

20
YEARS

HELPING CORRECTIONAL AGENCIES BUILD A MORE ENGAGED WORKFORCE

CORRECTIONAL OASIS

A Desert Waters Publication

20
Years!

JANUARY 2023

From The Director's Desk

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The Importance Of Spirituality And
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In Memoriam



Volume:20
Issue:1



A non-profit for the health of correctional agencies, staff and families

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

This month we celebrate, with thanksgiving, a full 20 years that Desert Waters Correctional Outreach has been passionately pursuing our mission.

It feels like only yesterday, when, after what I call persistent “God promptings,” my husband Ted Tudor and I started this “mom-and-pop” nonprofit in the little cow town of Florence, Colorado. We’re grateful that we have come a long way since then.

In an effort to capture the essence of what has transpired these past two decades, I invite you to peruse the following list of Desert Waters’ accomplishments.

- Corrections-specific and trauma-responsive wellness courses developed: **7**
- Instructor Trainings: **97**
- Certified Instructors: **1,091**
- Directly Delivered Trainings: **196**
- Conference Presentations: **82**
- Webinars: **22**
- States represented in our trainings: **39**
- Countries represented in our trainings: **6**
- Research Studies: **7** (including groundbreaking studies on the prevalence of post-traumatic symptoms among correctional employees)
- Federal Contract Agreements: **3**
- Published Books: **6**
- Book copies sold: **72,062**
- Book copies donated: **5,040**
- Published and distributed the (free) *Correctional Oasis* monthly since Jan 2004
- Expert Witness Testimony: **5**
- Professional counseling services offered: 2003 to 2014
- The Corrections Ventline: 24/7/365 hotline – by phone (from 2005 to 2013) and by email (from 2004 to the present)

- Awards: **2** (2014 Harry Tinsley Award, Colorado Criminal Justice Association; 2016 Commercial Product Award of Excellence for the course "From Corrections Fatigue to Fulfillment," the International Association of Correctional Training Personnel)

The above list does not include the multiple thousands of corrections staff who have been, and continue to be, trained in our courses across the nation and the world as a result of Instructors certified by Desert Waters to teach one or more of our courses. We are beyond grateful for the multitude of wellness seeds that have been planted in the hearts and lives of men and women in all variety of corrections settings, and we trust those seeds continue to grow and multiply.

Beyond numbers, we will always hold close to our hearts the countless dear individuals we've had the privilege of interacting with – meeting, listening, laughing, agonizing, crying, praying, and rejoicing. The field of corrections is full of gems.

I do not cease to feel grateful and amazed by where we are today.

None of these accomplishments would have been possible without our team of dedicated and resourceful Board members, staff, volunteers, and donors. And none of these accomplishments would have been possible without the correctional decision-makers, the formal and informal leaders, who have continuously and courageously acknowledged the staff's needs, and who have embraced Desert Waters' services even when correctional staff wellness was anything but a popular concept.

Last but not least, it is my strong conviction that none of Desert Waters' accomplishments to this point would have been possible without the provision, protection, and direction of the One who sent me on this most unexpected and most worthy venture!

As we start our 21st year, my vision is to see every correctional agency in the United States and beyond adopt effective wellness training material such as what Desert Waters advocates and offers.

May it be so!

Caterina Spinaris

2023 Online Training Schedule

- **Feb 21-24, Feb 27-28 & Mar 1** – From Corrections Fatigue to Fulfillment™
- **Mar 6-10 & 13-14** – True Grit: Building Resilience in Corrections Professionals™
- **3rd Wed of the month, Mar-Dec** – The Supportive Correctional Supervisor™
- **May 2-5 & 8-10** – Improving the Well-being of Corrections Professionals: Understanding, Acknowledging, and Overcoming Traumatic Stress™
- **Jun 5-9** – Towards Corrections Fulfillment: For New Staff™
- **Jul 10-14** – Correctional Family Wellness™ (For Families™ & Staff™)
- **Sep 11-15 & 18-19** – From Corrections Fatigue to Fulfillment™
- **Oct 23-27 & 30-31** – True Grit: Building Resilience in Corrections Professionals™
- **Nov 6-10** – Towards Corrections Fulfillment: For New Staff™
- **Nov 27-30 & Dec 1** – Correctional Family Wellness™ (For Families™ & Staff™)
- **Dec 5-8 & 11-13** – Improving the Well-being of Corrections Professionals: Understanding, Acknowledging, and Overcoming Traumatic Stress™

Select a course above
to sign up to join us!



