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Understanding the Impact of Secondary Trauma in Mentoring

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PURPOSE OF THIS SESSION

Discuss trauma and secondary trauma. Provide insights, guidance and best practices for identifying, and managing secondary trauma, as well as, how to implement systemic practices to support a trauma sensitive work environment that empowers self-care.

Check In

- What motivated you to pursue a career in this field?



What is Trauma?

- Trauma is witnessing or experiencing an event that poses a real or perceived threat to the life or well-being of the person or someone close to the person.



What is Trauma? The Three E's

Events

Events/circumstances cause trauma.

Experience

*An individual's **experience** of the event determines whether it is traumatic.*

Effects

Effects of trauma include adverse physical, social, emotional, or spiritual consequences.

Secondary Trauma or Vicarious Trauma

The cumulative effect of working with survivors of traumatic life events.

Anyone who engages empathically with victims or survivors is vulnerable. (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995.)

- Identity
- Sense of Safety
- Ability to Trust
- Self-esteem
- Intimacy
- Sense of Control

Vicarious Trauma

40-85% of helping professionals report high rates of traumatic symptoms (Mathieu, 2012)

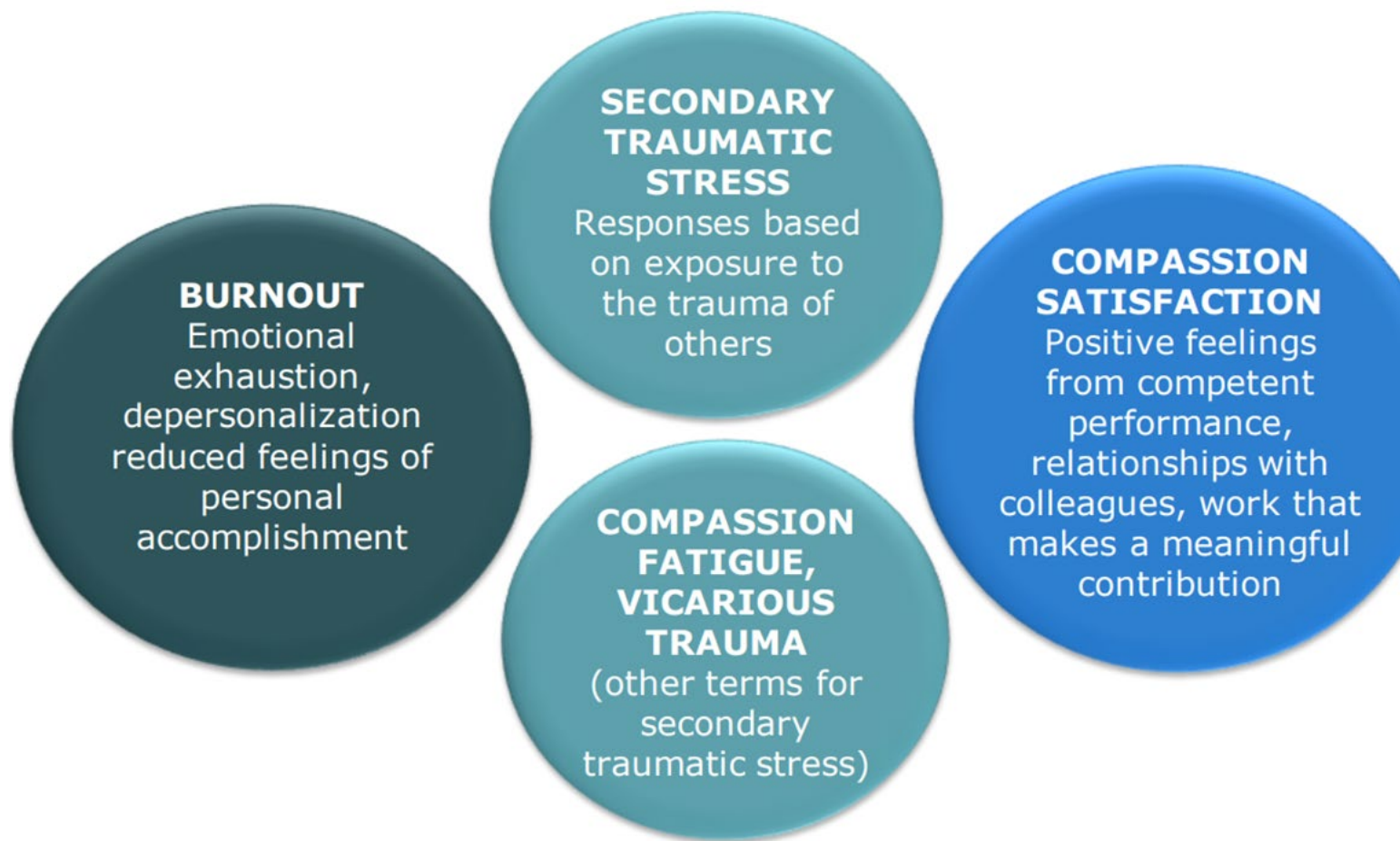
Identity examples:

