Sandee LaMotte, CNN

Updated 4:08 PM ET, Thu October 19, 2017



More from CNN

Someone is lying about that 'shithole' meeting. And I think I...

Matt Damon vows to 'close my mouth for a while' after backlash...

POLYVORE





Joyce Marter

joyce-marter.com

The Impact of Sexual Harassment

- Emotionally
- Physically
- Spiritually
- Financially
- Relationally



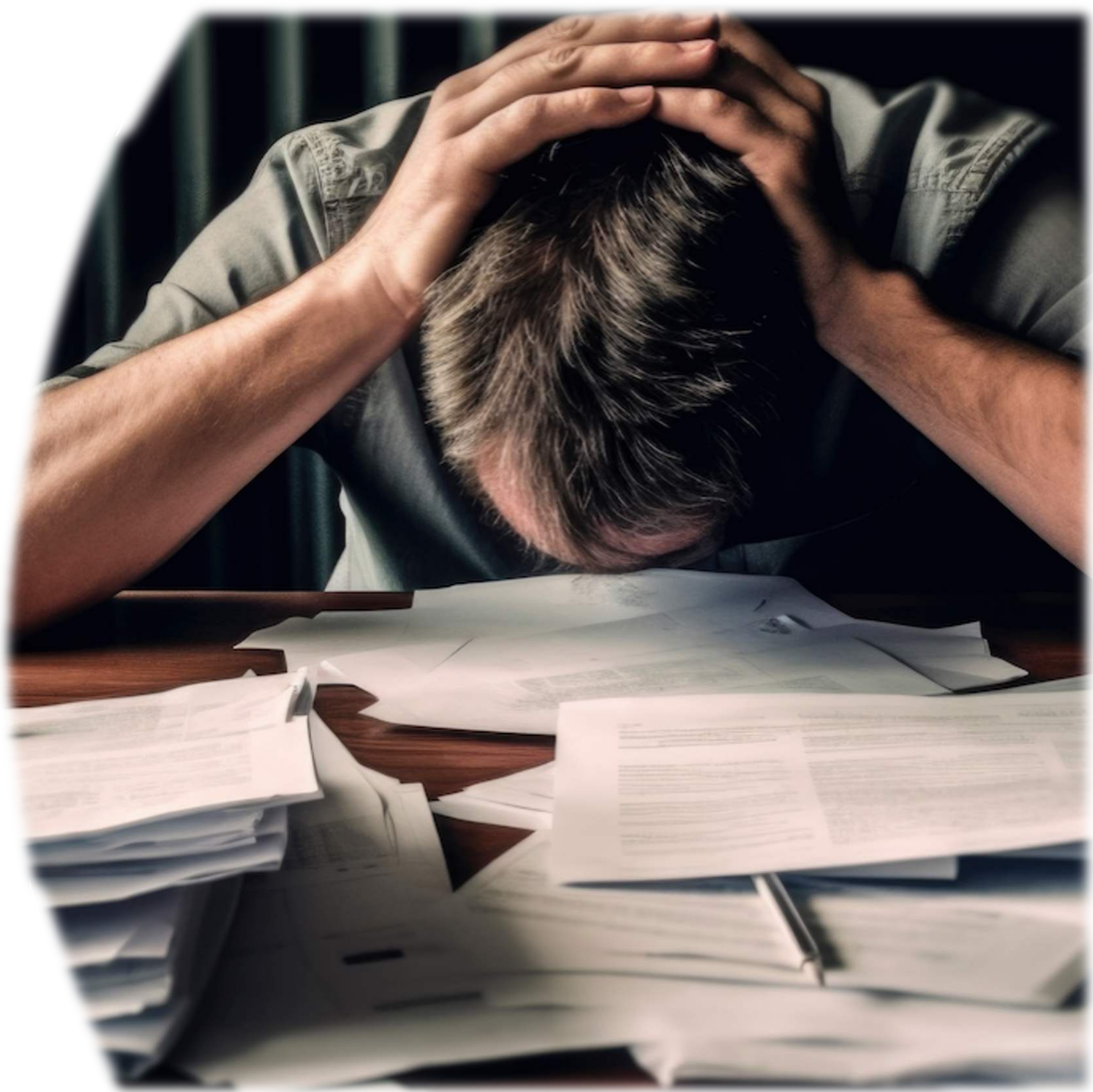
Types of Boundaries

- Emotional
- Physical
- Sexual
- Time
- Space
- Financial



How Trauma Affects Boundaries

- Negatively impacts feelings of worth
- Triggers disempowerment
- Creates conflict aversion
- Causes people-pleasing
- Triggers guilt and shame
- Results in learned helplessness



How Systemic Discrimination Affects Financial Boundaries

- Power imbalance, inequity
- Disempowerment
- Fear of retaliation
- Cultural reinforcement of the status quo



Inappropriate Verbal Behaviors

- Derogatory/demeaning comments based on gender, sex & stereotypes
- Crude or offensive language, name calling or gender slurs
- Comments about clothing if also mentioning physical attributes
- Requests for sexual favors
- Repeated requests for dates
- Terms of endearment
- Sexual innuendos

Inappropriate Non-Verbal Behaviors

- Lewd hand gestures
- “Elevator eyes”
- Blowing kisses, licking lips
- Winking in a suggestive manner
- Touching or groping yourself in display of sexual innuendo
- Patting, pinching, or grabbing
- Unsolicited back rubs or clothing adjustments
- Cornering or blocking doorways/pathways
- Photos, drawings or cartoons of a pornographic sexual nature

Inappropriate Electronic Behaviors

- Sexting (messages/pictures/video with sexual content)
- Cyber stalking
- Harassment & threats via all forms of electronic communication:
 - Email
 - Messaging
 - Online/intranet postings
 - Social media



Inappropriate Social Behaviors

- Asking somebody on a date more than one time
- Supervisors having poor boundaries and giving better treatment to those supervises who socialize with them
- What else?



