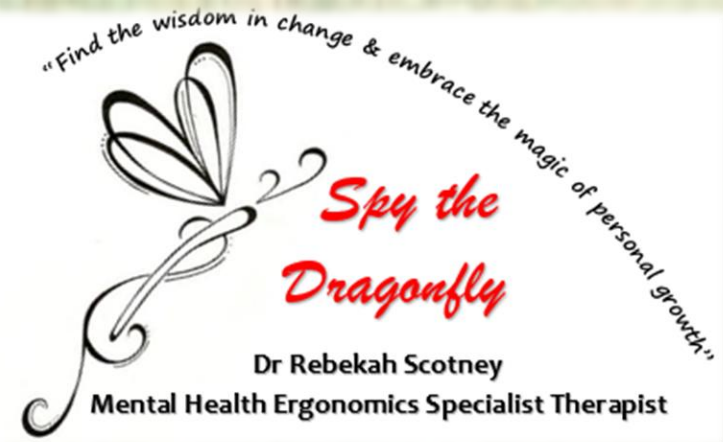


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RSI of the Emotional Self


Sustainable Wellbeing & Mental Health Ergonomics for Companion Animal Advocates

Happiness

"Find the wisdom in change & embrace the magic of personal growth"

Spy the Dragonfly

Dr Rebekah Scotney
Mental Health Ergonomics



Compassion Fatigue...



- When I started work in the animal sciences, I was overwhelmed by emotions
 - Nobody told me about the feelings of
 - Guilt...
 - Sadness...
 - Anger...
- And nobody told me (or warned me) how difficult it would be to talk about how my work made me feel



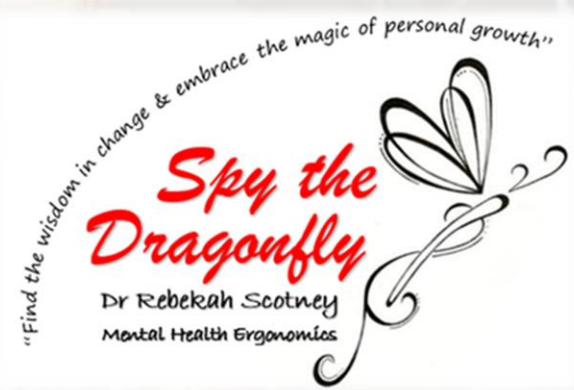
Compassion Fatigue



The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet (Remen, 1996)

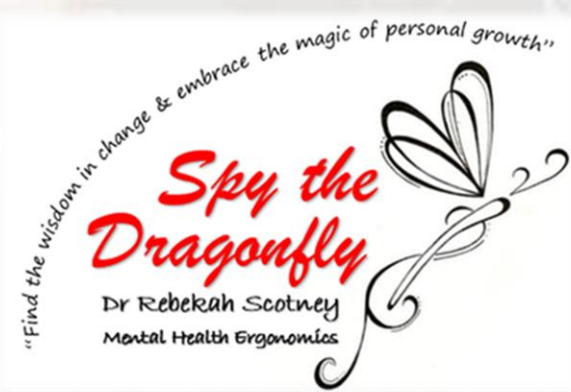
- Our Vulnerability allows us to connect with others, and is the 'gateway' to a range of experiences and emotions (joy, love, kindness, contentment, gratitude, trust, sadness, belief, frustration, anger, helplessness, and so on...)
- Compassion Fatigue results in numbing or numbing behaviours
- Numbing is not selective i.e. if we overly distance from the 'negative' emotions and experiences, we become unable to enjoy the 'positive' ones (Carrie La Jeunesse)

Compassion Fatigue



- Our Empathy: 'felt responses' to stories, circumstances, injuries and emotions of others.
 - Requires emotional investment and engagement
- Our Compassion: the desire we have and/or the action we take to relieve the suffering of others.
 - Takes energy
- Compassion fatigue is about work-related primary or secondary exposure to extreme or traumatic stressful events and is considered two-fold:
 1. Burnout (BO): measured by exhaustion, frustration, anger and depression; and,
 2. Secondary traumatic stress (STS): negative effects of secondary traumatic stress include fear, sleep difficulties, intrusive images or avoiding reminders of traumatic experiences

