

Episode 133 - Elaine Hammond: Burnout and Self-Care in Social Work

[00:00:08] Welcome to in social work. The podcast series of the University at Buffalo School of Social Work at www.insocialwork.org. We're glad you could join us today. The purpose of social work is to engage practitioners and researchers and lifelong learning and to promote research to practice and practice to research. We're in social work did you know that in social work now has an online mailing list to receive updates on newly released podcast. Go to our website.

www.insocialwork.org and click on the envelope icon near the center right of the page and just above our most recent episode. You will be taken to a new page where you can sign up to stay in touch with in social work. Hello I'm Charles Syms burnout and it's sibling compassion fatigue is a significant concern in professional social work. Either can leave social workers feeling angry frustrated and powerless. These feelings can lead to disengagement from clients and from the work burnout can be conceptualized as a reaction to the work environment. Examples could include problematic administrative and staff interactions excessive or uncontrolled workload demands or the lack of adequate resources. These complaints continuing and or escalating stress on social work professionals who try to maintain their best efforts in the provision of service compassion fatigue results from the work of caring for others. The demands of the use of self by social work professionals with individuals and groups can leave one feeling drained and out of touch with their own emotional state.

[00:02:07] This can impact the professional and personal relationships that one has to have positive professional and personal lives social workers developing social workers as well as other human service providers must learn how to take care of themselves. Elaine Hammond a University at Buffalo School of Social Work is a licensed master's social worker with 35 years of professional practice. Her previous work has included child welfare mediation and arbitration as well as clinical mental health practice teaching part time at the University at Buffalo Schools of Social Work and law. Ms Hammonds current focus is on teaching and training within an integrated trauma informed paradigm. Ms Hammond has a passion for helping caregivers of all kinds. Learn to better care for themselves. Working from an integrated trauma informed perspective. She has a private practice specializing in working with very small children and their families and with adults who experience traumatic events in early childhood. Ms Hammond encourages every student and as many colleagues as possible to find a mindfulness practice that works for them reminding them to breathe and when appropriate to consume chocolate. In this podcast Ms Hammond uses a trauma informed perspective to provide a paradigm to help one think about self care. Using the letters m o r p h or mindfulness organizing resources pillars and humanity Ms Hammond provides a direction for us to think about how to create an individualized self care strategy. Ms Hammond was interviewed for this podcast by Dr. Nancy Smyth dean of the School of Social Work at the University at Buffalo this episode was recorded July 2013 Hi this is Nancy Smyth and I'm the dean at the School of Social Work here at the University of Buffalo.

[00:04:19] And today I'm honored to have a chance to spend some time talking to a friend and former colleague actually still a colleague. I was going to say I still hang out there from time to time. Elaine Hammond who has done lots of thinking and teaching about the concept of self care for professionals so I'd like to start by welcoming you. Elaine thanks for agreeing to speak to me about this. You're so welcome. I feel quite honored to spend his time. Let me start by just asking you to talk about what you mean when you talk about self care. What does that even mean. I think that one way that will make sense to the audience is to start from the negative side. Eventually we're going to start talking in a way where there are almost no negatives. But in the absence of self care we lose our sense of meaning in life. We don't perhaps take good care of our bodies. We fall into ways of thinking that aren't entirely useful to us. Our emotions begin to drive us into a reactive kind of

fashion. And as Sandra Cole could say about trauma reactions or sense of life meaning it can really be disrupted and for us as professionals a lot of our sense of self meaning in life meaning is the work that we do. It doesn't make a difference. Are we able to make an impact in the world or are we doing a good job. And for so many of us looking at it through that lens we tend to prioritize the care that we give to others and we don't necessarily take care of all of those dynamics for ourselves. We're not necessarily taking our lunch breaks.

[00:06:10] We're not necessarily having conversations with our supervisor about what feels safe in terms of caseload. We are not necessarily taking time for fun or pleasure. We're just not necessarily attending to our own needs as a human being when we think of ourselves only as professional or place and that psychodynamic folks would say an overdetermined amount of priority on our professional selves then we're not starting with ourselves as humans. We're not taking good care of our own humanity. OK so then self care really is about acknowledging our humanity and taking care to care for ourselves in the same way that we would be thinking about caring for others. So let me ask a question and I don't want to stay on the negative part for too long but I do think the question needs to be asked What do you think it is that gets in the way of us doing this for ourselves. In other words why is it that we come in and you know I'm thinking about social work but I know that you've thought about this for many professions. But why is it that we come in focusing only on caring for the other and don't seem to apply these ideas to ourselves. That's a very good question and I think that has a complicated answer for some of us especially in social work. And I also see this a little bit as I interact with professionals in the medical field. We come into the profession for very specific reasons.