Sexism

- Definition
- How does this occur?
 - Language
 - Opportunity/discrimination
 - Treatment/assigned tasks
 - Pay & benefits
 - What else?
- What can be done?



Anti-Harassment Trainings

- Company's Policies & Procedures
 - Standards and expectations
- Regular trainings
- Communication with Supervisor, HR, EAP & Legal



Reporting Protocol

- Direct communication
- Followed by written email or memo
- Report to:
 - Direct supervisor
 - A department head
 - Human Resources
 - An Ethics Officer
- Anonymous reports are accepted



Encourage Reporting

- Management trainings
- Supervisory meetings
- Communications
 - Newsletters
 - Signs
- Incentives
- How else?



Resolution Outside the Employer

- Department of Human Rights
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)
- [US Department of Justice: Civil Rights Division](#)



Empower the Bystander

Activity with Case Examples:

- What would you do?
 - Ignore the situation
 - Seek help
 - Say something right then
 - Speak to the person in private



Retaliation Prohibition on Reporting

- Whistleblower Act
- Illinois Human Rights Act
- State Officials & Employee Ethics Act
- False reporting can result in disciplinary action, including termination



Facilitate a Positive Workplace Culture

- Equality in treatment & opportunity
- Respect
- Civility
- Affirmation
- What else?



Techniques and Clinical Recommendations for Therapists Working with Clients Dealing with Sexual Harassment

Key Techniques and Approaches



Clinical Considerations

- Trauma
 - Trauma History
 - Depression and suicidal ideation
 - Anxiety and panic attacks
- Self-Esteem
 - Empowerment
 - Assertiveness
- Substance Misuse
- Eating Disordered Behaviors
- What else?



Connection Between Sexual Harassment and Mental Health Conditions

Harassment can trigger or exacerbate:

- Trauma
 - PTSD
 - Acute Stress Disorder
- Depression and Anxiety
- Self-Esteem Issues
- Substance Use Disorders
- Eating Disorders



Create a Safe and Supportive Environment

- Establish a trusting relationship/positive rapport
- Foster a non-oppressive and inclusive environment
- Use trauma-informed care
- Appreciate Intersectionality
- Reintegrate the client before the session ends
- Provide resources for in-between sessions





Always believe the client

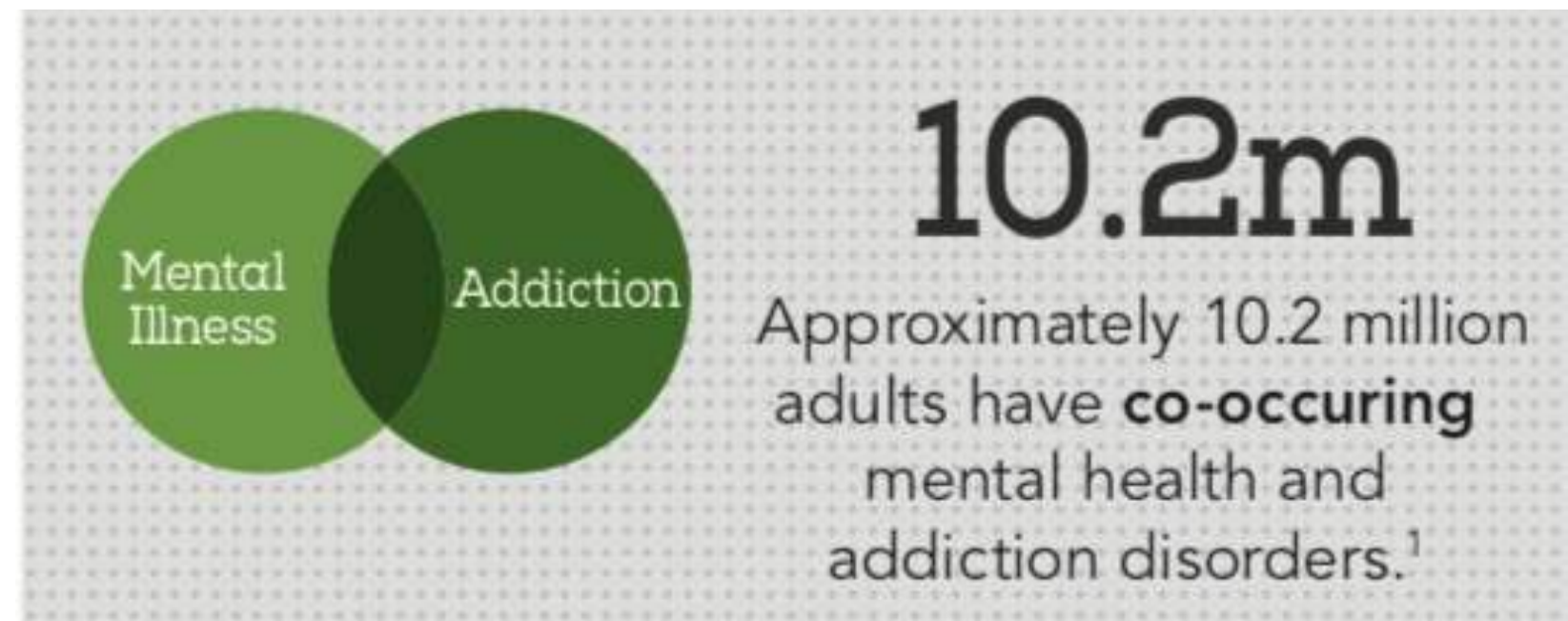
- 95% of female victims of sexual harassment(abuse/assault) are telling the truth
- Don't play Devil's Advocate
- Provide empathy, validation and normalization



