Help for the Helpers: Building and Maintaining Well-Being for Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs) and Victim Advocates

Transcript: U.S. Army Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness Outreach Webinar

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Presenter:
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Lytaria Walker:	00:03	Welcome to the Directorate of Prevention, Resilience, and Readiness Outreach Webinar for December. At this time, all participants are in listen-only mode. However, you may ask questions at any time by placing them in the Q&A box. There will be several opportunities for questions throughout the webinar, and we should have some time at the very end. Today's webinar has been approved for one hour of live continuing education units. Participants must obtain CEU certification through their local commanders by downloading the webinar presentation slides as attendance verification. The slides will be posted in the chat box at the end of the webinar and emailed to registered participants. Please note that the views of DPRR Outreach Webinar presenters are their very own and are not endorsed by the Department of the Army or the Department of Defense. This month, our guest is Kimberly Crowell, a master resilience trainer and performance expert.
Lytaria Walker:	01:05	Kimberly Crowell has worked as a resilience and performance psychology expert for the Army for 11 years. Crowell has dedicated her life to helping others across a variety of populations, including children in the foster care system, hospital staff, social workers, Soldiers and their Families, and elite level college and professional athletes. Crowell has a master's degree in mental health counseling from West Virginia University and a master's degree and kinesiology from Indiana University. When she's not out training or traveling the world, you can find her at home with her two dogs or at Lowe's buying supplies to fix up her home. Kimberly, ma'am, thank you so much for joining us today. Please take it away,
Kimberly Crowel...:	01:54	Thank you for the introduction. My name is Kimberly. Today, we are going to be talking specifically to Sexual Assault Response Coordinators and Victim Advocates. However, if you don't fall

into those categories, that is certainly okay. I think a lot of the conversations that we will be having today can be geared towards anybody that is in that helping field. So usually when I do trainings or classes, I like to keep them really interactive. Of course, in this type of setting, that makes it a little bit more challenging. A little bit later on in the presentation, please have your keyboards handy because we will be having some conversation through the chat.

Kimberly Crowel...: 02:46 And so I definitely want to hear your opinions, your experiences. At the last webinar, we had some additional resources being added to the chat. So this is certainly a collective effort. I do want to hear from you all. As we move forward, just a disclosure statement. The opinions that I'm expressing are my own. I am a contractor for the Army and for Magellan Federal, but I have no financial interests or other relationships to disclose. So let's get into it. What are we going to talk about today? So, first if you'll indulge with me a little bit, I will talk a little bit about my journey and how I got here and how I decided to go after this presentation. And then we'll talk about some of the research that is out there specifically for SARCs and VAs in terms of wellbeing and mental health and their overall resilience.

Kimberly Crowel...: 03:48 And then we'll have some conversations together about understanding the why: Why is it important to make sure that we are taking care of ourselves as those that provide help for others? And having some conversation about what gets in our way, what prevents us from taking care of ourselves in a way that builds our resilience and our overall wellbeing. Lastly, I will talk about some strategies to enhance wellbeing and some theories that are out there to also enhance wellbeing and resilience. When I was asked to do this presentation, the first thing that popped into my head was we can talk about energy management and breathing and all of that.

Kimberly Crowel...: 04:34 And that's well and good, and we will talk about those strategies at the end, but I think what's more important is to really have a discussion and have some reflection. We as seasoned individuals, we're not old, we're seasoned, is that we have a lot of experience in using self-care, in maintaining wellbeing, and enhancing our own resilience. We've seen some things, we've had some experiences, but it's not about knowing the strategies to use. To me, it's more about why are we not using these strategies more often? Why are we not employing these on a more consistent basis? And what's really holding us back? And why do we wait until we are just overwhelmed to start attempting to initiate these strategies? We wait until the

stress builds and builds and then on the weekend, we treat ourselves to some relaxation

Kimberly Crowel...: 05:28 So we'll have some conversations through the chat about that. And then establishing some routines that can fit into what you're already doing and maybe add something new that's not going to be overwhelming for you but is going to continue to build your overall wellbeing. So before we get into that, I do want to make sure we are all on the same page. I do want to talk about some terms that are commonly used in literature and also terms that we hear often throughout work as a SARC or a VA or any type of helping profession. I'm sure many of you have heard of compassion fatigue, but maybe we haven't actually heard of compassion satisfaction, which is that first term up there. So, compassion satisfaction is when I actually feel good about the work that I do, and I find meaning in the work that I do to contribute to the greater good of other people or society.

Kimberly Crowel...: 06:24 We actually get pleasure and joy from that work. And so compassion satisfaction is a huge component when we're talking about overall wellbeing, maintaining our own resilience, particularly as a helper. The second term, I'm sure we've heard this before, is compassion fatigue. So compassion fatigue is when we experience a physical, emotional, and spiritual depletion associated when we are helping others that are in significant emotional pain and physical distress. This can certainly happen as a SARC and VA, and your workload can play an impact on that. We'll talk about that in a second. But if I'm constantly having to provide for others and constantly having to listen to their stories, and I'm there to help them process those experiences and those traumas that they have and to advocate on their behalf to get them to the resources they need.