[00:07:50] Something has happened to us in our lives where we've had interventions from our choice of a life profession that either worked really well for us and so we want to be a part of that and we want to perhaps give back which sets very high expectations for how we're going to engage in the profession. And then conversely the help and intervention that we may have had may not have been so great in our opinion. And so we may seek to join that profession or engage in that particular paradigm of things that can go wrong in a person's life in a way that it means better just does it better. Or perhaps even attempts to fix problems. I guess setting up enormous expectations there is the paradigm of the amount of time that is put in to becoming a professional in our own profession. We're looking at anywhere between 6 7 years perhaps of postsecondary education. When I'm looking at law students and teaching law students looking at about that same amount of time and then of course when you look at the medical professions in some of those professions we're looking at another 10 maybe 12 years. We're looking at this huge investment of time. A lot of expectations that build up in that time period about what we're going to do when we finally graduate and actually are permitted to work. There is the pressure of student loans. The financial realities of subsidizing a professional education are enormous and place a certain expectation that we must engage at a very rigorous level in order to allow ourselves to be financially secure enough in order to kind of make up for that. And I also believe that academia does a poor job of encouraging self care in students.

[00:09:57] We are often and appropriately I'm not saying that's not appropriate but we're often asking students to prioritize their academic pursuits above everything else. I'm not persuaded that that's always appropriate. And I am persuaded that it sets up an expectation that our simple humanity is all secondary to some sort of material goal. And yes now we begin to drift a little into the esoteric one of the things I room looked forward to about this conversation is that when I'm teaching and when I'm training I'm simply immersed in the practicalities. What does the research tell us about eating what does that tell us about relationship. What does it tell us about mindfulness. What does it tell us about meditation. A couple of the interventions that I very specifically teach and I very very seldom get an opportunity to talk about why do I choose to do this kind of work. And how do I come to the kinds of interventions that I believe are helpful. So perhaps some of where I

think it's coming from that you can see I mean it's a convoluted complex package and really different for every person. I definitely can hear that and as you're talking I can also really hear the cultural context here for the fact that we're in a culture that devalues many things over humanity and over the humanity of individuals so that's part of what obviously makes it harder. I'm also thinking that there's such variation in terms of the types of settings people are working in and even between settings you know you may have somebody working in places that are similar agencies. But the way the agency is administered may be very different in terms of whether it's built on principles that supports child care or not. Absolutely.

[00:11:55] And as we move into the kind of I have these five things that I kind of consider theoretically and the fourth one really I think addresses that in a way that I believe can help practitioners in a variety of settings in a variety of professions. Take a look at their work environment and care for themselves better in that environment. Well no that's great. Now you've piqued my interest. Why don't we back up. I'd love to hear about these five things. OK well we should just tell the audience a little I mean we do know one another so huge you know some things about me. I sometimes think perhaps too much. I do a lot of thinking and part of my thinking when I'm just entertaining myself with thought is to come up with some sort of acronyms. I don't actually like acronyms in my everyday work. I don't use them with clients and I don't use them a whole lot in the classroom. But in my own mind they help to keep me organized so I have this acronym and I had help with it which I'm sure the prize you either or I think of us more thing more ammo are ph morphing our work lives in to a more humane and more compassionate compassion is a good word for me to use around the entire kind of system. But what I look at is first of all mindfulness. And so it's a mindful organization of our resources within the pillars of what you and I know can be trauma informed care and in a spirit of humanity.

[00:13:32] Which I believe leads us to a compassionate way of caring for ourselves in all of our lives whether it's our personal relationships. But for this conversation. Absolutely. In our professional relationships so mindfulness becomes the first pillar so to speak. It does and for some people here we are talking about formal meditation. That's true for me. Any class that had any kind of contact with me over a period of time knows that should I wander into their midst and have not had an opportunity for my daily meditation. Things will not necessarily go as smoothly as they might in other occasions but I'm not always talking about formal meditation or what are thought to have going on. Assuming that position with the hands in the in the position and the feet and Lotus and all that good stuff it can be as simple as a single breath. We learn more and more neuro biologically about the skill of mindfulness how to use a sense of paying attention to the present moment in a way that is really useful especially in Western culture where this is not a skill that is often at least taught to us natively in our culture and our families. So it really is about being present in the moment that we have right now. So when I talk about mindfulness many people assume that I'm talking about a meditation practice and there are real benefits to that and certainly work with students and clients around that but it need not be that elaborate. And the reason that I begin with that is as simple as was demonstrated as simply as when you run into someone you haven't seen in a while. What do you say. How are you.

