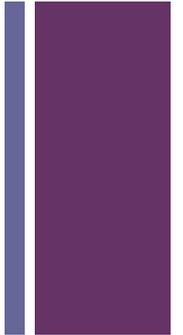




Taking Care of You: Preventing Secondary Traumatic Stress

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+ Acknowledgements



- Marleen Wong, PhD
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What is secondary traumatic stress (STS)

- “The experience of short-term exhaustion and traumatic stress reactions associated with exposure to the suffering of one’s clients.”

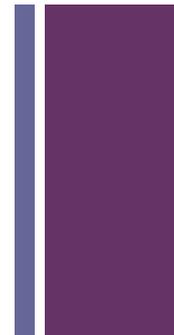
(Boscarino, Figley, and Adams, 2004)

- Also known as Compassion Fatigue





The Bucket



- Anyone who works with high-needs families is like a bucket that can get filled with traumatic stress (Pryce, 2013).
- 26% of people working with this population show signs of STS (and 50% of child welfare workers).
- Agencies must adopt strategies that will help home visitors “dump the bucket.”
- **Discuss: why do you think home visitors would be more at risk?**





Home visitors are particularly at risk



**Many of the families in home visiting programs have experienced trauma.

**Boundaries are less clear when professionals are in the home.

**There are often safety issues in the homes and neighborhoods that are visited.

**Home visits are not predictable—there are often surprises (not always pleasant) during the home visit.

**Home visitors are more vulnerable because they are “out there” all alone.

**People who go into this field tend to be empathetic and highly attuned to others, which makes them more vulnerable to STS.

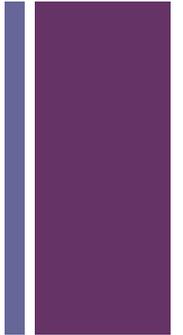


Measuring CS & CF: The *Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL)*



- The ProQOL is free (Stamm, 2009)
- 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

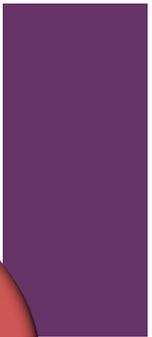
+ Self-care Strategies

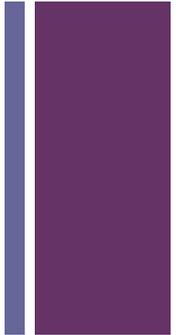


- Shoulder shrugs:
- Inhale and lift your shoulders up to your ears. Hold.
- Exhale and let them drop down.



STS Warning Signs

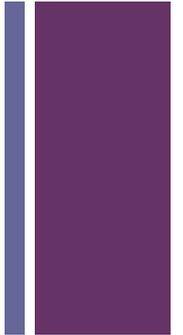




■ Take a quiet minute:

What signs and symptoms of STS stand out the most for you?

+ Self-Care Strategies



- DayTamer TM:
- Sitting on front half of chair, feet supported, rest your hands palm up in your lap.
- Place your left thumb in the palm of your right hand.
- Exhale, gently press thumb into palm. Inhale, release any pressure or effort.
- Do this for several breath cycles.

DayTamer is a trademark of Michael Krugman

+ Factors that increase risk of STS

■ Clients

- **Demanding/non-compliant/hostile/threatening
- **Families with children, especially young children
- **Stories of intense suffering

Professional

- **Personal trauma history
- ** New to the field

Job Environment:

- **High percentage of clients with trauma history
- **Culture that does not value self-care



+ How can you help your agency/program prevent STS?

It is not enough to simply ask clinicians to “take care of themselves.” Agencies have to create a culture that makes this possible.

HOW?

The following slides will address this issue through awareness, balance, and connection (Saakvitne, K. & Pearlman, L.).



Awareness

- Start with awareness of STS, both in leadership and front-line staff. **Why must leadership be involved?**
- STS and self-care should be introduced to staff during their initial orientation.
- Provide continuing education about STS.
- The culture of the agency should support home visitors in the development and implementation of their self-care plan. **One way to do that is to start an agency “Wellness Program.”**



Balance

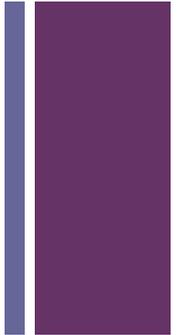


- Manage caseloads wisely.
 - Balancing trauma cases with non-trauma cases is crucial. Perhaps spread your more traumatic cases through the week.
- Maintain balance between work and home: turn off cell phones after work, limit work hours, take vacations, take lunch breaks. Do you have a transition ritual between work and home (change clothes, listen to radio, exercise, meditate, read the paper, etc)?
- Continuing education is encouraged so that home visitors continue to be challenged and learn new skills to effectively meet work demands.
- Balance the very difficult work with humor and fun.





Connection

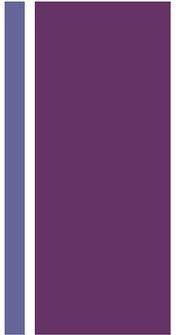


- Provide “team times” built around relaxing (meals, off-site team days, outings).
- Provide group peer supervision at least once a month that is reflective and supportive in nature.
- **All clinical staff members should have regular reflective individual supervision that creates a “safe space.”**
- What is reflective supervision (see next slide)?