Kimberly Crowel...: 07:24 That certainly takes a toll on us. And so, understanding what some of those signs and symptoms could be for compassion fatigue, what could lead into compassion fatigue or couple with compassion fatigue is burnout. So burnout can be a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion. This is typically caused by long-term involvement in emotionally demanding situations. So, for example, we think back to Covid we had a lot of medical staff, particularly nurses, facing that burnout because these emotionally demanding situations were never ending. We just could not find that end. So that can certainly lead to burnout. People tell me that one of their concerns or issues as an organization is lack of staff. I think that's consistent across a variety of populations. And so if we have fewer staff, that means I might be working longer hours. I might take on more patients or more individuals that I'm working with.

Kimberly Crowel...: 08:28 And so that also could potentially lead to physical, emotional or mental exhaustion. Here are some things to pay attention to, and some symptoms that you can identify in yourself: depression, cynicism (a negative attitude towards the work you're doing), boredom with our job, not being emotionally charged. I know I love what I do, and I get excited to come out and teach, but when we're starting to experience that burnout, that is no longer the case. We're just not engaged with what we're doing. We also may experience a loss of compassion where we just don't care anymore.

Kimberly Crowel...: 09:17 And then lastly, discouragement, where it doesn't matter what I do. It doesn't matter how much effort I put in; things are not changing. Things are not shifting for the better. And then that can certainly lead to that level of discouragement. So just keep an eye out for the SARCs, VAs, and supervisors that are out there. Keep an eye out for some of these symptoms of burnout. With that, we also need to talk about on the upside and why we're here and how to establish and maintain our resilience. So at the performance center when we train resilience, our definition is "the ability to grow and thrive in the face of challenges and be able to bounce back from adversity." Oftentimes when I ask folks, "What does resilience mean to you?"

Kimberly Crowel...: 10:02 They say, "be the tennis ball." We want to be the ball. And sometimes when we talk about resilience, sometimes that ball isn't quite bouncing the way that we want to. Instead of thriving in the day-to-day, we tend to just be surviving. So I've got my head above water, and I'm treading water, and I'm just trying to maintain, that's really not resilience. Resilience is thriving. So I'm taking these adversities, whether they're big adversities, small adversities and we're really challenging ourselves to continue to grow and learn from those experiences and continuing to thrive. Also, resilience is about someone who's willing to take calculated necessary risks and to capitalize on opportunity. The keyword here is willing, I have to be willing to put myself out there. We're taking risks, not for the sake of risk taking itself, but these are thought out risks, knowing that we don't know what the end result may be.

Kimberly Crowel...: 11:04 This might be a great experience, or this might not work out well. But I go in with that open mind of learning from that experience and being confident that I'm going to put myself out there. I'm going to do the best I can, and I'm going to seize that opportunity to be able to do that. So that's what we're talking about with resilience. And then lastly, wellbeing. I'll spend some time at the end talking about how to monitor and improve our

wellbeing. But wellbeing is more than just positive emotions. It's more than just feeling good. It's about building meaningful and positive relationships and achieving a sense of accomplishment. And like I said, I'll spend a little bit more time there. So now we're working out of the same framework here. So I do want to highlight a little bit about what the research says particularly with Victim Advocates out in the field and how we can start protecting their resilience and their overall wellbeing.

Kimberly Crowel...: 12:01 I love to look at research and when I was reading through it, there is certainly research out there, particularly for the fields of Victim Advocates and SARCs. But most of the research has been done specifically focusing on social workers. So there is a call in the field to do more research, and there certainly is a building of research for these two populations. But this particular research that I did read, I found interesting because it really focused on how we build protective factors and what are those risk factors that VAs and SARS experience just by nature of their job of helping individuals manage these traumas and crisis situations. What we're looking at here is called secondary traumatic stress.

Kimberly Crowel...: 12:52 Secondary traumatic stress can be experienced just by listening or witnessing traumatic experiences. So I think with Victim Advocates, hearing the stories, doing adjudication, helping resolve issues, and helping individuals find the resources they need. We're going to hear the story over and over and over again. How do we protect against secondary traumatic stress? So number one: compassion satisfaction, having joy, finding pride in what you do, having that sense of accomplishment in what you do, that is one of the biggest protective factors. Have a passion for that job and a passion for helping others. This is going to help protect against STS or secondary traumatic stress. Also, another protective factor includes having a sense of social support from your coworkers. Having that support within the work environment is a huge protective factor.

Kimberly Crowel...: 13:56 So get to know the people to your left and to your right, not just their name and where they're from, but really understanding who they are, what motivates them, what is valuable to them, what's important to them, and that can certainly build that social support network. In addition, supervisors play a huge role. I hope I have some supervisors on here. But you also play a huge role in the support and the conversations and the way that you lead with your Victim Advocates and your SARCs. You have a huge impact on being a protective factor against STS and burnout and all of that. Also having that peer network outside of work, having someone that you can rely on that you don't have to talk to about work or a tough day.

