Because You Matter: Compassion Fatigue and Self Care

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Definitions

- Compassion Satisfaction
  - The pleasure you feel from the work you do
- Compassion Fatigue
  - Compassion fatigue is a state experienced by those helping people in distress; it is an extreme state of tension and preoccupation with the suffering of those being helped to the degree that it is traumatizing for the helper.
- Burnout
  - Psychological exhaustion and diminished efficiency resulting from prolonged exposure to stress.
- Work Related Traumatic Stress
  - Primary traumatic stress: direct target of event
  - Secondary (Vicarious) Traumatic Stress: a transformation in the self of a trauma worker that results from empathic engagement with traumatized clients and their reports of traumatic experiences. Its hallmark is disrupted spirituality, or a disruption in the trauma workers’ perceived meaning and hope.

Compassion Model

Professional Quality of Life

Compassion Satisfaction → Compassion Fatigue

Burnout

Secondary Trauma

Compassion Satisfaction

- The positive aspects of helping
  - Pleasure and satisfaction derived from working in helping, caregiving systems
- May be related to
  - Providing care
  - To the system
  - Work with colleagues
  - Beliefs about self (Your Mission)
  - Altruism
Exercise

- Who are you in the work?
- Define the #1 reason you do what you do
- What about this job brings you joy?
- “Coach”

Compassion Fatigue

- Burnout
  - Work-related hopelessness and feelings of inefficacy
- Vicarious Trauma
  - Work-related secondary exposure to extremely or traumatically stressful events
- Both have detrimental health consequences
  - Burnout is about being exhausted physically and emotionally
  - Vicarious Trauma is about being afraid

People Bring Themselves

- People bring a past and a present to anything they do
  - Their schemas and beliefs
  - Their stigma beliefs
  - Their social support systems
    - Positive support
    - Negative support
  - Their history of trauma and illness
  - Their families and close others
  - Their economic situation

Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

- Excessive blaming
- Bottled up emotions
- Isolation from others
- Receives unusual amount of complaints from others
- Voices excessive complaints about administrative functions
- Substance abuse used to mask feelings
- Compulsive behaviors such as overspending, overeating, gambling, sexual addictions
- Poor self-care (i.e., hygiene, appearance)
- Legal problems, indebtedness
- Recurrence of nightmares and flashbacks to traumatic event
- Chronic physical ailments such as gastrointestinal problems and recurrent colds
- Apathy, sad, no longer finds activities pleasurable
- Difficulty concentrating
- Mentally and physically tired
- Preoccupied
- In denial about problems
Protecting against Fatigue

- Basic Rules (Individual)
  - Rest
  - Recreation (not with co-workers 😊)
  - Nutrition (Hydration)
  - Exercise
  - Keeping a “full tool box”
    - 5 statements
  - Developing a personal safety plan

Personal Safety Planning

- Self care to address the 4 key areas
  - Awareness of personal crisis cycle
    - Triggers and cues
    - Emotional and Physical reactions
    - Effective crisis coping skills
  - Accountability
  - Revision

Ten Self Care Steps (Mathieu, 2007)

- Take stock of where you are at, making a list or visual representation of demands. How full is your plate?
- Build a self care inventory. Interview friends, collect suggestions anywhere you can find them
- Make time for you everyday. (relaxing walk, bath, etc)
- Delegate and ask for help more
- Have a transition ritual to and from work
- Learn to say no (or yes) more
- Assess your trauma inputs (CSI?)
- Educate and train more (equip)
- Join a peer support group (or start one)
- Work part time

Organizational Support

- Breaks
- Open communication lines
- List of warning signs and “caution lights”
- Limits on overtime
- Monitor PTO/Vacation
- Wellness programs
- Debriefings
Signs of Organizational Fatigue

- High absenteeism
- Constant changes in co-workers relationships
- Inability for teams to work well together
- Desire among staff members to break company rules
- Outbreaks of aggressive behaviors among staff
- Inability of staff to complete assignments and tasks
- Inability of staff to respect and meet deadlines
- Lack of flexibility among staff members
- Negativism towards management
- Strong reluctance toward change
- Inability of staff to believe improvement is possible
- Lack of a vision for the future

Measuring CS & CF: The Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL)

- The ProQOL is free
- A 30 item self report measure of the positive and negative aspects of caring
- The ProQOL measures Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue
- Compassion Fatigue has two subscales
  - Burnout
  - Secondary Trauma

Well Established

- The ProQOL is the most widely used measure of the positive and negative aspects of helping in the world
- The ProQOL has proven to be a valid measure of compassion satisfaction and fatigue
- It has been used for over 15 years
- The measure was developed with data from over 3000 people