Practical Strategies for Self-Care

This session is being recorded and will begin shortly.

Monday, December 13, 2021
1:30–3:00 p.m. e.t.
This series will address topics that are critical to the victim services field across the country.

The material presented during today’s webinar will be available on the OVC TTAC Webinars page.
If you are experiencing any technical issues with the audio for this session, please let us know in the feedback box.

If you have technical difficulties during the webinar, contact:

Bess Hoskins at bhoskins@ovcttac.org
Welcome and Introductions

Cathy Phelps

Claudia Zaborsky
Learning Objectives

Define

Define vicarious trauma, burnout, and compassion fatigue

Recognize

Recognize the signs and symptoms of vicarious trauma, burnout, and compassion fatigue

Explore

Identify professional and personal care techniques to reduce or mitigate the experience of vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, and burnout at work
Let's get to know you!

- www.menti.com
- 1167 5145
“The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet.”

—R. N. Remen, M.D., 1996
Vicarious Trauma

- Exposure to the traumatic experiences of other people is an inevitable occupational challenge for people working in the fields of victim services, emergency medical services, fire services, law enforcement, and other allied professions.
- There is a spectrum of responses to vicarious trauma that range from negative to positive.
Vicarious Trauma - Spectrum of Responses

Change in Worldview

Spectrum of Responses

Negative
- Vicarious Traumatization
- Secondary Traumatic Stress
- Burnout
- PTSD
- Unhealthy Behaviors
- Compassion Fatigue

Neutral
- Resilient, Healthy Workers

Positive
- Vicarious Resilience
- Posttraumatic Growth
- Vicarious Transformation
- Compassion Satisfaction
Burnout: A state of physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion caused by long-term involvement in demanding circumstances

Burnout is a process, not a condition

Origins are usually organizational

Symptoms are directly related to the cause
Compassion fatigue occurs when the balance between secondary trauma, burnout, and the satisfaction we find in doing our jobs becomes unbalanced.

- The reduced capacity or interest in being empathic or adverse reactions of helpers who seek to help trauma survivors.
- Compassion fatigue is NOT the same as burnout.
Compassion Fatigue (continued)

Vicarious Trauma +

Burnout +

Low Compassion Satisfaction =

Compassion Fatigue
"The capacity for compassion and empathy seem to be at the core of our ability to do the work and at the core of our ability to be wounded by the work."

~Charles Figley
Prevalence Poll
Risk Factors - Personal

- young age
- prior traumatic experiences
- pre-existing mental health issues
- highly empathetic
- social isolation, inadequate support system
- a tendency to avoid feelings, withdraw, or assign blame to others in stressful situations
- difficulty expressing feelings
- difficulty being assertive or setting boundaries
- loss in last 12 months (death of a loved one, divorce, layoff)
Risk Factors - Professional

- early in career, newer employee, less experience
- inadequate preparation, orientation, and training
- lack of quality supervision
- constant and intense exposure to trauma with little or no variation in work tasks
- lack of an effective and supportive process for discussing traumatic content of the work
- employee/role or organization mismatch
- conflict in the workplace
Exposure to the Story and Its Results

- Witnessing reactions of the victim, family, friends, and community
- Exposure to the victim’s re-victimization
- Confronting the worst of humanity
- Seeing the aftermath of the criminal justice process
Pandemic Stress
Historical Trauma and Social Justice

• The cumulative, multigenerational, collective experience of emotional and psychological injury in communities and descendants.

### Indicators of Compassion Fatigue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
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<td>Physical</td>
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<td>Behavioral</td>
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Emotional

- Anger and irritability
- Anxiety
- Mood swings
- Denial
- Depression
- Fear
- Guilt
- Overwhelmed
- Sadness
- Shame
- Lack of interest
- Numbness
Physical

- Nausea
- Shaking
- Sleeplessness
- Too much sleep
- Trouble breathing
- Weight changes
- Headaches
- Chest pain
- Backaches
- Hyperarousal
- Sweating
- Generalized pain
- Increase in blood pressure
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavioral</th>
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<tr>
<td>Increased use of alcohol or drugs</td>
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<td>Lack of motivation or energy</td>
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<td>Changes in appetite</td>
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<td>Difficulty forming relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual dysfunction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social isolation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Withdrawal/antisocial</td>
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<td>Aggression</td>
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Cognitive

- Lack of focus
- Diminished concentration
- Forgetfulness
- Not completing tasks
- Intrusive thoughts
- Cynicism
- Pessimism
Spiritual

- Lack of self-satisfaction
- Loss of purpose
- Pervasive hopelessness
- Lack of joy
- Sense of emptiness
- Anger or sense of injustice
- Questioning religious or spiritual beliefs
- Questioning the meaning of life
What’s Your “Badge of Honor”?

• The narrative that is used to prove productivity while ignoring boundaries, burnout, and compassion fatigue symptoms.

• These “badges” are used to mask negative behaviors, poor self-care, and can impact overall morale within an organization.
Six Badge Indicators

- Are you angry and/or resentful?
- Do you complain to people who can’t make changes?
- Do you have a hard time owning your role in the situation?
- Is, “Yes, but…” your first reaction to a suggestion?
- Have you become a “negative” storyteller?
- Do you have the, “It’s just easier to do it myself” attitude?
Defining Resiliency
Resiliency Is...

“...the power to cope with adversity and adapt to challenges or change. Resiliency helps us return to healthy functioning after being in a stressful situation.”

Luthar, Cicchetti, and Bronwyn 2007
Resiliency

Helps to endure loss, chronic stress, traumatic events, and other challenges

Enables you to develop a reservoir of internal resources that you may draw on

Helps to survive challenges, and even thrive, during chaos and hardship
Core Elements of Resiliency

1. Self-Knowledge and Insight
2. A Sense of Hope
3. Healthy Coping
4. Strong Relationships
5. Personal Perspective and Meaning
1. Self-Knowledge and Insight

- Knowing who you are
- Having a clear sense of what you believe and how you feel
- Identifying your strengths and weaknesses
2. A Sense of Hope

- Belief that situations can get better
- Belief that the future will be better than the present or past
- Recognizing the difficulty of the experiences of the victims you serve yet maintaining a positive view of the challenges of life
3. Healthy Coping
Strategies To Develop Healthy Coping

- Learn to identify physical stress reactions
- Get adequate sleep
- Develop calming and modulation techniques
- Change the pace of your work and personal life
Strategies To Develop Healthy Coping: Being Grounded
4. Strong Relationships

- Sense of belonging
- Positive connections with others
- Personal networks of support

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Organizational Strategies for Strong Relationships

- Enhance communication skills
- Learn boundaries of confidentiality
- Collaborate
- Seek inclusiveness and diversity
- Foster a team approach
5. Personal Perspective and Meaning

- Personal points of view—weighing the costs, losses, and benefits associated with victim service work
- Individual morality, integrity, spirituality
- Coherent meaning for life
Establish a Health-Promoting Environment

Health Promotion = Policy lays the full weight of a healthy life in the hands of individuals

Health Protection = Suggests that the responsibility for many stressors are rooted in political and economic disparities
Self-Care Redefined (continued)

Not always a quick fix

Look beyond the immediate

Beware of using “self-care” as an excuse to do things with long-term negative consequences
Self-Care Redefined (continued)

- Taking care of yourself physically and emotionally
- Reflection of how you have coped in the past
- Working toward goals
- Continuous self-exploration and growth
- Release of toxic relationships
- Accepting change and being flexible
Healthy Boundaries

Assist survivors only with what they cannot do for themselves. This gives survivors a sense of empowerment and a return of control.

Support survivors in doing what they can and need to do for themselves. This avoids creating dependence and helplessness.
Healthy Boundaries (continued)

- Know where you end and a survivor begins.
- Know how personal history affects your ability to work with survivors.
- Know your biases and values.
- Know the difference between enmeshment and empowerment.
- Balance your personal and professional life.
Organizational Wellness

“The individual self-care plan is likely to be unsuccessful if it is the ONLY component of an agency well-being initiative.”
Organizational Wellness (continued)

- Principle 1:
  - Begin with the job description

- Principle 2:
  - Invest in a benefits package

- Principle 3:
  - Construct a staff mission statement and an inclusiveness philosophy statement
Organizational Wellness (continued)

Principle 4:
• Attend to agency inclusiveness and recognition of historical trauma

Principle 5:
• Offer clinical and program supervision

Principle 6:
• Design conflict resolution policies and establish boundaries
Organizational Wellness (continued)

- **Principle 7:**
  - Ensure the agency provides a safe physical and psychological environment

- **Principle 8:**
  - Formalize staff involvement

- **Principle 9:**
  - Require continuing education

- **Principle 10:**
  - Redesign the annual employee review
“Self-care is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation.”

~Audre Lorde
Questions?

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Resources

- OVC’s Vicarious Trauma Toolkit
  - [https://ovc.ojp.gov/program/vtt/about-the-toolkit](https://ovc.ojp.gov/program/vtt/about-the-toolkit)

- OVC TTAC
  - [www.ovcttac.gov](http://www.ovcttac.gov)

- “A Gecko’s Guide to Building Resiliency in Child Abuse Staff and Volunteers”
  - The University of Texas at Austin, Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault; Center for Social Work Research, School of Social Work

- The Mayo Clinic
  - [https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/resilience-training/about/pac-20394943](https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/resilience-training/about/pac-20394943)

- The Trauma Stewardship Institute website
  - [https://traumastewardship.com/](https://traumastewardship.com/)
OVC TTAC
National Webinars Vital Services Series: Practical Strategies for Self-Care

Scan the QR code with your phone to open the survey.
Thank you!