

Coping With Compassion Stress

Presented by ComPsych® Corporation



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Agenda

What is “Compassion Stress”?

Risk factors for developing Compassion Stress

Stages of Compassion Fatigue

Interventions/Prevention

Balancing Work and Life

Common emotional obstacles

Self-care strategies

What is Compassion Stress

- It is a term applied to emotional/behavioral effects felt by people who work with others under stress
- Compassion stress is progressive, signaled by subtle changes in mood, a long time regaining energy and positive attitude about work after time off, not looking forward to work and only recalling unpleasant aspects afterwards
- Compassion stress can lead to job “burnout” which is a person's inability to relieve the physical and mental symptoms associated with chronic stress
- It can show up as poor job performance, impersonality with patients/clients, lack of motivation and in health problems such as high blood pressure, insomnia, depression, or addiction

Assessment Questions

- Do you feel run down and drained of physical or emotional energy?
- Do you find that you are prone to negative thinking about your job?
- Do you find that you are harder and less sympathetic with people than perhaps they deserve?
- Do you find yourself getting easily irritated by small problems, or by your clients or coworkers?
- Do you feel misunderstood or unappreciated by your clients or coworkers
- Do you feel that you have no one to talk to?
- Do you feel that there is more work to do than you practically have the ability to do?
- Do you feel that you are in the wrong organization or the wrong profession?

Discussion Questions

In what ways do your interactions with others cause you stress?

How does that stress show itself? What happens when you get stressed?

What have you tried to make it better? Has it worked?



Risk Factors for Compassion Stress

- Don't know how to say "no" to demands on their time and energy
- Assume added responsibility when they are already working at capacity
- Consistently sacrifice their personal lives for work
- Lack control in their positions
- Don't discuss their problems or feelings
- Routinely criticize themselves, feel often guilty
- Haven't learned how to manage stress effectively
- Views work as a “calling”; expects work to give life meaning

Faulty Perceptions

- I will “fix” the problem
- I am responsible for outcomes; i.e. whether people change, learn, feel better or resolve their problems
- They will appreciate everything I do for them
- I know what I’m getting into
- I can do it alone
- If I’m strong enough, I can deal with the stress
- My family/friends will understand and accept my absence from the relationship with them



Compassion Fatigue Stages

The Passionate Phase

The Overwhelmed

The Irritability Phase

The Withdrawal Phase

Illness vs. Renewal/Maturation



Passionate Phase

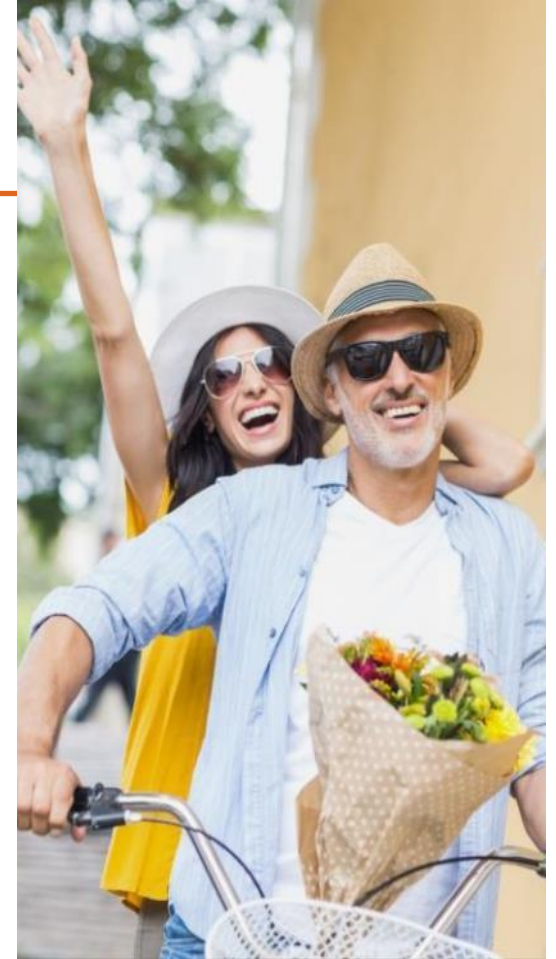
Committed, involved, available

Solving problems/making a difference

Willingly go the “extra mile”