Compassion Fatigue v's Burnout

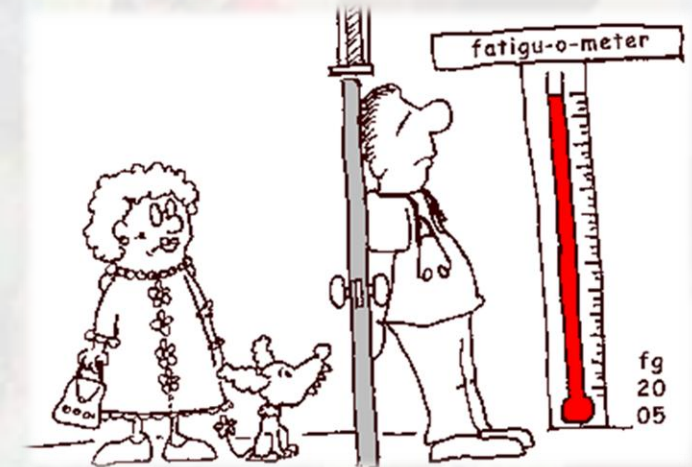


Compassion Fatigue:

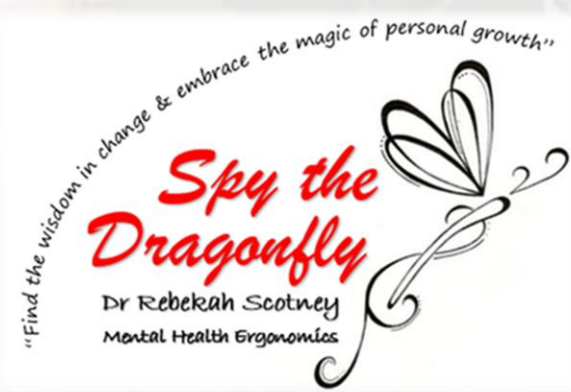
- Evolves specifically from the work we do; the relationship between us and our animals (or colleagues, or clients)
- In contrast to Burnout, those who are suffering from Compassion Fatigue continue to try to provide care when personal reserves are depleted
 - The caregiver is often unable to detach or obtain perspective in order to heal themselves
 - Those suffering Compassion Fatigue generally still love their jobs

However,

- Self care and the quality of care for others can be/are compromised
- Can change jobs but CF will follow you



Caregiver responses



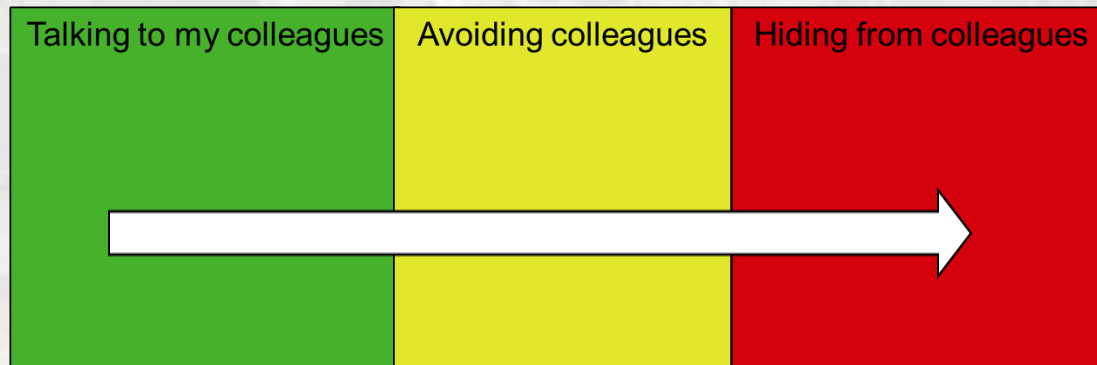
Responses and reactions may vary over time

- Can be cumulative

Stress and coping strategies translate from personal life to work life, and vice versa

- Some strategies will work for you, and some will not
- Some strategies will work for you and not for others
- Some strategies will work sometimes and not at other times

IMPORTANT TO RECOGNISE WARNING SIGNS



Caregiver Stressors?

