

# SUPPORTING THE EMOTIONAL WELLNESS OF CHILD WELFARE STAFF IN MITIGATING THE IMPACT OF SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS

THANK YOU ALL FOR COMING!



# OBJECTIVES OF TODAY'S DISCUSSION

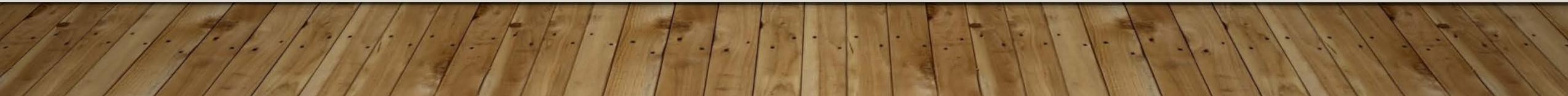
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- What is secondary traumatic stress (STS)
- What does STS look like
- What is burnout
- What does burnout look like
- How to care for self while caring for others
- How Citizen Review Panels can support Child Welfare staff

# WORD ASSOCIATION

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- The first thing that comes to my mind when I think of Wisconsin is...







# WORD ASSOCIATION

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- The first thing that comes to mind when I think of my favorite food is...







# WORD ASSOCIATION

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- The first thing that comes to mind when I think of work is...













# SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS (STS) DEFINED

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“The natural consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other – the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person.”

(Figley, 1993)

# VULNERABILITY

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- STS is a naturally occurring condition.
- Need to identify, anticipate and prepare for coping with STS symptoms.
- Those professions most vulnerable include providers of mental health services, child and family service agencies, emergency responders, court personnel and those working with the elderly and disabled.
- All are exposed to the trauma of others.



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“The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet.”

Rachel Remen, *Kitchen Table Wisdom*





# SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS: WHAT IS IT?

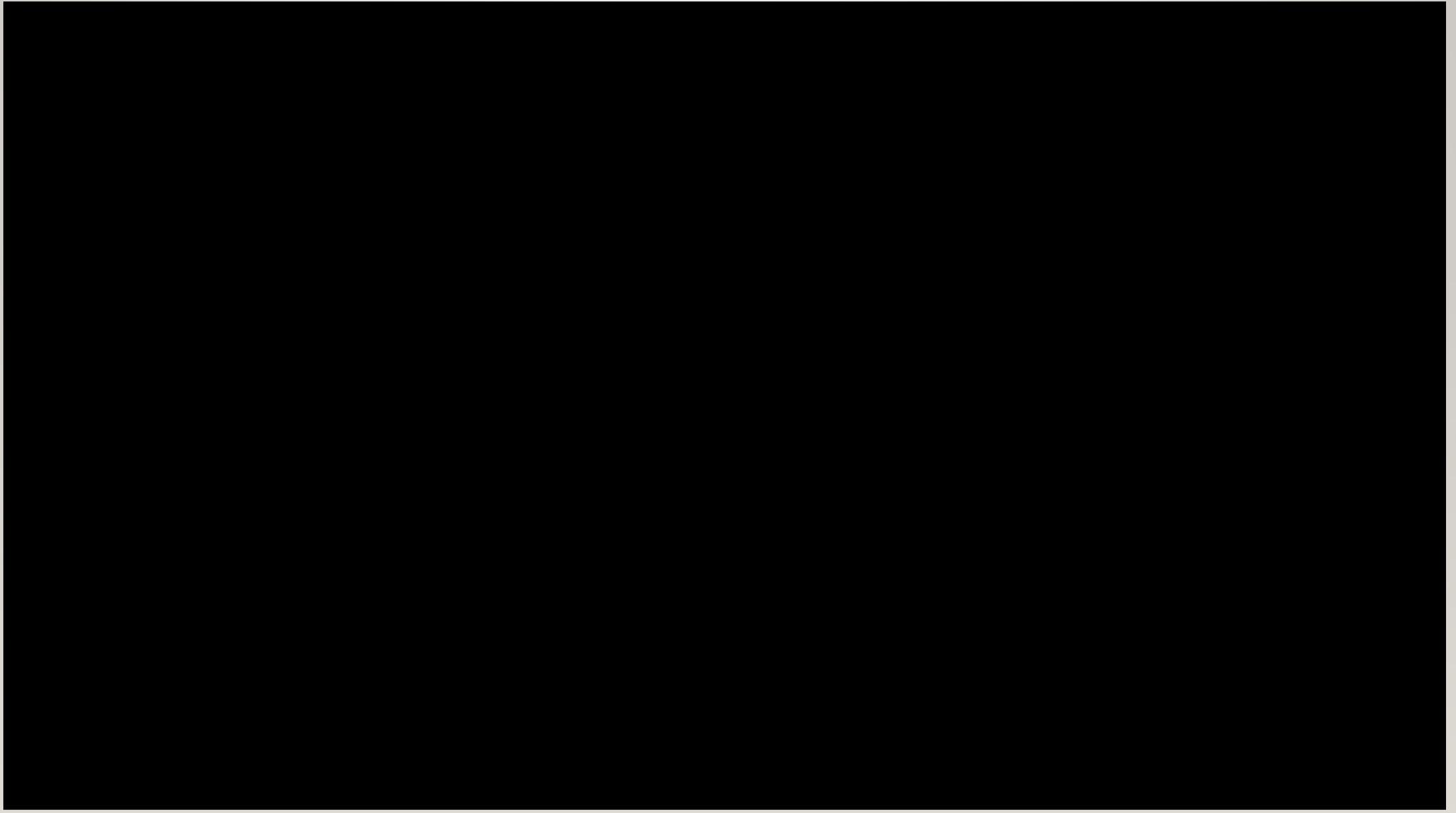
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- Indirect exposure to the trauma of others
- Comes from our perceptions of what a traumatic experience was like for another person
- Can develop serious consequences if not managed
- Also referred to as “compassion fatigue” or “vicarious trauma”
- Symptoms of STS can have a rapid onset after one event or a series of events

# SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS LOOKS LIKE . . .

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- Unexpected and intrusive thoughts/images about the event(s).
- A sense of reliving someone else's traumatic experience(s).
- Sleep disturbances to include difficulties falling asleep, staying asleep and nightmares.
- Being afraid/on edge, avoiding things that are reminders of the event(s), a decreased ability for empathy, impaired memory, difficulty making decisions, depression, anger, headaches, body aches and an increase in addictive behaviors.
- Can impact people cognitively, emotionally, behaviorally, spiritually, interpersonally and/or physically



# BURNOUT: WHAT IS IT?

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“Associated with high stress, heavy work demands and low personal & professional rewards in the workplace.” (Pryce, Shackelford and Pryce, 2007)

- “Anchored in the work environment (excessive work, limited resources, little influence, high levels of accountability with limited power, low pay/recognition or satisfaction), little sense of purpose or meaning.” (Cox and Steiner, 2013)
- Emerges gradually and worsens over time
- It is how you think about where you work

# BURNOUT LOOKS LIKE ...

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- Exhaustion, lacking energy to be consistently productive, feeling bogged down
- Usually has a gradual onset and can worsen over time
- Feeling disillusioned about one's job, callous attitudes and cynicism
- Negative evaluation of one's own job performance/effectiveness
- Sleep disturbances, headaches, irritability, physical & mental exhaustion
- Feelings of pessimism, cynicism, difficulties in work relationships and poor work performance

# DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN STS & BURNOUT

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## STS

- Can emerge suddenly
- You take with you wherever you go
- It is in your heart
- It's about working with traumatized people

## BURNOUT

- Happens over time
- You leave it at work
- It is in your head
- It's about where you work

# WHAT MAKES US VULNERABLE TO SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS?

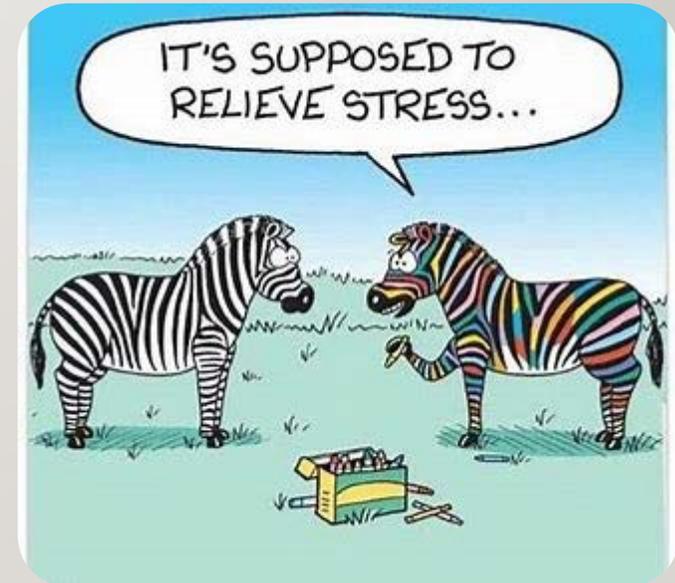
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- Empathy
- Insufficient Recovery Time
- Populations served
- Unresolved Personal Trauma or Reminders of Resolved Trauma
- “Suck it up, buttercup”
- Caregiving qualities
- Disbelief/dismissal trauma
- Perceptions of the helping role