Volunteers without being asked

High enthusiasm



Overwhelmed Phase

Intrusive thoughts associated with the client's problems and pain

Obsessive or compulsive desire to help certain clients

Client/work issues encroaching on personal time

Inability to “let go” of work related matters

Perception of clients as fragile and needing your assistance



The Irritable Phase

Begin to cut corners -impulsivity/reactivity

Sense of dread working with certain clients

Begins to denigrate the people we serve

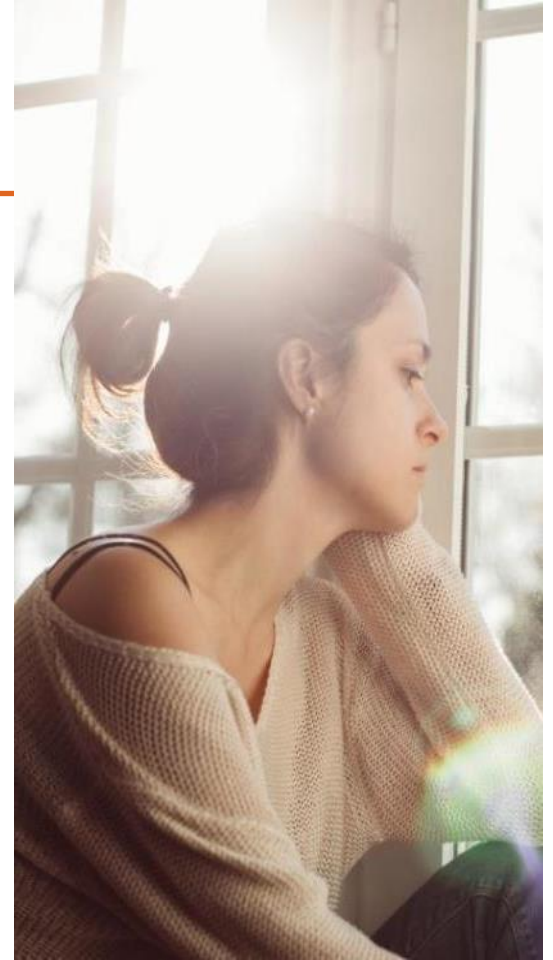
Use of humor is inappropriate

Oversights, mistakes and lapses of concentration

Start distancing ourselves from friends and coworkers

Sense of inadequacy

Increased perception of demand/threat



The Withdrawal Phase

Clients become irritants, instead of persons

Tired all the time, don't want to talk about what we do.

Neglect our family, clients, coworkers and ourselves

Loss of humor

Loss of energy

Isolation

Sleep disturbance

Change in weight/appetite

Tardiness/Absenteeism

Illness and Victimization vs. Maturation and Renewal

- Overwhelmed and leaving the profession
 - Somatic Illness
 - Secretive self-medication/addiction (alcohol, drugs, work, sex, food, spending, etc.)
- Resiliency
 - Transformation

