National Council for Behavioral Health

Compassion Fatigue: Caring for the Caregivers
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Overview of Presentation

• The Problem
• Secondary Traumatic Stress, Vicarious Trauma and Compassion Fatigue
• Building Resilience
• Self-Compassion
• Organizational Wellness
• Self Care
“That which is to give light must endure burning” - Viktor Frankl
High Stress Positions Turnover

- Child welfare staff – 30 – 40% annually nationwide with average tenure less than two years (US GAO, 2003)
- Public agencies – 20 % and private 40% (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2008)
- 64% Iowa Turnover Rate for Direct Care Staff
Behavioral Health Turnover

- Up to 40% for entry level positions
- Decreases dramatically as you go up the ladder, much less for professionals
- Little to no “C-suite turnover

(Linda Rosenberg, President and CEO of National Council for Behavioral Health)
Top 7 Reasons for Turnover

• **Reason 1:** Job or workplace was not as expected
• **Reason 2:** Mismatch between job and person
• **Reason 3:** Too little coaching and feedback
• **Reason 4:** Too few growth and advancement opportunities
• **Reason 5:** Workers feel devalued and unrecognized
• **Reason 6:** Workers suffer from stress due to overwork and work-life imbalance
• **Reason 7:** There is a loss of trust and confidence in senior leaders

How Does Compassion Fatigue Impact Organizations?

- Low morale
- High Turnover
- Staff conflicts
- Workers Compensation
- Loss of market advantage
- Decreased productivity
- Unhappy staff = susceptibility to litigation
- Creation of additional positions to supplement lagging
- Increased training costs
- Sustained stress response imbedded in the organizational culture
Impact of Stress on the Body

- Forty-three percent of all adults suffer adverse health effects from stress.
- Seventy-five percent to 90% of all doctor's office visits are for stress-related ailments and complaints.
- Stress can play a part in problems such as headaches, high blood pressure, heart problems, diabetes, skin conditions, asthma, arthritis, depression, and anxiety.
The Impact of Stress

• The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) declared stress a hazard of the workplace. Stress costs American industry more than $300 billion annually.

• The lifetime prevalence of an emotional disorder is more than 50%, often due to chronic, untreated stress reactions.
Trauma-Informed Organizations

Recognize staff success and satisfaction is impacted by:

• Personal Trauma Histories
• Compassion Fatigue
• Secondary Trauma
• Vicarious Trauma
• Lack of Organizational Supports
Trauma-Informed Organizations

• Create an environment that is safe for staff to share personal and work related stressors
• Offer support through supervision
• Has EAP or other professional services in place
• Train to increase confidence and competence in job performance
• Education to increase awareness about the impact of stress on work performance
• Support development of meaningful stress management strategies
Psychological Safety

“Refers to the ability to be safe within oneself, to rely on one’s ability to self-protect and keep oneself out of harm’s way.”

(Bloom, 2013)

If you have never felt safe or remembered safety, how will you know it when it is present?
“The sense of feeling safe with other people... There are so many traumatized people that there will never be enough individual therapists to treat them. We must begin to create naturally occurring, healing environments that provide some of the corrective experiences that are vital for recovery.”

(Bloom, 2013)
Moral Safety

The never-ending quest for understanding how organizations function in the healing process.

- An attempt to reduce the hypocrisy that is present, both explicitly and implicitly
- A morally safe environment struggles with the issues of honesty and integrity
  
  (Bloom, 2013)
Stress

Body
- Headaches
- Frequent infections
- Taut muscles
- Muscular twitches
- Fatigue
- Skin irritations
- Breathlessness

Mind
- Worrying
- Muddled thinking
- Impaired judgement
- Nightmares
- Indecisions
- Negativity
- Hasty decisions

Emotions
- Loss of confidence
- More fussy
- Irritability
- Depression
- Apathy
- Alienation
- Apprehension

Behavior
- Accident prone
- Loss of appetite
- Loss of sex drive
- Drinking more
- Insomnia
- Restlessness
- Smoking more
Cortisol: The Good and the Not So...

