



SOCIAL WORK WILDCAT CONFERENCE

Friday, April 17, 2026

- 8:15 a.m. Welcome from Kansas State University Salina
- 8:30 a.m. The Quiet Forces that Wear Us Down: Prediction Error, Feedback Loops, and Strategies for Reducing the Hidden Frictions of Clinical Practice
Presented by Amber Dickson
While self-compassion and boundaries are essential tools for addressing therapist burnout, resilience can be further strengthened by examining other, often overlooked, sources of drag and depletion. This presentation explores the quiet forces that wear clinicians down; prediction error, feedback loops, and the hidden frictions that accumulate in clinical practice. Grounded in systems thinking and neuroscientific principles, the session outlines how these subtle pressures create emotional and cognitive load. Therapists will leave with practical strategies to identify and reduce these strains, supporting more sustainable, grounded, and satisfying long-term clinical work.
- 9:30 a.m. Break
- 9:45 a.m. Radical Rest: Dismantling Internal Pressure & Reclaiming Attainable Self-Care
Presented by Tip Rudell
Burnout doesn't always come from long hours or overwhelming caseloads. Sometimes, it comes from the invisible expectations we carry inside our bodies and minds. Expectations that have been shaped by culture, identity, survival, and social constructs that tell us we must be everything for everyone. In this session, I want to unpack how internalized expectations contribute to burnout - especially those navigating layered identities (caregiver, leadership, marginalized identities). Throughout reflective practices, grounding exercises and a lot of authentic conversation - we will explore what realistic self-care actually looks like. This workshop truly blends practical tools you can use day to day, with emotional honesty and vulnerability. Participants will leave with a clear understanding of their own internal narratives, a reclaimed self and individual strategies for their own personalized self-care that honor who they are...not who they've been told to be.
- 11:15 a.m. Good Self-Care: It Starts at the Office
Presented by John Wade, Abigail Wassinger, and Allie Funk
The importance of practicing good self-care for mental health practitioners is well-documented, with benefits for both the clinician and their clients. However, it can be difficult to put into practice, which can be compounded when the work setting is an additional source of stress. This workshop will explore practical ways for clinicians to incorporate good self-care into their daily routine, and for agencies to help cultivate the right conditions for their staff to thrive.
- 12:15 p.m. Break for Lunch (own your own)



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- 1:30 p.m. The Five Senses of Self-Care — An Interactive Sensory Experience
Presented by Toni Owens
This session will engage its participants in hands-on experiences that will explore the ways sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch can be used to enhance their self-care practices. Practitioners and business owners will join the discussion to share and demonstrate how their products and services focus on specific senses to provide an optimal self-care experience.
- 3:00 p.m. Break
- 3:15 p.m. ACT Like You Care About Yourself: ACT for Clinician Well-Being
Presented by Timothy Dearhamer
Let's be honest, many of us hand out oxygen masks for a living while holding our own breath. This upbeat, experimental workshop uses Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) to explore why helpers burn out, overextend, and forget their own needs. We'll play with defusion skills, embodied exercises, and values-based boundary practices that make self-care feel less like a luxury and more like a professional necessity. Participants will leave with practical ACT tools, clearer values, stronger boundaries, and a simple self-care plan they might actually follow. Come ready to unhook from unhelpful thoughts, reconnect with what matters, and finally treat yourself with the care you recommend to everyone else.



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Thank you to our presenters!

Amber Dickson

Amber Dickson, LCPC, is a counselor and vice president of Existential Family Therapy in Overland Park, Kansas. She developed a systems mindset as well as experience integrating creativity into design requirements during her previous career as a structural engineer and has since found both to be invaluable in the counseling field. She is an Internal Family Systems Level II trained therapist and specializes in helping individuals navigate anxiety, grief, and existential challenges. Many of her clients are in technical and scientific professions and have initial skepticism about counseling. Amber combines evidence based techniques with compassion and curiosity to guide clients toward an authentic path of peace and purpose.

Tip Rudell

Tip Rudell is a mental health professional, community facilitator, and poet who specializes in creating safe, authentic spaces for exploration, healing, and connection. With experience running support groups, nature-based grounding sessions, and identity-focused workshops, she brings a trauma-informed, affirming approach to every room she enters. Her facilitation blends motivational interviewing, open conversation, and creative reflection to help individuals rediscover their capacity, challenge internalized expectations, and move toward sustainable self-care. She is passionate about advocacy, community care, and fostering environments where people feel seen, valued, and empowered to show up as their full selves.

John Wade

John Wade is a Roe R. Cross Distinguished Professor and the Director of the Clinical Psychology Program at Emporia State. He is a licensed psychologist with over 20 years of clinical experience. He is a frequent presenter at both the state and national level, and has given numerous professional trainings. He has been awarded the Shane J. Lopez Award for Professional Contribution to Positive Psychology by the American Psychological Association, as well as the Excellence in Teaching and Excellence in Scholarship Awards from the Emporia State University Teachers College.

Abigail Wasinger

Abigail Wasinger is currently earning her master's degree in Clinical Psychology at Emporia State University. She completed her undergraduate degree at Kansas State University, where she also worked in a neuroscience research lab. After graduating, she worked as a behavioral technician with Flint Hills Neuropsychology, administering psychological assessments. Abigail is now completing her practicum at the Wichita State University Counseling Center, where she works with college students on a range of mental health concerns. She is passionate about helping people understand their emotions, strengthen their coping skills, and feel more connected to themselves. With experience in individual therapy, group counseling, and assessment, Abigail enjoys blending evidence-based practices with a warm, person-centered style.



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Allie Funk

Allie Funk is currently earning her master's degree in Clinical Psychology from Emporia State University and is also completing her practicum at the Wichita State University Counseling Center. She earned a degree in Journalism from Emporia State University before deciding to pivot and use her natural curiosity in pursuit of helping others through Clinical Psychology.

Toni Owens

Toni Denae Owens is a licensed master social worker (LMSW), holding a Bachelor of Science degree in Social Sciences with a minor in American Ethnic Studies and a Bachelor of Science degree in Social Work from Kansas State University. Toni earned her Master of Social Work degree from Park University. She has work experience in multicultural student affairs, diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging and her career combines her passions for higher education, social work, community development, and social justice. Toni has been teaching on the collegiate level since 2020. In 2021, she completed her certificate in University Teaching at West Virginia University (WVU), where she recently successfully defended her dissertation as a requirement to complete the Human & Community Development Ph.D. program. She is a selected participant in the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Doctoral Scholars Program. Toni also serves as a Founding Advisory Member for WVU's Faculty Justice Network and was selected to be a part of the inaugural cohort of the Engaged Scholar Institute at WVU in 2023. She currently serves on the K-State Social Work Community Advisory Committee.

Timothy Dearhamer

Timothy Dearhamer, LCSW, is a trauma informed therapist and educator specializing in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). He helps adults and couples with ADHD, anxiety, depression, and trauma reconnect with their values and build more meaningful lives. He has seen firsthand how easily helpers give compassion away faster than they extend it to themselves. His continuing education workshops blend evidence-based ACT skills with grounded, practical tools that clinicians can use immediately in their work. Timothy brings a warm, relatable style that helps professional reconnect to purpose, strengthen boundaries, and care for themselves with the same generosity they offer their clients.