RESEARCH BENCH: GRATITUDE

BY GREG MORTON, M.S.

GratITUDE. In a correctional setting. Or should I say: In a correctional setting? Really? Hard to find? Easy to find if you're looking? Impossible to find no matter how hard you look?

At a GED graduation ceremony once, I told the incarcerated students that, besides thanking their teachers, which is mandatory of course, they should also thank the officers who kept the school and their housing units calm so that they could study and learn. Maybe I got a couple of grim-faced nods. No matter, I meant it then just like I mean it now.

Because we don't just find gratitude. We create gratitude. We show gratitude. We display gratitude. Gratitude is an active event, not a passive one.

(Guy in the back row whispers to his buddy: "Yeah, but what do I get out of it?")

I am glad you asked because that is what this Research Bench is all about. What, indeed, do you get out of expressing your gratitude to another person?

It starts with research recently published from the University of California, San Diego

"Gratitude expressions improve teammates' cardiovascular stress responses."

Gu, Y., Ocampo, J. M., Algoe, S. B., & Oveis, C. (2022).

Journal of Experimental Psychology. General, 151(12), 3281-3291.

This is how the study unfolded. Participant pairs were school acquaintances. Each pair was given a challenging two-stage task to perform. Half of the participant teams (the non-gratitude teams) were allowed to proceed with the tasks after a neutral conversation about their school days. In the other team (the gratitude team) one member was given private instructions to thank his or her partner for something genuine that that person had done for them in the past, rather than just talk about school life in general. They were then allowed to proceed with the tasks. The tasks were to (1) develop a sales presentation together, and then (2) each deliver the presentation separately. They were given a fixed amount of time to finalize their presentation and then were graded on its delivery.

One thing the researchers hoped to observe was the difference between a threat response and a challenge response. A threat response happens in people when we feel that our resources are inadequate for the task ahead, when we feel that we might fail. A challenge response is based on confidence, acknowledging the difficulty of the upcoming task, but with a personal belief that we can accomplish what is being attempted. A threat response and a challenge response have different biological indicators. (Think about that one for a second. Apply it to work requirements, if you'd like.)

As outcomes, the interpersonal dynamics of each pair were measured, as well as their cardiovascular efficiency. This was done by comparing their cardiac output and their vascular constriction. (Cardiac output is high for a challenge response, and low for a threat response, high meaning better blood flow from the heart, and low meaning less blood flow from the heart to the rest of the body. A threat response, on the other hand, causes vascular constriction, that is, narrowing of blood vessels, with higher levels of a threat response resulting in greater vascular constriction.) These biological indicators revealed the level of biological stress the participants were undergoing.

A threat response is marked by *"less efficient cardiovascular activation ... physiological patterns of challenge and threat have important down-stream consequences. For example, threat responses impair decision*

making, whereas challenge responses are associated with better performance in cognitive and motor tasks. Over the long term, threat responses are associated with elevated risk for cardiovascular disease, less effective immune response, and cognitive ability impairments" (p. 3282).

And that is what the researchers found in this simple gratitude study: *"teammates showed improved challenge-threat responding ... when one member of the team expressed gratitude to the other ... prior to engaging in demanding tasks"* (p. 3287).

"One person's gratitude can positively impact a team at a biological level and promote more adaptive responses to stress"

SO WHAT: I'll quote the last line of the article and then we'll see if we can apply it to our profession; *"One person's gratitude can positively*

impact a team at a biological level and promote more adaptive responses to stress" (p.3289).

That means that your gratitude response can have a beneficial effect on other people's physical health! That is no small accomplishment for such a humble act.

How you would make this happen at work depends on the job you have, and on the tasks you share with coworkers. If you work a posted position, it might be that somebody with different days off did a voluntary overtime for you so you could attend a child's school graduation. If you are a work crew supervisor, you might thank the housing unit officer who recommended the hardest worker you have on your crew. If you are in an

administrative position getting ready to present a new project to your executive team, you might want to remember something your project partner did for you, and thank them as you are waiting for your time on the agenda. If you are a shift supervisor making rounds, thanking your staff for genuinely remembered assistance would contribute to your team's performance in ways we all need.