- Cortisol - A stress management response hormone. The stress can be physical, mental and emotional. Cortisol release continues even after the stressor has been removed. Too much cortisol has a significant impact on health.
Oxytocin: The Anti-Stress Hormone

- Oxytocin - A chemical released by the brain that people often think of as a female hormone because it stimulates labor and milk flow for breastfeeding
- Men have it, too; it’s released during sex and is associated with cuddling behavior
- Bonding hormone
- Research shows that oxytocin is also connected to many types of virtuous actions like responsibility, trust and generosity
Compassion Fatigue, Vicarious Trauma, Secondary Traumatic Stress, Burnout: Are They Interchangeable?
“Empathy? Compassion? I have medication for that.”
PTSD

Trauma

● Actual or threatened death or serious injury
● Threat to physical integrity of self or others

Reactions

● Intense fear, helplessness, horror
● Nightmares, flashbacks, avoidance, dissociation

Most people will not develop PTSD after a traumatic event. Those most likely to experience PTSD are survivors, family members and rescue workers.
What Are We Bringing to The Table?

• Many of us come with issues that are unresolved and continue to impact us in our lives and in our work.
• What have you done to resolve your past?
• Do you know how those things impact your present?
Vicarious Traumatization

• A person’s individual nature of responses or adaptation to VT determine coping and transformation of the trauma.
• Anything that interferes with the helper's ability to fulfill his/her responsibility to assist traumatized clients can contribute to vicarious trauma.
• Many social service workers report that they experience the demands of their agencies as the greatest impediment to their effectiveness and work satisfaction. (Pryce et al., 2007).
Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)

- STS is both physical and emotional stress responses to working with a highly traumatized population. It is a psychological phenomenon in which the caregiver experiences many of the common feelings and symptoms associated with victimization.
- STS can affect all aspects of one’s life: cognitive, emotional, behavioral, spiritual, interpersonal and physical.
- STS comes on more quickly than burnout but is also more responsive to solutions.
Compassion Fatigue - Deep physical, emotional and spiritual exhaustion accompanied by acute emotional pain. Compassion-fatigued practitioners continue to give themselves fully to their clients, finding it difficult to maintain a healthy balance of empathy and objectivity.
“Those who have experienced compassion fatigue describe it as being sucked into a vortex that pulls them slowly downward.”
"You’ll have to excuse my husband - he’s got compassion fatigue".
How Does Compassion Fatigue Impact Staff?

- Loss of meaning and purpose
- Decreased creativity
- Inability to innovate
- Absenteeism
- Retreating into the familiar
- Distracted or unfocused
- Physical health effects
- Internal becomes external
Self-Assessment for Compassion Fatigue - Checklist

Answering “yes” or “no” to the following nine statements will help you assess your risk for Compassion Fatigue:

• Personal concerns commonly intrude on my professional role. Yes No
• My colleagues seem to lack understanding. Yes No
• I find even small changes enormously draining. Yes No
• I can’t seem to recover quickly after association with trauma. Yes No
Compassion Fatigue - Checklist

• My clients’ stress affects me deeply.
  Yes  No

• I have lost my sense of hopefulness.
  Yes  No

• I feel vulnerable all the time.
  Yes  No

• I feel overwhelmed by unfinished personal business.
  Yes  No

Answering “yes” to four or more questions may indicate that you’re suffering from compassion fatigue. This instrument developed by Pfifferling and Gilley has not been validated, but results should serve as a quick check of your state of mind.
What To Do?

- Co-worker support programs
- Research has demonstrated that, while valuable, individual self-care strategies alone do not work
- Self-care at the individual, professional and organization levels
Building Resiliency

- The key is to not try to avoid stress altogether, but to manage the stress in our lives in such a way that we avoid the negative consequences of stress!
- Accept the fact that there will be certain levels of stress in your life, and work to manage it in a way that you avoid or minimize the negative consequences of the stress (Daniel, 2007)
Qualities of Resilient People

1. Optimism, Faith
2. Integrity
3. Social support: Foster group identity and cohesion
4. Perseverance
5. Responsibility

(Everly, 2009, from Desiderius Erasmus, A guide to the Righteous Protector, 1501; Sun Tzu, The Art of War)
Personal