Interventions/Prevention

Recognize the signs

Role boundaries/Expectations

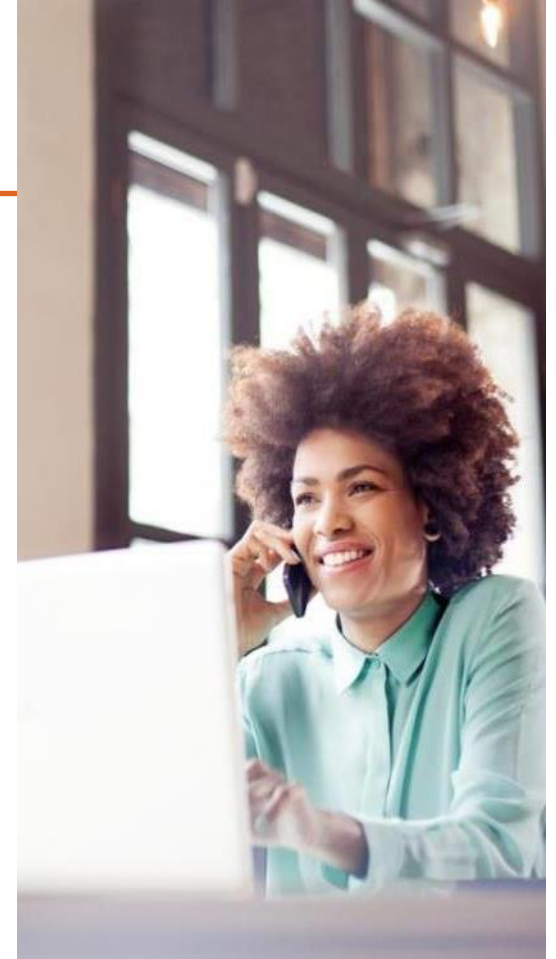
Learning to say “No”

