Compassion Fatigue/ Secondary Trauma:

"Destroyer of workplace compassion and morale"

Carolyn Curtis, Ph.D. & Charles Stolzenbach, LMFT
Compassion Fatigue is a form of physical, emotional, and spiritual exhaustion.
It is common for line staff to be impacted by compassion fatigue.

(Gaille, 2017)

- 48% of US workforce experience high levels of personal distress that is directly associated to job duties.
- 40% of nurses report experiencing compassion fatigue.
- 68% of people who experience compassion fatigue are full time employees.
- Effects of Adverse Childhood Experience on consumers and staff.
- Workers carry their own trauma history.
Compassion fatigue (AKA Secondary Traumatic Stress) is a common but an unrecognized effect in Human Service, threatening front line workers’ morale, productivity, health, and general wellbeing.
We are here to help build a trauma-informed workplace equipped with the tools of mutual self-care and leadership support.
The goal is to contain the destructive potential of compassion fatigue.
Why a trauma informed workplace is needed?

There is a strong connection between Secondary Traumatic Stress and careers that require helping other in some way.
Organizational Trauma

Trauma-Organized Systems: Chronic Stressors and Collective Trauma

- Staff and Budget Cuts!!!
- Not enough time for collaboration or supervision
- Technology and Paperwork demands
- Client needs vs. Delivery service demands
- Law suits, reforms, task-driven vs. relational
- Feeling unsafe at work
- Staff Turnover
- Traumatic events: violence, suicide, deaths
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Every day stressors that lead to Compassion Fatigue

- The case numbers are growing, while the number of Case Workers is frozen.
- Not able to help consumers with available resources
- Watching consumers make fraudulent claims
- Unrecognized behavioral effects of trauma
- Conflicting values
Trauma Organized

- Reactive/Organizational
- Hyperarousal-Crisis Driven
- Reliving/Retelling
- Fragmentation-Us vs Them
- Interpersonal Conflict/Silo
- Organization Disassociation/Amnesia
- Avoiding—Numbing
- Authoritarian Leadership
Staff and management often are unaware how stress, trauma, and compassion fatigue effects workplace productivity

- Insubordination
- Absenteeism
- Frequent illness
- Apathy
- Easily distracted
- Low productivity
The Burnout Curve

- Excessive expectations
- Hard work, low reward
- Increased effort, no result
- No end in sight
- Rage towards others
- Mental/physical exhaustion
- Descent into cynicism
- Feelings of despair and hopelessness
- Loss of belief in any better future
- Collapse

Work Output and Satisfaction

Sense of Emptiness and Worthlessness
Are you suffering from **JOB BURN-OUT?**

Here are 4 early warning signs:

1. A co-worker asks you to "hold that thought," and you realize it's been montas since you actually had one.

2. Hilariously inane business jargon starts to make sense.

   A paradigm for corporate re-parenting:

   EGDAD!

3. For you, "long-term strategic planning" means deciding where to eat lunch that day.

   What are your projections for next fiscal quarter, Ellen?

   You must be joking.

4. People frequently tell you to get a grip, and you do.

   ULP!
Stress, Trauma, & Compassion Fatigue are Public Health Issues

- They are linked to 6 leading causes of death:
  - Heart Disease
  - Cancer
  - Lung Disease
  - Fatal Accidents
  - Liver Disease
  - Suicide
Staff and management can begin to recognize the signs and symptoms of compassion fatigue in self and others.

Suicide rates, employment turnover, burnout, and other disruptive symptoms are all related to the symptoms of compassion fatigue.

The two most common reactions amongst workers who begin suffering from compassion fatigue are cynicism and emotional exhaustion.

One in two Child Welfare Workers experience compassion fatigue symptoms that fall within the severe range.
What management support is needed for a trauma informed workplace?
Create a trauma informed workplace

- Shared language
- Foundational understanding of trauma
- Understand the nature and impact of trauma
- Understanding racial disparities and insidious trauma
Front line workers are our first responders.

Only 28% of people in helping profession have received some sort of specialized trauma training.
San Francisco
Dept. of Public Health Model
Trauma Systems 101

- Foundational training in trauma
- Half day training
- Common language and common practices
- Trauma informed commitments
- Adopt, adapt, align
Build Trauma Informed, Educated Workforce

Train the Trainer
Harnessing Local Trauma Experts
Organizational Healing Policy Evaluation

Practices

- Cultural humility & Responsiveness
  - Racial/cultural equity

- Trauma Understanding
  - TIS 101

- Resilience & Recovery
  - Mindfulness

- Compassion & Dependability
  - Reflective Supervision

- Collaboration & Empowerment
  - Participatory Decision Making

Evaluation

Policy

Collaboration & Empowerment
Montefiore University Hospital Model Brooklyn, N.Y.
Learning collaboratives

- Introducing trauma informed care—understanding stress and trauma
- Manifestations of trauma
- Secondary traumatization
- Reactions to trauma
- Resilience, recovery, and commitment to change
• It is not what is wrong with you; it’s what happened to you?
• It’s not what is wrong with this organization. It is what happened to this organization?

Trauma Aware Leadership:
What’s your ACEs Score?
Adverse Childhood Experiences study is foundational for trainings.
Mechanisms by Which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan
Other traumas

- Historical trauma
- Micro-aggressions
- Natural disasters
- Community based trauma
- Zip code
- Allostatic load
- Systems oriented trauma- Retraumatization
The stories of the traumatic stress of refugees from war and civil persecution.

• Suffered from lack of food, clean water, & lack of shelter.
• Witnessed arrest, torture, & execution of community leaders.
• Sexual abuse and rape
• Physically harmed, beaten, causing head trauma
• Suffocation, strangulation, downing
• Night mares, intrusive memories, ever on guard
Supervision with trauma awareness.

- Reflective supervision
- Stress circle
- Collaborative effort
- Feedback
- EAP is your best friend
Daily Stress Temperature Reading
What are tools of mutual self-care?
Mind Matters Pinwheel

Self soothing—emotional regulation skills
Develop an observing self
Relationship Skills
Compassion for the hijacked brain
Self care
Live intentionally
Mutual self care: Personal growth system

- Individual plan to integrate trauma informed principles into their daily life
- Goals provides input for staff training
- Trauma Informed Champion
- Reminders and Support for Change
- Follow up at one year

San Francisco Public Health
Personal Growth

• PEARLS
• 920-CALM
• Deep breathing
• Mindfulness
• Calm spaces
• Walking routes
• Buddy System
• EAP
• Debriefing

Montefiore University
Brooklyn, N.Y.
Reactions to trauma

Remember the acronym, PEARS

- **Partnership:** “Let’s work together.”
- **Empathy:** “That sounds frustrating.”
- **Apology:** “I am sorry that happened.”
- **Respect:** “You have gone through a lot.
- **Support:** “Let’s see what we can do.”
“The Three Good Things“

• 14 Nights
• Write 3 good things that happened that day.

Label them with one of these positive emotions:
*Joy  * Gratitude  * Serenity  * Interest  * Hope
  *Pride  * Amusement  * Inspiration  * Awe
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.

Naomi Rachel Remen
Reflect

• What inspired you to be in this field and do this work?

• What motivates you to continue?

• Develop a personal care/service philosophy. Write it down.
Compassion fatigue will always exist because it takes a lot of effort to care for people.

These careers must exist because help is needed every day.

Through it all, it is important to make sure each worker takes self-time everyday, to maintain their quality of work and continue being a provider in this helping service.