VICARIOUS TRAUMA, BURNOUT AND SELF-CARE

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Nature of Our Work

Much of this work involves some or all of the following:
- Prolonged attention on disturbing and negative information
- Crisis work with a short term focus
- Lack of results
- Working against resistance
- Limited or lack of resources
Sexual Assault Work Goes Beyond “Burn-out” Threat

• Threat to our sexuality
• Threat to our sense of safety and higher awareness of potential for violence
• Question the goodness of others causing distrust in interpersonal relationships
• Impact potentially compounded if there is a personal experience with sexual assault
Signs & Symptoms

• No longer laugh or have fun at work.
• Easily annoyed or irritated by colleagues, those we are helping
• Complain about minor health ailments
• Feeling less & less excited, fulfilled about work
• Easily annoyed by minor problems, minor problems/setbacks seem larger than life
• More prone to gossip, talking behind colleagues backs
• Quality of work has suffered
• Difficulty with meeting deadlines
• Sleep problems resulting in low energy
• Lack of creativity and innovativeness
Cognitive Impact:

- Forgetfulness
- Trouble concentrating
- Cynicism
- Perfectionism
- Apathy
- Reduced productivity
Emotional Impact

- Anger
- Depression
- Hyper vigilance
- Anxiety
- Irritability
Emotional Lability

- Crying excessively
- Fears
- Isolation
- Suspiciousness
- Numbness
- Suicidal thoughts
Change to "lability"
Woodard, Kimberly, 9/24/2014
Emotional Liability

- Rigidity
- Negative attitude
- Preoccupation with trauma
- Minimization
- Inability to accept limitations
- Thoughts of harm to self or others
Behavioral Impact

- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Not being available for call when scheduled
- Excessive physical illness
- Easily irritated
- Sleep disturbance
- Eating disturbance
Behavioral Impact

- Weight loss or gain when not trying to lose
- or gain weight
- Inability to complete tasks on time
- “Sloppy” completion of paperwork.
- Tardiness for meetings and taking an excessive time to get into the ED.
Behavioral Impact

- Professional becomes personal
- Many of us have experienced some form of violence or someone close to us has been harmed by violence
- Resistance in our communities can create concern for our safety
- Backlash
What Are Your Red Flags?
Creating Balance at Work

- Set smaller, attainable goals
- Revisit time lines for long term goals and rethink deadlines
- Build in fun at work (music, jokes, regularly scheduled lunch with co-workers, staff appreciation gifts, talking circles)
- Change your routine (change jobs within the office, rearrange your office furniture, switch office space, buy something new for your office)
- Set limits. Say “NO”
• Cultivating what we do love about our work “What do you love about your work? What keeps you passionate?”
• Having a clear vision of why we are doing this work “Why do you do this work?”
• Spirituality maybe an important asset
Questions to Ask Yourself

• Do you feel valued by your colleagues? What makes you believe that?
• Do you feel valued by your employer? What makes you believe that?
• Do you value yourself? In what ways do you let yourself know that you value YOU? How often do you do that? Is there room for more?
Creating Balance

- Time out-------------------------------------Work, Work, Work
- Avoid isolation-----------------------------Isolate=Productivity
- Change your circumstances----------------Stick with it at all costs
- Diminish intensity/drama-------------------We thrive on stress/crisis
- Empowering others--------------------------Get it done myself
- Learn to say “no”---------------------------Never turn anyone down
- Detach as needed---------------------------Be there for everyone
- Reassess your values-----------------------Waste of time
- Pace yourself-------------------------------No time to slow down
- Take care of your body…-------------------Push yourself until you can’t
- Diminish worry & anxiety-------------------Worrying is second nature
- Allow for mistakes-------------------------Strive for perfectionism
- Keep your sense of humor-------------------Take your job seriously
WK2  Change to "seriously"
Woodard, Kimberly, 9/24/2014
Organizational Culture

• Create a group culture that is based in indigenous traditions of helping and helpers needing to engage in self care
• Balance task focus with process and relationships focus
• Provide workshops / training in self care; time during the day to exercise these concepts
• Build stress level checks into reviews and evaluations - how stressed do people feel? What is contributing? What do we need to do about these?
• Put stress prevention/safety strategies on the agenda for meetings.
• Allow people to express feelings of distress, grief and loss and frustration
• Keep an eye open for vulnerable individuals and see intervention as valid.
• Create support structures/resources within the workplace
• Put value on socializing, fun, humor, relaxation time as a group
Key Responsibilities For Administration

- Hold regularly scheduled staff meetings
- Opportunity to debrief after critical incidents or during staff meetings via case review
- Bring in facilitator to hold talking circles to provide emotional outlet
- Develop a Buddy system
- Refer to mental health as appropriate
- Staff retreats with built in time to play, play and more play
Key Responsibilities For Administration

- Provide adequate training for “SANEs”
- Monitor scheduling of “SANEs”
- Monitor on call
- Aware of unfilled shifts, staff unavailable
- Consistent performance evaluation and program evaluation
Return to the Natural to Create Balance

• Environment
• Food
• Relatives
• Humor, laughter
• Meditation/Solitude
• Music, singing, dancing
• Rituals of releasing feelings, grieving (letting go; releasing)
• Water as cleansing; as healing; as refreshing our spirits
• Ceremonies
• Spend time in solitude
• Reflecting
• Meditating – ancestors spent much time thinking; when asked a question, they wouldn’t answer right away; when they had hard times they would take time to think about the solutions.
• Being with Positive People/Less energy on negativity
• Create a good balance between your needs and needs of those around you
• Spirituality
• Make a commitment to yourself
• Other ideas?
Self Care for “SANEs”

• Post of the exam before leaving the hospital
• Setting limits
• Debriefing
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