Taking control

Social professional support

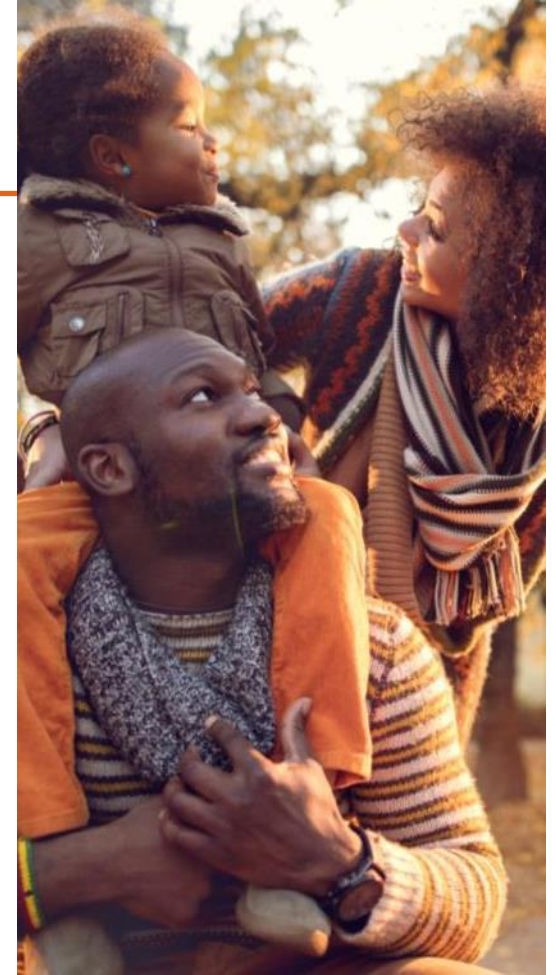
Self care strategies

Work/life balance

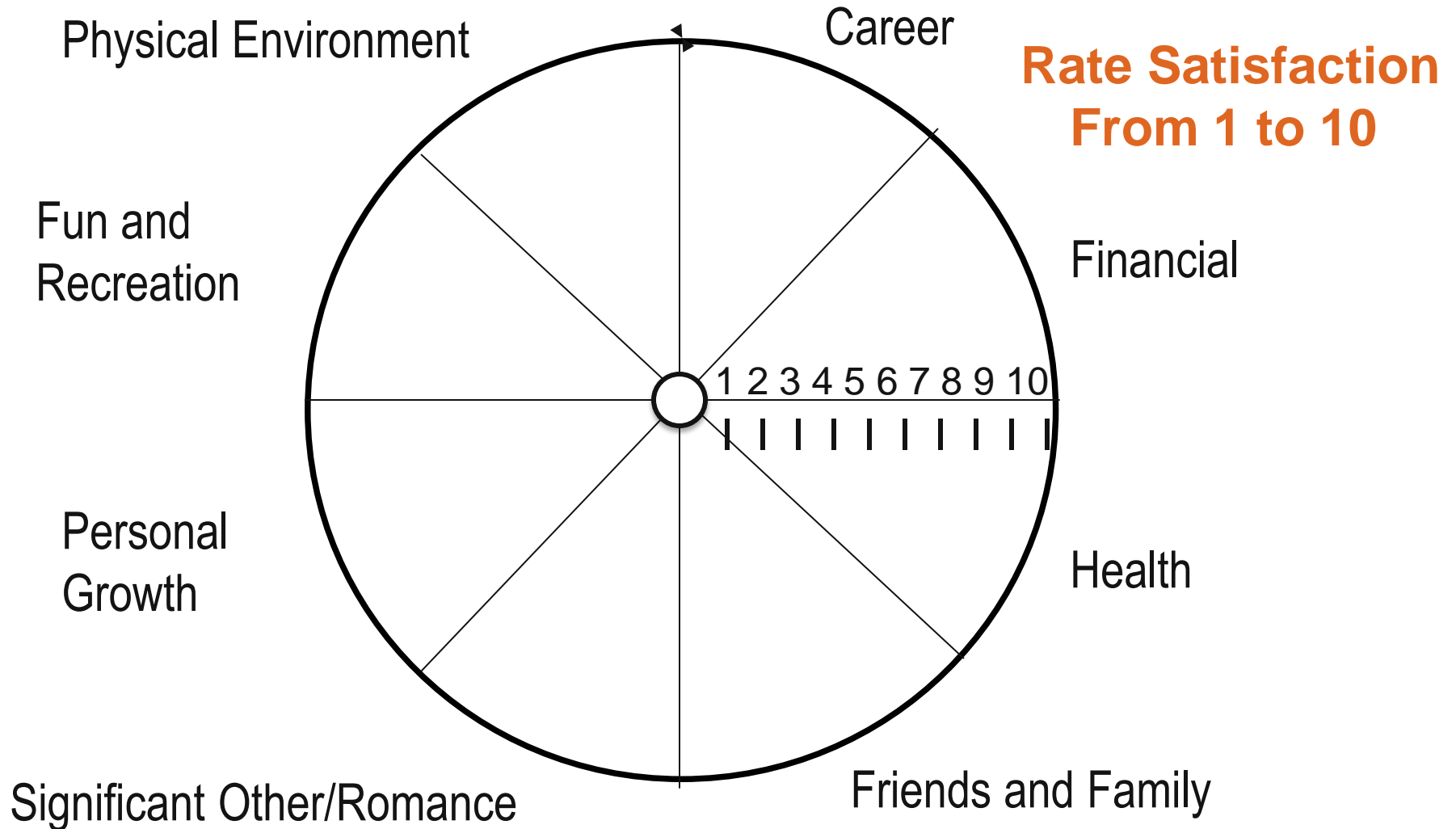


Components of a Balance Life

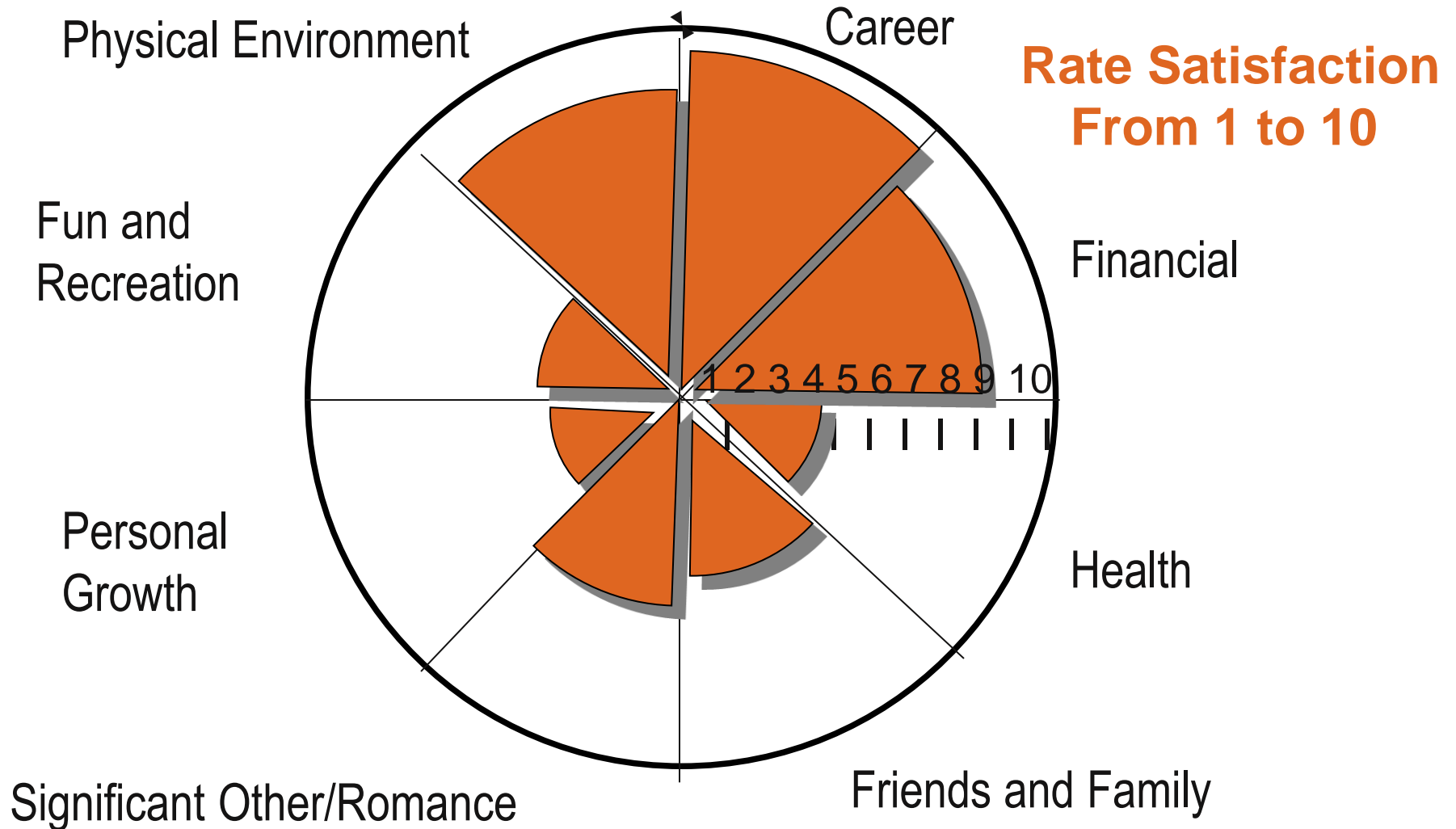
- Career
- Significant Other or Romance
- Family and Friends
- Health
- Personal Growth
- Recreation
- Home
- Financial Situation



Balance Wheel Exercise



Balance Wheel Exercise



Emotional Obstacles

Emotional absorption – “I feel your pain”

Boundaries – “Should I be doing this?”