[00:15:28] If we have no sense of mindfulness in our life we really can't adequately answer that question. Because we truly may not know what we know is we've been asked and that the social convention is to say fine or. I mean there's lots of conventions. Oh I'm so busy with another topic for another day. But we know how to answer but we don't necessarily know how to say how am I really. And in a way that Foster's relationship with the person that's asking and fosters good relationship with ourselves. And I think that that's one of the things that we can take away from mindfulness practice is that primarily our relationship with ourselves really improves. Well as you're talking I'm thinking about how the simple act of staying present which is took me years to figure out that that's why everyone wants you to notice the breath because your breath can only be

in the presence of a simply active being present in the here and now is the place I need to be if I'm going to make a choice to behave differently and show it by being present in the here and now I open up the space to make a choice about changing other things in my life changing how I care for myself for instance. Absolutely. One of the things that when I work with adolescents and teach them this skill sometimes actually they're resistant to it because they fear that they will never be able to get angry again. And they've come to really depend on the emotion in the actions the behaviors in anger in order to be in relationship and make some impact in their world.

[00:17:17] And one of the things I tell them is that mindfulness will not take that choice away from you. And in fact if you choose to behave in an angry fashion at least you'll be present for the event and you will know exactly what you're saying and what's going on kind of be able to enjoy it a little bit better. OK. So the M mindfulness is the first principle then and self care. Right. And then I look at the O it's really about a how can we organize our thoughts and this is where I begin to look at the difference between judgment and assessment. So if we organize our thoughts and our professional behaviors around judgment then essentially we make decisions and we close the door on those decisions. It often involves as I mentioned to you earlier as we were chatting. This comes from the work of Bernay Brown who talked so much and writes so eloquently around shame and blame and I see shame and blame as being a part of this judgment. It's a very dual way of looking at things things are right or things are wrong. And again that fits into this the set up that we very often professionally have to there is a single right way to do things.

[00:18:42] There is a single right way to be a good professional and if we don't behave in that very particular way and we take on a label of burnt out or we take on a label of impairment there's a lot of accusation in that very much the way the research talks about labeling in terms of diagnosis picking on these labels can perpetuate these judging behaviors can perpetuate the feelings of shame and blame and they really don't leave us with very many options other than to react in the moment. We have to go back to old behaviors and we simply knee jerk react if we can allow ourselves to assess that leaves space open for Movement for choice for change and we then can replace blame and shame with acknowledgment and responsibility. And that leaves us in a position where we can then respond to the various things that are going on in our lives. So that is simply a way of organizing our thoughts and our experiences. We may well have all kinds of experiences that will leave us feeling unskilled or helpless or hopeless. This may trigger things that have happened before in our lives. And the research around burnout talks quite a bit about these feelings of hopelessness and helplessness that our skills are simply not adequate for the challenges that we are being presented with almost identical to the dynamics in everyday life except put into the professional arena. So this is a different way of sizing our thought. I think that almost like a Medha reframing that allows you to reframe your experiences in the moment. So here's an example from this morning in my as you know a very tiny private practice. Right now I work excludes all of my clients are professional caregivers and I was speaking with a woman this morning who made a very very small error on a billing form and proceeded to make copies of it as she should have. And when she noticed this very small error immediately went to a place of I am so stupid.

[00:21:21] Those were the what she said she heard those words just yelling in her head. I am so stupid and I said to her. Okay now we've been talking what is she said absolutely it was a judgment it left me with the door slammed and not much room to do anything except stand at the copier and try not to cry. So then if we look at that in terms of assessment she was able then to back up and say I was distracted by one thing and another. It's not the disaster of the century. I will then feed these bad copies into the shredder. I will correct the space on the original and I will make new copies much more. Noticing and assessing response as opposed to judging and blaming oneself in the present moment. So then we get to R and R is about resources and I take this directly from the sanctuary model and as you know Sandra boom sanctuary model. It's large it's complex. There's a great deal more to it than what I'm about to say but one of the nuggets that is useful on an everyday

basis for caring for ourselves in the professional environment is looking at the three morning questions How am I feeling. What do I need or what is my goal and for this conversation I look at those as the same thing and who can help me. This allows us to go into what the research on burnout where they talk about the need for resiliency and build professional resiliency through our skills by having challenges in our professional lives. There are appropriate to our skill level our relationships with our colleagues our supervision and our greater treatment community including our clients.