Kimberly Crowel...: 14:45 That could be a significant other or a best friend. Doesn't really matter as long as you have one. The research says to have one to five people that you're close to. We call them a "2:00 AM buddy," someone who you can call at 2:00 AM. You can rely on them. If you just need to vent, you can, but if you need support, they're there to support you. Make sure you have that strong peer network outside of work as a protective factor. Lastly, a protective factor is giving VAs and SARCs the opportunity to participate in decision making and goal setting. So how they go about working with the people in their charge and having a sense of autonomy. So when we talk about a sense of autonomy, it's not just necessarily about having a sense of control, but autonomy is being able to live my life in accordance with my core values and who I am as a person.

Kimberly Crowel...: 15:45 And so if I'm able to make decisions, if I'm able to set goals at work, that certainly can build a sense of autonomy, buy-in, and support which is really critical in those protective factors. I've been very lucky to have quite a bit of support from supervisors. When we have to decide as a team, we do that. We sit down, and my supervisor doesn't say, "Hey, this is what I'm thinking. What do you think?" Basically indicating his mind is already made up in what we're doing, and he's just listening to us for the sake of listening.

Kimberly Crowel...: 16:30 But he says, "Hey, what do you think? What is our plan? What do you think moving forward is going to work well? What are some of the pitfalls of this decision?" And so we come together as a team and are allowed to have that autonomy to be able to make decisions. And he listens to us and makes sure that we all have a say, and then we come together as a group and make that decision. And so that of course builds motivation. It builds some buy-in from the staff. We're here to support each other. We're not in this alone. So those are some of those protective factors. With protective factors, of course, we always have risk factors that can increase our chances of development of that secondary traumatic stress and decrease our overall wellbeing or our resilience.

Kimberly Crowel...: 17:15 So the first two are really the most significant. And what the research stated was caseload and time spent with trauma survivors. So caseload, how many individuals are we currently working with? Am I overloaded? And then the time with trauma survivors, hearing the stories working with them and helping them through the emotions that they're experiencing, that certainly can increase our risk for the STS and burnout and that compassion fatigue. One thing I want to talk about with caseload is that here at Fort Sam Houston2 we are an advanced

individual training site. We have a lot of students here, Soldier students primarily in the medical community. And I was sitting down and having some conversations with our Victim Advocates and some SARCs, and how their workload was disseminated and assigned played a huge factor in potential burnout.

Kimberly Crowel...: 18:18

So if we've got some SARCs and VAs that are only assigned to the AIT population. Like I said, our AIT population is quite large, and because of that, the risk of sexual assaults and violence can certainly increase. And so right from the baseline, they potentially are going to have a bigger caseload than a VA or SARC that's assigned to a permanent party has significantly fewer individuals here and cases they may have to manage. So we are looking at and working with supervisors and working with the organization to see how we can rotate through. Can we separate brigades and battalions to make that caseload more manageable? That's working with the supervisors and working with the organization to help spread that caseload, so some people aren't overworked and starting to experience that burnout.

Kimberly Crowel...: 19:10

Another risk factor, not as significant as caseload and time spent, could be previous experience with trauma from the advocate's perspective. So we know if we have some unresolved trauma, some unresolved emotions that we are experiencing, that certainly is going to have an impact. Not as significant as the first two, but certainly something to consider. And then lastly, another risk factor is lack of social support organizationally. So if we don't have that support from the organization, from our supervisors, or we feel we're an island, we're out doing this fight on our own, that certainly can have an impact. So these are some of those protective factors and risk factors and they are something to keep in mind and look out for in your organization. Are you providing that social support?

Kimberly Crowel...: 20:02

Do you have opportunities to participate in decision making and how things are done? Are you sitting in on different groups to influence how care is provided? That's something to think about and reflect on for your individual organizations, wherever you may be. So I do want talk about the meat and potatoes of why we are here. So having some conversation and having some discussion on what per really prevents us from taking time for ourselves. Oftentimes I hear folks say, well I'm super stressed, or I've had a really stressful week, so I'm going to do something on the weekend. But in all reality, why are we waiting to deal with our stress? Why aren't we dealing with our stress in the moment? And why are we not taking time for ourselves? So we're going to access the chat for this. I'd just like you to finish

the sentence there at the top: “I can’t take time for myself because...”

Kimberly Crowel...: 21:10 “Not making time for ourselves a priority.” “Taking care of others.” Absolutely, that’s certainly something that I’m guilty of too. Particularly if you’ve got family, you’ve got pets, and then you’ve got work. We’ll talk about how to start setting up some routines that can help. “Guilt.” This came up in the last group, and it’s something that I have also dealt with. Guilt about not about placing mission first, which usually puts us puts us last. “Procrastination.” “Time management.” We’ll talk about that. “Lack of time in the day.” “Not realizing it’s necessary in the first place.” Oftentimes we get on autopilot and just go, go, go.

