

# **Protecting Delaware's Children**

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## **Workshop C1: Vicarious Traumatization**

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# Definition of Psychological Trauma

- “direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threat of death or serious injury or threat to the physical integrity of another person or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death, or injury experienced by a family member or other close associates.” (DSM 1V)



# Countertransference

- Occurs when a clinician or helper's past history interferes with their current relationship with a client. Sometimes the past issue may be an unresolved one and the helper can become subjectively involved



# Vicarious/Secondary Trauma

- Change that occurs within the helping professional as a result of empathic engagement with a traumatized client (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995)
- Compassion Fatigue: decreased ability to maintain empathy-result of repeatedly listening to traumatic stories (Figley, 1995)
- Burnout: general malaise, chronic tedium in workplace (Jenkins & Baird, 2002)



# Physical Reactions

- Change in sleep patterns/nightmares
- Change in appetite
- Shallow, rapid breathing
- Dizziness/Headaches
- Muscle tension
- Increased heart rate/chest palpitations
- Stomach upset
- Fatigue
- Sweating/rapid pulse



# Psychological Reactions

- Shock or numbness
- Anger /Fear
- Depression/Sadness
- Guilt/Frustration
- Feeling unsafe/vulnerable
- Loneliness
- Helpless/hopeless/powerless/worthless
- Emotional rollercoaster
- Fear of victimization



# Cognitive Reactions

- Confusion/inattention
- Difficulty concentrating/remembering
- Difficulty making decisions
- Distorted thoughts
- Slowed thinking
- Thinking the world is unsafe
- Flashbacks/Intrusive images
- Replaying the event repeatedly
- Too many thoughts at once



# Behavioral Reactions

- Withdrawal from others
- Angry outbursts
- Crying/Irritability
- Fear of being alone/ Sense of aloneness
- Difficulty trusting
- Changes in sexual activity
- Doubts about relationships
- Critical of others
- Withdrawing from others/ Clinging to others
- Conflict in relationship



# Spiritual Reactions

- Loss of faith
- Spiritual doubts
- Questioning old beliefs Despair
- Life is meaningless
- Withdrawal from church or community
- Sense of the world being changed



# Why do trauma work?

- recognition that such work is important in ensuring survival of species
- gratification that comes from helping others
- to bear witness of others' experience
- personal and professional validation
- community and personal connections which result from crisis
- desire to make a difference



## Stress Reduction Kit



Directions:

1. Place kit on FIRM surface.
2. Follow directions in circle of kit.
3. Repeat step 2 as necessary, or until unconscious.
4. If unconscious, cease stress reduction activity.

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# Survival kit

- Two things are indispensable
- A symbolic red flag; alerts and is an identifiable indicator of stress. It signals a challenge to stop and review the situation.
- A self care plan must be carefully planned and practiced ahead; involves intentionality and attentiveness to one's emotional health.



# Self Care Pyramid

- Everly (1995) describes constructing a plan according to a self care pyramid.
- Base of the pyramid lies internally focused strategies of attitude and perception and self care practices. As the pyramid narrows upwards external aspects of connection and support and problem solving become the focus of the plan.



# Caring for Yourself

- Eating well, exercising, and resting
- Avoid stimulants such as caffeine, chocolate and nicotine and depressants such as alcohol.
- Seek out comfortable, familiar surroundings and avoid spending too much time alone.
- Share thoughts/feelings with those who are supportive and helpful
- Do not block recollections- helps to talk
- Set boundaries with people who have not been helpful in the past.



# Self Care (Cont.)

- Give yourself time to recover; reactions are usually short-term
- Seek help if reactions interfere with job responsibilities
- Focus on concrete, achievable tasks.
- Avoid personalizing or taking responsibility for how others respond to the traumatic event
- Do not compare or measure your reactions to those of other people - each Individual's experience is unique and personal.



# Self Care (Cont.)

- Communicate your feelings clearly; others may not know how to respond to you appropriately. Let them know which responses are helpful and which are not.
- Know that anniversary dates or a specific holiday may trigger feelings related to the trauma. This is normal.
- Seek help from a professional counselor if symptoms persist.



# Self Care (Cont.)

- Practice Self Care that is attainable, related to reactions and positive.
- Maintain a routine
- Importance of collaboration
- Support (personal and institutional)
- Training
- Honoring transitions



 Thank You for Your Attention!