Assessment and History Gathering

- Psychosocial history
- Past experiences of abuse or trauma
- Evaluate the client for any
- Substance use history
- Pre-existing physical health conditions

Dual Diagnosis Statistics*



- According to the [National Institute on Drug Abuse](#)



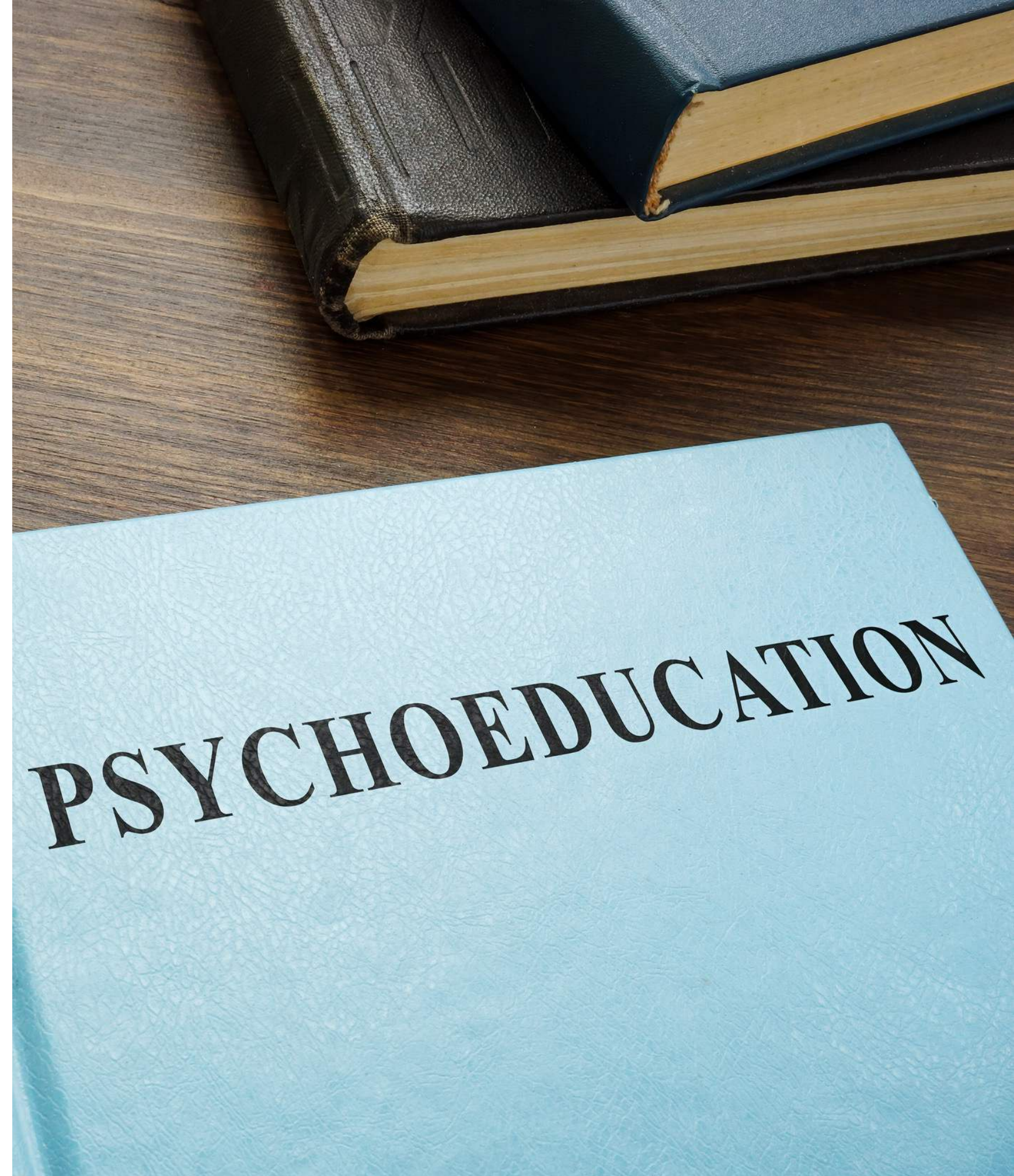
Risk factors

- Suicidal ideation
- Homicidal ideation
- Substance Misuse
- Self-Harm
- Self-sabotage
- Dissociation
- Domestic Violence



Psychoeducation

- What is sexual harassment
- What are your roles and responsibilities
- Resources



Develop a Safety Plan

- Create a plan for managing triggers and flashbacks.
- Ensure the client has resources for immediate support if needed.