Kimberly Crowel...: 22:09 I am very guilty of this myself. And so having that sense of guilt, having that sense of I’m the last on the list. I’ve got my to-do list. I’m definitely a to-do list person, and I either never make the list or I’m at the very end of the list, and we just don’t quite make it. Other responsibilities, family, of course. So we think that we are okay. We have this thing that we talk about with some of the other classes which is called the taillight effect. So we think that we have adjusted, and we think that we are managing, but if we were to talk to our kids, our spouse, our coworkers, they see that we are overwhelmed. They see that our fuse is a little bit shorter in terms of our temper, so we think we’ve adjusted, but in all reality, we are just trying to compartmentalize all of these things.

Kimberly Crowel...: 23:10 And it’s going to seep out somewhere. I’m going to take it out on my kids; I’m going to take it out on my significant other I’m going to take it out at work. But it’s going to pop up at some point because we can only compartmentalize so much, and it’s going to start seeping through. This is my journey, something that I have really been trying to manage my whole life, having that work-life balance. I love my job. I love to work. I’ve been working for as long as I can remember, whether it was a government job taking taxes out or babysitting. And if we look at all of these reasons why we’re not taking time for ourselves, a lot of this can stem from our own core values and core beliefs.

Kimberly Crowel...: 24:02 So, thinking about what is most important to you, how you were raised, oftentimes we hear this in, “I should” statement. “A good leader should...” “A Victim Advocate should...” “A good parent puts their children first.” “A good leader puts their Soldiers first.” And so we operate out of these core values and core beliefs. There is nothing wrong with these core values or core beliefs. They motivate us. They drive our behavior; they allow us to accomplish great things. But sometimes those core

values, core beliefs about taking care of ourselves, taking time for ourselves sometimes are rigid and lack some flexibility that really provide us that opportunity to say, “It is okay for me to take time for myself.” Someone put, “It may seem lazy.”

Kimberly Crowel...: 24:56 I actually, my mom sat in on the last webinar with me and she and I had a conversation afterwards, and that was something we discussed. It’s not that we’re being lazy taking care of ourselves. It’s that we are figuring out prioritization. If I can’t take care of myself, how can I possibly give a hundred percent to other people in my life that matter, whether that’s at home or if that’s at work? So that’s something for you to reflect on. Do you hold some of these core values, core beliefs that are limiting your flexibility and being able to take time for yourselves? So we’ll think about that. What are strategies that we can leverage to make sure that we are a priority? I’d like you to ask: “I should take care of myself because...” What is the end of that sentence? What can you use to give yourself permission to take care of yourself? I’d like to hear some, some things that you have in the chat there. “My small humans.” Yeah, I love that.

Kimberly Crowel...: 26:09 “I can’t help others if I’m empty.” If you’ve ever heard of you can’t fill somebody’s else’s cup if my cup has nothing in it. So we have to fill our own cup. We need to make sure that we are taking care of ourselves so that we can pour ourselves into the cup of others. “Making ourselves a priority.” We have to be priority number one, and that’s hard to do sometimes. That’s certainly difficult. “I think it is making yourself your best investment.” I think that’s incredible. We develop that belief or value and remind ourselves of it.

Kimberly Crowel...: 27:03 “Because we matter.” We matter, I matter. And we are just as important as everyone else in our life. And if we want to take better care of others, we need to put ourselves first. And to add to that, the reason we should take better care of ourselves needs to override the reason that we don’t take care of ourselves. It has to be stronger, otherwise, we will not be the priority. We will not start putting ourselves on top of that list. So we have to hold strong to these reasons and make sure that they are stronger to override the reasons we don’t take care of ourselves. I’ve been on this journey for most of my life, but in the last year I had some really tough conversations with my family, had some tough conversations at work about how I need to take care of myself and take time for myself.

Kimberly Crowel...: 28:05 “Kim needs to be the priority” was a conversation I had with my family, my boss, and my team. We have a good team that we

felt comfortable talking about those things. One thing that's really important to me, one of my core values and how I live my life is with kindness and generosity. I can't think of a time in my entire career, pre-Army and during my career working with the Army, that I have not worked in a helping profession. I have helped other people my entire life, even as an undergrad. And so kindness and generosity is something that is really important to me. It's part of my core.

Kimberly Crowel...: 28:53 That's how I was raised. It's how I live my life. It's what's important to me. While kindness and generosity is a value belief that I hold very dearly, it's typically seen as other-oriented, which fits really well, because that's what I do. I like to help other people and be generous to other people with my time, with whatever it is that I can provide for them. But sometimes we have to take those core values, core beliefs, what's important to us, and turn it inward. How can I be more kind to myself? How can I be more generous with myself to be able to give myself that time to enjoy my weekend and not be stressed about work? I'm generous with the time that I can actually take a day off and the whole world isn't going to collapse if I'm not at work for a day.

Kimberly Crowel...: 29:45 I can trust my coworkers and know that the people that I work with are going to take care of the customers and they're going to provide great training. And so turning that kindness and generosity inward is something that I have reflected on, and I have leveraged to help me to stop putting everything else first and putting myself on the back burner, or even on the list at all. Matthew, I see you said, "Learn to tell people no," and I'm going to talk about that here in a second. Whatever the reason is that you should take care of yourself, make sure it's stronger than the reason to not put yourself first.