How about something more complicated? Does it make sense to thank a fellow officer for something they did in the past as you are both suiting up for a cell extraction with an out-of-control individual?

Frankly, I think that last example proves the research as well as any corrections example does. Take a second or two and focus on that setting, imagining yourself as firstly the giver and then, secondly, the receiver, as you are preparing for the cell extraction. What cognitive and emotional space does the gratitude expression put you in as you get ready for the extraction? How strong does the teamwork bond become? And then, ask yourself if you can you feel your confidence increase while your breathing and heart rate come under control.

I'll leave the answer to you, but for me it is: "Yes. Every time."





From Corrections
Fatigue to Fulfillment™

INSTRUCTOR TRAINING

Online Training &
Independent Study



2023 Online Instructor Training Dates

- > Training 1: Feb 21-24, Feb 27-28 & Mar 1
- > Training 2: Sep 11-15 & 18-19

Times

- > Times Online: 9am–1pm MT (8am PT, 10am CT, 11am ET)
- > Independent Study: 12 hours
- > Phone or Virtual Coaching: Two one-hour individual sessions following the online training

7-day (42-hour) Online Training & Independent Study

Staff called the course:

- *incredibly valuable*
- *eye-opening*
- *career-saving*
- *relationship-saving*
- *life-saving*

- Science-based explanation of the psychological dynamics behind the negativity of the corrections workplace, and its manifold costly consequences to corrections agencies, staff, and their families
- Science-informed strategies to increase staff well-being and to improve the organizational climate and culture
- Based on research in psychological trauma, resilience, and Positive Psychology
- CF2F certification offers corrections personnel the ability to teach the valuable CF2F principles to staff at their agency
- Independent study includes the books “Staying Well” and “More on Staying Well” by Caterina Spinaris

Upon Successful Completion of Certification Requirements Instructor Candidates Will Receive:

- Certificate of Completion for 42 Contact Hours
- Three-year certification and license* as Instructors** or Co-instructors** to offer the 1-day CF2F course to their agency staff***
- Electronic copies of CF2F course materials
- CF2F updates during their three-year certification

Fee: \$1,495.00 per Instructor Candidate.



CF2F

Course Author: Caterina Spinaris, PhD., is DWCO's Executive Director and a Licensed Professional Counselor with over 30 years of clinical experience. Caterina conducts research, and offers research-based trainings and interventions to corrections agencies to counter the effects of occupational stressors, and to increase organizational health and employee well-being.

In addition to CF2F, she authored the following courses: "True Grit: Building Resilience in Corrections Professionals™," "Correctional Family Wellness™," "The Supportive Supervisor™," "Improving the Well-Being of Corrections Professionals™," and "Peer Supporter Training™." Caterina is the 2014 recipient of the Colorado Criminal Justice Association's Harry Tinsley award.

- **FIVE** customized versions for staff working in (a) adult corrections or detention facilities, (b) probation and parole offices, (c) juvenile justice facilities, (d) juvenile justice community services, and (e) administrators and supervisors
- Pertinent to both frontline staff's and supervisors' interests and concerns
- Applicable to both custody and non-custody staff
- Practical and easy to grasp by both new and veteran employees, and by managers
- To be team-taught by your agency instructors and co-instructors as a full-day

Criteria for Instructor Candidates

- Prior classroom training experience
- At least 5 years of working in corrections
- Experience working through work-related challenges
- Ability to present emotionally-laden material
- Ability to be an empathetic listener
- Ability to moderate emotionally-heated discussions
- Ability to team-teach



DESERT WATERS
CORRECTIONAL OUTREACH

Desert Waters Correctional Outreach is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation (EIN 30-0151345) with the mission to advance the well-being of correctional staff and their families, and the health of correctional agencies, through data-driven, skill-based training.

REGISTRATION

Dates: February September Fee: \$1,495 per Instructor Candidate

For More Information:

Visit: [CF2F](#)

To sign up: [Click Here](#)

To pay by Credit Card, call us at 719-784-4727. Purchase Orders accepted.

admin@desertwaters.com

Cancellation Policy: No refunds less than three weeks prior to the training. Registrations are transferable to another instructor candidate of the same agency as long as instructor candidate criteria are met.