What are yours?



LOOK OUT, EVERYBODY! I'M
GONNA BE CRABBY FOR
THE REST OF THE DAY!!



Caregiver Responses

Cognitive Presentations

Poor concentration

Irritability

Inability to make decisions

Racing or intrusive thoughts

Excessive worrying and catastrophising

Physical Presentations

Exhaustion

Headaches and tension

Insomnia

Backache (overactive adrenal gland)

Persistent cold or sore throat

Emotional Presentations

Easily upset or angered

Narcissism

Sense of hopelessness

Diminished sense of enjoyment of life

Helplessness

Behavioural Presentations

Increased use of alcohol or drugs

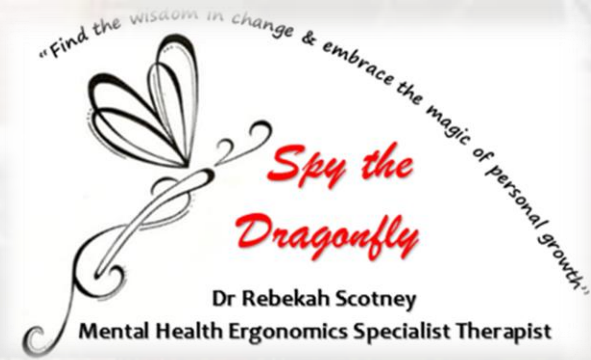
Absenteeism

Isolation from others

Non-participation in teamwork

Difficulty separating work from home

Red Flags for Supervisors



Behaviour is unusual or inappropriate (e.g. aggression, avoidance, withdrawal, 'odd')



Cognitive difficulties (e.g. poor concentration, memory lapses, confusion, poor decision making)



Continuing **emotional** signs (e.g. negativity, over-reactions, irritability, outbursts)



Accompanying **physical** signs (e.g. headaches, hangovers, fatigue, significant weight changes, chest pain)

THE COST POOR MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE

Stress related compensation claims have doubled in recent years, costing around \$10.9 billion each year

Stress Claims \$145.9 million

Mental health is the 3rd biggest health problem in Australia, after heart disease and cancer

Absenteeism \$4.7 billion

Presenteeism \$6.1 billion

On average, someone with untreated depression will need three to four days of additional sick leave each month.

Less than half of those experiencing these conditions seek support.

83% of respondents reported experiencing stigma in some form as a result of their mood disorder.

86% of employees with stress and depression prefer to suffer in silence

Many people fear that disclosing a mental illness will lead to workplace exclusion and compromised career prospects.

The FLIPside:

Compassion Satisfaction



Compassion Satisfaction:

- Positive aspects of working as a caregiver
 - the 'payment' for caring
- It is about the pleasure you derive from being able to do the work you do everyday
 - Focusing on what you did well during your shift/this week/this month?
 - It felt good when.....
- Our Counterbalance mechanism:
 - Sense of accomplishment, joy, achievement...



So how do we balance ourselves?

"Find the wisdom in change & embrace the magic of personal growth"
Spy the Dragonfly
Dr Rebekah Scotney
Mental Health Ergonomics



What is resiliency?



the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties

"bouncing back" from difficult experiences.

the psychological strength to cope with stress and hardship. It is the mental reservoir of strength that people are able to call on in times of need to carry them through without falling apart



the capacity to cultivate strengths to positively meet the challenges of life

the ability of a substance or object to spring back into shape

the ability to overcome challenges of all kinds—trauma, tragedy, personal crises, plain 'ole' life problems—and bounce back stronger, wiser, and more personally powerful.