[00:23:21] So when you're dealing in when you've used your mindfulness and you know that something is amiss and you've framed it into an assessment mode then this is a way to say OK what am I feeling in this moment and then what kind of help do I need. And the reason that I move what is my goal. To what do I need is because I have found over time that it's useful for professionals to give themselves permission to use the word need for themselves. When we're not sharing wealth for ourselves we tend to set aside our needs almost as if we have no actual need is is everything in our lives is just a want or desire. But no we do have needs and we can give yourself permission in the professional environment. So what do I need and then who can help me. And it might be that the WHO CAN HELP ME is well. So if we back up a little perhaps someone is feeling simply overwhelmed by the presentation of the client that they've just had and they're feeling helpless as though that this is just not a person in a situation that they believe they can intervene with. Their skills are not adequate to the situation. And that may or may not be accurate but it's absolutely true and useful in terms of the feeling that they're having in that moment. So then what is their goal or what do they need.

[00:25:02] If we're in an assessment mode where we're taking responsibility and we're trying to have a good response to what's going on it might be that we need to read that book on this particular client dynamic that we've been setting aside for a long time it might be that we need to seek out training might be that we need to prioritize this in supervision. So there could be any number of things that we might assess as being important in that would be really empowering and supportive to us in working with this client and then who can help me. It might be that someone totally unrelated to the professional environment can help you and you may need to speak to your partner or spouse about having some space in the evening to read for the next few weeks might be that you need to approach the training or human resources folks at your place of employment to see if there's any training money available or are there any training coming up or can you make a suggestion around this particular kind of training. So this is the way I look at how do we get our resources together. OK I'm just trying to take it all in because I thinking you're going to be deciding on resources based upon both the assessment and then you're answering the questions of what do I need and what's my goal. And then when you know your age or your goal then you can best say Well where could the help set. And it's possible the help might not even be I have a specific plan and maybe there's someone I need to talk to to help me come up with a plan. So then where does it move from this step.

[00:26:41] So from here it moves into a place that is probably at least I've found the most problematic outside of our own school of social work and that's where I help people look at the five pillars of trauma informed praxis and how might these apply to us as professionals. I actually did not begin doing this with social work students however I first began doing this in terms of the students in academia with the law students that I see every year. I see probably 40 to 50 some odd students a year in the classroom situation. It's a course on ethics professional ethics for them. We spend some time talking about making a good fit in your professional environment as support for legal ethics and that then led me and my success in talking with them in this Paradine which made incredible sense to them to spread it out into other areas. But without any kind of discussion we just hear that this is about trauma informed practice. A If you and I both know you might not know the word practice or all you hear is trauma and what are you saying you know work itself is going to

kill me. No that's not the case. It's a paradigm that has been put together it's very useful it has good accuracy it has good utility it makes it really true. But it's the labeling can get in the way. But that said the pillars themselves instead of looking at them in how we serve clients we can reframe them and rework them into how do we make choices and decisions and engage with our professional selves in ways that will take good care of us.

[00:28:47] So the first one although they're not hierarchical they do kind of makes sense to talk about in this order and the first one is safety when I'm talking with social workers and young attorneys as well actually even attorneys somewhat into the career were very often talking about caseload size. That's something that helps them to begin to understand that I'm talking about more than did they have a lock on their door is their car parked in a safe place. Are they able to call for help in their office if they need to. Certainly those are safety issues. And if we don't have those that comparison in the work environment I'm also talking about more than that I'm talking about what are the conditions that we need to faith in the work that we do. Do we have good supervision that can be a safety issue. Do you have a supervisor that we feel hears us and supports us well and helps us to come up with new ideas as I've worked with young attorneys over the last few years. Once my shocked almost every semester I stand there and go where you know look you really happen. And they all laugh at me. The very first year though and I still kind of haven't gotten used to it. Is that supervision is not a model in the law. One is simply hired and put the small room with a lot of paperwork. I expected this to do. And it's not necessarily serving their profession anymore and that we can see some of that analogy in social work although we do have a good tradition of supervision. Agencies are heavily loaded they have a lot of responsibilities.

