Compassion Fatigue
Caring for Counselors

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Objectives

- Provide an overview of Vicarious Traumatization, Compassion Fatigue, Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Self assessment
- Look at responses to Compassion Fatigue, both professionally and personally
- Offer resources
A Word From the Doctor

Oh, the Places You’ll Go!

By Dr. Seuss
OH! THE PLACES YOU'LL GO!

You'll be on your way up!
You'll be seeing great sights!
You'll join the high fliers
who soar to high heights.

You won't lag behind, because you'll have the speed.
You'll pass the whole gang and you'll soon take the lead.
Wherever you fly, you'll be the best of the best.
Wherever you go, you will top all the rest.
A Word From the Doctor

Except when you don't
Because, sometimes, you won't.

I'm sorry to say so
but, sadly, it's true
and Hang-ups
can happen to you.

You can get all hung up
in a prickle-ly perch.
And your gang will fly on.
You'll be left in a Lurch.
A Word From the Doctor

You'll come down from the Lurch
with an unpleasant bump.
And the chances are, then,
that you'll be in a Slump.

And when you're in a Slump,
you're not in for much fun.
Un-slumping yourself
is not easily done.
You will come to a place where the streets are not marked. Some windows are lighted. But mostly they're darked. A place you could sprain both your elbow and chin! Do you dare to stay out? Do you dare to go in? How much can you lose? How much can you win?

And IF you go in, should you turn left or right... or right-and-three-quarters? Or, maybe, not quite? Or go around back and sneak in from behind? Simple it's not, I'm afraid you will find, for a mind-maker-upper to make up his mind.
A Word From the Doctor

You can get so confused that you'll start in to race down long wiggled roads at a break-necking pace and grind on for miles across weirdish wild space, headed, I fear, toward a most useless place.
“Care providers are unique people. We have the gift of being able to connect with others in ways that are difficult to explain and even more difficult for others to understand. Our unique ability to emotionally join with our clients that allows us a near first-hand experience of their inner world is perhaps our greatest gift; it is also our greatest challenge.”

--Karl La Rowe
STSD: Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder

Vicarious traumatization is a process of change resulting from empathic engagement with trauma survivors. It can have an impact on the helper’s sense of self, world-view, spirituality, affect tolerance, interpersonal relationships, and imagery system of memory.

--Hudnall Stamm
Symptoms of STSD

Distraction
- Problems with Attention
- Loss of Stimulus Discrimination
- Internal Noise
- Persistent Intrusions
Symptoms of STSD

Sensitivity
- Avoiding and Numbing
- Compulsive Re-exposure
- Self-destructiveness
Symptoms of STSD

Overload

- Inability to Modulate Arousal
- Hyper-vigilance
- Exaggerated Startle Response
- Misperception
Vicarious Traumatization refers to the transmission of traumatic stress through observation and/or hearing others’ stories of traumatic events and the resultant shift/distortions that occur in the caregiver’s perceptual and meaning systems. Secondary traumatic stress occurs when one is exposed to extreme events directly experienced by another and becomes overwhelmed by this secondary exposure to trauma (Figley & Kleber, 1995).
Compassion Fatigue Test


**Defining CF vs. Burnout**

**Burnout:** Stress that is cumulative, relatively predictable, and frequently can be helped through a respite or habit/life change.

**Compassion Fatigue:** A state of tension and preoccupation with the individual or cumulative trauma of clients as manifested in one or more ways (sx of PTSD). Similar to CIS, except that you are absorbing the trauma through the eyes and ears of your clients.
Human Costs

- Job Performance goes down
- Mistakes go up
- Morale drops
- Personal relationships deteriorate
- Personality deteriorates
- Overall decline in health
Response to Compassion Fatigue

♥ Professional Strategies
♥ Personal Strategies
Professional Strategies

Recognize and accept vicarious traumatization.

- Natural outcome of trauma work
- Occupational hazard
- Normal response
Limit Exposure

- Limit exposure to trauma material when possible
- Limiting exposure during clinical intakes
- Soothing yourself with imagery
- Think through a positive moment in the future for the client
Professional Strategies

Attend to Empathy

- Keep firmly planted in present
- Maintain broad perspective
- Always better for the client if we are not injured by their trauma or feelings
Name Reenactments

- Notice, name, explore reenactments (be aware)
- View reenactments as learning experiences
Professional Strategies

Set Limits

- Keep good boundaries with clients
- Do not mistake client’s needs for mandates
Professional Strategies

Maintain Professional Connection

- Professional Education
- Support Groups
- Supervision and Consultation
- Vicarious Traumatization Consultations
Professional Strategies

Create Balance

- Balance types of work
- Engage in non-clinical work
- Vary case load
- Consider clinical, ethical and personal issues involved in accepting a case
- Furnishing workspace with personal objects
- Time between calls: breathing, stretching, etc.
Professional Strategies

Seek Spiritual Renewal

- Remember to find meaning in your work
- Identify & celebrate successes with clients
- Renew hope
- Maintain focus on larger purpose of work
- Explore disillusionment
Personal Strategies

General Self-Care

- Personal Psychotherapy
- Rest and Play
Frame of Reference

- Identity
- Spirituality
- World View
Personal Strategies

Intrusive Traumatic Imagery
We cannot approach our work as a sprint and continue the race. It is a marathon and requires ongoing rest and rejuvenation. Attention to the person of the therapist serves not only ourselves, but also our clients, colleagues, relationships, and profession...
We must be open, aware, knowledgeable, available, hopeful. In order to do our best work, we must nurture ourselves so we can be all of these things for our clients and for ourselves. In addition to preserving our own humanity, we have a responsibility to our clients to address vicarious traumatization.
A Closing Word From the Doctor

Oh, the Places You'll Go!

By Dr. Seuss
But on you will go
though the weather be foul
On you will go
though your enemies prowl
On you will go
though the Hakken-Kraks howl
Onward up many
a frightening creek,
though your arms may get sore
and your sneakers may leak.
A Closing Word From the Doctor

On and on you will hike
and I know you'll hike far
and face up to your problems
whatever they are.
You'll get mixed up, of course, as you already know.
You'll get mixed up with many strange birds as you go.
So be sure when you step.
Step with care and great tact and remember that Life's a Great Balancing Act.
Just never forget to be dexterous and deft.
And never mix up your right foot with your left.
A Closing Word From the Doctor

And will you succeed?
Yes! You will, indeed!
(98 and 3/4 percent guaranteed.)
References

Books:
Trauma and the Therapist by Laurie Anne Pearlman and Karen W. Saakvitne
Breath of Relief: Transforming Compassion Fatigue Into Flow by Karl LeRowe
Oh! The Places You’ll Go by Dr. Seuss

Websites:
http://www.ace-network.com/cfspotlight.htm#cfmenu
http://www.breathofrelief.com