Our Psychological Bucket

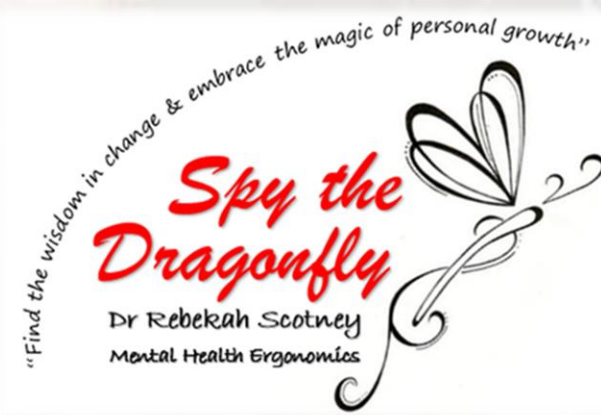
Psychological bucket



- Do what you love
 - Make use of the transition periods in your day
 - Practice being mindful
 - Be wary of reflecting on feedback
-
- Ilana Nathan – Resilience is about more than bouncing back

What fills your bucket?

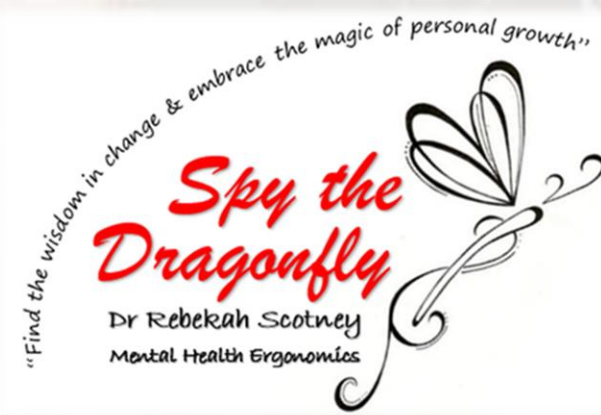
Grit...what is it?



- Grit is passion and perseverance for long term and meaningful goals.
- The ability to persist in something you feel passionate about and persevere when you face obstacles.
- Not about intense emotions or infatuation, it's about having direction and commitment.
- Research indicates that the ability to be gritty - to stick with things that are important to you and bounce back from failure - is an essential component of success independent of and beyond what talent and intelligence contribute (Duckworth 2016).

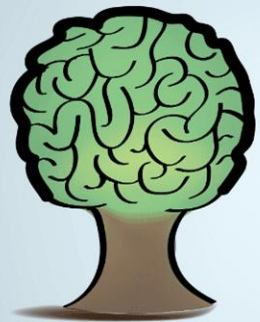


Grit comes from a Growth Mindset



In a nutshell...what you focus on, you get more of!

*Growth Mindset: is the belief that the ability to learn is not fixed and improvement can happen through effort and perseverance



GROWTH MINDSET

VS



FIXED MINDSET

Grit is natural practice of someone who has a Growth Mindset:

- 'If I work hard I can get better at y or z, so let's get to work!'
- Grit is the 'I love a challenge!' v's 'This is too hard'.

How do we promote a Growth Mindset?



In our workplace and in our communities?

We must first practice it ourselves!

- Set high standards and a nurturing environment: reach for the good feeling in a safe and supportive environment
- Encourage people to hear criticism and learn from it
- Not 'judge-and-be-judged' BUT 'learn-and-help-learn'
- Model a growth mindset in our everyday lives

Fixed Mindset vs. Growth Mindset

Based on the work of Dr. Carol Dweck

I believe that my **[Intelligence, Personality, Character]** is inherent and static. Locked-down or fixed. My potential is determined at birth. It doesn't change.

Fixed
Mindset



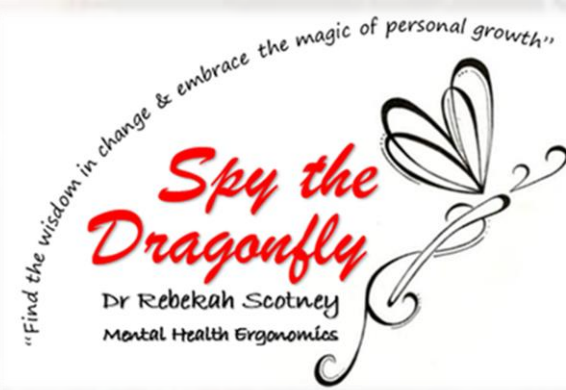
Avoid failure
Desire to Look smart
Avoids challenges
Stick to what they know
Feedback and criticism is personal
They don't change or improve

I believe that my **[Intelligence, Personality, Character]** can be continuously developed. My true potential is unknown and unknowable.

