

Abstract

The interpreter shortage is drastic, especially around mental health counseling, due to compassion fatigue, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress. Burnout in the field of interpreters is a considerably big issue, and strategies are needed to mitigate negative affects. This topic is crucial to the field of interpreting because interpreters are needed in all areas of life. dDeaf people exist in all industries, including mental health, making the need for qualified interpreting professionals necessary as dDeaf individuals seek equivalent experiences to their hearing counterparts. Discussed is the importance of interpreting in the field of interpreting as well as the different roles that occur in therapeutic practice. The purpose of this study is to provide biblically practical ways to help a Christian mental health interpreter prevent being impacted by vicarious trauma and burnout. This study will be working with 10 certified Christian mental health Sign Language Interpreters (SLI) consisting of 5 males and 5 females. The participants will be selected using social networking apps and by sending out information through word of mouth. The participants participated in a mixed study where they will be interviewed and through online surveys. The following theoretical research anticipates the following themes: 1) healthy relationships have a positive impact on mental health, 2) interpreters with existing mental health conditions may need additional coping mechanisms, and 3) some coping mechanisms can be performed independently. Findings urge those who are Christian mental health interpreters, counselors with dDeaf clients, trainers of interpreters in programs, and those who need services to take into consideration the different ways that can be used to avoid burnout.

Literature Review

Burnout

- Burnout is when the interpreter becomes emotionally exhausted because of stress relating to the job.
- Vicarious trauma is when a person discusses trauma with someone that happened to them and accepts the trauma for themselves.
- Compassion fatigue is the cost of caring.
- Burnout occurs in this field because ASL is a visual language this means that “interpreters are required to visualize the experience, cognitively engage with the content to translate it, reproduce the emotions of the patient, and use a first-person form when delivering the message” (Zafirah, 2020, p.2).

Lack of support and training

- Interpreters are not trained in how to deal with compassion fatigue and deal with traumatic situations when they arise.
- Lack of training can also cause stress.

What does mental health interpreting look like?

- The triad consists of the dDeaf person, the interpreters and the therapist.
- Most common worry dDeaf people have is that they do not want their information being shared to people it does not affect.
- Interpreters are the go-between person for the therapist and the dDeaf person. They are the dDeaf person’s sole access to the appointment
- Therapists are there to facilitate communication and help the client to determine what is going on and how to solve the problem.

Introduction

Sign Language Interpreters are responsible for carrying the message between both spoken and signed languages. Because of that, they are put under a lot of stress because there are people (dDeaf and hearing) who rely on them being able to get the message across. In the counseling room, this is difficult because people are more likely to be upfront with their struggles and it is difficult to not react and to not take it personally. In an article titled “The impact of compassion fatigue on mental health sign language interpreters working with children: A thematic analysis” Zafirah states “Sign Language Interpreters face greater demands in their role compared to spoken language interpreters. This may be because SLIs are responsible for bridging the communication gap between the dDeaf population and the hearing world” (2020, p. 2)

Research Question

What self-care strategies help to prevent burnout because of vicarious trauma?

Methods

- Population: Christian Interpreters
- Participants: 10 nationally certified ASL to English Christian Interpreters 5 male and 5 female.
- Participants are found using social networking apps and word-of-mouth referrals.
- Selection is based on n entry survey.
- Requirements: practicing the Christian faith. Actively been a mental health interpreter within the past two months.
- Rationale: certified interpreters typically have more experience so they are most qualified to interpret in these types of settings.
- Duration: 4 months nationwide.
- Participants meet online for an hour to discuss strategies they have been using and whether or not they have been helping them with self-care.
- Data: Mixed methods collected by surveys and interviews.

Theoretical Results

Based off the literature and past studies it can be predicted that the themes that will occur are:

- 1) healthy relationships have a positive impact on mental health.
- 2) interpreters with existing mental health conditions may need additional coping mechanisms.
- 3) some coping mechanisms can be performed independently.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the impact of mental health on an interpreter is vital to their job. It can influence everything that they are doing. Because the stress of interpreting is so big coping strategies are needed to address burnout and compassion fatigue. Sign language interpreters are needed in every aspect of life and the mental health community is just a small speck of that. For Christian Interpreters this study is helpful because light is shed on the importance of being healthy for the dDeaf community.

