



# Compassion Fatigue; Helping the Helper

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# Objectives

- Effects of our work as a caregiver
- What is compassion Fatigue
- PTS / Secondary Traumatic Stress / Burn out
- Components of Treatment for Compassion Fatigue
- Skill Building and Resources



## Introductions

- Who are we as a group?

# Compassion Fatigue Narrative

- 2000 – reentered workforce as a behavioral Health Tech – recent loss / Divorce / single mom
- 2003 – remarried – continued work as a BHT
- 2007-09 working two jobs / going to school fulltime
- 2010-12 – working with chronic illness / family issues / divorce talk
- 2012-2016 – Working with military trauma / family issues escalate
- 2017 – Current role / family issues again in crisis



# Effects of our work

- Who has been effected by their work as a caregiver?
- Silent Witness

# What is Compassion Fatigue?

- Two Models
- Compassion Fatigue = Secondary Traumatization + Burnout (Figley, 1995)
- Compassion Fatigue = Secondary Traumatic Stress +/x Burnout +/x Primary Traumatic Stress (Gentry & Baranowsky, 1997)

# Secondary Traumatic Stress Vs Primary Traumatic Stress

- **Criterion A: Event** (experiencing) Witnessing or gaining knowledge of event...learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by family member or other close associate (DSM-IV-TR)
- **Criterion B: Re-experiencing / Intrusion**  
Intrusive thoughts of clients, clients imagery, dreams, ***increased perceived threat in all contexts.***



# Secondary Traumatic Stress / Primary Traumatic Stress Symptoms (Criterion C)

## Arousal

- Fear / Anxiety
- Obsessive Thoughts
- Sleep Problems
- Irritability / Easily Angered
- Impulsive
- Disease / illness
- Immune problems
- Poor concentration
- Hypervigilance
- Somatization
- Weight gain / loss
- Increased perceived Threat
- Chronic Fatigue

## Avoidance

- Procrastination
- Depression
- Self Rx
- Relational problems
- Isolation
- Blame / Shame
- Dread
- Hopelessness
- Diminished self care
- Rumination
- Entitlement

# Safety Net (tool) for Compassion Resiliency

- Empower 1-2 people to confront us when we
  - ✓ Become Symptomatic
  - ✓ Consistently diverge from our normal actions
- Person Should know us well and be able to withstand our attempts at deflection
- Denial increases as we become more symptomatic



# Burnout

- Two Definitions
- Burnout is a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, 1982; Maslach & Goldberg, 1996; Maslach and leiter, 2003)
- The chronic condition of perceived demands outweighing perceived resources (Gentry & Baranowsky, 1996)



# autonomic nervous system dysregulation; regulates the body's unconscious actions

## Sympathetic Nervous System

- Fight or Flight
  - accelerated the heart rate
  - constrict blood vessels
  - raise blood pressure
  - Functions not critical to survival shut down
  - Arousal / Avoidance

## Parasympathetic Nervous System

- Rest and Digest
  - Relax
  - Restores body to state of calm
  - Blood pressure decreases
  - Blood Vessels dilate
  - Heart rate decreases
  - Allowing us to think rationally



The chronic condition of perceived demands outweighing perceived resources (Gentry & Baranowsky, 1996)

***PERCEIVED THREAT = FIGHT/FLIGHT = SYMPATHETIC  
DOMINANCE = CHRONIC ANXIOUS PRESENCE = BURNOUT***

***EMPATHY + VISUALIZATION OF CLIENTS EXPERIENCES =  
SNS ACTIVATION + CHRONICITY = SECONDARY  
TRAUMATIC STRESS > BURNOUT.***



# Tool for measuring compassion Fatigue

- Developed by Beth Stamm in 1998 (5 revisions)
- Professional Quality of Life (Pro-QOL v5)
- Measures 3 subcategories
  - Compassion Satisfaction
  - Secondary Traumatic stress
  - Burnout