Growth
Mindset



Desire continuous learning
Confront uncertainties.
Embracing challenges
Not afraid to fail
Put lots of effort to learn
Feedback is about current capabilities



“Some people get twenty years experience, while others get one year of experience twenty times in a row” Angela Duckworth

How does this relate to Compassion Fatigue?



Enthusiasm Stage:

- we are committed, involved, and available...
- ready to problem solve...
- ready to make a difference...
- we willingly put in extra hours...
- our enthusiasm overflows...
- we volunteer...
- we are willing to go the extra mile and often do so without prompting...
- "I'll do that!!"

How does this relate to Compassion Fatigue?



Irritability Stage:

We begin to see the imperfect nature of the systems and people around us...

- we distance ourselves from clients, coworkers, family and friends
- begin to cut corners...
- begin to belittle our colleagues and clients...
- we talk unfairly about their challenges...
- we denigrate their efforts...
- the use of humor is sometimes strained...
- we daydream or become distracted when clients or colleagues are speaking with us...
- oversights and mistakes begin to occur...
- we may notice our anger, cynicism, diminished creativity, and sadness...

How does this relate to Compassion Fatigue?



Withdrawal Stage:

- our enthusiasm turns sour...
- we lose our ability to see students as individuals rather they become irritants...
- complaints may be made about our work and we might have problems in our personal life...
- we are tired all the time...
- we no longer wish to talk about work and may not even admit to what we do...
- we neglect our family, our coworkers, our students and ourselves...
- our shield gets thicker and thicker to block our pain and sadness...
- we may notice our inability to embrace complexity, chronic exhaustion/physical illness, difficulty empathizing/feeling to numb to other's pain, and absenteeism.

How does this relate to Compassion Fatigue?



Zombie Stage:

- our hopelessness turns to rage...
- we begin to hate people...
- we even hate our coworkers if they dare question us...
- others become incompetent or ignorant in our eyes...
- we develop a disdain for humor...and have no time for fun...
- we may have a sense that we can't ever do enough, an inflated sense of importance related to our work, hyper-vigilance/sleeplessness, and a sense of persecution...

How does this relate to Compassion Fatigue?



Renewal v's Pathology Stage:

- If we have not addressed this cycle earlier, we come to a fork in the road where we either continue deeper into compassion fatigue to a place of pathology and victimisation (overwhelmed, leaving the profession, changing positions and repeating the cycle, somatic illness, chronic symptoms) or,
- We take a turn towards maturation and renewal (hardiness, resiliency, transformation) – Growth Mindset and GRITTIENESS!

