

## Self Care and Leadership



Dr. Kathy Galleher  
[KMGConsultation@gmail.com](mailto:KMGConsultation@gmail.com)  
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## Sustainable Ministry

*“Do not think that love, in order to be genuine, has to be extraordinary. What we need is to love without getting tired.”*

-Mother Teresa



## What is “Sustainable Ministry”?

Sustainable ministry is an approach to ministry that

- Uses your gifts
- Helps you grow
- Responds to others’ needs
- Helps them grow



## Some Hallmarks of Sustainable Ministry

- Balance
- Sustainable Pace
- Flexible
- Abundance



**The key: not depleting resources by over-demand**

## Depletion

If we start a pattern of ministering where

**Demands > Resources**

**WE ENTER A STATE OF DEPLETION**



## Internal Sources of Depletion

- **Our attitudes can be depleting**
  - Unrealistic expectations
  - Perfectionism
  - Rescuing or ‘Needing to be Needed’
  - Fear of disappointing or saying ‘no’
- **Our feelings can be depleting**
  - Guilt
  - Resentment
  - Anxiety



## Situations can be depleting

- Witnessing Suffering
- Loneliness
- Endless need
- Conflict
- Powerlessness
- Feeling incompetent
- Disappointment
- Bureaucracy



## Our Responses Can Be Depleting

Responses to Stress that Increase Depletion

- Numbing Out/Anesthetizing Ourselves
- Distraction/Dissipation

## Depleting Responses To Stress

- **Numbing Out:** Getting rid of pain with mood alteration or dissociation.
  - These coping responses become problems and make us more depleted
- Addictive or compulsive behaviors
  - Alcohol or drugs
  - Eating
  - Spending/Gambling
  - Compulsive internet/video
- Depression/Social Isolation



## Distraction/Dissipation

### Distraction/Dissipation:

- Pain/Stress management by “zoning out”, distracting, and ‘shaking off’ stress
- Indiscriminate TV watching, Internet surfing, constant texting, video games
- Mindless Talking
- Endless projects and busyness
- Vigorous exercise: Running or Dancing
  - (Healthy In Moderation)



## Warning Signs of Depletion

- Warning signs of depletion: We all have unhealthy behaviors, emotional patterns, etc that show up when we are depleted
  - “Yellow Flags” are early warning signs that we are out of balance
  - “Red Flags” indicate we are depleted.
- What are your “Yellow Flags”?
- When the depletion worsens, what are your “red flags”?



## When We Minister From Depletion

- **Unhealthy Motives**
  - Anger- Fear- Guilt
- **Unhealthy Relationship /Ministry Patterns**
  - Enabling
- **Unhealthy Personal Patterns**
  - Burn out /Depression/ Resentment
  - Addictive Behaviors: Drinking, etc
  - Impulsive Choices



## Reflection

### 5 minute conversation

Do you recognize patterns of depletion in your own life?  
In your organization?  
How does it affect you?

The most effective way to prevent depletion is  
**SELF CARE**



The most effective way to respond to depletion is  
**SELF CARE**

## Sustainable Ministry Requires

- Healthy Self Care
- Healthy Self Awareness
- Acceptance of Self and Others
- Communal & Personal Support
- Spiritual Support



## Self Care is ESSENTIAL

Self Care protects your ability to minister  
in the long run

- Like oil for the car (not just gas)
- If you run out of oil, the car is destroyed...



## For Example...

We need time for

- Exercise, Good Eating, Sleep
- Prayer
- Social time -FUN!
- Reflection
- Sharing with others
- Acceptance of Imperfection
- Addressing conflicts and needs as they arise
- Attend to mental health/ emotional issues



## What Gets in the Way of Self Care?

- Guilt
- Thinking It's Optional /We Don't Need It
- Wanting To Do "More"
- Thinking It Is Selfish

## Three Approaches to Self Care

- **Setting Healthy Limits**
  - Time/Energy
  - Thinking/Expectations
- **Replenishing/Renewal**
  - Activities that rejuvenate
- **Spiritual practices**
  - Mindfulness and Contemplation

## Need for Boundaries

- To create sustainable ministry and avoid depletion, we need to engage in self care as a way of life.
- Healthy boundaries are an essential part of self-care and balance in ministry and organizations

## What do Boundaries Do?

- Make clear what is offered and expected
- Offer a clear/consistent message about limits of the relationship
- Define the amount of time/ space/emotional energy another person can expect
- Respect the needs of all involved (and the power differences )