15-Minute Break

1:30 – 1:45 ET





Holistic & Integrated Approach

- Mind
- Body
- Spirit
- Relationships
- Work

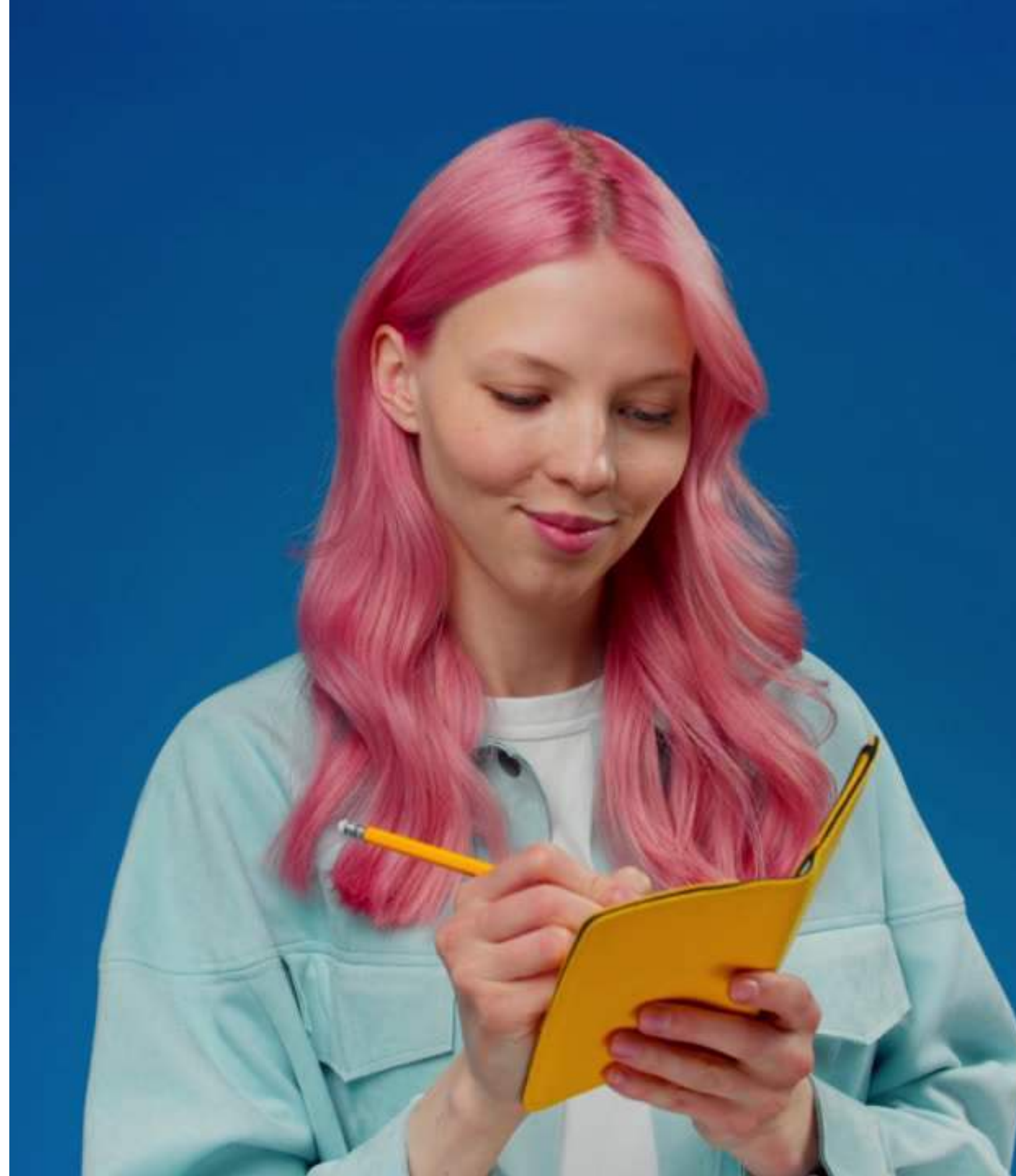


Psychodynamic Psychotherapy

- Understanding themes & patterns
- Making the unconscious conscious
- Working through defense mechanisms
 - a. Denial
 - b. Rationalization
 - c. Intellectualization
 - d. More

Narrative Therapy

**Become the author of own
story**



Family Systems Therapy

- How the trauma is impacting:
 - a. Partnership
 - b. Parenting
 - c. Others



Assertiveness Training/Self-Advocacy

- Role play
- Words matter
- Body language
- Tone
- No means no
- Empowerment and Autonomy





Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

- Paying Attention to Self-Talk
- Restructuring Negative Belief Systems
 - “No one will believe me”.
 - “This is my fault.”
- Thought Records
- Thought Stopping



Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)

- Short-term protocol
- Understanding the root trauma
- Understanding the negative belief about oneself attached to that trauma
- Reprocessing the experience through:
 - Eye Movement
 - Sound
 - Tapping
 - Safe Place & Container Exercises

Mindfulness & Somatic Therapies

- Yoga
- Meditation
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Teach coping and relaxation strategies
- Grounding techniques





Practice Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

- Moment-to-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and environment
- Rooted in the here-and-now, taking life one day at a time
- Noticing our thoughts and feelings without judging them
- Allows us to respond, rather than react to stressors



Benefits of Mindfulness

- Enhances relationships
- Improves job performance
- Reduces chronic pain
- Increases focus and attention, and improves decision-making skills
- Improves creativity, memory, and cognitive flexibility
- Improves mood, empathy, and overall quality of life
- Boosts immune system