- difficulty talking about and identifying with feelings
- low self image
- questioning identity, world view, and/or spirituality
- disruption of ability to maintain positive sense of self

Sense of safety examples

- Blaming others
- Easily startled
- Intrusive thoughts especially about clients with severe trauma

Related Terms & Concepts



Signs of Secondary Traumatic Stress

Anxiety

Sadness

Confusion

Isolation and
avoidance

Intrusive
imagery

Loss of control,
trust and
independence

Somatic
complaints

Relational
disturbances

Headaches

Risk taking
behaviors

Negativity

Difficulty
concentrating

Secondary traumatic stress:

What might you notice in yourself / your peers?

- ❑ Irritability
- ❑ Inability to concentrate
- ❑ Feeling angry / cynical
- ❑ Intrusive or recurrent disturbing thoughts
- ❑ Sleep problems
- ❑ Feeling emotionally detached
- ❑ Overly aware of any signs of danger
- ❑ Hopelessness
- ❑ Guilt
- ❑ Avoiding reminders of difficult experiences
- ❑ Social withdrawal
- ❑ Chronic exhaustion
- ❑ Physical ailments
- ❑ Diminished self-care
- ❑ Feeling ineffective
- ❑ Feeling down or depressed
- ❑ Feeling apathetic

Signs of Compassion Fatigue

Sadness, grief, loss of pleasure

Avoidance of working with some people and of work

Less able to feel empathetic

Poor self-care

Nightmares and insomnia

Difficulty concentrating

Deatchment and isolation

Signs of Burnout

Fatigue

Anger

Frustration

Cynicism

Negatvity

Withdrawal

Impact of Trauma on Work Life

Traumatic experience + work stress = adverse workplace behavior

- Inability to problem solve
- Irrational decisions
- Inability to process information
- Taking harmful chances
- Less able to handle work stress
- Lower standards of work achieved
- Difficulty staying on task
- Suppression of difficult thoughts, feelings, and emotions
- Burnout



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Table Discussion

Promoting Self Care & Resilience

Self Awareness and Self Reflection

- Understand and respond to your own needs. Learn to recognize your body's signs of stress. Set limits.

Establishing Boundaries

Seeking Support

- Seek out help for your own feelings. Mentorship is life changing work, for some students you are their lifeline. Taking care of yourself is crucial in your ability to be present and support your young people.

Developing Coping Mechanisms

Organizational Change

- Suggest policies and practices that can foster a trauma-informed work environment,

- **Create time for rest and leisure.** Small ways of taking care of yourself can include a morning cup of coffee, a special bubble bath, a walk in the park.
- **Maintain a positive view of the world.** Bad things happen, but there is a lot of good in the world. Remember that you are part of the good that is happening in your child's life.
- **Choose your battles.** Ask yourself "does this really matter?" See what you can let go of. Realize that life will go on even if you are not perfect.
- **Keep hope alive.** Focus on the glimmers of hope and change in your mentees and your relationship with them.

ABC's of Self Care & Resilience

Awareness

- Be aware of how your responses to stress look and feel like for you, and when they are more likely to be triggered.
- Practice self-regulation plan (e.g., deep breathing, moving around, drinking water, etc.)
- Respect others' decisions, while also knowing what is right for you.

Balance

- Create realistic routines, including regular physical/mental breaks!
- Practice reframing and look for opportunities in challenges.
- Communicate expectations/boundaries (e.g., when you need space, when you will be available, etc.).