## Realistic Limits

### When we don't set realistic limits:

- We say "Yes" to more than we can do
- We take on too many commitments
- We don't have time for self care
- We are always "running"
- Eventually this creates resentment and burnout

Caused by understaffed systems, high need, perfectionism, fear of disappointing



## Examples

- **Time:**
  - Running late/long for everything,
  - Meetings that don't start or end on time
- **Hours of Availability**
  - Work intrudes on vacation time and days off
  - Answering non-urgent texts and emails at all hours
- **Work Load:**
  - Too many commitments for the hours in your day
  - Forgetting/Double booking
  - Neglecting personal life
- **"Crisis Mode" is normal**
  - Constantly "winging it" because there is no time to prepare.

## Limit Setting

In order to keep good time/energy boundaries, you need to

- Have a realistic sense of your limits
- Practice setting limits
- Be Assertive: Say "Sorry, I can't", and hold to your limits
- Tolerate the disappointment of others when you set limits



## Some Helpful Questions

- **What needs to be done?**
  - Are there others who can do this?
  - What is the impact of saying “No”?
- **What is the impact of saying “Yes” on the other things I need to do?**
  - Planning
  - Follow-Up
  - Self Care

## Assessing Your Time Boundaries

- What are healthy limits for you ?
- What gets you to push past limits and over-work?
- What unrealistic expectations contribute to your overcommitment?
- What are the signs that you are overcommitted?

## Helpful Practices

- Talk about work load expectations
- Emphasize importance of days off and honor it
- Discuss availability and non-availability
  - How/when to contact you
- Use calendars to schedule ministry, self care, community activities, etc.
- Build in rest time after particularly busy times
  - Take rest days after travel
- Have regular meetings that start and end on time.  
**Leave enough time for planning/preparation.**



## Cognitive Boundaries

**We are often a victim of our own unrealistic expectations**

**To protect yourselves from self-created depletion, check your thinking and expectations**



## Cognitive Boundaries

- Setting boundaries around how much stress you will take on
- Recognize and dispute unrealistic expectations or beliefs that you have
- Recognizing the sources of stress that are optional

## Common Unrealistic Beliefs

- If there is a crisis or problem, I have to solve it.
- I can't disappoint others.
- I can't accept powerlessness.
- I must be available at any time when someone needs me.
- If someone is in pain, I have to fix
- If I don't do everything I can to help , I am a bad person.
- It's wrong for me to take a day off if others have needs

## Healthy Cognitive Boundaries

- **Recognize and Dispute Irrational Expectations:**
  - “I don’t have to make everyone happy”
  - “Everyone else doesn’t have to do things my way”
  - “I can’t solve all the challenges the volunteers face”
- **Recognize Others Are Responsible for Their Feelings:**
  - “She is unhappy and I don’t have to fix that”
  - Just because she is disappointed in me doesn’t mean I did something wrong (Or that I’m mean)
- **Note Impact of the Environment on Me:**
  - “I’m used to order and planning and this chaotic environment is a challenge for me”

## Self-Talk

### Self Compassion (K. Neff/C. Germer)

- **Speaking to ourselves with the same care we would with friends**
  - **Recognition:** This is a difficult moment /a moment of suffering (*This is really hard for me*)
  - **Compassion/Comfort:** Wishing myself well or expressing compassion like I would with a friend (*I’m so sorry, I know this is hard for you*)
  - **Universality:** Recognizing that this is a shared human experience. Wishing everyone well. (*Many other people have felt this kind of frustration and powerlessness. May we all find some peace*)

## Good Boundaries Answer these Questions:



- ❖ What are our roles in this situation?
- ❖ What can you expect from me?
- ❖ For how long?
- ❖ What are my limitations?

## Emotional Boundaries

## 80/20 Rule

- **In my training, they used to warn us that 20% of the clients would use up 80% of our time and resources**
  - Important to have good mental health screening so you have volunteers who are capable of fully participating in program, not the sole focus of you or the community
- **We need to give our emotional energy to all our volunteers, not just a few**
  - Get team support with difficult situations

## Unhealthy Boundaries

### Unhealthy Co-dependence :

The ‘rescuing’ role keeps going on and on.

- Getting ‘sucked in’
- Fosters dependency
- Often connected to unresolved emotional issues
  - Over identification with issues or person
  - Reminds you of issues in your own family, etc.



