




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^{WK1}

- Crying excessively
- Fears
- Isolation
- Suspiciousness
- Numbness
- Suicidal thoughts

Slide 8

WK1

Change to "lability"

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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”

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- 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

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WK2

Change to "seriously"

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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

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- 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”

WK4


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

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WK4

"SANEs"

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