# Healing and Resiliency Skills

- ***Self Regulation*** – Ability to shift from sympathetic to parasympathetic dominance while fully engaged in the activities of daily living.
  - ***Intentionality*** – Principle based Vs demand Driven; being true to your personal covenant
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- ***Perceptual Maturation / Self-validations*** – others reactions and valuation do not determine behavior (integrity > reputation)
  - ***Connection*** – Develop and Utilize Support Network
  - ***Self-Care*** – Aerobic Activity 3x/week (best)

# Self Regulation

- The ability to intentionally control the activity of our autonomic nervous system
- When an individual perceives a threat- real or imagined the sympathetic nervous system is dominate
- Self Regulations is as simples as relaxing one's muscles while encountering perceived threats that arise throughout each workday.



# Intentionality

- Living by our personal code
- Moving from reaction to intentional behavior
- First you need to become aware of our intentions. (mission statement)
- What triggers make you break your code
  - Breach of Ethics / practice guidelines
- With self regulation we can desensitize the power of the triggers reduce reactivity and focus on intentional behavior





# Perceptual Maturation / Self-validations

“Change the way you look at things and the things you look at change”

## Perceptual Maturation - Workplace

Demand Vs Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There are no demands on any of us</li><li>• We are always “at choice”</li><li>• Choose to do all work related tasks, especially the undesirable ones</li></ul>
Outcome Driven Vs Principle Based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Outcomes are beyond our control</li><li>• Aim for outcomes but focus upon present behavior</li><li>• Do your best, its always good enough</li><li>• Maintain your integrity</li></ul>
Relinquishing Entitlement and Secondary Gains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We are not victims of our work, we compete to be in our positions</li><li>• Your work entitles you to nothing more than anyone else</li><li>• Become aware of the gains you receive from perceiving yourself as a victim to your work</li><li>• Decide whether these “gains” are worth the cost</li><li>• Embrace your workplace as an opportunity to practice your principles – become better, stronger person</li></ul>
System Demands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accept that all systems demand more from us than we can give</li><li>• Relinquish your expectation of acknowledgement and appreciation</li><li>• It is not your work causing your stress, it is what is happening in your body as you encounter the situations at work</li></ul>



# Perceptual Maturation / Self-validations

## Perceptual Maturation / Self Optimization

Mindfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Calm Body</li><li>• Observing mind</li><li>• Acceptance of current situation / non judgmental</li><li>• Curiosity / teachable</li><li>• Remain in the present (no multitasking)</li></ul>
Science of Happiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Positive emotions can be intentionally achieved</li><li>• More positive = More effective = More resilient</li><li>• Gratitude</li><li>• Service</li><li>• Goodwill</li></ul>
Self-Validation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Many care providers rely upon their work and feedback from their patients supervisors or colleagues as primary source of worth</li><li>• When we need outside validation then all human interactions are perceived threats</li><li>• Overly sensitive to others evaluations of us</li></ul>
Personal Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Intentionality</li><li>• Coming into alignment with one's own principles</li><li>• Graceful &amp; elegant instead of "brute force"</li><li>• Working smart instead of hard</li></ul>

# Connection

- Develop a Support Network
  - Four Important Functions
    1. Sharing Trauma Narratives
    2. Empower them to confront
    3. Telling on ourselves
    4. Hold us accountable





# Self-Care

- “That Which is to give light must endure burning”

(Viktor Frankl)

- Those of us that have chosen to be givers of that light are going to experience some burn
- If we are going to burn than we need to burn fuel and not ourselves

## Components of good self-care

1. Regular aerobic activity
2. Healthy Diet
3. Good Sleep Hygiene
4. Regular social activities
5. Creative activity or hobbies
6. Spiritual practices
7. Professional enrichment



## Compassion Fatigue Resiliency; Conclusion

- Caregiving hurts
- Impossible to avoid pain associated with professional or volunteer caregiving
- A professional does not have to suffer if s/he is willing to evolve and mature personal and professional skills
- It is possible to be healthy while working in a toxic environment.