Future Work

1. Studying How burnout affects the brain using a CT scan.
2. The client's perspective on knowing that the interpreter has a mental disorder. If the same one, do they feel seen? Or is it an invasion of privacy?
3. How does faith impact the field of mental health Interpreting?

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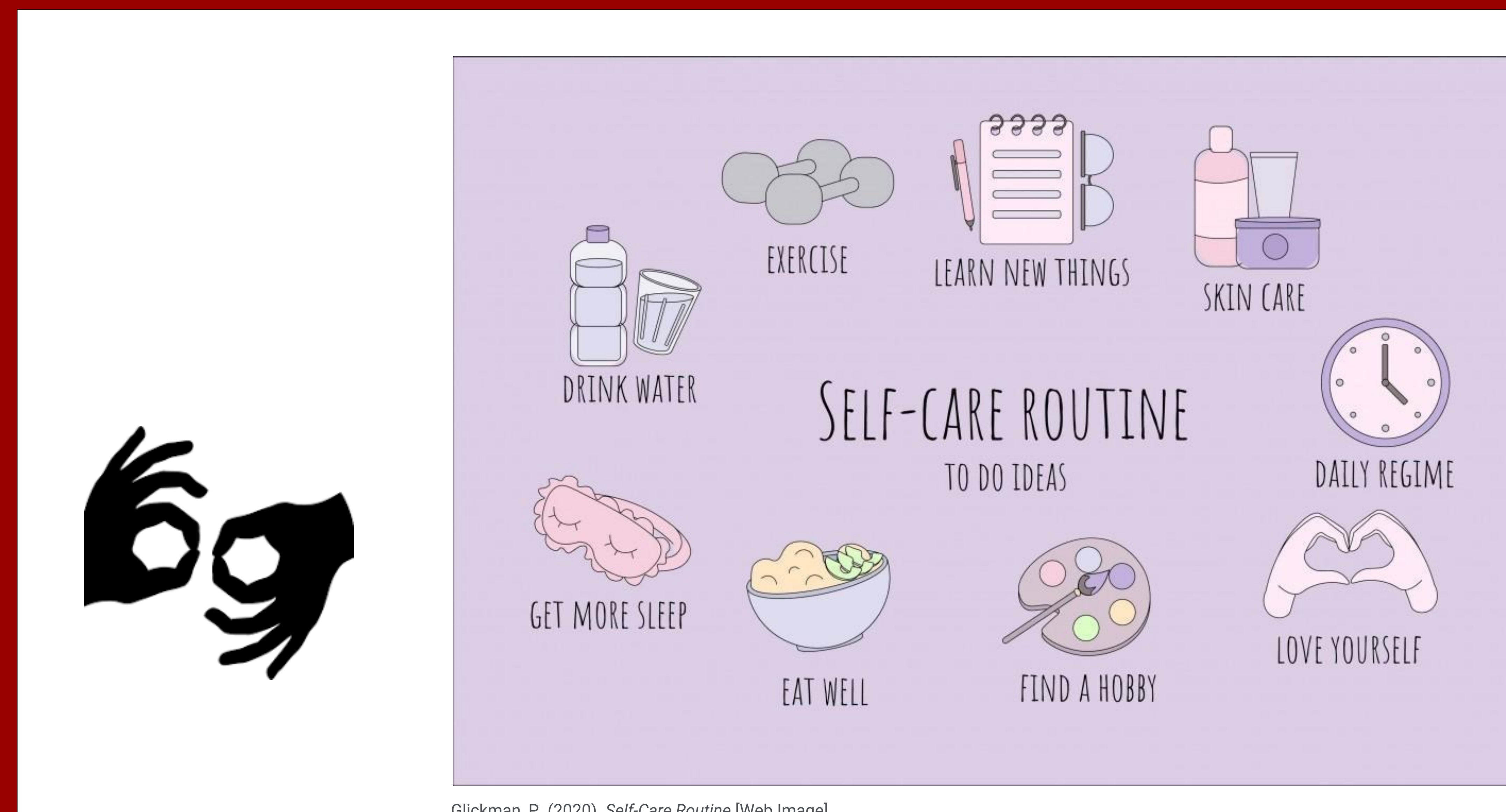
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