Connection

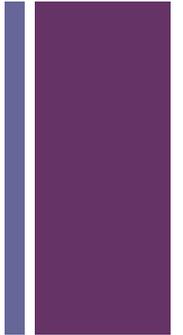


■ Description of Reflective Supervision (Zero to Three):

- It's **REGULAR**. On a reliable schedule and sufficient time allotted.
- It's **REFLECTIVE**. The time is divided between mentoring and monitoring. Taking the time to talk about how the home visits are affecting the home visitor. Supervisor uses open-ended questions.
- It's **COLLABORATIVE**. Problems are solved collaboratively, and home visitors feel safe and not judged.



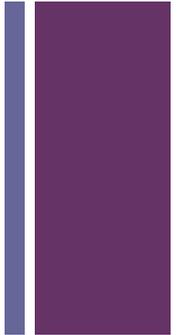
Connection With Meaning & Purpose



- Remind yourself why you went into this work in the first place. As a program, have a discussion about what brought each staff member into doing this work. Why is this work meaningful to you? How do you think you're making a difference in the lives of families?
- As a program, share details of small (or large) successes. Think about a moment in the last month when you saw that you were making a difference.



Connection



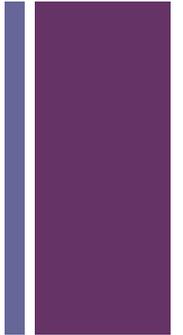
- Refrain from engaging in one-upmanship about trauma cases, which can increase STS in your colleagues. Ask permission from the listener before debriefing about a session with traumatic material. Don't "slime" your colleagues.
- If there are traumatic events in your program, be sure that "debriefing" is voluntary.

+ What can you try at your agency?

- Talk with a small group about one thing that you'd like to try in your agency in the next month.
- Make sure this is something “doable” and concrete. Just one small thing that you can experiment with.

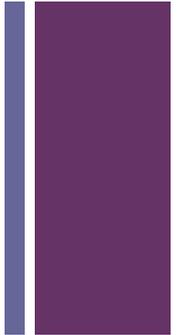


Mindfulness Can Help You!



- **Boosts immune functioning** (Davidson, *Psychomatic Medicine*, 2003)
- **Reduces anxiety and depression** (Hoffman, *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 2010)
- **Helps with emotional regulation** (Farb, *Emotion*, 2010)
- **Reduces rumination (repetitive thoughts)** (Chambers, *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 2008)

+ Self-Care Strategies



- Practice mindful breathing: breathe in to the count of four, hold for two counts, breathe out to the count of eight.
- For the first month of practice, limit to four breaths at a time, but do it frequently through the day.
- Any time that your exhale is longer than your inhale, it triggers the relaxation response.
- Mindfulness (being fully present in the moment) can calm your nervous system and reduce your stress.

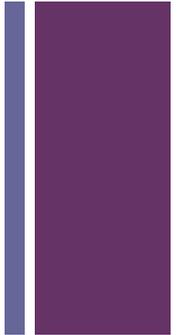
+ It works!

- Research shows that using a focused breathing exercise every day helps to improve emotional regulation (Arch & Craske, 2006).
- The key to making it work is the “every day” part!

+ Incorporating Mindfulness

- Mindfulness must be PRACTICED. It must be done over and over again in times that aren't stressed.
- Then when the stressful times occur, mindfulness is already a habit.
- *There are all kinds of mindfulness: breathing, mindful walking, meditation, prayer, art, music, reading inspirational literature, being in nature, gratitude.*
- What mindfulness strategy could you try in the next few weeks?

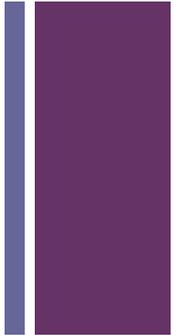
+ Mindfulness and Gratitude



- STS can rob us of the ability to take in the goodness of life.
- Being “mindfully grateful” can give that back to us.
- Try implementing “3 Good Things” (Seligman, Stern, Park, and Peterson, 2005). In the two hours before sleeping, think about or write about three good things that happened that day.
- In clinical trials, this exercise increased happiness after one week, and this increase was still significant at the six month mark.



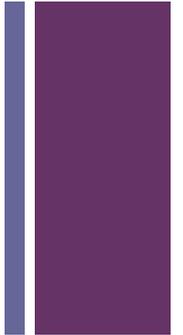
Your Personal Wellness Wheel



- Every person will have different activities that help them cope. What is renewing for one person may be depleting for another. That's why it's called a PERSONAL wellness wheel.
- Think about what renews you, gives you energy, renews your hope. Set an intention to build those things into your work life.
- Think about what renews you outside of work, so that you come back on Monday mornings refreshed. Set an intention to emphasize those aspects of your life.
- Increase the likelihood of following through by choosing an accountability partner (spouse, friend, counselor, co-worker) and having regular check-in sessions.



+ My Personal Wellness Wheel



- Complete the Wellness Wheel (Williams, 2016).
- On the back of the sheet, list one or two things in each domain that you can do to make your wheel a little larger and a little more balanced.





Useful Resources

- National Child Traumatic Stress Network website: www.nctsn.org
- socialwork.buffalo.edu/resources/self-care-starter-kit/how-to-flourish-in-social-work.html
- Tools for Peace: Stop, Breathe, and Think (a helpful app for practicing short mindfulness activities)
- Mathieu, Françoise (2012). *The compassion fatigue workbook*. New York, NY, Routledge.
- Van Dernoot Lipsky, L & Burk, C. (2009) *Trauma Stewardship: An everyday guide to caring for self while caring for others*. San Francisco; Berrett-Koehler.
- Teater, Martha & Ludgate, John (2014) *Overcoming compassion fatigue*. Eau Claire, Washington; PESI Publishing.



+ Please contact me if you need more information or more training:

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