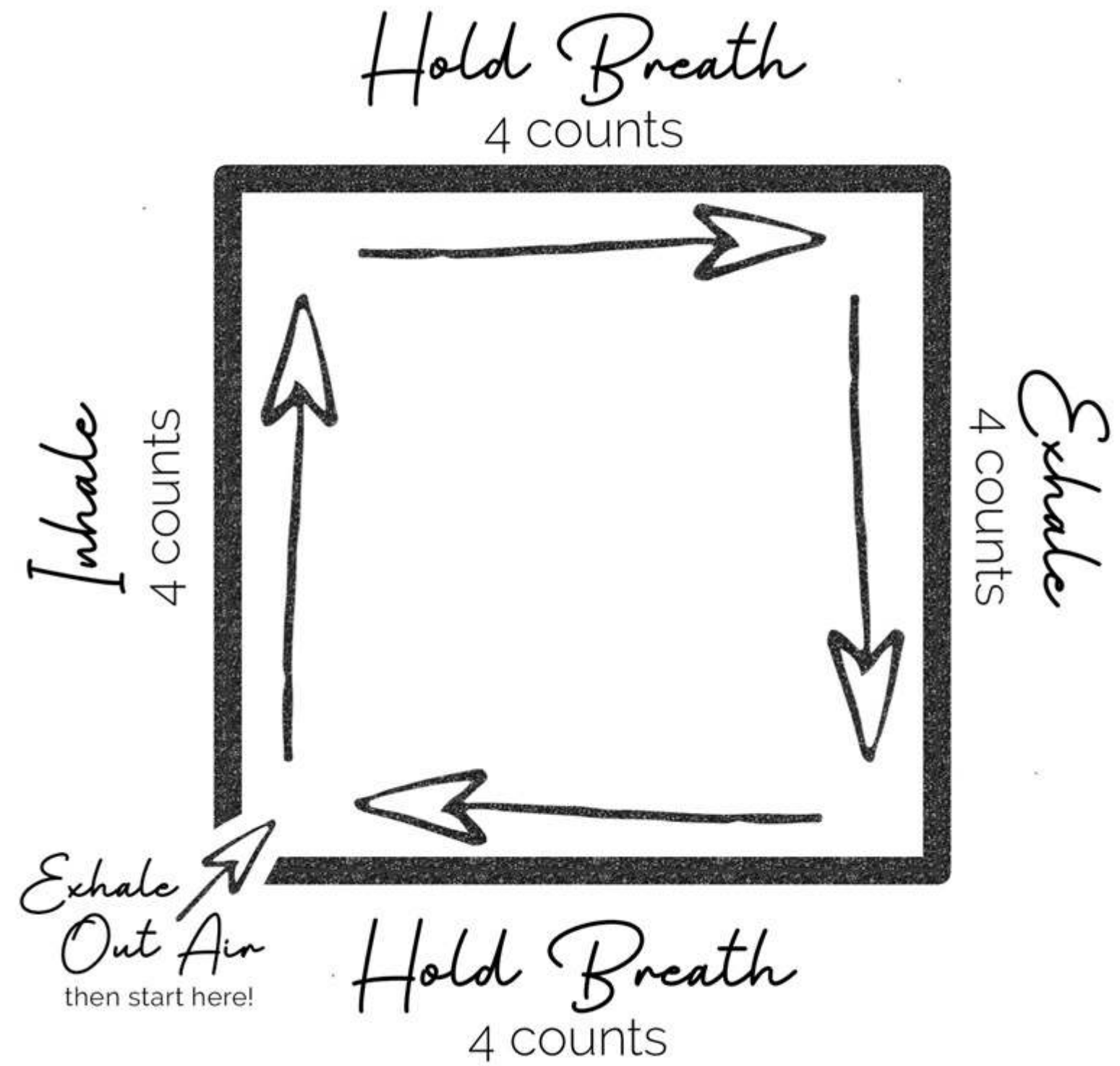


Benefits of Mindfulness, cont.

- Decreases anxiety, stress, depression, tiredness, and irritability
- Increases emotional intelligence
- Encourages healthier eating habits
- Improves heart and circulatory health
- Aids in recovery from substance use
- Improves sleep
- Increases financial well-being



Square Breathing



Strategies to Increase Mindfulness

- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Unplugging from technology
- Listening & using your senses
- Yoga
- Stillness
- Mindful eating & spending
- Breathing
- Body scans
- Positive mantras
- Connection to nature
- Meditation
- Grounding practices
- Morning routine



Detachment

**Feelings are
waves of energy
which we can
choose to surf,
rather than
allowing them to
overcome us.**

ARLENE ENGLANDER



Detachment as a Mindfulness Practice

- Pause
- Connect with the breath
- Get grounded
- Zoom out
- Imagine a protective barrier
- Unhook or unplug
- Healthy compartmentalization



Detach From

- Your own negative emotions like fear, anxiety, anger and sadness
- The negative emotions of others
- Expectations
- Outcome (embrace uncertainty)



Cultivate Emotional Intelligence



Mindfulness & Emotional Intelligence



**Know your
emotions**



**Manage your
emotions**



Motivate yourself



**Recognize &
understand the other
people's emotions**



**Manage relationships
(manage the
emotions of others)**

Develop Your Emotional Intelligence

- Know your emotions
- Manage your emotions
- Motivate yourself
- Recognize and understand other people's emotions
- Manage relationships (manage the emotions of others)





Low EQ

- Emotionally triggered
- Aggressive, passive or passive aggressive
- Participation in:
 - Scapegoating
 - Blaming
 - Bullying
 - Gossiping

High EQ

- Low insecurity
- High openness
- Assertive
- Self-aware
- Inclusive
- Respectful
- Takes responsibility for actions



Improve the Communication Process

- **First seek to understand** the other party
- **Recognize** that you may not be understood
- **Notice when your emotional brain** has been activated
- **Observe your process**
- **Watch** the other's reaction to you as a way toward self-awareness
- **Take a break** and regroup if needed
- **Seek help** when needed
- **Re-engage** when you are not triggered



Practical Solutions

- Become rooted in the present
- Let go of defensiveness
- Take responsibility
- Appreciate the power of empathy
- Practice flexibility, adaptability, & compromise





Support

“ Alone we can do so little,
together we can do so much.