Kimberly Crowel...: 30:31 Let's talk about strategies and routines. And before I move on, I just saw the comment from Tisha, "How can we advocate for others if we can't advocate for ourselves?" Absolutely, we don't. For the individuals that you are supporting, you don't wait until they've been stressed all week to help them and to advocate for them. Why are we doing that to ourselves? Why are we establishing that stress management techniques or relaxation is a reward for stress as opposed to just dealing with the stress in the moment? So let's talk about some strategies that we can use, and some of these you might already be using, but how do we prioritize? How do we make this more part of our routine where it's at the forefront rather than the last thing on the to-do list?

Kimberly Crowel...: 31:22

So one is finding a routine that works for you. And there are a variety of things that I've listed here that you can certainly incorporate into that routine. So, first thing, make sure that we're doing some self check-ins. This could be through meditation or mindfulness. I've got an app here that I'll talk a little bit more about on the next slide. And there's a QR code if you want to download the app. Meditation or mindfulness, whatever that looks like for you, tracking and paying attention to our emotions, which play a critical role in our resilience. It's okay to be angry, upset, and sad and all of those negative emotions. They certainly play a role. It's also good to have positive emotions. Positive emotions have a huge impact on our overall resilience and our wellbeing.

Kimberly Crowel...: 32:13

And actually positive emotions can undo the physiological effects that we experience from stress. So, high heart rate, blood pressure, muscle tension, positive emotions undo all of those things. We have a running joke with the Soldiers that I work with that the only emotion that Soldiers are issued is anger. Any other emotion is unacceptable. Any emotion is fine but just keeping track. And if you have a hard time identifying emotions, that's okay too. No judgment. Maybe get yourself a little emoji chart or an emotion wheel to really tune into how you're feeling. Some individuals enjoy journaling. So maybe doing a nightly journal or a mid-afternoon journal, just reflection on the day. And then prayer. So if you're religious or if that's part of your routine, prayer can be a great way to do a self check-in.

Kimberly Crowel...: 33:10

Also, we also want to incorporate some healthy practices into a routine. Eat a balanced diet if you're close to an Armed Forces Wellness Center at an installation, they can certainly help you or get with your primary care doctor to meet with a dietician or nutritionist. I know when I eat healthier, I feel better, I have more energy. And it just, it does help throughout the day. I don't get that lunchtime lull when I'm eating more nutritious food. So I have energy throughout my day, and I have energy to do the things that I love to do at the end of the day. Exercise, we know exercise releases those feel-good hormones in our body. It brings energy, boosts mood, and exercise does not have to be two hours in the gym, sprinting 10 miles on the treadmill or lifting a lot of heavy weights.

Kimberly Crowel...: 34:03

Exercise can be as simple as going out and playing tag with your little humans. Exercise can be walking your dogs. So doing some yoga at home counts. When I get home, I immediately put on my sneakers. I take my dogs for about a 30-minute walk. And then I'll finish that off with a little bit of yoga, a little bit of

stretching. When I'm done, about 10 or 15 minutes, I feel good. I feel energized. The dogs are taken care of, and we're ready to start the evening. Take advantage if you have a longer lunch. Make sure you take lunch. That's also important. That's something I'm also doing. Setting aside 30 minutes to actually eat lunch and then walk the track. At Fort Sam, we've got this beautiful track. We have beautiful weather most of the time. Just two days ago, it was 80 degrees.

Kimberly Crowel...: 34:51 Find that time to decompress. It doesn't have to be an hour; it could be 10 minutes. I talk with a lot of Soldiers about this. Sometimes Soldiers will say I just want to "wash off the Army from the day." So they come home, they take a shower, they just wash away the stress from the day. And that way they're more present at home. They're able to focus on their hobbies, or their children, or their spouse or their pets, whatever they're coming home to. Take that 10 or 15 minutes to reset as you move into the next part of your day. I do this a lot for myself with some deliberate breathing.

Kimberly Crowel...: 35:42 Where I live in San Antonio, traffic can be quite challenging. Some days it takes me 30 minutes to get to work. I had one instance where it took me two hours to get to work. Before walking into work, I was upset, frustrated, and irritated because I was late, I actually just sat in my car, took a nice couple deep breaths, and set some intentions. So when I walk in for class, I'm not grumpy and irritated, but I'm there because I am excited to teach and be with my students. So take a couple deep breaths for a couple minutes. Sometimes I'll do this on my way home. So when I get home, just take a couple breaths to reset from the workday to home life.

Kimberly Crowel...: 36:26 If you have children and you park in the driveway or in the garage and they're coming out wondering why you mom or dad hasn't gotten out of the car yet, just stop around the corner, take a couple breaths and then walk into your home. I think that's something that's important. For those of you that do have children, you are not only doing this for yourself. We're managing ourselves and decompressing so that we can be more present with our families. But also you teach your children how to do the same thing. You're teaching them that it is okay to decompress and take 10 or 15 minutes to just reset from school, reset from practice. Maybe they had a tough day, or maybe they had a great day, and they want to just live in that moment a little bit longer.