*CF2F licenses can be renewed for another three years by passing an online exam (fee \$490).

**Instructors can teach on their own if necessary; Co-instructors must always team-teach with an Instructor.

***Instructors and Co-instructors are NOT certified to train other instructors or individuals outside of their agency.

TURNING POINTS: SHIFTING ATTENTION IN THE NEEDED DIRECTION

BY DARIA MAYOTTE, M.A.

As a 23-year-old single lady on a mission in 2001-02, I had obeyed God's call to go to South Africa for a year where I taught literacy five days a week to incarcerated 18-21 year-old males at Pollsmoor Prison. The experience dramatically transformed my life, and I was certain I'd return one day with my (future) family to further invest in these young men.

Nine years later that was indeed the case. Married and with a five-month-old baby we relocated from the USA to South Africa, intent to invest our lives in the broken who found themselves locked behind bars.

Through a series of circumstances, it turned out that our first outreach initiative was not with incarcerated juveniles at all. Instead, through creative input and God's prompting under the leadership of Hope Prison Ministry's two volunteer chaplains, we requested permission to utilize a large empty room in the juvenile prison, setting it up as the location of what would become our weekly coffee shop exclusively for corrections staff to have a place of quiet, a place to unwind and connect with others.

I must admit I was more than apprehensive about this idea. *"This is going to be awkward,"* I thought. *"These uniformed officers have it all together. They don't need us. We're going to come across belittling to their distinguished positions."* Nevertheless, we pulled together the necessary supplies and attempted to transform the hollow echoes of the empty space into something that would create solace amidst a harsh environment.

My husband Steve and I put some TLC into some dilapidated prison tables and chairs, covered them with fresh tablecloths, brought in some instant coffee, tea, and prepackaged cookies, put on some soothing music, and scattered a few prayer cards in various locations. We printed a large welcome sign to place at the door, advertising our new venue, Cup of Hope. And...voila! We waited. I was nervous and fully prepared to be humiliated with the reality we were not needed here.

Looking back, I will never forget that day. I believe we had between 60-70 corrections staff members walk through our doors, far exceeding our expectations. The place became busy and alive within the few short hours we were there. But there was one moment that really stuck in my heart. It was a conversation with a couple of corrections staff members who pulled Steve and me aside for a moment. With literal tears falling from their eyes, they said to us, *"We've been here 30 and 40 years. This is the first time in all our decades of working that anyone has ever done anything for us. Every volunteer bypasses us to go straight to the inmates. Thank you for doing something just for us."*

I really couldn't believe what we were hearing. I stood there attempting to process my readiness to be rejected in contrast to the actual words that were coming out of their mouths. How could this be? How could these stoic professionals be telling me they're actually genuinely grateful for some sweetened hot water in a styrofoam cup?

But it was more than that. Over the weeks and months to come, sipping tea and coffee side-by-side in conversation with corrections staff, our eyes were gradually opened to the circumstances in which COs find themselves. Hearts were poured out. Stories were told. Trust was built. Relationships were established. Prayer requests were shared.

That was on the better days. Other days were more challenging. And that's ok. To be expected, actually.

Nevertheless, this was a turning point for us as volunteers in corrections. We didn't actually realize it at the time. We still thought we were there for the offenders and this interaction with corrections staff was just an eye-opening bonus. But as the months, and eventually the years, passed, we started to understand a few things differently: many men and women working behind bars are truly hurting; unhealthy staff cannot be expected to create rehabilitated offenders; and it is time we open our eyes to invest in those who hold both the literal and metaphorical keys to corrections institutions.

It wasn't long before we began working exclusively with corrections staff. Some might say we did so in lieu of working with offenders. And it is true - we no longer provided programs directly to the incarcerated. But I wouldn't say we quit investing in offenders. Simply, we chose to pour our time and resources into a population that would in turn have a far greater impact on the incarcerated than we could ever hope for. And I believe that investment is continually paying dividends, even today.





THE SUPPORTIVE CORRECTIONAL SUPERVISOR™

Online Training &
Independent Study

Interested in Positively Impacting Your
Entire Agency?

Begin With This 10-Month, 46-Hour
Transformative Course for Supervisors!