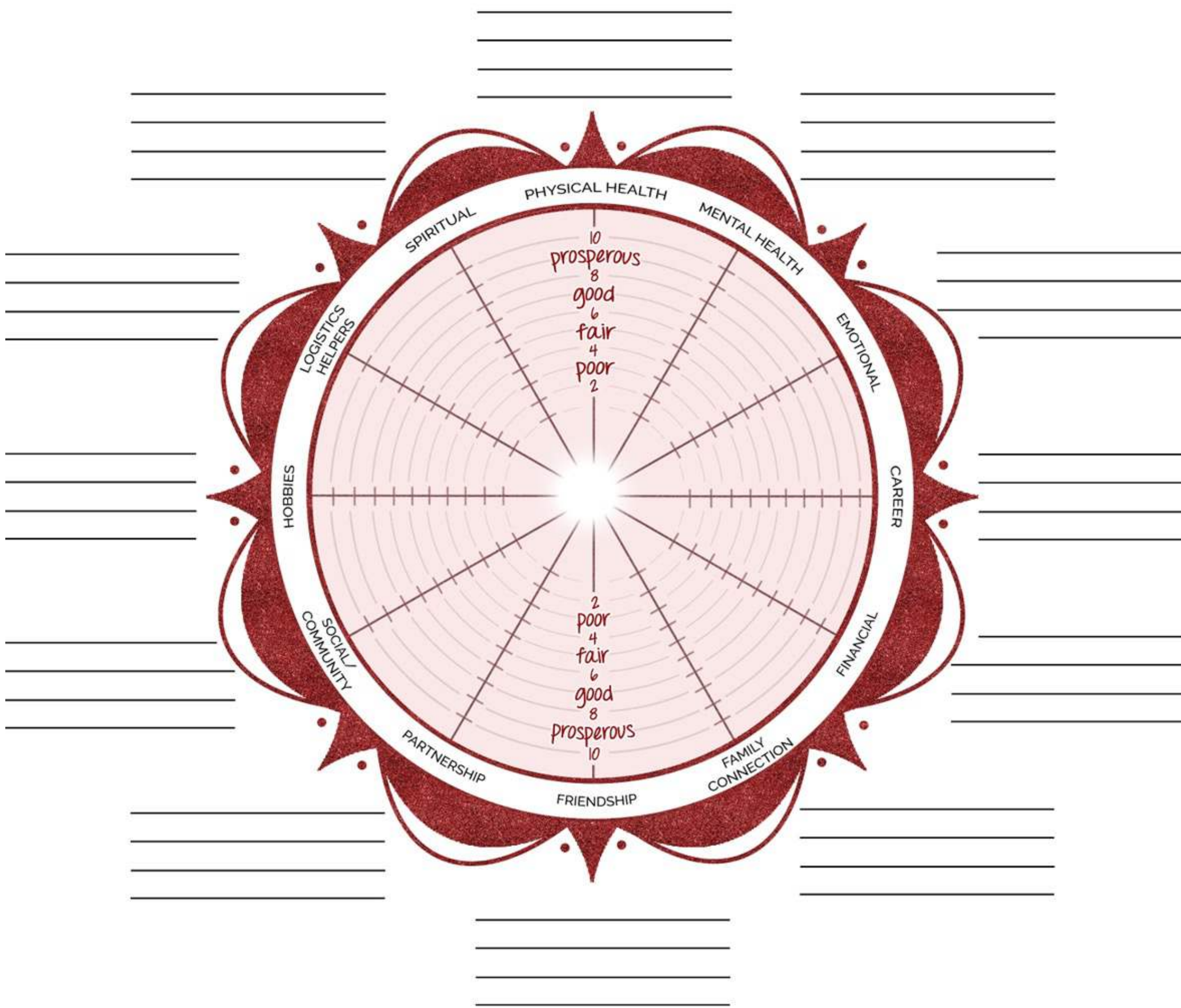
”