Kimberly Crowel...: 37:20 Give them that time. You're teaching them their own self-care, which I think is so invaluable when they go out into the world.

They've already got these strategies, and they're well practiced. They know what works for them. So taking that time to decompress is really important. Lastly, being able to manage demands. If things are controllable, make a plan, execute the plan. Make that to-do list. With procrastination, I often tell people if you're a procrastinator, you're not lazy. Usually procrastination is not about laziness or a lack of interest. Usually we procrastinate because we're overwhelmed and we're anxious about it. We just keep putting it off.

Kimberly Crowel...: 38:14

Hopefully it becomes a little bit more manageable. But we know that's not the case. We know we increase anxiety. So if you tend to be a procrastinator, sit down, do that thing for five minutes. Anybody can do something for five minutes. At least create a plan, create an outline, and then do one or two things in that plan. And that's going to help lower that anxiety and help manage procrastination. If you come across instances that are uncontrollable particularly as Victim Advocates and SARCs, crisis doesn't happen between the hours of eight and five. You may be called in the middle of the night. We don't have control over that. But if I've managed control in these other areas, these other routines, when those uncontrollable events or late-night calls happen, I can take a couple breaths because I've rehearsed how to manage stress and anxiety.

Kimberly Crowel...: 39:04

I can be more present with that individual and taking care of them. Tune into your thoughts and feelings. And then lastly, learning to say no and also learning to say yes. So learning to say no to those extra things. Something that I've done recently in about the past year and a half or so, is I started turning the alerts to my email off when I get home. Home is for home. I don't need to be checking email because I can check my email. And then you're responding. And now you spend an hour going back and forth and trying to find more information. If it's an emergency, someone will call you. Very rarely at my job do we have an emergency, and if it is a big deal, my boss will call me. So I've turned off the alerts on my phone and for my email.

Kimberly Crowel...: 39:56

I stopped checking my work calendar at home. In order to help me to do that, every night before I leave work I take about 10 minutes and look at my calendar. I see what's coming up, and I create a little to-do list, a little prioritization list for me. I stick it on a sticky note right on my computer. So when I come in the morning, I already have intentions for the day. I already have a plan laid out, and it's not overscheduled. So if something does come up at the last minute, I can fit it in and I can shift the list, but I don't have to worry about it at home. I've got that time set aside. And then lastly, learning to say yes.

Kimberly Crowel...: 40:38 So yes to yourself, yes to going out and seeing Wicked on the weekend. I highly recommend it if you haven't seen it; it's really good. Saying yes to time for yourself. Setting boundaries is so critical and so important. And sometimes we might have to set boundaries with our supervisors and have that conversation, Hey, if it's an emergency, I will be more than happy to answer my phone. But if it's something that we can manage tomorrow, then I'll deal with it in the morning and I'll be more than happy to jump on that first thing. And so setting and sticking to boundaries is really important. I have a friend I don't get to see very often. She lives in the DC area. I've lived in Korea, then I moved to San Antonio.

Kimberly Crowel...: 41:27 So I'd maybe see her once a year. But she sets a boundary of, "Hey, I want to spend time with you, so I have an hour and a half to go out to dinner and do whatever we want to do, and then it's me time." Keeping those boundaries is a way to say yes and to say no. And it helps avoid that guilt. I've given you that time, and I can give you more time tomorrow when I come in. William, thank you. Putting your phone down, absolutely.

Kimberly Crowel...: 42:13 Getting away from social media, getting away from technology to be present. You don't have to do all of these things but find ways to incorporate this into a routine that you can use each day. And that's going to help build our resilience, increase our overall wellbeing. Incorporating that into your routine allows you to better manage those stressors as they come, as opposed to letting stress build and build and then trying to play catch up and trying to manage.

Kimberly Crowel...: 43:05 These are some additional strategies. These are some of the apps that I was talking about. So breathe to relax. This can connect to your Apple watch and helps you with diaphragmatic breathing. I do use this on occasion. I just do deliberate breathing on my own now because I'm well practiced. I use it quite often. For those of you that have an Apple Watch or a Fitbit, just something to keep in mind. Many of us turn off the Breathe app on our phone where it says to take a breath. Keep it on because your body is actually telling you, "Hey, you're super stressed right now. I'm seeing changes in your body physiologically that are caused by stress." So it's a reminder for you to take a breath, take a pause.

Kimberly Crowel...: 43:54 So I would encourage you to put that alert back on your watch there. Do some breathing, calm down, reassess, and then move on from that situation. This mood tracker is great. You can also use this with patients as a healthcare provider. It will track to your Fitbit as a way to track your mood over time. Particularly if

you're up and down this might be a good strategy for you. And then lastly, the Virtual Hope Box. I really enjoy this app. You can put your own pictures on there. It has little games for distraction if your brain's all over the place and you need to refocus it. It's got strategies for relaxation and increase that positive mood state and positive or more effective thinking.