3rd Wed of the Month, Mar-Dec 2023

Fee

\$1,495 per Supervisor

Includes the Participant Manual
and three booklets for
independent study.

Reason

Research suggests that the quality of corrections staff's professional relationship with their supervisors affects staff's morale, job satisfaction, energy level (physically and emotionally), and also their mental health, physical health, and family health¹. Additionally, a supportive supervisory style can reduce staff's use of work-related sick days^{2,3}.



Target Audience

Federal, state, county and city supervisors who work in correctional/detention institutions or probation or parole offices, and who supervise staff who manage justice-involved adults or juveniles. Course participants can be from the same correctional agency or from different agencies.

Course Author: Caterina Spinaris, PhD, LPC, is DWCO's founding Director and a Licensed Professional Counselor in the State of Colorado. Dr. Spinaris has been treating and training correctional employees and their families since the year 2000. She also develops wellness-related educational materials, and conducts research on correctional employee wellness. In addition to this course, Dr. Spinaris has also authored DWCO's signature course, From Corrections Fatigue to Fulfillment™ (CF2F), True Grit: Building Resilience in Corrections Professionals™, Towards Corrections Fulfillment: For New Staff™, Improving the Well-being of Corrections Professionals: Understanding, Acknowledging, and Overcoming Traumatic Stress™, and Correctional Family Wellness™. The CF2F course received the 2016 Commercial Product of the Year Award of Excellence by the International Association of Correctional Training Personnel. Dr. Spinaris is the 2014 recipient of the Colorado Criminal Justice Association's Harry Tinsley award, and the author of the books Staying Well: Strategies for Corrections Staff, and More on Staying Well: More Strategies for Corrections Staff.

OBJECTIVES

1. Identify values and behaviors of supportive supervisors
2. Present research-based evidence on the impact of supervisors on subordinates' health and functioning
3. Emphasize the importance of self-regulation and self-care
4. Present information about mental health conditions correctional staff may be experiencing, including suicidal thinking, and ways supervisors can respond constructively
5. Describe skill-based behaviors for supervisors to interact with subordinates to create healthy workforce cultures

Desert Waters Correctional Outreach, Inc., is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation (EIN 30-0151345) with the mission to advance the well-being of correctional staff and their families, and the health of correctional agencies, through data-driven, skill-based training.

CONTENT DELIVERY

Online delivery of one module per month for 10 months, including small and large group interaction, and participant feedback regarding application of course principles in between training sessions - 3.0 hours per session. The full 46-hour course includes 30 hours of DWCO instructor-led training and facilitation; 10 hours of independent implementation; and 6 hours of independent reading.

MODULES

1. Reasons & Values
2. The Need – Research Findings
3. Understanding Your Staff & Yourself
4. Dealing with Your Distress
5. Behavioral Health Conditions
6. Staff Suicide Concerns
7. Skillful Interacting with Staff
8. Dealing with Escalation & Other High-stress Situations
9. Supervisor Functions & Role Modeling
10. Promoting a Positive Workplace Culture

For More Information:
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¹Spinaris, C.G., and Brocato, N. (2019). *Descriptive study of Michigan Department of Corrections Staff Well-being: Contributing factors, outcomes, and actionable solutions.* https://www.michigan.gov/documents/correc6ons/MDOC_Staff_Well-being_Report_660565_7.pdf

²Duchaine, C.S., Aubé, K., Gilbert-Ouimet, M., et al. (2020). *Psychosocial Stressors at Work and the Risk of Sickness Absence Due to a Diagnosed Mental Disorder: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis.* *JAMA Psychiatry*, 77(8): 842-851. doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2020.0322.

³Milligan-Saville, J.S., Tan, L., Gayed, A., et al. (2017). *Workplace mental health training for managers and its effect on sick leave in employees: a cluster randomised controlled trial.* *Lancet Psychiatry*. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(17\)30372-3](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(17)30372-3).

THE IMPORTANCE OF SPIRITUALITY AND SPIRITUAL FITNESS IN BOOSTING RESILIENCE

BY CATERINA SPINARIS, PHD, LPC

In this article I'd like to discuss two related concepts, that of spirituality and that of spiritual fitness, and their importance for true resilience, health, and quality of life.