Helen Keller

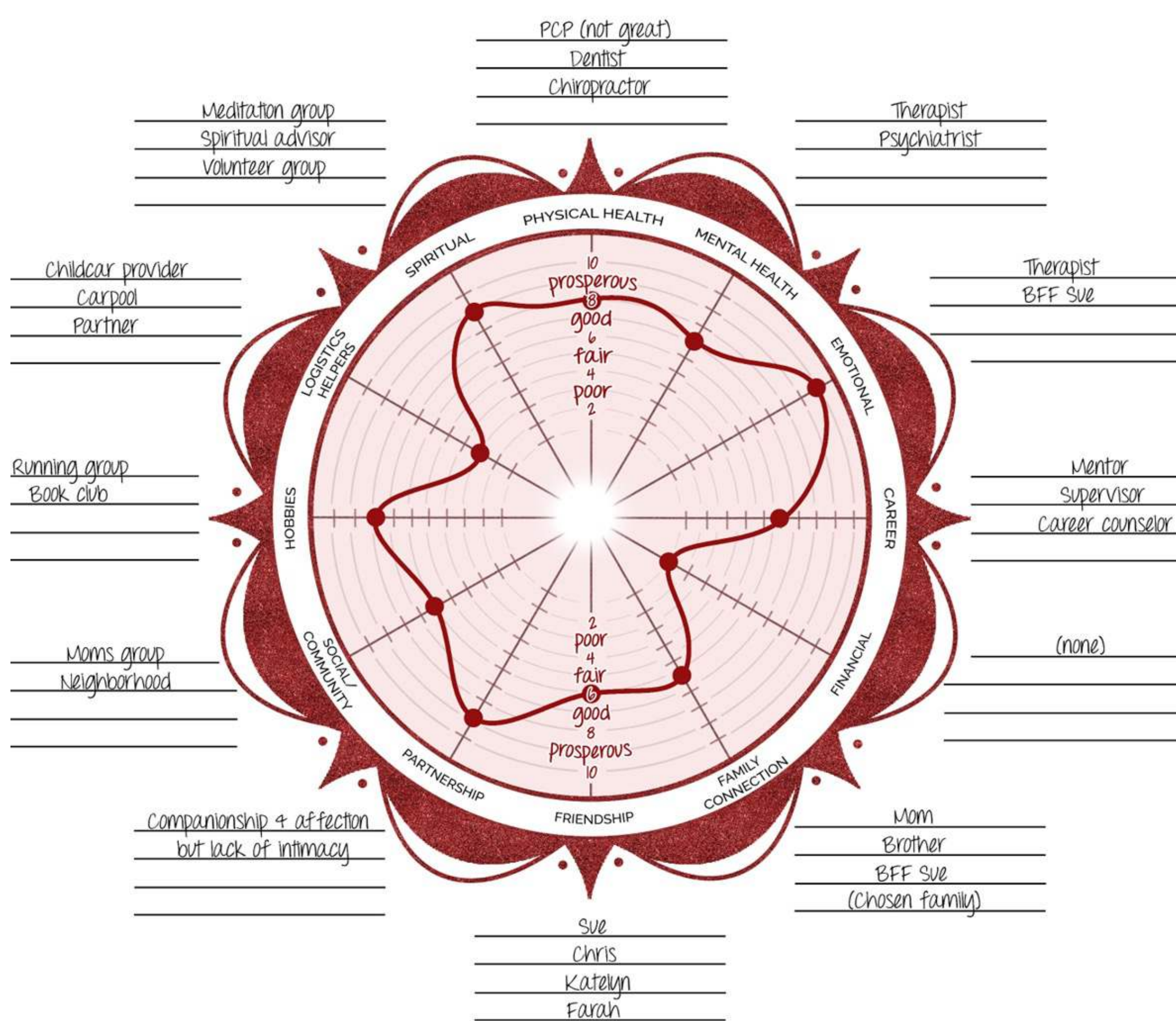
Barriers to Accessing Support

- Fear (difficulty trusting)
- Pride
- Shame or stigma
- Guilt
- Fear of imposition
- Low self-esteem, not feeling deserving
- Learned helplessness
- Hopelessness
- Loss of power and control (ego)
- Loss of credit (ego)
- Early life messages
- Expense
- Introversion or shyness

Support Network Wheel



Sample Completed Support Network Wheel



Access Support

- Avoid isolating with your feelings
- Connect with loved ones
- Ask for what you need
- Access community
- Utilize teletherapy



Self-Care

“You yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection.”