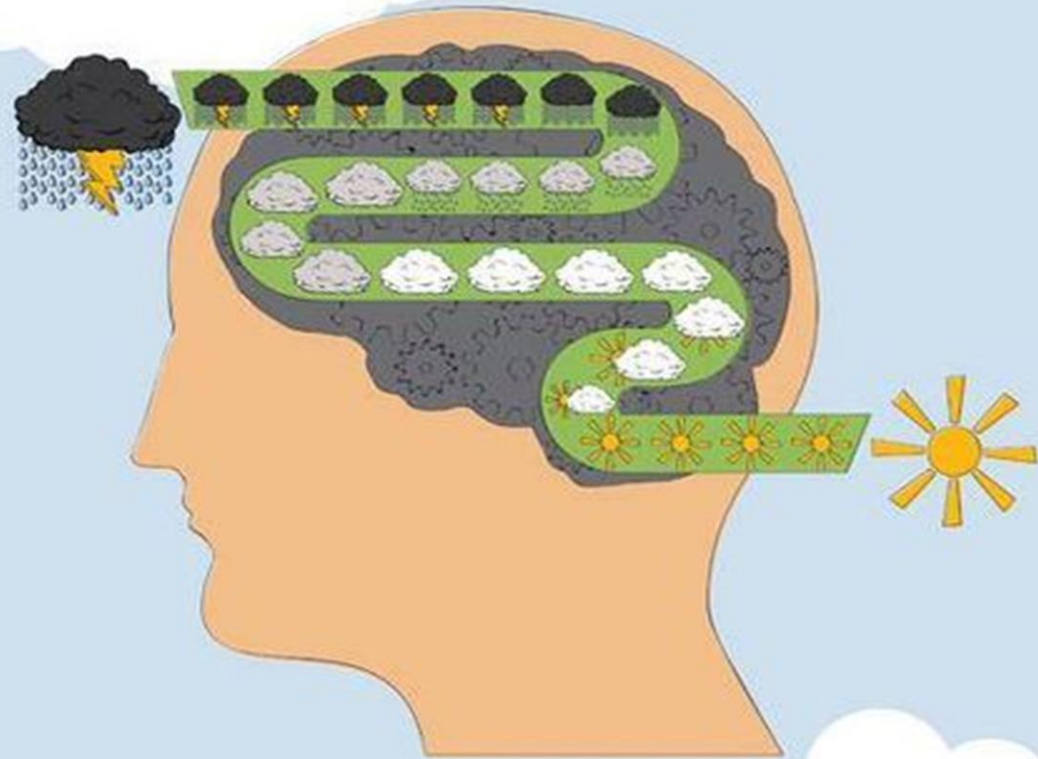
“As people think, so shall they be.”
Bible (Proverbs 23:7)

“Men feel disturbed not by things, but by the views which they take of them.” Epictetus
(First century philosopher)

“We don’t see things as they are, we see them as we are.” Anais Nin

“...for there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.”
Shakespeare (Hamlet Act 2, scene 2, lines 249–250)

If you can't **CHANGE** it,



change the way you
THINK about it

“Find the wisdom in change & embrace the magic of personal growth”

Spy the Dragonfly

Dr Rebekah Scotney
Mental Health Ergonomics

The Good News...



- one can learn skills and mindsets that change the trajectory towards compassion satisfaction at any stage in the cycle
- one of the goals of this presentation is for you all to understand the power of mindsets and grit
- skills in mindset can be learned and used to proactively address ways to avoid compassion fatigue and,
- when compassion fatigue does arise, we can address it early with confidence and support

Positive Psychology – learning to THRIVE



Engagement

Being interested and involved in life.

Positive Emotions

Experiencing positive feelings such as joy, calmness and satisfaction.

Accomplishment

The belief and ability to do things that matter most to us, achieving goals, and having a sense of mastery.



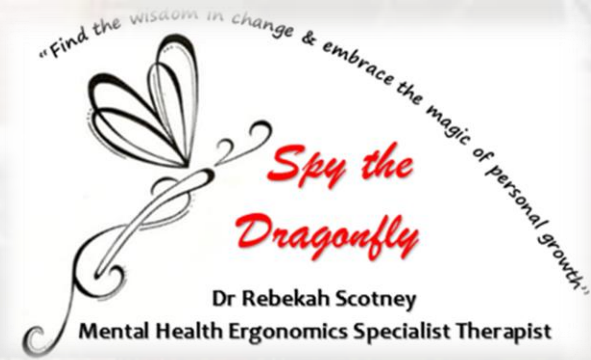
Relationships

Feeling loved, valued, and connected with others.

Meaning

Having a sense of direction, feeling that our lives are valuable and worthwhile, and connecting to something bigger than ourselves.

Here's the Kicker – innate values



Am I Doing What Matters in A Way That Matters?