A friend, who would absolutely not call himself religious, said to me recently that the subject of spirituality is not discussed often enough among corrections staff, in spite of its crucial importance.

He made this comment after I shared with him (with permission) the following thoughts sent to us by a Correctional Officer:

"Recently I became more committed to my faith. Me being a very compassionate, empathic, and loving person, being around a lot of evil, corruption, egotism, and pride really rubs off. Being around a lot of negativity for long hours tends to weary me. But whenever I pray, the heaviness is becoming lighter. I think my problem at work is more of a spiritual one. I just got to bear in mind that God is good in spite of all the evil in the world."

Possible reasons why spirituality may not be a popular subject in correctional circles is that it might be thought of as being an outdated concept, make-believe, or what weaklings resort to when they cannot cope with life's difficulties.

Additionally, at times spirituality is confused with toxic religious systems where people have been exposed to grave hypocrisy, exploitation, and power abuses. Understandably, survivors or witnesses of such hurtful and disillusioning experiences might reject anything to do with spirituality, faith, or religion outright, possibly throwing a precious baby out with the stinking bath water.

There is substantial evidence that healthy spirituality is a foundational contributor to true resilience, true grit, the capacity to endure hardship, "regroup," and bounce back from setbacks.¹

And that is why we are discussing this topic here. All of us who deal with correctional staff wellness know that, given the relentless challenges correctional staff encounter on the job, they absolutely NEED true grit. And if spirituality can help build and increase their spiritual fitness, and thus their resilience, then it is a subject worth addressing.

Indeed, research findings suggest that supportive spirituality and religion function as protective factors for both physical and psychological health. For instance, participation in spiritual communities is associated with longevity, and reduced risk for depression, substance abuse, and suicide.^{2,3}

Based on such study findings, the United States Department of Defense designated Spiritual Fitness to be one of eight key components of its Military Service Members' Total Force Fitness framework, impacting their resilience, and their readiness and ability to meet mission requirements.⁴

The Department of Defense defines Spiritual Fitness as "the ability to adhere to beliefs, principles, or values needed to persevere and prevail in accomplishing missions" (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3405.01, A-2).⁵

To put it more simply, spirituality is our inner strength, the "tiger in our tanks," stemming from our beliefs and ideals. Spiritual fitness is our ability to tap into that reservoir of strength, so we can be empowered to live out our ideals with dogged determination, even in the face of opposition, hardship, disappointment, or loss. That is how spirituality – our beliefs and ideals – boosts resilience. In essence, **spiritual fitness is resilience based on spirituality.**

It is important to point out that the term spirituality as used in the above definition may or may not include what is traditionally viewed as organized religion. What makes the inclusion of Spiritual Fitness in the Department of Defense's Total Fitness Framework especially noteworthy is its distinction between vertical and horizontal spirituality.⁵

These are two concepts that may be different in some ways, but are also related in other ways. It is possible to identify with one but not the other dimension of spirituality. People who embrace horizontal spirituality may or may not also embrace vertical spirituality. The two can co-exist or can exist independently of each other. As you'll see below, what these two types of spirituality have in common is valuing, committing to, finding joy in, and even sacrificing for something that transcends and surpasses oneself.

Vertical Spirituality

Vertical spirituality typically refers to a person's religion – belief in, relationship with, and commitment to a Supreme Being, a deity, a "Higher Power," God, or ultimate ideals, with a yearning to "connect" with that Being or live out these ideals. Vertical spirituality involves personal convictions that may be seen by others as being arbitrary or even irrational, but, for the persons espousing them, they are foundational principles and beliefs in defense of which they may be willing to suffer and even perhaps die. Vertical spirituality often includes belonging in organized communities with established structures, teachings, rituals, and ceremonies which commemorate and celebrate special times of the year.

Horizontal Spirituality

Horizontal spirituality usually refers to deeply felt commitment to aspects of our existence that have to do with life's meaning and purpose – whether individually or corporately; moral values that are held at the highest regard; choices and actions based on these values; prioritizing the common good in social contexts; a sense of belonging and connectedness with others in one's community or society; a sense of being part of something meaningful and of great value; and the pursuit of connecting with something bigger than oneself.

