

Compassion Fatigue & Self Care for Service Providers in Indian Country

2016 Indian Nations Conference

PRESENTERS:

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Learning Objectives

- Define Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma
- Describe how Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma impact service providers
- Identify no cost and low cost cultural strategies for self-care and stress relief

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).
- Vicarious trauma is a natural, occupational hazard of working with victims. Social workers, counselors, law enforcement, medical service providers and other helping professions can experience vicarious trauma, but the key is to be aware of the signs and symptoms and how to address it.

VICARIOUS TRAUMA

DEFINITION: Vicarious trauma is the emotional residue of exposure that counselors and other service providers have from working with people as they are hearing their trauma stories and become witnesses to the pain, fear, and terror that trauma survivors have endured. - www.counseling.org

- 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

Vicarious Trauma

Strong emotions are a normal part of working with victims of crime. Victim assistance professionals, including clergy, should expect to have their own emotions unbalanced at times. As victims unburden themselves with tales of horrific experiences, healers absorb some of the pain. In effect, they become witnesses to the traumatic experience. Like others who assist victims in crisis, clergy may become subject to compassion fatigue, also known as burnout. In some cases, they risk an even more serious danger: vicarious or secondary trauma.

Vicarious trauma is a stress reaction that may be experienced by clergy and other victim assistance professionals who are exposed to disclosures of traumatic images and events by those seeking help. Helping professionals may experience long-lasting changes in how they view themselves, others, and the world.

***VICARIOUS TRAUMA** www.ovc.gov
Victim Needs From a Faith-Based Perspective

SYMPTOMS OF VICARIOUS TRAUMA

Are similar to, but usually not as severe as, those of posttraumatic stress disorder, (PTSD) and can affect the lives and careers of even clergy with considerable training and experience in working with disaster and trauma survivors and may include:

- Intrusions such as flashbacks or nightmares.
- Avoidance, in which the person tries to reduce exposure to the people or situations that might bring on his or her intrusive symptoms.
- Hyper arousal or physical symptoms such as hypervigilance, sleeplessness, or increased startle response.

RISK FACTORS

That increase the risk of vicarious trauma include:

- Unexpected or repeated exposure to trauma.
- The degree of empathy that a clergyperson feels for the victim's suffering.
- Unresolved emotional issues.

Symptoms of Vicarious Trauma; Risk Factors; Prevention & Response from www.ovc.gov

PREVENTION & RESPONSE

It is crucial for all who work with victims to find ongoing support systems for themselves, to identify situations that may trigger unresolved emotional issues and refer such cases to a colleague. Simply acknowledging the effect on one that others' pain has can be one of the best coping mechanisms. The victim assistance community also may be able to provide support for clergy such as those exposed to mass victimization by using established CISD- Critical Incident Stress Debriefing. (Debriefing is specifically discussed later in this presentation)

Symptoms of Vicarious Trauma; Risk Factors; Prevention & Response from www.ovc.gov

DEFINITION OF TRAUMA

"The experience of overwhelming demands on the physiological and psychological systems of the body resulting in a profound felt sense of betrayal, vulnerability, and immobilization."

- Robert D. Macy, Ph.D. Trauma Center, Justice Resource Institute, Brookline, MA

A very difficult or unpleasant experience that causes someone to have mental or emotional problems usually for a long time or medical which is a serious injury to a person's body.

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/trauma>

Types of Trauma



Randy Moss Ph.D.
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What is Trauma?

Major occurrences that happens to Individuals or their loved ones or persons they serve. A serious injury or shock to the body can be caused by assaults to adults and children, Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Stalking, Serious Accidents such as car accidents, community tragedies and homicides or suicides.

Tragedies in Communities and throughout our Country

Examples:

- 9/11- 2002 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center
- Columbine School Shooting
- Red Lake School Shooting
- 1995 Oklahoma Bombing Tragedy.

Many community tragedies create work for victim advocates.

- An emotional wound or shock that creates substantial, lasting damage to the psychological development of a person, often leading to neurosis (neurosis is an emotional illness in which a person experiences strong feelings of fear or worry).
- 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

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

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

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 IN ADDITION IN SERVING VICTIMS OF CRIME

- 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
- Personal stress such as death of family and loved ones, health issues, family controversy, etc.