Connection

- Make intentional time to connect with colleagues, friends, and family.
- Notice what is working/going well, capacity, strength & success.
- Find opportunities for humor and laughter.

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Healing Work

Healing Work

You have embarked on a crucial journey by familiarizing yourself with the concept of Secondary Trauma.

Understanding the signs of trauma equips you to proactively identify potential symptoms in yourself or those under your supervision.

Prioritizing self-care is important in effectively managing secondary trauma.

A proactive and intentional effort will not only benefit you but also allow you to support others more effectively.

The **WOW** Pause

WOW on Pause is an opportunity, as a team, to pause from the workday.

We encourage our team to take a walk, stretch, meditate and/ or eat a snack. Do something **AWAY** from their immediate workspace.

RECHARGE. This is separate from their lunch hour. Do whatever recharges them.

Our team is not required to do anything, but we hope that they are able to take it as a reminder that no one can give from an empty well.

Beginning the Healing Work

Understand and respond to your own needs. Learn to recognize your body's signs of stress. **Set limits.**

Create time for rest and leisure. Small ways of taking care of yourself can include a morning cup of coffee, a special bubble bath, a walk in the park.

Maintain a positive view of the world. Bad things happen, but there is a lot of good in the world. Remember that you are part of the good that is happening in your child's life.

Doing the Work

Seek out help for your own feelings.

Mentorship and is life changing work, for some students you are their lifeline. Taking care of yourself is crucial in your ability to be present and support your young people.

Choose your battles. Ask yourself "does this really matter?" See what you can let go of.

Keep hope. Focus on the glimmers of hope and change in your mentees and students and your relationship with them.

Source: Children's Home Society of Missouri, n. d.



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Table Discussion

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Building a Trauma Sensitive Approach in the Work Environment

How Youth Guidance Implements the 6 principles of Trauma Informed Care Agency

Trustworthiness and transparency:

Organizational operations and decisions are conducted with transparency and the goal of building and maintaining trust among staff, clients and family members of those receiving services.

Collaboration and mutuality:

There is recognition that healing happens in relationships and in meaningful sharing of power and decision-making. The organization recognizes that everyone has a role to play in a trauma-informed approach. One does not have to be a therapist to be therapeutic.

Safety:

Throughout the organization, staff and the people they serve feel physically and psychologically safe.

Peer support and mutual self-help:

These are integral to the organizational and service delivery approach and are understood as a key vehicle for building trust, establishing safety, and empowerment.

Empowerment voice, and choice:

Organization aims to strengthen the staff, client, and family members' experience of choice and recognizes that every person's experience is unique and requires an individual approach. This builds on what clients, staff and communities have to offer, rather than responding to perceived deficits.

Cultural, historical, and gender issues:

The organization actively moves past cultural stereotypes and biases, offers culturally responsive services, leverages the healing value of traditional cultural connections, and recognizes and addresses historical trauma.

How Youth Guidance Implements the 6 principles of Trauma Informed Care Agency

- Opportunities to do your work
 - Inner You Retreat & Cohorts
- Curriculum Exposure
- Self-Disclosure Trainings
- Coaching
- Role Modeling

What does this look like?

Trauma-Informed Supervision and Agency

Leading with empathy and curiosity

Seeking to genuinely understand others and what may be happening

Being conscious of potential triggers

Checking in on employees' wellbeing, self-care, and professional development

Reflective Supervision

Supporting Staff

- Affirm the importance of your staff and team, and the work they do for the organization.
 - *Shout Outs*
- Provide regularly scheduled supervision that is evaluated on with the supervisor and employee.
 - *Set date: 1st and 3rd Wednesdays*
- Acknowledge staff differences and discuss how they inform one's work and the experiences of trauma.
- Provide information on available resources and support services.

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Table Discussion

Illinois College Access Network



- ICAN seeks to improve the quality of higher education access and retention support services for those in most need of the guidance needed for success.
- It does so by providing tools and information to access professionals who deal daily with students – inside schools, after school programs, institutions and organizations.
- Scan the QR to join the ICAN web page
- Our next Illinois CAN meeting is Tuesday, September 24, 8:30-10am

For Additional Information about Youth Guidance

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