Because horizontal spirituality sounds poetic and philosophical, and is hard to describe, I share here stirring snippets of writings that exemplify horizontal spirituality at its best. They are written by a man who suffered more than any of us can grasp, yet emerged from that fiery furnace more spiritually beautiful than when he entered it. This man is Viktor E. Frankl, a Jewish-Austrian psychiatrist, the sole Holocaust concentration camp survivor of his family. He is the founder of logotherapy and the author of 39 books, including "Man's Search for Meaning."

On the importance of meaning in life:

"Life is never made unbearable by circumstances, but only by lack of meaning and purpose."

"There is nothing in the world ... that would so effectively help one to survive even the worst conditions as the knowledge that there is a meaning in one's life. There is much wisdom in the words of Nietzsche: 'He who has a WHY to live for can bear almost any HOW.'"

On finding beauty – meaning in the moment – regardless of circumstances:

"One evening, when we were already resting on the floor of our hut, dead tired, soup bowls in hand, a fellow prisoner rushed in and asked us to run out to the assembly grounds and see the wonderful sunset. Standing outside we saw sinister clouds glowing in the west and the whole sky alive with clouds of ever-changing shapes and colors, from steel blue to blood red. The desolate grey mud huts provided a sharp contrast, while the puddles on the muddy ground reflected the glowing sky. Then, after minutes of moving silence, one prisoner said to another, 'How beautiful the world could be...'"

On going beyond oneself:

"We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."

"Man is originally characterized by his 'search for meaning' rather than his 'search for himself.' The more he forgets himself – giving himself to a cause or another person – the more human he is. And the more he is immersed and absorbed in something or someone other than himself, the more he really becomes himself."

On gratitude and forgiveness:

"I do not forget any good deed done to me, and I do not carry a grudge for a bad one."

On the inner strength derived through evoking the image of a beloved:

"... my mind clung to my wife's image I heard her answering me, saw her smile, her frank and encouraging look. Real or not, her look was then more luminous than the sun which was beginning to rise. I didn't even know if she were still alive. I knew only one thing: Love goes very far beyond the physical person of the beloved. It finds its deepest meaning in (our) spiritual being, (our) inner self. Whether or not the beloved is actually present, whether or not the beloved is still alive at all, ceases somehow to be of importance for the first time in my life I saw the truth ... that love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which man can aspire The salvation of man is through love and in love a man who has nothing left in this world still may know bliss, be it only for a brief moment, in the contemplation of his beloved. In a position of utter desolation ... man can, through loving contemplation of the image he carries of his beloved, achieve fulfillment."

Impact of Corrections Fatigue on Spirituality and on Spiritual Fitness

And now we come back to why we are discussing this topic. As stated earlier, anything that can boost correctional staff's resilience and wellness is important to discuss.

And we know from studies and anecdotal observations that Corrections Fatigue wages a relentless war against staff's spirituality, eroding their spiritual fitness – and therefore also their resilience – over time.^{6,7}

This statement by a Correctional Officer exemplifies this: "I've lost my faith in mankind and in religion since working in corrections."

And here's an example of loss of fulfillment and meaning regarding the job:

"I'm trying to find satisfaction in my work.... However, I've grown apathetic about what my department will do next and became uncaring if they're even going to keep me on the payroll. All I'm getting is a paycheck out of me working as a correctional officer."

Listed here are some other ways that describe how, over time, Corrections Fatigue can render staff spiritually unfit if not prevented or countered appropriately:

- Becoming negative and pessimistic
- Expecting the worst
- Losing hope
- Being tempted to give up in one or more ways
- Having difficulty trusting others
- Having difficulty enjoying beauty
- Feeling emotionally disconnected from others

- Having difficulty feeling affection, compassion, or love
- No longer believing that there is true goodness, love, innocence, or purity in this world
- Losing passion for life
- Coming to believe that they themselves are not worth loving
- Coming to believe that making good choices does not make a difference for the better
- Coming to believe that there is nothing worth fighting for or striving for

Overcoming the Impact of Corrections Fatigue on Spirituality and on Spiritual Fitness

How can we overcome these destructive effects, revive our spirituality, and regain our spiritual fitness, perhaps even shielding ourselves from future onslaughts of Corrections Fatigue?

Here are some action-based suggestions.