[00:30:26] Resources are not necessarily what they should be or could be which can leave people feeling like they're really and safely hanging out there somewhere or supervision can be just let's review the charge to make sure you got stuff done and it's not supervision. It really focuses on what's happening in the work and how I'm doing with the work of those types of things. Absolutely. So that's what those are the things I'm talking about when I'm talking about safety. Let me go to trustworthiness for practitioners. This is about having the trust that the both the explicit and the implicit contract you entered into when you agreed to work for this agency are going to be upheld and if they're not that'll come out a little bit later. But one of my own examples as I was once hired and a position and the expectation was that I would have between 75 and 80 families on the caseload. But you and I both know it was of love interest. But that was an explicit agreement. When I went in there and when I got to 105 there really wasn't anything other than the shrugging of shoulders and what I found in that particular situation was that my lack of trust that those boundaries would be respected and our agreements followed through with really began to leak into a lot of other areas of the work. It became very unuseful situation to have that particular issue of trust taken away. Again we could be talking about just about anything. You know you're told you have X amount of vacation a year and you trust that that's the case. It may however be that you find out that OK well you have vacation days.

[00:32:16] But you can only use them under conditions a b c and d and when Mercury isn't retrograde. So there's a number of things that come into that that very few people have really taken and an opportunity to look at how much they trust their work environment. We got a choice. And the first thing I would say in Joyce's choice doesn't mean that to get everything that you asked for. That's not the ideal choice at its richest is about knowing that there are a number of options some of which are available to you some of which are not available to you. And what are your choices going to be about engaging with the system that is offering these opportunities. What kinds of choices will you make. Are you someone who prioritizes salary for example over a number of hours that you know someone who might be willing to work 60 hours a week for a certain salary level and that feels fine to you. Absolutely fine. Now for someone else that would be a choice that would not be a good way of caring for themselves. So choices really again everything takes mindfulness but

especially I think when we're talking about choice option it's important to take time to be mindful of what is healthy and what is good for you in your particular life and circumstance. So just go through the last two. We have collaboration. There are folks who no matter how good their work situation is if they don't feel that they're heard really heard it might be that things actually change. But the qualities that the research so often tells us that clients value in a clinician that you can do any number of interventions.

[00:34:11] But if the client does not feel that you are with them doesn't believe that you have heard their concerns. The best of interventions may not be successful and indeed you may be able to choose an intervention because of time constraints or financial constraints or setting restraints that might not be optimal for this particular client but have an excellent result with them in their situation. If they really believe that they have heard you the same is true for employees. I think here we're talking about employee loyalty the sense that we are a team and absolutely for social workers. I believe that very often we need some sense of that that we are engaged in a struggle with others and that they actually hear us. So that's what we're talking about there. Is there good agency communication collaboration can also leak into technological issues. Is your agency using technology that you feel comfortable with in terms of communication. If they're not can you get comfortable with it. Do you have a what I agency that doesn't do anything technological that the way that you really communicate well. So when we're talking about collaboration we're also looking at communications style very much as we work with the client and all of this leads to that sense of empowerment. Does our work and the way we do actually make a difference in the world. I used to look at self care really crossed through these five pillars and it is a way to do it. Great way to do it.

[00:35:47] I can manage to work it out to talk about everything from I don't know do you choose to take a walk or work at lunchtime or sit at your desk and eat Snickers bars or other. No you know I can manage to make these pillars applicable to almost any body mind or spirit support that's necessary in a full compassionate human life but I've really found that by adding some of these other considerations that it fleshes that out a little better and that then finally that H on the very end is in this spirit of humanity that we are humans first. I don't know if you had an opportunity to listen to the podcast that I did with Corey Bloomquist as she's done this research and we could look at all kinds of things you know the statistics tell us about 75 percent of us will experience burnout talks about alcohol and drug use. Health and relationship consequences. You know where it's more likely to be fatigue undirected excess energy. There's just this huge laundry list of things that we can look for and that the literature talks about and very much emphasis on how do we identify impairment. How do we kind of diagnose what's going on with someone. But the more she has looked at her data and with her colleagues who with whom she works around this the more firm they've become that starting with the professional self. It's not sufficient. We need to begin with the human self. And if we take good care of our humanity then we will be in the best position to be really excellent professional objects. So that's the age and that makes sense. So the M is mindfulness. The O is organizing our thoughts the R is resources the P is Pillers and the H's are humanity.