## Assessing Emotional Boundaries

- **What personal issues do you over-identify with?**
  - How do you know when you are over-involved?
- **What are your emotional needs?**
  - How are you getting these met?
- **Remember to get an outside perspective when an issue is too 'close to home'**

## “In Over Your Head”

- ❖ **What are the signs that you are in over your head?**
  - ❖ Self destructive behavior patterns
  - ❖ Spending too much time/emotional energy on one person or situation
  - ❖ Resentment or avoidance of person
  - ❖ If so, who can you turn to for support?
- ❖ **What limits do I need to set?**
  - ❖ Who can help support me/coach me

## Support Good Boundaries

- ❖ **Talk out loud about boundaries on your team**
- ❖ **Set firm boundaries initially, you can always relax them later**
- ❖ **Model good limit setting with others (kind, firm)**
- ❖ **If you struggle to set good limits, ask another team member to hold you accountable.**
- ❖ **Create a network of support and problem solving to raise issues before they are a crisis**
- ❖ **Be able to challenge one another in a supportive way**

## Addressing Emotional Boundaries

- **Address it directly**
  - I'm concerned about the time/energy you are spending with this one situation/community member
- **Suggest Limits/Guidelines**
- **Suggest they get feedback from Community**
- **Have Accountability/ Check Back**

## Replenishing Requires

- **Time and Space**
- **Self -Knowledge** : Knowing what replenishes you
- **Discipline**: The discipline to stick to a plan for replenishment when you could spend that time 'being productive'
- **Openness**: The willingness to enjoy the experience

## Replenishing/Renewal

- **Address stress by intentionally nourishing yourself.**
- **Make a List of Favorite Things:**
  - **Favorite music/book, long walk, cook**
  - **Talking to a friend, laugh, sharing**
  - **Yoga, tai chi, journaling, prayer**
  - **Photography, playing music**



## What nourishes you? Make a list of replenishing activities

Make a commitment to do these when you see yellow and red flags for depletion

## Renewal

- Spiritual Resources are important for self care
- A “bigger picture” to help us keep perspective
- “Bigger arms” to hold the struggles we face
- Escaping from the trance of past/future worries to arrive in the present moment

## Spiritual Resources for Depletion



## Spiritual Resources for Abundance

Practice Pausing:

- Stop Everything
- Breathe
- Arrive in the Present Moment
- Find “Moments of Rest”



## Practices

- Notice “What’s Not Wrong”
  - “Zooming Out” and seeing the big picture
- Reflecting on/Savoring Positive Moments
- Cultivate Joy: Appreciate Everyday Miracles
  - Noticing what we take for granted

## Spiritual Practices for Abundance

- Practicing Acceptance
  - Serenity Prayer
  - Saying “yes” rather than “no” to feelings: Accepting all feelings, even uncomfortable ones



### Meditation/Contemplative Practices

- **Mindful Eating : To feel cared for**
- **Mindful Walking : To feel support**
- **Images for Making More Inner Space**
  - Sky Meditation: For anxiety
  - A bigger bowl/Salt in the Lake : For suffering
  - Tree with Deep Roots: For crises

### Spiritual Practices for Abundance

- **Keeping Perspective**
  - Noticing “What is Right”: For irritation or impatience
- **Coming Home**
  - “Beloved”
  - Listening to anger
  - Taking care of my feelings



### Practices which Support Healthy Teams

- Time/energy spent building life of the team
- Regular affirmation and recognition
- Support of one another in self-care
- Time to pause as a team
- Support for healthy boundaries as a group
- Regular opportunities for communication
- Practice addressing conflict well
- Personal and Faith sharing



### Practices for Individual Self Care

- Time Budget
- Self Care Strategies
- Spiritual Self Awareness



### When Do I Need More Help

- Sometimes we move from depletion into something more serious : Depression, Anxiety Disorder, Addiction.
- How Do I Know If I Need Professional Help?
  - Affecting Sleep, Eating
  - Affecting Work, Community Life, Friendships
  - Have Tried to Make Changes On My Own
  - Have Tried Goal Setting and Accountability with Community Members/In-City Coordinator
  - Problem Persists or Worsens
  - If It Helped Before

### Reflecting on the Workshop

- What will I take away with me from today's talk?
- Are there any changes I want to make?
- What further conversations would I like to have with my colleagues ?