

NOURISHING NEWS

All Faiths Food Bank agency newsletter



Let's work together: Managing periods of high stress

Typically, I highlight the recent events at the food bank over the past few months. However, unless you've been on a three-month retreat, you'll know that we've introduced many new practices — such as implementing the PWW ordering system, adding barcodes to Link2Feed, transitioning TEFAP eligibility forms online, updating the Civil Rights complaint forms and preparing those scheduled to meet with Florida's Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. There's so much activity that many agency visits have revealed feelings of being overwhelmed by these changes. Darla and I completely understand!

This month, I've created a concise guide for volunteers and pantry leaders to navigate the remaining quarter and stay positive for the busy summer ahead. I want to thank you all for your effort in adopting these new processes. We know changing long-standing routines is challenging, but we believe that once the initial hurdles pass, these updates will streamline your work and allow you to focus on what you do best — connecting with neighbors and providing a welcoming, dignified experience during distribution.

With that in mind, I leave you with a final question:

What events motivate your pantry to keep doing the work you do?

We call these "Mission Moments" at the food bank. Feel free to share some, and let me know if it's okay to share them with others!



Ana Hernandez
Agency Relations Coordinator



Fun fact:

"Safe Place Visualization" involves imagining yourself in a calming environment during stressful moments. This grounding technique helps manage anxiety, and has been proven to lower stress hormones.

Tip: To improve its effectiveness, involve your senses in the visualization; notice what it looks like, what sounds you can hear and what smells are present.

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ERIN'S BOOK NOOK!

I asked Erin, our wonderful L2F and Data Intake Manager (and our go-to person for mindfulness and perspective), to share a resource that has helped her deal with stress.

She reached into her library and pulled out a timeless classic: **The Tao Te Ching** (translated by Stephen Mitchell).

Erin's takeaway:

Instead of fighting the chaos, try "flowing" with it. When we stop clinging to how we think things should go and accept them as they are, the pressure starts to lift.

As we navigate new software and busy distribution days, remember:

"We're all going through lots of big changes. Flowing with it as best we can can be the wisest approach into a progressive state. Not expecting perfection. We'll get there!"

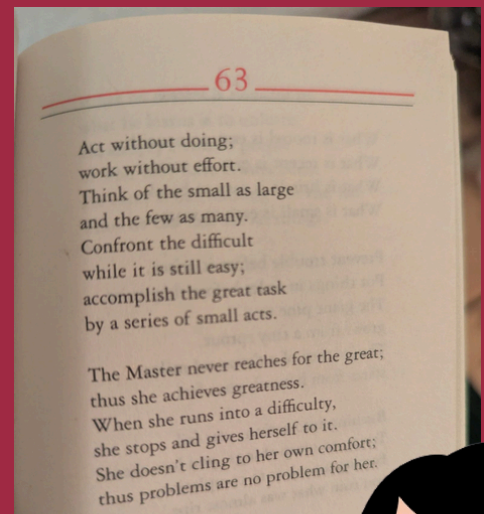
Erin Evergreen
Data Intake Manager

On the art of "non-doing"

- In the middle of a high-stress shift, this text reminds us that our presence is often our most powerful tool. By staying calm and focused, we set the tone for everyone around us without even having to say a word.

On facing difficulty

- When things don't go as planned (whether it's a software glitch or a long line), Erin suggests this perspective from chapter 63:



UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING COMPASSION FATIGUE

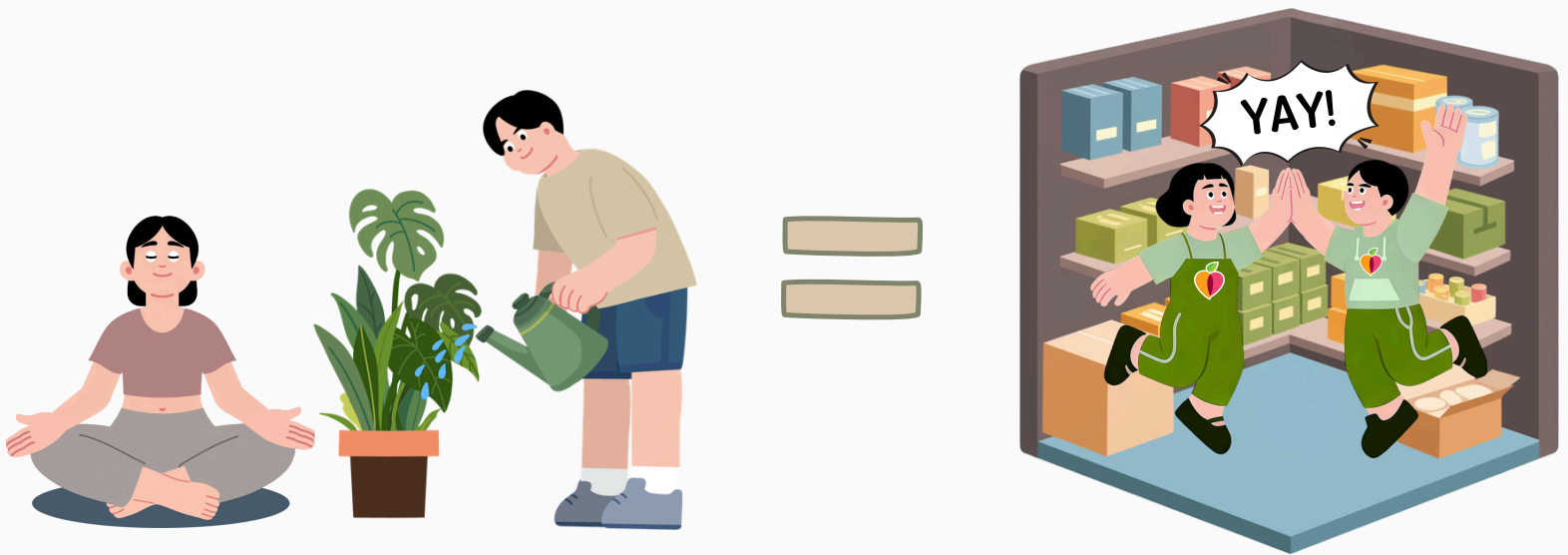
Compassion fatigue is a common challenge for those in helping professions, including food pantry volunteers and workers. It arises from prolonged exposure to stress and trauma, often stemming from assisting individuals in crisis.

This condition combines secondary traumatic stress (caused by indirect exposure to trauma and burnout), which is characterized by physical and emotional exhaustion.

To manage compassion fatigue, food pantry workers and volunteers can focus on building resilience through self-care practices.

These include maintaining a healthy work-life balance, engaging in enjoyable activities, practicing relaxation techniques like deep breathing or meditation, and seeking support from colleagues or loved ones.

Recognizing the signs of compassion fatigue early is crucial, as is setting boundaries and taking breaks when needed!



For additional tools and strategies, resources such as the Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project and the Compassion Resilience Toolkit offer valuable guidance.

Source: National Association of Social Workers, "Practice Perspectives: A Look at Compassion Fatigue and Resources for Social Workers," Fall 2022.

VOLUNTEER STRESS SUPPORT: THE “STOP” SKILL

When things get hectic at the food pantry, use the **STOP** technique to stay grounded and in control of your own reactions:

S - Stop: Don't react. Just freeze for a moment to stay in control of your emotions.

T - Take a step back: Pause and take a deep breath. Give yourself time to calm down before responding.

O - Observe: Gather the facts. Notice what is happening around you and how you are feeling without jumping to conclusions.

P - Proceed mindfully: Ask, "What is my goal?" Act only when you are clear-headed and ready to be effective.



Source: Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) Tools, "STOP Skill," 2026.

Waffle Pizza Sammies



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Waffle Pizza Sammies



This institution is an
equal opportunity
provider.

Ingredients:

- 2 slices of sandwich bread
- Sliced pepperoni
- Mozzarella cheese
- Butter
- Marinara sauce

Directions:

1. Turn on waffle maker to medium heat.
2. Gently spread butter on one side of each slice of bread. Flip slice of bread buttered side down and layer on the mozzarella, pepperoni, more mozzarella, and top with another slice of bread (buttered side up).
3. Place the sandwich into the waffle iron. Don't touch the hot waffle iron! Let it cook for about 2 minutes and then move your pizza waffle to a cooling rack.
4. Pour some marinara into a small dish for dipping your crispy, delicious pizza sammie.

Reminder:

Please mark your calendar!

Our annual Partner Agency Conference will be held from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Friday, April 17, at All Faiths Food Bank, 8171 Blaikie Ct., Sarasota, FL 34240.

We would love to have at least one representative from each agency attend. This year, we will be introducing our Agency Advisory Council, who has been working on sessions for the conference. More details will be shared soon.

RSVP here by April 10: <https://forms.gle/YXDNKcss5oeXPntM8>

We hope you can join us!



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