[00:37:43] So that sort of helps you remember all of the elements of what should go into this process. It sounds like you also have a process when you're teaching about this to get really concrete with people about things like sleep and eating movement. Can you say a little bit about those types of things without giving me your semester long version of all of this. But just to give people sort of a flavor for some of that. Can I start essentially with the body. We can all pretty much any profession any room full of folks at any given time you know we can hook into when we're under stress when things are pressured in our lives. It's very often the things around our body that we set aside first we're at a point in science in Western civilization where we're really beginning to catch up in terms of data with realisations that has been a part of other civilizations perhaps for thousands of years. And really I feel so fortunate to be working at a time when there's data that

supports what has been known by various cultures in various times for a great deal of time. The how to take good care of ourselves. So for example the research now you know can tell us that we're looking ideally at between 7 and 9 hours sleep a night which is far more than we were talking about even ten years ago. Science was telling us five is probably enough. Well we know now that five is not enough and that we need this fleet in order to reduce systemic and nation we may gain weight as a virtue of not getting enough sleep. It can exacerbate diabetes as a virtue of not getting enough sleep.

[00:39:40] We know things about sleep. Now that it's good to have a room that feels slightly cool to you and of course that varies from person to person. That darkness is good that either silence or a gentle white noise in the background is really ideal. And I sometimes work with people I'm talking about clients quite a bit around weaning away from a radio or a television and I usually unable to have good success with that once I show them some of the data about how we can vacillate in our sleep cycle and that as we come up toward the top of our cycle. If there is language that we identify as language I'm going on in the background we're far more likely to wake because her brain hears it and attaches to it and then wants to do something with it. So that's why looking at things like sand noise or ocean sound for a babbling brook or I personally don't do bird sounds but some people like bird sounds is a nice background kind of situation when I'm talking about nutrition. I'm not out to promote any particular way of eating. Research is telling us more and more that the closer our food can be to how it grows probably the better in the long run. So the more that you bring into your body that is as close to how it grows as possible. It's all good. Many people live an absolutely healthy life. Eating a lot of meat. Some folks will believe that I have a bias toward any number of things perhaps vegetarianism or whatever. I really don't.

[00:41:23] There's nothing in any culture and in any sense of knowledge or in any data that tells us that we know the single best way to eat. But the closer of how it goes the better you do and you do better if you eat slightly smaller amounts more regularly throughout your day and that can be a real issue in professional life. I think it's one. Well actually twice in my career where I digressed into eating only at my desk and it was all about paperwork just trying to stay even with the constant flow of paperwork and it wasn't in my best interest and that that wasn't in my best interest wasn't in the best interest of the work either. So those are also issues around that movement. Actually they recently up that we were at 20 minutes a day and it didn't have to be necessarily aerobic and ideally it was as early in the day as possible because that also support the good sleep cycle and a good cycle of your various hormones that regulates sleep and wakefulness. They recently upped that to 30 minutes a day although it still doesn't have to be terribly aerobic. So it can be simply a nice long walk with your somewhat elderly dog. So we're not talking here about conditioning. We're not talking a sincerely about physical fitness we're just talking about. What does a body need in order to have a certain minimal amount of health and care in life and your body needs 30 minutes feel ideally out of doors in our neck of the woods sometimes that can be hard but ideally out of doors. So those are some examples.

[00:43:13] I start with the body when I'm talking about the mind and usually talking about thought patterns and how thought patterns arise. What are automatic kinds of thoughts. What are some mechanisms for changing them. And this is very often where I have mindfulness knowledge of these things. So when I'm talking about mindfulness in the body and really talking about the physical responses to breathing how it alters systemic inflammation and calms that how the oxygen in your brain increases the availability of neurotransmitters to bind appropriately in the various sections of the brain how the massaging just the belly going in and out as your breathing massages limbic tissue and massage the biggest nerve and you know I'm really concentrating on what that's about we're talking about thoughts here's where we start to begin to introduce mindfulness in terms of thought and here's probably the first time that I'm talking with students or practitioners about not judging and concentrate on that a lot in this particular kind of teaching and training so that we're

simply noticing what am I thinking now even if it's in a slightly the third person kind of fashion Oh look here I am thinking that that other driver is not as skillful as I although in that kind way to put that is a very you know you can tell I'm a social worker probably thinking thinking that and more strong language but we can't know what we're thinking in the present moment. If we are not mindful and that can allow us to come into the present moment and talk a little bit in this section about how thoughts dwell excessively in the past can lead us to behaviors that look depressed.