“Away”
Doing things that are not in line with who you want to be

“Towards”
Doing the things that matter, being the person you want to be

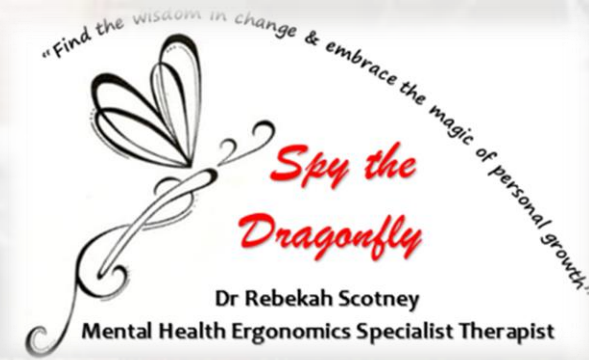
Choice Point

Hooks
Difficult/unhelpful thoughts, feelings, memories that ‘hook you’

Helpers
Values, strengths, skills that help you do the things that matter

Challenging Situation

Strategies for coping,leading to healing



Communication; a dying art

Initiate workplace communications

Participate in formal and informal debriefings

Don't be afraid to put your hand up and say;
"I can't do this today"



Strategies for coping,leading to healing

Reflective Practice; a new horizon

Experience:

- Thoughts
- Feelings
- Actions

Return to Experience:

- Analyse with compassion, non-judgmentally
- Recognise – beliefs, attitudes & values
- Identify patterns in actions, thoughts & beliefs

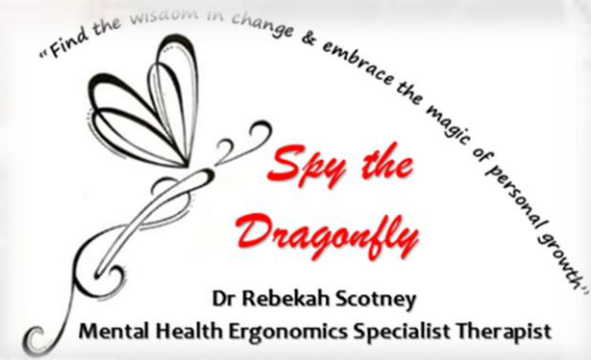
Identify New Ways:

- Behaving
- Thinking
- Feelings
- Actions

Reflection: is a generic term for those intellectual and affective activities which individuals use to explore their experiences and gain new understandings or insights (Boud et.al.)



Strategies for coping,leading to healing



Learn about Grief and Mourning

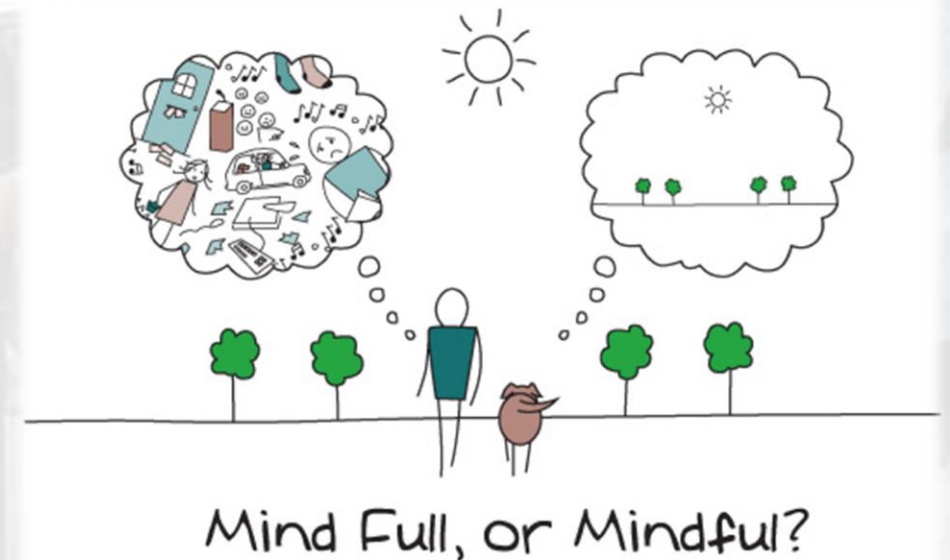
- 5 Stages
- Education is power

Focus on successes

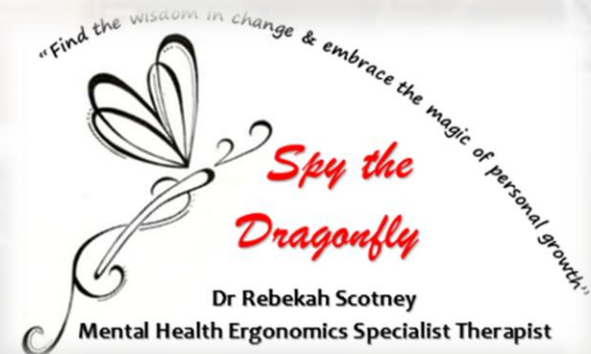
- Alleviating pain, stress and anxiety in our patients
- Curing illness or injury
- Educating clients
- Being a supportive colleague

