


Compassion Fatigue & Self Care for Service Providers in Indian Country



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Dianne Barker Harrold, J.D.
Attorney & Indian Country Consultant
Resource Delivery Coordinator
Unified Solutions Tribal Community
Development Group, Inc.

WHAT IS VICARIOUS TRAUMA?

 The cumulative and transformative effect upon the helping professional as a result of working with survivors of traumatic life experience(s).

DEFINITION CAN VARY DEPENDENT ON PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND SPECIFIC OCCUPATION.

VICARIOUS TRAUMA

- Vicarious trauma happens when our trauma gets stirred up as we hear the stories of others
- V/T is a transformation in our inner experience as a result of empathic engagement with our client's trauma
- V/T is normal; inevitable; and happens to everyone who engages empathically with trauma survivors
- V/T is a negative, secondary effect for helpers which can be caused by repeatedly hearing horrible stories about extremely stressful events.
- V/T is different from burnout/compassion fatigue

Compassion Fatigue and Self Care

- What is Trauma?
 - A serious injury or shock to the body:
 - Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Stalking, Serious Accidents
 - Incidents: 9/11- 2002 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, Columbine School shooting, Red Lake school shooting, Murder, Suicide

Compassion Fatigue and Self Care

- ❏ An emotional wound or shock that creates substantial, lasting damage to the psychological development of a person, often leading to neurosis.
- ❏ An event or situation that causes great distress and disruption to one's life.
- ❏ Trauma can (and does) happen to anyone of us at any time.
 - ❑ It is a normal reaction to an abnormal experience and can have long lasting effects.

Compassion Fatigue and Self Care

- ❏ **The Causes of Trauma**
 - ❏ An External Cause
 - ❏ Violation
 - ❏ Loss of Control
 - ❏ Historical Trauma:
 - ❑ Native Americans and Alaskan Natives continue to be the most victimized of any ethnic group in the United States.

Compassion Fatigue and Self Care

What is Compassion Fatigue?

- ▣ The Strain that helping professions experience in their ability to remain in empathic connection with trauma victims
- ▣ A natural behavior and emotion that comes from knowing about a traumatizing event experience by another
- ▣ The negative effects from trauma transposed from victim to professional helper, family, or friend who is assisting and supporting a victim

Compassion Fatigue and Self Care

Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

- ▣ Intrusive thoughts
- ▣ Nightmares
- ▣ Generalized anxiety
- ▣ Sadness
- ▣ Depression
- ▣ Sleeplessness, insomnia
- ▣ Sleeping too much
- ▣ Physical Ailments
- ▣ Grouchy disposition
- ▣ Negative attitude
- ▣ Physical Fatigue
- ▣ Feeling the work you do is useless or futile

Compassion Fatigue and Self Care

ACCEPTANCE

Recognizing and accepting that Compassion Fatigue is a natural occupational hazard of trauma work is an essential first step in developing healthy work habits.

Compassion Fatigue and Self Care

- Learn coping methods and self care techniques that work for you
- Use these techniques consistently
- Accepting varied responses to trauma as normal allows the helping professional to self-examine and address these responses free from shame, blame or judgment.

STRESSES FOR YOU

- **Balancing Job and Family-children, grandchildren, single parent, child care**
- **Job Stress-budgets, supervisor/boss (are you one?); co-workers, what is your job?**
- **Financial – Work- Personal**

- **Stress Management Inventory**

WAYS TO RELIEVE STRESS

EXPENSIVE STRESS RELIEVERS

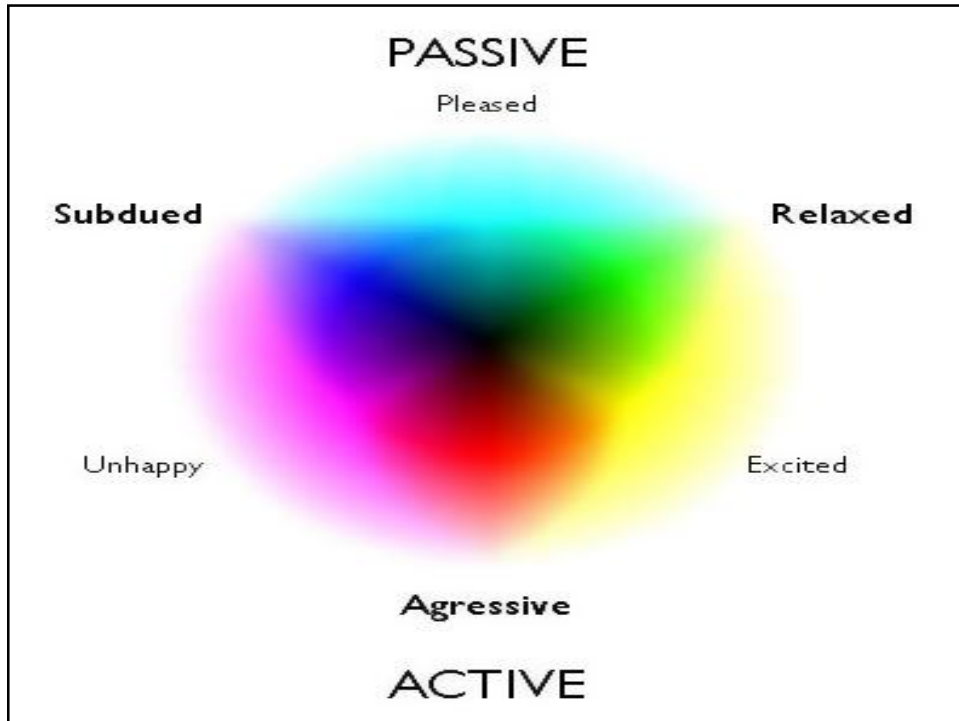
- **Vacation**
- **Spa Treatments**
- **Massage**
- **Shopping**
- **Movies (comedies not sad ones!)**
- **Manicure**
- **Pedicure**

