



“The antidote for burnout is whole-heartedness,” says James Ginsberg, Director of Substance Treatment Services/Housing First at the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless. “What do we do to enter back into this work? You think if you’re burning out, you need to take a step back, but sometimes you need to re-enter the work fully. It’s about stepping back and about re-entering.” Supervisors are often in the perfect positions to facilitate both.

Through individual and group supervision, formal support after difficult events, and helping staff feel a sense of control in their work lives, supervisors can create a culture of self-care. Here are 10 practical tips for supervisors to create a work environment that fosters self-care among staff:

1. Stop, get out of the workplace, and do some planning—hold retreats for staff on a regular basis.
2. Bring in food for the team.
3. If there is any incident like death, near death, or some other critical incident, automatically offer a critical incident debriefing facilitated by someone outside the agency. Whether staff say they want to come or not, offer it. We don’t assess whether it is needed. We just do it.
4. Keep weekly supervision time sacred.
5. Offer employee assistance programs and be clear with staff what mental health care services are offered through company insurance.
6. Do whatever you can to help staff feel that they have control over their work days.
7. As a supervisor, keep a small caseload and keep yourself as visible as possible. Force yourself to be in the middle of things. Stand and chat with staff every chance you get.
8. Articulate the big picture and remind staff that we’re on the right track.
9. Don’t withhold information from staff. Don’t forget to keep them informed about how decisions have been made.
10. Happily admit that you don’t always know the answer.
11. Provide structure. Give staff autonomy, but also create the structures in which people can thrive. This is a difficult balance.