Kimberly Crowel...: 44:37 One thing I also really enjoy about the Virtual Hope Box is they have a coping card that's in there. So if you know that you have common stressors and common demands in your day-to-day life, you can create a strategy and a routine to help you better manage those. So when I tend to get overwhelmed, I tend to get a little bit short tempered. My fuse gets a little smaller, and I get frustrated very easily. And I don't want that because I'm going to take that out on whoever happens to be in front of me and needing something at the moment. It says emotions and physical symptoms. I know when I start to feel overwhelmed, I tend to get frustrated very easily. I also have an increase in muscle tension.

Kimberly Crowel...: 45:22 So I tend to grip my jaw when I'm stressed. And I have terrible TMJ and that TMJ really activates. I know if I were being mindful, I would pay attention to stress driving home one day, and I can realize I'm clenching my jaw, and my heart rate will increase. So my coping skills are to take a breath or three and to think through my words. If I'm like, "Hey, I need a moment. Let me get back to you," that's okay too. I'm not saying "No, I can't help you." I just need a minute to reset myself and then I'll come talk with you. These are all really helpful apps. You've got the QR codes, and these are all DoD apps.

Kimberly Crowel...: 46:09 So if you just Google DoD apps, you can find those. So they're for iPhone and for Android. Let's talk about some wellbeing. So Dr. Martin Seligman is considered the father of positive psychology out of the University of Pennsylvania. He has a book called Flourish. Highly recommend. It's cited down there at the bottom. Lots of really great nuggets of information. And so when he's talking about wellbeing as more than just feeling good or experiencing positive emotions. Happiness is not a permanent emotion. It fades just like every other emotion. So we can't just focus on wellbeing as "Well, I'm happy today." It's more than that. So it is about feeling good, about having those positive emotions, but it's also about having meaning.

Kimberly Crowel...: 47:02 So having that sense of purpose, developing really strong, good, and positive relationships in our life, and having that sense of accomplishment, setting and reaching those goals. The way we choose our course in life is to maximize all of these elements.

And so we're going to talk about briefly strategies to build wellbeing. For those of you that are in the military, my apologies, it is an acronym. I know you have lots of acronyms, but what's one more that's going to help improve wellbeing? So we call this PERMA. One is developing positive emotions. Positive emotion has so many great benefits. Looking at the pleasant life, what brings you joy? What inspires you? What makes you laugh? What gives you hope? I have two dogs.

Kimberly Crowel...: 47:57

I have a German Shepherd that I rescued. She has a lot of anxiety issues, and I have a German Shepherd lab mix heavy on the lab. She's nutty. She likes to run and play but what really brings me joy is my German shepherd. She didn't really know how to be a dog or how to play when I first got her. And so when she and my other dog are playing and they're wrestling and they're chasing each other and they're doing zoomies in the backyard, it really does bring me this awesome sense of joy and amusement. And I just love watching them play. Because my puppy really brings out the dog in my dog, and I love that for her, that she can just really enjoy and be comfortable as a dog because she just didn't know how to do that for so long.

Kimberly Crowel...: 48:41

So that's something that just brings me joy on a regular basis. And they're silly, so they make me laugh. E is for engagement. Did time stop? Were you absorbed by the task? Looking at hobbies that you have, maybe you love to craft maybe you love to sew. What is that task just really takes my full attention. This is very similar to a runner's high, if you've ever experienced that. So people who run a lot will say I was running and it just felt so easy, and I didn't even realize that I did 10 miles or 13 miles. They're just totally absorbed in what they're doing. So if you're not a runner, that's okay.

Kimberly Crowel...: 49:27

You don't have to be a runner to enjoy this. For me, it's just being absorbed by the task. I love to hike. I love to be outdoors. Teaching, I love to teach, and so that time just stops. Like, where did the time go? I could just talk about this all day, but I only have an hour. R stands for positive relationships. Other people matter. We are social creatures by design. And some of you might say you're an introvert. I am too. I love to restore energy by myself. If I've had a long day at work and I've talked to a lot of people, I want to be home and just decompress on my own or decompress on the drive home.

Kimberly Crowel...: 50:15

But we need other people, and we don't need a thousand friends. This isn't a popularity contest, but you need to have anywhere from one to five people that are in your corner. Who is that person in your life? As humans, we are really great at

building relationships. If you think back to if you're married, when you first started dating your spouse or really long-term friendships when you first started developing that friendship, we put a lot of time and deliberate intention into getting to know that person, what makes them tick, what makes them happy, what do they enjoy, what do they hate? And we get all that information, and we spend a lot of time there. But through time, through distance, through comfort we tend to stop putting that intention in.

Kimberly Crowel...: 51:10 Make sure that you are maintaining those positive relationships, being consistent and having those conversations once a week with that special person. Have date nights with you as a couple, having dedicated time with each other. So continue to build and maintain those positive relationships. M is for meaning. So belonging to and serving something that is bigger than yourself. What brings you that sense of meaning in your life? For me, it is my job. I love what I get to do. I love to help people just be their best version of themselves. That's something that I love. So for me, that's the sense of meaning that I have.