WAYS TO RELIEVE STRESS EXPENSIVE STRESS RELIEVERS

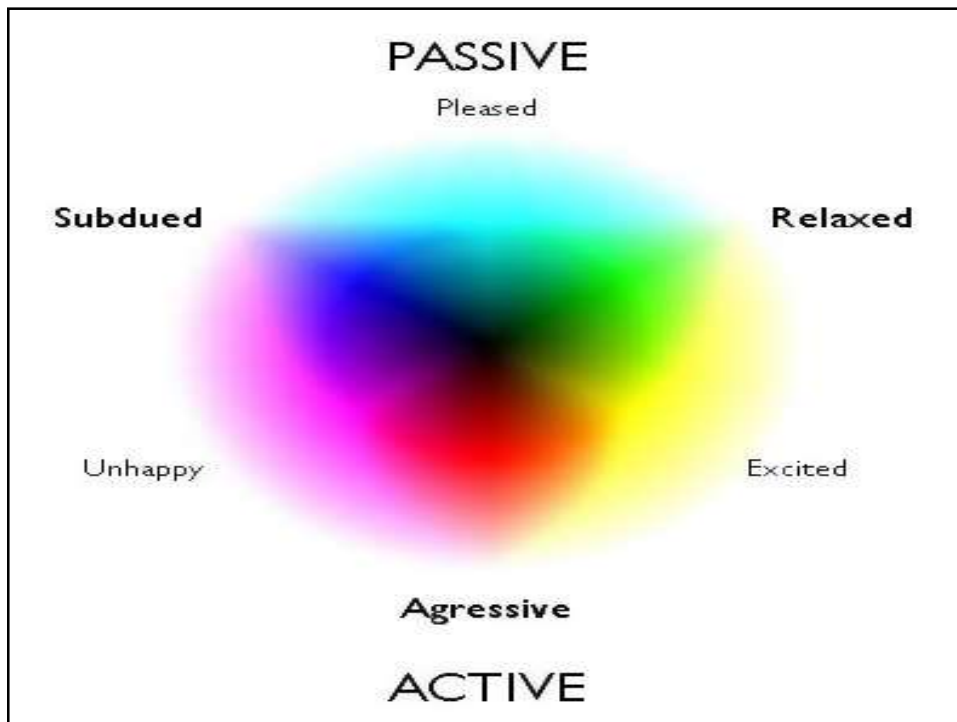
- Vacation
- Spa Treatments
- Massage
- Shopping
- Movies (comedies not sad ones!)
- Manicure
- Pedicure

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

**Cruise Ship in Juneau, Alaska
Gastineau Water Channel**



Beach in Hawaii



TAKE A VIRTUAL VACATION

**Mendenhall Glacier
Juneau, Alaska**



**Beautiful Fall in Michigan near Grand
Traverse of Ottawa & Chippewa
Indians**



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



Oneida Tribe of Wisconsin
Gene Redhail

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
- Adequate pay as available
- Create a respectful and nurturing work environment
- Provide (and encourage) time off from work
- Professional development opportunities
- Access to stress management
- A project supervisor that understands the needs for compassion fatigue and stress relief
- Debriefing opportunities for staff

DEBRIEFING ACTIVITY

- **Debriefing** is a specific technique designed to assist others in dealing with the physical or psychological symptoms that are generally associated with trauma exposure. Debriefing allows those involved with the incident to process the event and reflect on its impact.

DEBRIEFING RESOURCES:

CISD Mitchell, PhD, Jeffrey T. Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Group Crisis Intervention

Joseph A. Davis, Ph.D., Providing Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) to Individuals and Communities.

The American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress, Inc.
www.aaets.org

- In addition to victims who often develop long-term crisis reactions, emergency workers, public safety/law enforcement personnel, victim advocates, child welfare and social services, and responders to crisis situations, rape victims, abused spouses and children, stalking victims, media personnel as well as individuals who were exposed to a variety of critical incidents (e.g., fire, earthquake, floods, industrial disaster, workplace violence, school shootings, terrorism) also developed short-term and sometimes long-term crisis reactions.



- Debriefing can be done in large or small groups or one-to-one depending on the situation.
- An appropriate and effective protocol is to be created and followed when assisting responders and service providers of any critical incident by a debriefing activity.
- During a debriefing event, ventilation and validation are important to individuals as each, in their own way, needs to discuss their exposure, sensory experiences, thoughts and feelings that are tied to the event.
- Ventilation (public discussion) and validation (testimonial of crisis event) are necessary to give the individual an opportunity to express emotion.



A Debriefer assists the support personnel and responders in predicting future events. This involves education and discussion of the possible emotions, reactions and problems that may be experienced after traumatic exposure and for the potential psychological and physical reactions in the future.

Debriefing Conductor:

- Someone specifically trained to do debriefing
- Mental Health Professionals
- Peer Support Personnel
- Cultural Healers
- A Pastor or Chaplain may be requested to conduct a prayer



STRESS RELIEF : ADDITIONAL ADVICE

- ☞ 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

- ❏ We are committed in serving crime victims. Most of us are here because we have a calling: a calling to help others, ease their pain, a true helping personality, and with many of us we are here because of something that happened to us or someone we loved.
- ❏ 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.



A story that validates victim importance

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."





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!

Chokessia (Thank you in Pascua Yaqui/Yoeme)

Wado (Cherokee for "thank you")

Donadagohvi (Cherokee for "until we meet
again"-no goodbye in Cherokee)



Resources used in this Presentation

- Office for Victims of Crime: www.ovc.gov
- American Counseling Association: www.counseling.org
- The American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress, Inc.:
www.aaets.org
- Critical Incident Stress Management:
www.criticalincidentstress.com
- Merriam-Webster: www.merriam-webster.com
- Integrated Counseling and Consulting:
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