[00:45:09] You know we're not talking about diagnosis here just you know bra was ruminating around the past and were dissatisfied back and look very much that way. If we are constantly projecting into the future and spending all of our time or a good deal of our time and energy they're worrying about what will happen then that leads to behaviors that can look anxious and certainly in my experience with our students it's very rare to come upon a graduate student who doesn't have a healthy dose of anxiety on board. Yeah that's true. That's part of the student experience so that this can be really helpful for them. And then we move into spirit and when I'm teaching and talking about Speir we're really talking about where do you find meaning in life. What is it in life that is greater than you. For some folks in any given room those will be religious system. But for some folks and almost any given room that will be the scientific knowledge that the sun will rise tomorrow not to get to Andy on all of us but that is a certainty that one can count on and gives them perspective that there is a large universe out there going about its universal duty holding itself together and that could bring perspective and meaning there's lots of different ways of bringing life meaning. So those are many of the issues that I'm talking about in practical when I'm talking with both with students and with practitioners. Well that's a great content and I just love listening to you sir to share the knowledge base that you've picked up in terms of where the current research stands on these things.

[00:46:54] You know in terms of what it's telling us to help us make informed choices in our lives. Again I feel so fortunate to be working in a time where this is true and fortunate that there are granting agencies and large respected institutions that are putting their time and their talent and their resources into looking at how do we care for ourselves better. How do we come more compassionate to ourselves. And therefore how can we bring more compassion into the world. Well and those are wonderful questions to end a podcast with. There could be dialogues for hours and hours and hours. So I really want to thank you has been really wonderful to listen to the way that you come at this. And I've done my own thinking about self care but you've really helped me put it in some larger frame and in sharing some of the ways that you come at it both with the pillars of trauma and formed. And I love MORPH I'm very bad at coming up with these myself. But they do really help me remember things well I didn't have this initially I had a word that maybe I would have been in a Calvin and Hobbes cartoon or something. But finally I with a little bit of assistance and brains that work in that direction. Well was able to do this and part of what I really hope out of this podcast. I am not a researcher myself. I appreciate research. I have a certain facility with it you know it makes my brain cells happy.

[00:48:28] What part of what I really hope comes out of the latter end of my career is that I have enough opportunities to talk about the things that I think about that it will spark curiosity and young researchers. Social work is in such a good position to take a lead in some of this research. Not necessarily as a part of a discipline but purely out of our own sense of the complexity and the richness of the one's experience. Well absolutely and I think that's why I was so excited when I came across that podcast that you did with now it's Dr. inquest's that's why I was so excited when I met her and heard about what she was doing because I love when I hear that social work is really beginning to bring some science to this with a lot of the wisdom I assume to practice wisdom that's there and integrating some of the research so I think that bringing all of those lenses is how we can start to make some progress as a profession in really helping to begin to teach this to ourselves and to our students and practitioners. And I think that there's a lot of learning for us all to do. And I like

the fact that you haven't limited your thinking about this to social work or even people in Human Services that it's really self care is an important concept culturally and it is for professionals and I would say even for people working in jobs that haven't been classified as professions they just have fewer choices in those situations. And so then it becomes much more incumbent on our society to talk about designing workplaces that honor these principles as wow. It does have a certain amount of success with this with a snowplow drivers.

[00:50:11] And these are men who sit in the cabs of impossibly large vehicles for up to 16 hours a day during weather events. And this Paradine makes sense to them. Oh that's wonderful. Well thank you so much for taking the time out of your schedule to do this. Well thank you. It's been a pleasure. You have been listening to Dr. Nancy Smyth interview Elaine Hammond on burnout and self care. We hope that you found it instructive and that you will begin to integrate its elements into your practice. I'm Charles Syms. Please join us again in social work. Hi I'm Nancy Smyth professor and dean of the University at Buffalo School of Social Work. Thanks for listening to our podcast. We look forward to your continued support of the series. For more information about who we are as a school our history our programs and what we do we invite you to visit our Web site at www.socialwork.buffalo.edu.