LOW COST STRESS RELIEVERS

- Get Organized
- Get in Touch with your Inner Child (bubbles)
- Aromatherapy
- Stress Stars/Stress Balls/Bendees
- Water Therapy-desk top fountain; physical hydration
- Music
- Computer Video Games
- Pillow-uses, colors
- De-stress Your Environment-colors, textures, patterns

COLORS: What do they mean?

- **RED** is aggressive, violent, passionate
- **BLUE** is calming
- **GREEN** represents life, nature, signifies growth, renewal, health, environment
- **YELLOW** is a warm color, represents sunshine
- **PURPLE** is the color of royalty, associated both with nobility and spirituality
- **PINK** is a softer, less violent red
- **WHITE** is a symbol of purity, cleanliness and innocence



NO COST STRESS RELIEVERS

- Exercise-relieves stress; works off anger
- Breathing Exercises
- Power Naps
- Humor
- Visualization
- Crying
- Self Talk
- Meditation
- Yoga



TAKE A VIRTUAL VACATION



NEGATIVE TECHNIQUES

- ❑ **Overeating**
- ❑ **TV Escape**
- ❑ **Prescription Drugs**
- ❑ **Illegal Drugs**
- ❑ **Drinking alcohol to excess**
- ❑ **Gambling**
- ❑ **Shouting/name calling**
- ❑ **Cursing**
- ❑ **Quitting your job-that'll show 'em!**

CULTURAL/TRADITIONAL STRESS RELIEVERS

- SWEAT LODGES
- SMUDGING,
- BRUSHING,
- HERB THERAPY



Smudging is a cleansing ceremony which removes any bad feelings, negative thoughts, bad spirits or negative energy. Smoke is created by burning cedar, sage, sweet grass or herbs depending on the particular healing or the tribal custom



- DANCING
- POW WOWS
- STOMP DANCES



- STORY TELLING

- ARTS AND CRAFTS



ORGANIZATIONAL COPING STRATEGIES

- Create a safe place to work
- Provide adequate supervision
- Debriefing opportunities for staff
- Adequate pay
- Create a respectful and nurturing work environment
- Provide (and encourage) time off from work
- Professional development opportunities
- Access to stress management

Compassion Fatigue and Self Care

- Life is too short to wake up with regrets
- So, love the people who treat you right
- Love the ones who don't just because you can
- If you get a second chance-grab it with both hands!
- Forgive quickly
- Don't get so busy making a living, that you forget to make a life.
- We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give
- Laugh often every day.
- Smile even if you don't feel like it, smiles are contagious
- Remember . . . There is always, always something to be thankful for and everyday is a gift.

Why We Do What We Do

- Most of us are here because we have a calling, a calling to help others, ease their pain, a true helping personality, but with most of us we are here because of something that happened to us or someone we love. We are changed irrevocably by the things we experience. The big things, the small things have their impact and can't be undone. Those experiences and the things that have happened to us is why we do what we do.

Don't Stress Yourself by the Numbers

Do not depend on the hope of results. When you are doing the sort of work you have taken on . . . you may have to face the fact that your work will be apparently worthless and even achieve no results at all, if not perhaps results opposite to what you expect. As you get used to the idea, you start to concentrate not on the results, but on the value, the rightness, the truth of the work itself. Big results are not in your hands or mine. All the good that you will do will come not from you, but from the fact that you have allowed yourself, in the obedience of faith, to be used by God's love.”

Father Thomas Merton

The Star Fish Story

A young boy was on the beach one day, and in the distance he saw a man bending over, picking something up and throwing the item into the ocean. As the man got closer, the boy could see that the man was picking up star fish and throwing them back into the ocean.

As the man approached closer, the boy walked up to the man and asked him what he was doing. The man replied, "I am putting the star fish back into the ocean, otherwise they will die."

The boy asked the man, "Why are you doing that, even though you have rescued some, look at all those left on down the beach. What does it matter?"


The man bent down, picked up another star fish and threw it into the ocean. He then turned back to the boy and said, "Well, it mattered to that one."



Compassion Fatigue and Self Care

If you are here today,
it means you care for others-it is your calling.
Take time to take care of yourself as well
as you continue your great work!

 **Wado** (Cherokee for "thank you")

 **Donadagohvi** (Cherokee for "until we meet again")



Unified Solutions Tribal
Community Development Group, Inc.
1415 E. Guadalupe Road, Suite 105-A
Tempe, Arizona 85283-9784
877-216-9914, Ext. 701
dianne@unified-solutions.org
WEBSITE: www.unified-solutions.org



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