1. **SLOW DOWN** and take in the beauty of the moment. The wonders of nature are a great way to begin repairing our spirituality. Beauty surrounds us, if only we stop long enough to intentionally notice it. Stop and look and listen and smell and feel and taste creation all around you. And as you do this, pay attention to your breathing as well. Keep it simple. Just look at a blade of green grass in the sunshine. The millions of mini rainbows reflected in snow crystals, sparkling in a snow-covered field. The clouds in the sky. A sunrise. A sunset. Sounds of the wind blowing through trees. The song of birds in the morning. The sound of the waves lapping across a beach. The purring sounds of a content cat.
2. **Show empathy.** Extend yourself by “putting yourself in others’ shoes,” and showing that you understand their way of thinking, even if you do not necessarily agree with it.
3. **Be compassionate.** Meet someone else’s need. Indeed, it is more blessed to give than to receive. Pure joy can well up in us when we give from the heart, whether we give in big or small ways to others at a low point in their lives.
4. **Be thankful.** Say “thank you” to those who assist you in any way. Think of whatever is going well in your life today, and be thankful for that. Consider all the blessings that you have, that you would miss sorely if they disappeared – even like a heated home during the winter months, and water that runs when you turn on the tap. Many people cannot even dream of such luxuries that we expect and take for granted.

5. **Forgive.** Whether or not you seek to re-establish relationship with a person you feel hurt by, consider choosing to let go of your hatred, desires or fantasies for revenge, or your wishing them ill.
6. **Seek reconciliation.** Repair strained or damaged relationships with key people in your life through constructive communication, making amends for any errors on your part, and forgiving their trespasses.
7. **Immerse yourself in inspirational material.** Meditate on inspirational literature, like sacred texts or poetry.
8. **Sing.** Let your voice rise, singing songs of joy and love.
9. **Pray.** Think of others and their needs, and in your mind wish the very best for them, blessing them with whatever you believe they need at this point in time.
10. **Reflect on the statement, “This is not just about me.”** It’s true. Life is not just about us. There’s a bigger picture beyond little us – even though we are precious and important – and we have been invited to participate and contribute to it. Consider that it may be worth your while to seek out this bigger picture and pursue it more than before.

We can also stir our “spiritual juices” by asking ourselves questions like:

1. Why am I here? What is my purpose in life? What gives my life meaning?
2. Where am I at this time in my life? How did I get here? Where do I want to be going? How can I get there?
3. What matters to me the most? What, to me, is worth dying for? What, to me, is worth living for?
4. What moves me to the core?
5. What is my source of inner strength?
6. What keeps me going when the going gets rough?
7. Who do I feel a kinship with? Who is part of my “tribe?”

Personal Application

As noted at the start of this article, spirituality is a topic that often takes a back seat in our Western culture, and perhaps even more so in the corrections workforce culture. So, what do we do with the information presented here?

You can start by thinking about where you find yourself at this time.

Do you identify with the many ways that Corrections Fatigue might have robbed you of spirituality and left you less spiritually fit than you'd like to be?

How could you intentionally counter these losses by applying some of the action-based suggestions above?

Are you willing to do so? What do you stand to lose if you do? What do you stand to gain?

Where do you begin? When?

For your long-term overall health, especially if you are a correctional professional, these topics of spirituality and spiritual fitness, particularly as they relate to resilience, are worth delving into further.

I thank Daria Mayotte for her valuable editorial comments. And I thank the Correctional Officers quoted here who so very courageously shared their thoughts and feelings with us.

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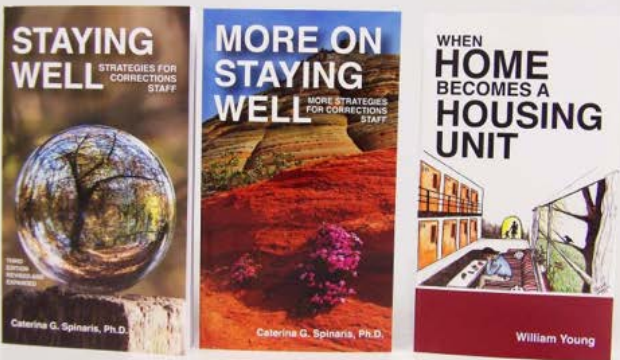


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Quote of the Month

"The way to get started is to quit
talking and begin doing."

~ Walt Disney

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