Compassion Fatigue:
Trauma and the Cost of Caring

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COMPASSION FATIGUE
TRAUMA AND THE COST OF CARING
Joyce A. Lyons, PhD, LPC
The Cost of Caring

Trauma Informed Care

Trauma
- Primary
- Secondary
- Vicarious
- Burnout

Compassion
- Fatigue
- Satisfaction
Paradigm

The boundaries, rules, and patterns that guide our thoughts and actions in certain situations.
Life Stress Test

- Previous 12-24 months.
- Measures susceptibility to stress related illnesses
  - Tension headaches
  - Acid indigestion
  - Loss of sleep
  - Ulcers
  - Cancer
  - Migraines
- Coping skills
Trauma Informed Care Principles:

- Safety
- Ensuring physical and emotional safety.
- Common areas are welcoming and privacy is respected.
Trauma Informed Care Principles:

- **Choice**: Individual has choice and control.
- **Individual has choice and control**: Individuals are provided clear and appropriate message about their rights and responsibilities.
Trauma Informed Care Principles:

- Collaboration
- Making decisions with the individual and sharing power.
- Individuals are provided a significant role in planning and evaluating services.
Trauma Informed Care Principles:

- Trustworthiness
- Task clarity, consistency and Interpersonal Boundaries.
- Respectful and professional boundaries are maintained.
Trauma Informed Care Principles:

- Empowerment
  Prioritizing empowerment and skill building
  Creating an environment that allows individuals to feel validated and affirmed.
Creating a Safe Environment

Supporting and teaching Emotional Regulation

Building Relationship and Connection
How to Support Someone Who Has Experienced Trauma

Predictability
Everyone loves surprises! Not. Trauma survivors often prefer predictability because that feels safer.

Space
Allow time for the survivor to calm down and take perspective. Trauma survivors often have difficulty regulating emotions and take longer to calm down.

Perspective
Be aware when “past is intruding into present.” Don’t take responsibility for what is not yours... gently.

Recalibration
Rid “over-reacting”, “over-sensitive”, or “over-anything from your vocabulary.

Attribution
Don’t refer to the person’s “upbringing, problem, issues, behavior” Call it for what it is - trauma.

Reciprocity
Give what you also need to receive: listening, empathy, and empowerment.

Support
Be kind, loving, patient... but empathetically set limits - you have needs too!

Choice
It can be a big trigger when a survivor is denied choice and control. Confer, collaborate, and cooperate.

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Trauma

Trauma: (noun)
Definition:  a deeply distressing or disturbing experience or unexpected physical injury. Sudden, dangerous, and overwhelming – remarkably common.

Traumatic: (adjective)
Definition:  emotionally disturbing or distressing.
Synonyms: Disturbing, shocking, distressing, disquieting, upsetting, damaging, scarring, injurious, harmful, hurtful, painful, agonizing, awful, chilling, alarming, devastating, harrowing, excruciating, horrifying, terrifying. lowing.
PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED TRAUMA ARE:

- 4x More Likely To Become An Alcoholic
- 4x More Likely To Develop A Sexually Transmitted Disease
- 4x More Likely To Inject Drugs
- 15x More Likely To Commit Suicide
- 2.5x More Likely To Smoke Tobacco
- 3x More Likely To Use Antidepressant Medication
- 3x More Likely To Be Absent From Work
- 3x More Likely To Have Serious Job Problems
- 3x More Likely To Experience Depression
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Trauma

Primary – Something happening to you.

Something you are carrying with you from your past (child abuse, neglect, war, motor vehicle accident, traumatic loss, work related exposure, first responders, fire fighters).
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**Secondary** – Secondary exposure to trauma.

Something bad happens to someone else and you hear about it. **Secondary trauma** is defined as indirect exposure to **trauma** through a firsthand account or narrative of a **traumatic** event (verbally, audio/video, counseling, reading files, news).
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Primary and Secondary Trauma could lead to PTSD.
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Vicarious – Something bad happens to someone else and you hear about it on a regular basis.

Vicarious traumatization (VT) is a transformation in the self of a trauma worker or helper that results from empathic engagement with traumatized clients and their reports of traumatic experiences. ... Its hallmark is intrusive thoughts, disrupted spirituality, or a disruption in the trauma workers' perceived meaning and hope.
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**Burnout** – Is the side effect of an unsatisfied worker or a toxic workplace.

Burnout is characterized by feelings of unhappiness, disconnectedness. It can include exhaustion, feelings of being overwhelmed, bogged down, being “out-of-touch” with the person he or she wants to be. Burnout may or may not be related to trauma. Burnout can often be addressed by changing jobs.
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**Moral Distress** – When policies or routines conflict with beliefs about patient care.

Moral distress occurs when we are told to do things that we fundamentally disagree with or are morally opposed.

- Discharge a patient prematurely
- Cut corners because of sheer volume of work
- Etc.
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- Poor work life balance
- Increased workload
- Lack of support
- Running on empty
- Self-awareness
- Education
- Self-care activities
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**Compassion Satisfaction**
- The positive aspects of helping.
- The “good stuff”
  - Enjoyment
  - Fulfillment
  - Purpose
  - Life – Work Balance

**Compassion Fatigue**
- The negative aspects of helping.
- The “bad stuff”
  - Exhaustion
  - Overwhelm
  - Resentment
  - Disengagement
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Compassion Satisfaction

- Compassion satisfaction is characterized by feeling satisfied by one’s job and from the helping itself. It is characterized by people feeling invigorated by work that they like to do. They feel they can keep up with new technology and protocols. They experience happy thoughts, feel successful, are happy with the work they do, want to continue to do it, and believe they can make a difference.
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Compassion Fatigue

• Compassion fatigue is characterized by the negative aspects of providing care to those who have experienced extreme or traumatic stressors. These negative responses include feelings of being overwhelmed by the work that is distinguished from feelings of fear associated with the work.
Develop an Early Warning System

Physical Signs of Compassion Fatigue

- Exhaustion
- Insomnia
- Headaches
- Somatization
Develop an Early Warning System

Behavioral Signs of Compassion Fatigue

• Increased use of alcohol/drugs
• Absenteeism
• Anger and irritability
• Exaggerated sense of responsibility
• Forgetfulness
• Personal relationships
Develop an Early Warning System

Psychological Signs of Compassion Fatigue

- Emotional Exhaustion
- Distancing
- Negative self-image
- Reduced ability to feel empathy
- Cynicism
- Resentment
Know your “RED” Zone

Compassion Fatigue - Total Crash

Getting slightly overloaded

Compassion Satisfaction
Professional Quality of Life

Compassion Satisfaction

Work – Life Satisfaction

Compassion Fatigue

Burnout

Secondary Trauma
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Be your best!

Assess your current situation:
- Intervene
- Find a colleague
- Seek supervision

Resiliency and Moving Forward:

Work as smart for yourself as you do for others.
References: