“The Cost of Caring”
Compassion Fatigue &
Burnout Prevention

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OHRDP

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Workshops for Helping Professionals
Agenda

• Definitions
• Impact – Personal & Professional
• Self Care Strategies – Personal & Professional
• Resilience
• Compassion Fatigue Assessment
If...

- If you can start the day without caffeine,
- If you can always be cheerful, ignoring aches and pains,
- If you can resist complaining and boring people with your troubles,
- If you can eat the same food every day and be grateful for it,
If...

- If you can understand when your loved ones are too busy to give you any time,
- If you can take criticism and blame without resentment,
- If you can conquer tension without medical help,
- If you can relax without liquor,
- If you can sleep without the aid of drugs,
- Then you are probably......
The Family Dog!
What do I know?

- Masters Degree in Social Work
- Medical Social Worker (5 years)
- Children’s Aid Society (20 years)
- Certified OACAS Trainer
- Critical Incident Debriefing Team
- Consultant – WHP Presentations on Compassion Fatigue & Vicarious Trauma
- Compassion Fatigue Survivor!
Who is at risk for Vicarious Trauma & Compassion Fatigue?

- Police officers
- Fire fighters
- Doctors/nurses
- Paramedics
- Child protection workers
- Residential staff (CYW’s)
- Seniors’ Caregivers
- Therapists
- Shelter staff
- Teachers
- Victims services
- Foster parents
- Clergy
- Others.....
“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.”

Rachel Naomi Remen, *Kitchen Table Wisdom* 1996
“First, do no harm to yourself in the line of duty when helping/treating others. Second, attend to your physical, social, emotional, and spiritual needs as a way of ensuring high quality services to those who look to you for support as a human being.”

Dr. Charles Figley - Ethical Guidelines for Standards of Helper Self Care
Job Description:

• Caring, educated, compassionate professional to provide support to the traumatized.

• Warning: this job can be dangerous, tragic, exhausting, frustrating, and may change you forever.
Benefits

- The change, however, may be good if you can learn to manage the stress of the work and grow from the experience.
Guided Visualization

• Sit comfortably
• Gently close or lower your eyes

“The work that you do…..”
Group Discussion

• What does your work/life routine look like now?
• Do you do any form of self care activity?
• Is there something you would like to start doing?
• What is in the way?
Definitions

• Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
• Vicarious Trauma
• Compassion Fatigue
• Stress
• Burnout
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is defined by the DSM IV as a diagnostic label for the constellation of emotional, behavioural and cognitive symptoms that may result from direct involvement in a traumatic experience.
Vicarious Trauma:

• Vicarious Trauma affects a person who was not directly involved in the trauma, yet the symptoms are similar to those of trauma survivors
Vicarious trauma is....

- “Vicarious trauma is the experience of absorbing the sight, smell, sound, touch and feel of the stories told in detail by victims searching for a way to release their own pain.” (Richardson 2001)
Compassion Fatigue:

- Compassion Fatigue has been described as the “Cost of Caring” for others in emotional pain. (Figley, 1982)
- The cumulative building up over time and the erosion that takes place in empathic helpers by the work they do
Compassion Fatigue:

• Compassion Fatigue is NOT a disorder
• Occupational hazard “the Cost of Caring”
• The consequence of doing our job well
• Results in an erosion of our capacity to show compassion over time
• Can result in a sense of helplessness and hopelessness
Compassion fatigue & Vicarious Trauma

Similarities:
• A deep erosion of our compassion, of our ability to tolerate strong emotions/difficult stories in others

• Transformation of world view, beliefs

• Can affect all levels of helpers (even the most experienced)

• Evident in helpers’ professional and personal life

• Occupational Hazards
Compassion Fatigue….

• “As helpers, we can’t help but to take in some of the emotional pain victims have left with us. As they release some of their pain, we take it in. By the end of the day, we’ve collected bits and pieces of their accounts of trauma, and they have become our own.”

(Nelson)
Stress:

• Administrative demands
• Crisis work
• Suffering of others
• Cumulative over time
• Other....
Paper work piling up??
Psychobiology of Stress
Stress & Crisis Response:

- Body prepares for “fight or flight” reaction
- Release of Cortisol & Adrenaline hormones into blood stream – “chemical dump”
- Blood goes to the heart – body protects vital organs – ie. leaving legs weak & shaky
- Rapid heart rate, increased & shallow breathing
The limbic system
“the emotional center of the brain”

The Three “F”s” of Survival:

*Fight  *Flight  *Freeze

•Role is to avoid danger and pain and seek safety!

•The Amygdala acts as a kind of early warning system. It processes an alarm response: DANGER!!

• The “smoke detector” in the brain (“the Gift of Fear”)

Before feelings become consciousness in the cortex

•“Emotionally arousing events activate the Amygdala and cause an increase in a protein that works in the Hippocampus and enables storage of memories. The Hippocampus can instruct the Amygdala to stop sounding an alarm”

Rothschild (2006)
Stress & Crisis Response:

• Must release the “chemical dump” from the blood stream
• Flush out system - drink plenty of water
• Exercise is the single best way to reduce chemical/hormone build up
• Alcohol & caffeine add to stress body is under
• Rest required to rejuvenate body systems

Help for the Helper: the psychophysiology of compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma
Burnout

• “Physical & emotional exhaustion as a result of prolonged stress and frustration”

• Depleted ability to cope with work demands

• Sense of powerlessness to achieve goals

• Does not necessarily alter our view of the world, but our view of the workplace

• Can happen in any occupation
Burnout:

• Physical and emotional exhaustion workers experience when they have low job satisfaction, feel powerless & overwhelmed
• Burnout does not mean that our world view has been damaged
• Most importantly – burnout can be easily resolved by changing jobs!
Burn Out or Compassion Fatigue:

- This is NOT the case for Vicarious Trauma and Compassion Fatigue
- Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma are much more complicated than just being tired!
- The impact is much deeper emotionally
- You can have Compassion Fatigue and also be Burned Out!!
Research

2009 – Journal of Health Psychology

“The healthcare field is becoming more aware of the profound emotional disturbances that occur in healthcare providers when they witness the suffering and pain of their patients in the face of incurable diseases.”
Physical Signs of Compassion Fatigue

- Exhaustion
- Insomnia
- Headaches
- Increased susceptibility to illness
- Somatization and hypochondria
### Behavioural Signs and Symptoms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Increased use of alcohol and drugs</th>
<th>Anger and Irritability</th>
<th>Avoidance of certain clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absenteeism</td>
<td>Impaired ability to make decisions</td>
<td>Problems in personal relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyper-sensitivity to emotional reactions</td>
<td>Compromised care for clients or family</td>
<td>The “Silencing Response”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Psychological signs and symptoms

- Distancing
- Resentment
- Depression
- Reduced ability to feel sympathy and empathy
- Cynicism
- Dread of working with certain clients
- Feeling professional helplessness
- Depersonalization
- Disruption of world view
LOOK, CAN WE TALK ABOUT IT WHEN I GET HOME? 'CUZ RIGHT NOW I HAVE TO TELL YOU...

I HAVE LIKE ZERO INTEREST IN LISTENING TO OTHER PEOPLE'S GARBAGE TODAY, OKAY?

S'ORRY, GO AHEAD.
Psychological signs and symptoms Con’t

- Problems with Intimacy
- Intrusive imagery
- Hypersensitivity to emotionally charged stimuli
- Insensitivity to emotional material
- Loss of hope
- Difficulty separating personal and professional lives

Sources: Saakvitne, Figley, Gentry, Baranowsky & Dunning (1997).
Compassion Fatigue Strategies
Awareness & Education

• Information about Compassion Fatigue
• Normalizing & preparation
• Individual responses will vary
• Key indicator: “when you find yourself acting and feeling in ways that are not your personal norm”
• Own trauma experiences & life stresses
Are we “Sliming” each other?
Low Impact Debriefing

- Anti-sliming strategies
- How to avoid sliming each other
1) Increased Self Awareness

2) Fair Warning

3) Consent

4) Low Impact Disclosure
“When working with people who face chronic & lifelong challenges, you reframe success”
The Four Steps of CF Strategies

CF Strategies - The four steps

Step one
Take Stock of stressors at home and at work

Step two
Enhance self care at home and at work & Improve Work/Life balance

Step three
Develop CF resiliency

Step four
Make a commitment to implement changes
Step One – Take Stock: Track your Stress (at home and at work)
Handout #6
Step Two: Enhancing Self Care and Improving work/life balance
Handout: Work/Life Balance
Self-Care:

• What has been shown to work:
• Simple basics of self-care:
  - Physical
  - Emotional
  - Spiritual
  - Professional
Self-Care Strategies

• Physical
  - Sleep/Rest
  - Eat well
  - Exercise

• Emotional/Spiritual
  - Laugh
  - Cry
  - Praise yourself
  - Spend time with family & friends
  - Zone out; read, music, meditate
  - Replenish your spirit
Self-Care Strategies

• Psychological
  - Read for pleasure
  - Take breaks
  - Say “no” more often
  - Laugh - often
  - Journal experiences
  - Seek counselling
  - Research Compassion Fatigue

• Professional
  - Set limits
  - Seek peer support
  - Balance work & home
  - Take vacations
  - Use E.A.P.
  - Supervision
Find your way to.....

- Talk it out!!
  - Colleagues
  - Friends
  - Partners
  - Journal
  - EAP

- Burn it off!!
  - Run
  - Gym
  - Yoga
  - Meditate
  - Other suggestions?
The longer I run
...the smaller my problems become!
The longer I _________
.....the smaller my problems become!
Mindfulness Meditation

• 15 minutes of nothing

Sit quietly
Breathe deeply

- Jon Kabat-Zinn
- Deepak Chopra
Step Three: Developing CF resiliency through relaxation training and stress reduction techniques
Stress Management vs. Resilience

• Stress Management – reacting to stress after the fact

• Resilience – developing immunity to the inevitable stresses of life & work
Step Four: Making a Commitment to Change

Handout: Making Changes
Acknowledge Compassion Fatigue

- for helpers who work with any vulnerable client population, but particularly with trauma survivors, children, & the chronically ill the most important part of coping with the intensity of the work is…….
…..acknowledge that

*it will affect you!!!*

Because you are good at what you do….being compassionate!
Acknowledge Compassion Fatigue

• Recognizing that it is “normal” to be affected by this work, is the most important coping skill
• Any reaction is “normal” to abnormal situations
• You are not alone!
Pro Quol Inventory
Professional Quality of Life Scale

- Self Evaluation for Compassion
  Fatigue, Compassion Satisfaction
  and Burnout
Remember…

• Your ability to help vulnerable or victimized clients depends upon your ability to stay emotionally and physically healthy

• You can’t take care of others, if you aren’t taking care of yourself
Find “moments of awe”
The star fish story.....