- Exercise
- Maintaining medical appointments
- Reading
- Adequate rest
- Creative projects
- Socializing

- Socializing
- Exposure to the arts/performance
- Spa/wellness treatment
- Healthy eating
- Exercise
- Hobbies
Professional

• Pursuing professional development opportunities
• Taking a real lunch break (away from your desk!)
• Maintaining regular supervision meetings
• Arranging group lunches or other meetings with coworkers
• Balint Groups (http://americanbalintssociety.org/)
Organizational

- Attending regular staff and supervision meetings
- Planning for staff retreat
- Involvement in organizational wellness policy development
- Personalization of office space or work area
Community

- Attendance at religious or spiritual services
- Involvement in community effort such as a community clean up day
- Neighborhood gathering
- Involvement in a chosen political activity or cause, such as writing a legislator or attending a rally
Organizational Practices:

• De-stigmatize secondary trauma through organizational recognition and acknowledgement
• Establish policies
• Professional consultation, training, and counseling
• Support and encourage self-care practices:
  Practices:
  • Educate staff about emotional competence
  • Encourage and promote compassion for self
  • Promote resiliency
Building Organizational Resiliency

• Avoid being a one man/one woman show
• No matter how resource poor the environment-beautify it
• Participation in peer supervision and support, eg. Balint Groups
• Take yearly team retreats
• Have a written widely disseminated self-care policy
Building Organizational Resiliency

- Guarantee a sustainable workload
- Guarantee supervision and monitoring - eg., Balint Groups
- Clear policy to help practitioners who “feel burned out” at the early stages of burn out
- Do not blame, punish or reprimand practitioners and staff due to structural problems in the organization
Appreciation and Support

• Revisit and reiterate expected program practices and staff skills (emotional safety is enhanced when people know what is expected of them)
• Establish or revise staff competencies based on program model and values
• Pay attention to middle management (supervisors)
• Role model
Appreciation and Support

- Formal and informal
- Recognition of individuals who exhibit values
- Values-based hiring
- Constant praise and feedback
- Resources are made available for people to do their work
- Task forces/workgroups run by staff to solve issues (peer council)
Appreciation and Support

- Consumer satisfaction reflected in staff evaluation
- Forums for “staff voice” to be heard
  - anonymous staff satisfaction surveys
  - rap sessions
  - town hall meetings
  - brown bag sessions
  - coffee chats
  - touching base sessions – closing the loop
Appreciation and Support

- Respect for each other’s time
- Showing flexibility and individual attention
- Coach on clinical issues, competency and play
- Significant attention to self-care, individual and organizational wellness
Interpersonal support is the single best predictor of resistance/immunity and resiliency rebound success and buffers failure.
Self-Care

• “If one believes empathy heals, then self-care is essential”
  (Mollica, 2012)

• Self-care is a form of self-empathy
Other Wellness Tools - WRAP® for Compassion Fatigue

• WRAP® is a self-management and recovery system developed by a group of people who had mental health difficulties and who were struggling to incorporate wellness tools and strategies into their lives. WRAP is designed to:
  ✓ Decrease and prevent intrusive or troubling feelings and behaviors
  ✓ Increase personal empowerment
  ✓ Improve quality of life
  ✓ Assist people in achieving their own life goals and dreams
  ✓ Heal Trauma

(www.copelandcenter.com) (www.mentalhealthrecovery.com)
Provider Resilience App

PROFESSIONAL QUALITY OF LIFE

It's been 30 days since your last update.

COMPASSION SATISFACTION

Average Score
You've scored in the average range of Compassion Satisfaction. Approximately 25% of individuals completing this scale...

BURNOUT

Low Score
Your score associated with Burnout is in a range that is lower than approximately 75% of the scores of those who have taken this...

SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS

Average Score
Your Secondary Traumatic Stress score is in the average range. Approximately 25% of individuals completing this scale scored hi...
Web Resources

www.self-compassion.org

www.mentalhealthrecovery.com

www.proqol.org/CProQOL Compassion Fatigue

www.intentionalpeersupport.org

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