# PROFESSIONAL COPING STRATEGIES

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- Balance your workload
- Participate in growth and development opportunities
- Make your work environment your own
- Set good boundaries/limit setting –
  - sometimes it's okay to say no or I need help
- Recognize your accomplishments
  - remember you do make a difference



# PROFESSIONAL COPING STRATEGIES

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- Reach out for support from coworkers and supervisors
- Respond to your physical and emotional needs
- Take breaks, lunches and vacations

When someone is going through a rough time ...just sit with them. No preaching, no advice. Just be there



# PERSONAL COPING STRATEGIES

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- Talk with those that are supportive of you

Walter →



← Sophie

# PERSONAL COPING STRATEGIES

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- Get enough sleep
- Eat healthy
- Do things you enjoy & spend time with people you love
- Take time to have fun
- Start a gratitude journal
- When you have a positive feeling keep it with you and share it with others
- Learn to savor what is happening now. Be present

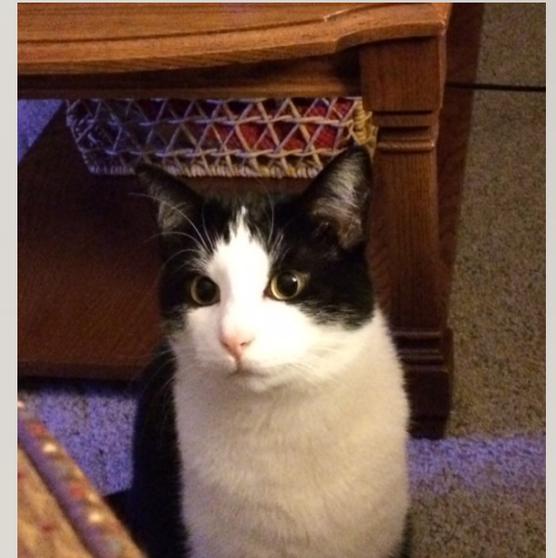




# PERSONAL COPING STRATEGIES

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- Develop a work-life balance plan – don't make work the center of your life
- Strengthen emotional and spiritual wellness
- Get up and move and have fun with it!



# HAPPINESS AND GRATITUDE

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- Research shows that humor and having an attitude of gratitude can improve one's mood and have a positive impact in the workplace.



# COMPASSION FOR SELF

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“If you want others to be happy, practice compassion.  
If you want to be happy, practice compassion.”  
– Dalai Lama



REMEMBER TO PRACTICE HAPPINESS, GRATITUDE  
AND SELF-COMPASSION

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# THE WORKPLACE IN GENERAL

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- Only 33% of U.S. employees feel that they are valued (Tinypulse, n.d.).
- 40% of U.S. employees do not feel meaningfully recognized and will not 'go above and beyond' (CareerBuilder, n.d.).
- 50% of U.S. employees believe that increased recognition would reduce voluntary turnover (CareerBuilder, n.d.).
- That is where CRP's can make a huge impact helping Child Welfare staff!

# IMPACT OF STS AND STAFF RETENTION

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- Definition of Turnover: The rate at which employees leave and are replaced
- Nationally, 30%-45% of child welfare staff leave within 2 years (Sribd, n.d.)
- If an agency has a turnover rate of 15% or more, youth have a 215% higher rate of maltreatment 6 months after DSS contact (Sribd, n.d.)

# IMPACT OF STS AND FAMILY REUNIFICATION

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- If a family has 1 social worker, reunification happens 74.5% of the time (Sribd, n.d.)
- If a family has 2 social workers, reunification decreases to 17.5% (Sribd, n.d.)
- If a family has 4 social workers, reunification decreases to 2.2% (Sribd, n.d.)
- If a family has 6 social workers, reunification decreased to .1% (Sribd, n.d.)

In light of STS, Marathon County established a CRP to support child welfare prevention and initiatives within the county.

# MARATHON COUNTY'S CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL SUPPORTS CHILD WELFARE STAFF WITH PREVENTION

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- Prevention decreased work load in future
- Abusive Head Trauma Committee takes Shaken Baby Simulator to county jail
- Radio interview to increase awareness of CRP's activities
- Journey Bus Tour to build supportive partnerships between the school systems and the Child Welfare systems
- Fundraising for The Child Life Enrichment Fund: to support the Prudent Parenting Act by funding activities for foster youth

# MARATHON COUNTY'S CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL SUPPORTS CHILD WELFARE STAFF WITH PREVENTION

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- Funded the Early Years Coalition with videos on:
  - Car Seat Safety
  - Safe Sleep
  - Shaken Baby



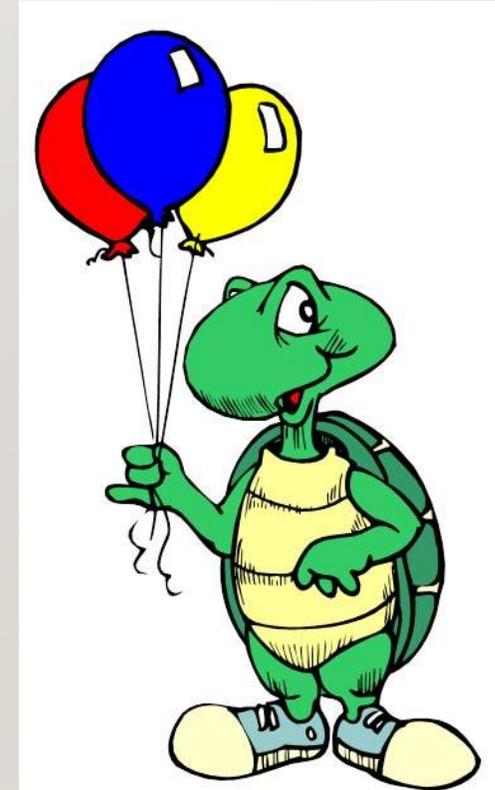
**RaiseGreatKids.org**

Talk • Sing • Read • Play  
Every Child. Every Day.

# MARATHON COUNTY'S CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL SUPPORTS CHILD WELFARE STAFF WITH PREVENTION

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- Booth at Children's Fest and Community Fest; where Tucker the Turtle entertains the children while volunteers hand out pinwheels and information bags to parents



# MARATHON COUNTY'S CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL SUPPORTS CHILD WELFARE STAFF WITH PREVENTION

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- Developed “When does Discipline Become Abuse?” and “Guidelines for Parents on Children Being Home Alone” Brochures
- Hands Around the Courthouse done annually
- Donated funds to Trauma Informed Parenting Trainings



# MARATHON COUNTY'S CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL MAINTAINS A COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILD WELFARE STAFF

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- Recognize child welfare staff with a cake and card during social worker appreciation month
- Recognized increased work loads of staff with pizza for the entire agency
- Actively participate in recruiting foster parents
- At least one staff member gets a paid trip to the Annual CRP convention to network with the best

# MORE IDEAS TO IMPROVE RELATIONSHIPS

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- Popcorn Fridays
- Ice cream or a Sundae bar
- Set up a free library of books and games in break room
- Help the department start a walking club
- Give workers free bus passes
- Monthly lunch gift card drawing
- Sponsor pot luck, chili contest, soup contest or international food days
- Set up laundry service for dry cleaning
- Network with business friends to give child welfare staff discounts at their businesses.
- Purchase a television, DVD player for breakroom and provide comedy DVDs

# MORE IDEAS TO IMPROVE RELATIONSHIPS

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- Purchase a Keurig coffeemaker and host international coffee days
- Decorate employee entrance with Thank-You from CRP
- Sign work anniversary cards for workers
- Buy floors for the breakroom
- Start an employee canteen
- Pizza day from the best pizzeria in town
- Hero day with hero sandwiches
- Use CRP Facebook page to recognize workers
- Decorate bulletin board to say Thank-You from CRP
- Go to Pinterest for more ideas!

QUESTIONS?

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WELLNESS OF CHILD WELFARE STAFF  
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SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS**

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**THANK YOU ALL FOR COMING!**

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