Kimberly Crowel...: 51:57 And then lastly, A is for accomplishment. So pursuing success, achievement, skill mastery. Maybe you're going back to college and want to earn a degree. For me, mine has been my health. So working on my health has been a goal that I've been working towards for the past eight months or so. Having that sense of accomplishment. Maybe you want to learn a new skill, maybe you want to learn to play guitar or something. So pursuing that success, that achievement, and if we are leveraging each of these areas and we're being balanced in these areas, that's certainly going to improve our overall wellbeing. So if you have strategies that you're using to build PERMA in your life, you can certainly add that in the chat if you would like. Do some reflections of how you are adding in this idea of PERMA into your life. Establish a sense of routine. So that is the time that I have. Thank you all so much for your participation and joining in the chat. I really appreciate it. I'm open to any questions that you may have.

Lytaria Walker: 53:08 Thank you so much for this presentation this afternoon. We will now take a few questions from the audience. If you would like to ask a question, please type your question in the Q&A box, and we will read them aloud. There will be a short delay before the first question is announced. "Is there book you recommend with boundary setting questions?"

Kimberly Crowel...: 53:55 Yvette, that's a great question. I might have to get back to you on that. I'm not sure. So there is a book called Crucial

Conversations that's really wonderful that talks about how to have some of these tough conversations. So that might be a good place to start. I do not know the author off the top of my head. But it is a really fantastic book because oftentimes when we have to have these difficult conversations and it could be with setting boundaries, it could be emotions are involved, the stakes are high. And so that book certainly can help you to start formulating some of those conversations with those in your life, whether that's at home or at work to start setting that up. It's not too expensive. You can find it on Amazon. That might be a good place to start for you.

Lytaria Walker: 55:04 What's interesting is that someone has a question in the Q&A box: "Can you talk a bit about how you would have the hard conversations regarding setting boundaries?"

Kimberly Crowel...: 55:17 At the performance center, we, we talk about assertive communication. One, understanding what is the problem? So is it somebody encroaching on boundaries? Have you set a boundary and people keep crossing it? Identifying your own thoughts and emotions about the issue or concern so that we're able to maintain our composure when we go in and have that conversation. And looking at what are some potential strategies? Where are some places that we are looking to develop a win-win? And then having the conversation. So this isn't just a one-way conversation, but it should be a two-way conversation. Express your concerns to that individual and then ask them, "How do you see this situation? What's your perspective on this?"

Kimberly Crowel...: 56:11 Have that two-way dialogue. They might not know that it's a problem. I was doing some training with a group and a supervisor was consistently texting after hours and it was directives and tasks that needed to be done, but a lot of those tasks were really not emergencies. They were things that could be done the next day. And so there was a lot of frustration on the staff's part because they're trying to spend time with their family. They were trying to establish that work-life balance, and yet their phone was just constantly being blown up by all these group texts. So then one person replies, we all get the reply. So setting that conversation, they may not know that it's a problem. So bring that to their attention and then come up with a compromise where both of you can settle.

Kimberly Crowel...: 57:01 For example, "If it's an emergency, please call me. If it's something that can be done tomorrow, maybe send a delayed email." I type out the email so I don't forget the task, and then you can just put a delay send where it sends first thing in the

morning and then I've got it first thing and I can tackle that in the morning. So I think having that conversation, doing some self-reflection first to maintain composure, asking their perspective how they see it, and then working together to build that collaborative response and answer and solution. And then we both get that win-win. So hopefully that helps and answers that question.

Lytaria Walker:	57:37	Absolutely outstanding answer. Thank you. If you have a question, please drop it in the Q&A box at this time. It looks like someone put the authors of the book you mentioned: Joseph Grenny, Kerry Patterson, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler.
Kimberly Crowel...:	58:01	I think I do see a question in the chat box about emotional intelligence and knowing when and how to set boundaries. With emotional intelligence, I certainly think that could play a role. If we're not in tune with other people's emotional state or understanding what motivates them, that could be a challenge in setting boundaries for sure. Not everybody has that emotional intelligence. So that's part of having that tough conversation and getting their perspective. They just might not understand. Emotional intelligence could play a role, but I think it doesn't have to be two-way, but you can certainly have that conversation to explore some emotional intelligence.
Lytaria Walker:	58:59	Thank you for that. If there are no more questions, we will conclude this afternoon's webinar. I do want to extend a very gracious thank you to Ms. Crowell for joining us today. Thank you listeners for joining today's webinar. Once the webinar concludes, you will be prompted to complete a survey. We appreciate your feedback as this helps us to improve upon future webinars. If you'd like to receive invitations for DPRR webinars and receive the latest news and information from the Director of Prevention, Resilience, and Readiness, please go to DPRR's website at armyresilience.army.mil and sign up for notifications there. Thank you so much for joining us today. Have a wonderful rest of your day.