Enabling – “Let me do it for you”

Setting Limits and Saying “No” – “You’re not going to like me”



Saying Yes – Saying No

By saying “Yes” to

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

By saying “No” to

1. _____

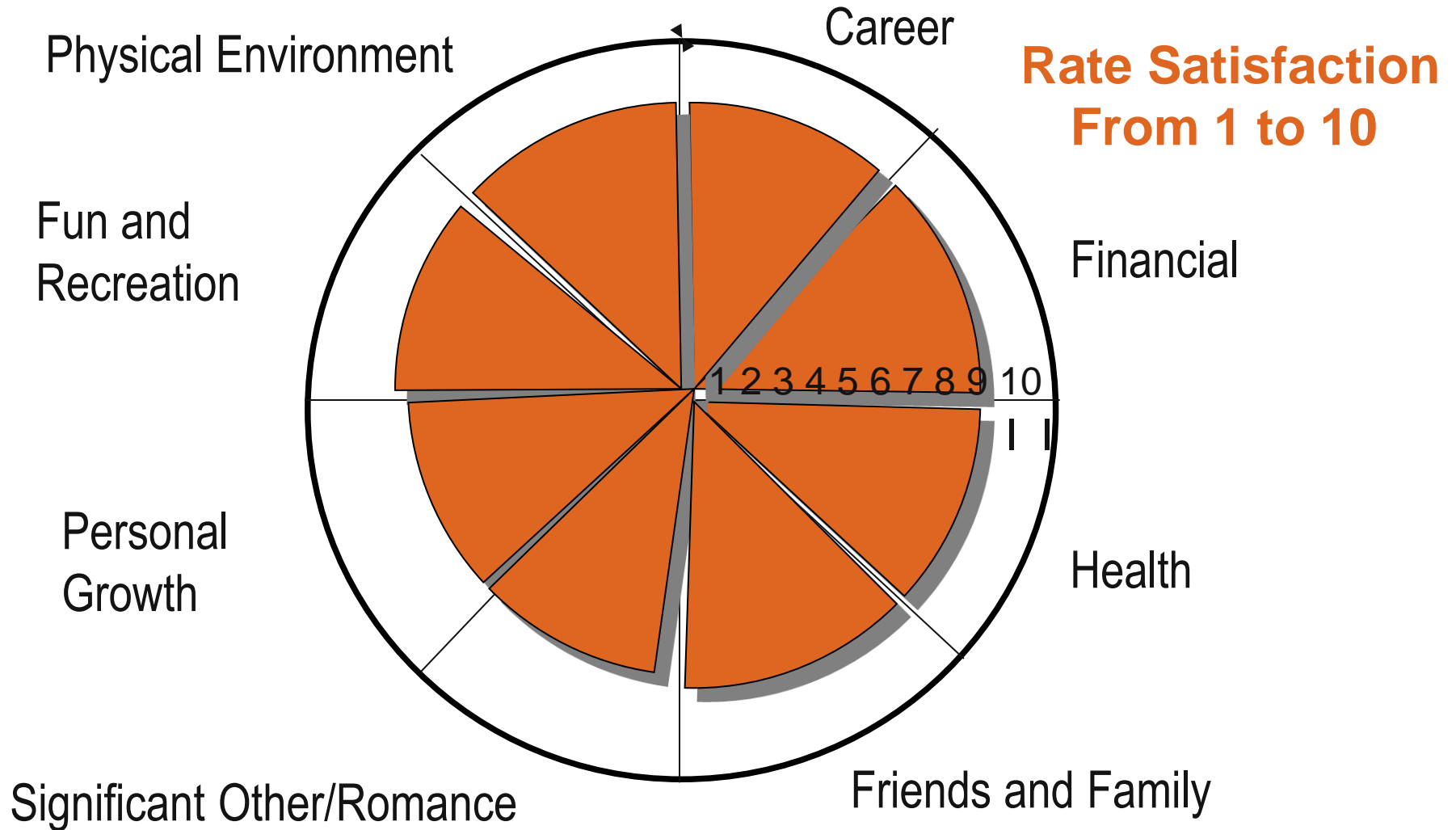
2. _____

3. _____

I’m saying “No” to

I’m saying “Yes” to

Balance Wheel Exercise



Self-Care Strategies

Rest

Exercise

Recreation

Building Relationships

Community



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