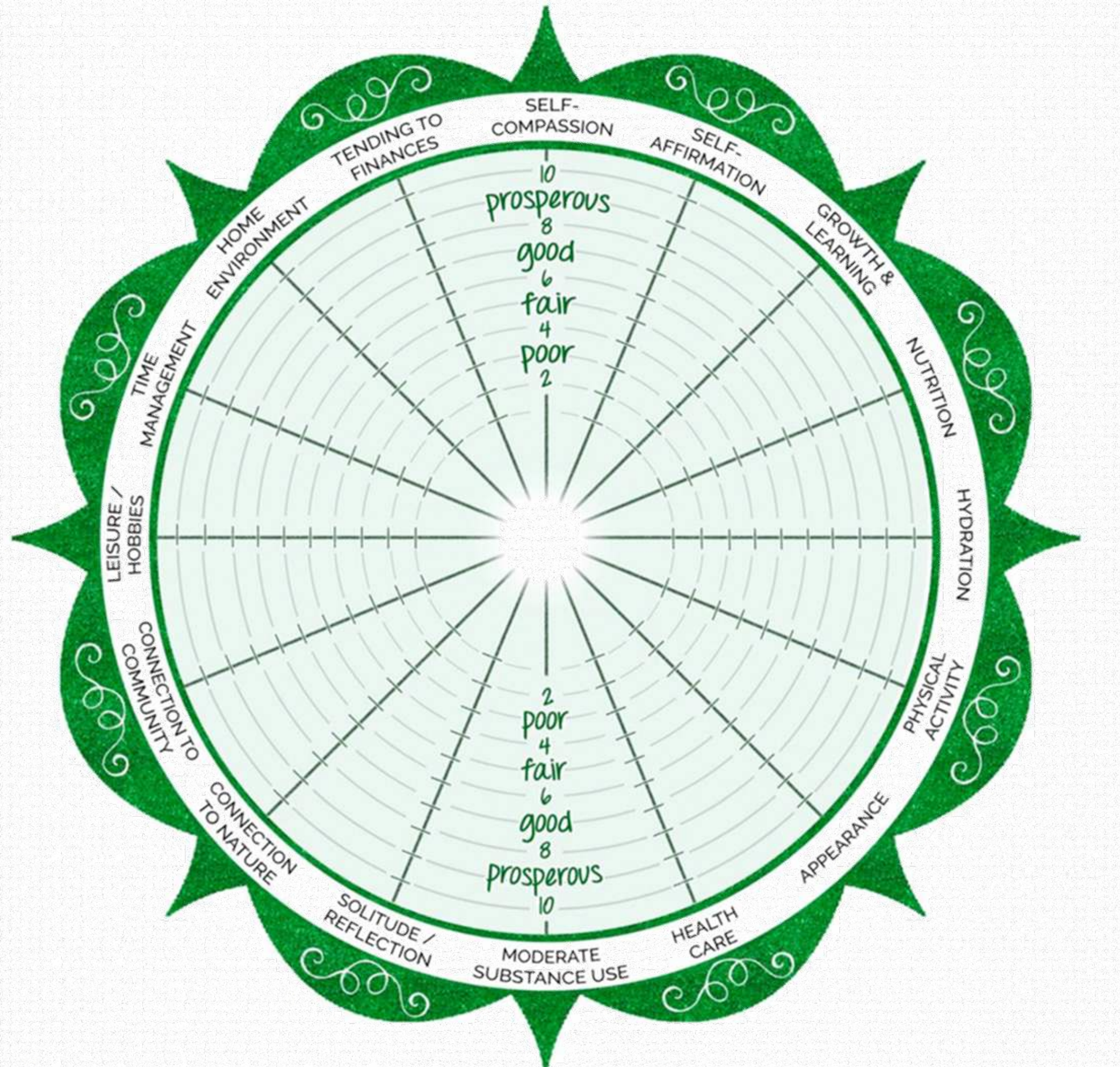
~ Buddha



Prioritize Your Own Well-Being

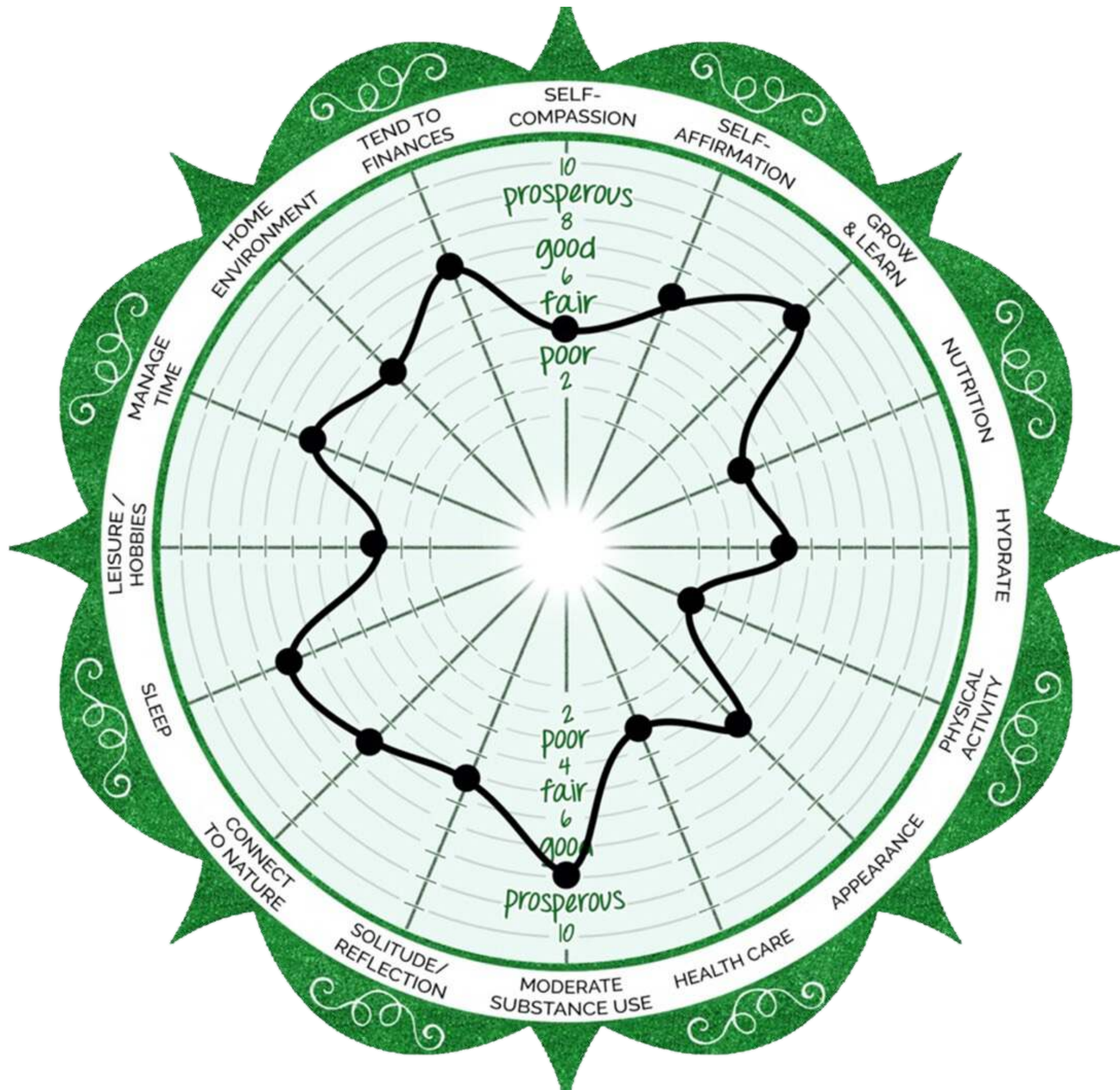
- Set healthy limits and boundaries with assertive communication
- Honor your feelings, don't judge or ignore them
- Practice self-forgiveness
- Honor your personal priorities
- Keep asking, "Am I making the choices I want?"





Self-Care Wheel





Sample Completed Self-Care Wheel

Guiding & Supporting Client Through the Process of Reporting Or Not

- Be mindful of countertransference issues
- Support them where they are at
- Respect their choice
- Support them in practicing self-compassion



Resources for Individuals Experiencing Sexual Harassment



**Mental Health
Resources for
Individuals, Couples &
Families
And Workplaces**



Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

The EEOC provides guidelines and support for individuals experiencing workplace harassment, including filing complaints and understanding their rights.

[EEOC Website](https://www.eeoc.gov)



National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC)

NSVRC offers resources, training, and technical assistance to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and violence.

[NSVRC Website](#)

The logo for the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) features the lowercase letters "nsvrc" in a bold, orange, sans-serif font. Below the text is a horizontal bar composed of three segments: a blue segment on the left, an orange segment in the middle, and a blue segment on the right.

National Sexual Violence
Resource Center

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)

RAINN operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline and offers resources for survivors of sexual violence, including legal assistance and counseling.

[RAINN Website](#)

RAINN

Equal Rights Advocates

Provides a Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Toolkit, which includes legal rights information and steps to take if experiencing harassment.

[Equal Rights Advocates](#)



EQUAL RIGHTS
A D V O C A T E S

Office of Justice Programs (OJP)

Offers publications and resources related to sexual assault awareness and prevention, including support for victims and policy recommendations.

[OJP Website](#)



Takeaways

- What information did you learn today?



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