Have a positive attitude

- You can make a difference
- Consistently work at being positive and involved



Strategies for coping,leading to healing



Work/Life balance

- Interests outside of work
- Time with friends and family
- Spiritual life

Be able to say "NO"

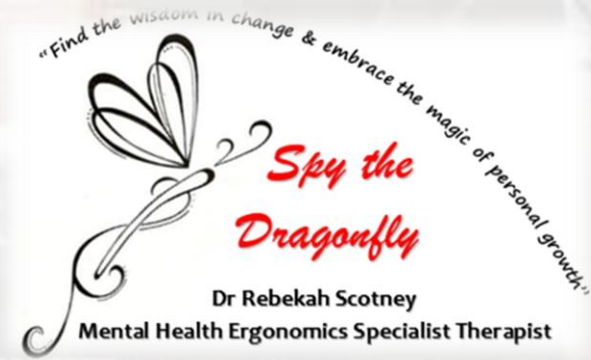
- Set limits on what you will do
- Protect your home life
- Leave work at work

Be realistic

- Can't do it all – know your limits
- Can't solve all the problems
- Do your best – it is good enough



Strategies for coping,leading to healing



Be supportive of your colleagues who are 'doing it tough'
(beware vicarious trauma.....)

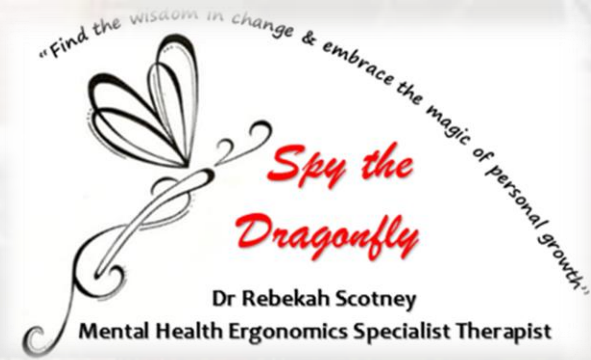
Understand that not everyone copes in the same way

Get help when we need it

- Medical
- Emotional
- Spiritual



Strategies for coping,leading to healing



Take a break!

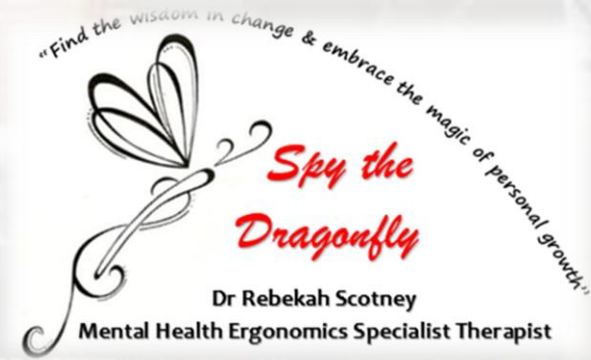
- Few minutes ('cool off')
- Lunch break
- Few days
- Holidays!

Work together as a team

- Strong defence against Compassion Fatigue & Occupational Stress
- Help each other with tasks that can be traumatic (euthanasia) or workload in general
- Support each other emotionally, listen, praise
- Debrief, decompress
- Focus on goals

Take Care of the Carer

So What Is The Cost Of Caring...?



SIMPLY TIME

T – take the time to know and look after yours physical and mental wellbeing

I – immerse yourself in positive thoughts, feelings and actions

M – make use of transition times during your day

E – engage in activities that heal mind, body and soul



Get Gritty...!



The key things that are pivotal to enjoying all aspects of one's life are;

Balance

Perspective

Attitude

Attitude is defined by a Growth Mindset and generates Grit