Compassion Fatigue/ Secondary Traumatic Stress:

"Destroyer of workplace compassion and morale"

Carolyn Curtis, Ph.D. & Charles Stolzenbach, LMFT
Compassion Fatigue is a form of physical, emotional, and spiritual exhaustion.
It is common for line staff to be impacted by compassion fatigue.

(Gaille, 2017)

- 48% of US workforce experience high levels of personal distress that is directly associated to job duties.
- 40% of nurses report experiencing compassion fatigue.
- 68% of people who experience compassion fatigue are full-time employees.
- Effects of Adverse Childhood Experience on consumers and staff.
- Workers carry their own trauma history.
Compassion fatigue is a common but unrecognized source of harm to human service workers. It threatens the morale, productivity, health, and general wellbeing of front line providers.
We must recognize how extensive and debilitating compassion fatigue is and how to take an active role in providing support for front line workers.
Through thoughtful and specific interventions, compassion fatigue can be reduced.
Why a trauma informed workplace is needed?
Organizational Trauma

- Traumatic events - violence, suicide, deaths
- Staff and Budget Cuts!!!
- Technology and Paperwork demands
- Lawsuits, reforms, task-driven vs. relational
- Feeling unsafe at work
- Staff Turnover
- Traumatic events - violence, suicide, deaths
- Not enough time for collaboration or supervision
- Client needs vs. Delivery service models
- Client needs vs. Delivery service models

Trauma-Organized Systems: Chronic Stressors and Collective Trauma
Every day stressors that lead to Compassion Fatigue

- The case numbers are growing, while the number of Case Workers is frozen.
- Not able to help consumers with available resources
- Watching consumers make fraudulent claims
- Unrecognized behavioral effects of trauma
- Conflicting values
Trauma Organized

- Reactive/ Organizational
- Hyperarousal- Crisis Driven
- Reliving/ Retelling
- Fragmentation- Us vs Them
- Interpersonal Conflict/ Silo
- Organization Disassociation/ Amnesia
- Avoiding— Numbing
- Authoritarian Leadership
Staff and management often are unaware how stress, trauma, and compassion fatigue effects workplace productivity

- Insubordination
- Absenteeism
- Frequent illness
- Apathy
- Easily distracted
- Low productivity
THE BURNOUT CURVE

Work Output and Satisfaction

Sense of Emptiness and Worthlessness

- Excessive expectations
- Hard work, low reward
- Increased effort, no result
- No end in sight
- Rage towards others
- Mental/physical exhaustion
- Descent into cynicism
- Feelings of despair and hopelessness
- Loss of belief in any better future
- Collapse
Are you suffering from **JOB BURN-OUT?**
Here are 4 early warning signs:

1. A co-worker asks you to “hold that thought,” and you realize it’s been months since you actually had one.

2. Hilariously inane business jargon starts to make sense.

3. For you, “long-term strategic planning” means deciding where to eat lunch that day.

4. People frequently tell you to get a grip, and you do.

**What are your projections for next fiscal quarter, Ellen?**

**ULP!**

*You must be joking.*
Stress, Trauma, & Compassion Fatigue are Public Health Issues

• They are linked to 6 leading causes of death:

• Heart Disease
• Cancer
• Lung Disease
• Fatal Accidents
• Liver Disease
• Suicide
What organizations can do to reduce compassion fatigue.
Front line workers are our first responders.

Only 28% of people in helping profession have received some sort of specialized trauma training.
Staff and management can begin to recognize the signs and symptoms of compassion fatigue in self and others.

Notice suicide rates, employment turnover, burnout, and other disruptive symptoms are all related to the symptoms of compassion fatigue.

Notice the two most common reactions amongst workers who begin suffering from compassion fatigue are cynicism and emotional exhaustion.

Remember one in two Child Welfare Workers experience compassion fatigue symptoms that fall within the severe range.
Create a trauma informed workplace

• Shared language
• Foundational understanding of trauma
• Understand the nature and impact of trauma
• Understanding racial disparities and insidious trauma
San Francisco
Dept. of
Public Health Model
Trust & Dependability
Cultural Humility & Responsiveness
Neurobiology & Development
Perspectives
Resilience & Recovery
Collaboration & Empowerment
Comprehensive Safety
Trauma Understanding
Trauma Informed System: Conceptual Framework

Leadership Engagement

Training: Trauma 101
Embedded trainers

Evaluation

Policy and Practice

Champions

ORG Leaders
Middle Management
Trauma Systems 101

- Foundational training in trauma
- Half day training
- Common language and common practices
- Trauma informed commitments
- Adopt, adapt, align
Build Trauma Informed, Educated Workforce

Train the Trainer
Harnessing Local Trauma Experts
Organizational Healing Policy Evaluation Practices

- Trauma Understanding
  TIS 101
- Cultural humility & Responsiveness
  Racial/cultural equity
- Resilience & Recovery
  Mindfulness
- Collaboration & Empowerment
  Participatory Decision Making
- Compassion & Dependability
  Reflective Supervision

Evaluation Policy

Organizational Healing Practices
Montefiore University Hospital Model
Bronx, N.Y.
Key components of program

- Leadership buy in
- Learning collaboratives
- Screening
- Critical Incident Management (CIM)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introducing trauma informed care—understanding stress and trauma</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manifestations of trauma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secondary traumatization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reactions to trauma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resilience, recovery, and commitment to change</td>
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What’s your ACEEs Score?
• It is not what is wrong with you; it’s what happened to you?
• It’s not what is wrong with this organization. It is what happened to this organization?

Trauma Aware Leadership:
Adverse Childhood Experiences study is foundational for trainings.
Mechanisms by Which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan
Other traumas

Historical trauma
Micro-aggressions
Natural disasters
Community based trauma
Zip code
Allostatic load
Systems oriented trauma- Re-traumatization
The stories of the traumatic stress of refugees from war and civil persecution.

- Suffered from lack of food, clean water, & lack of shelter.
- Witnessed arrest, torture, & execution of community leaders.
- Sexual abuse and rape
- Physically harmed, beaten, causing head trauma
- Suffocation, strangulation, downing
- Night mares, intrusive memories, ever on guard
Critical Incident Management

• Exposure to traumatic events can cause heightened emotional state of crises which generates emotional turmoil.

• International Critical Incident Stress Foundation—Evidence based model

• Use when violent and unexpected death of an associate employed at the site

• A mass casualty event that the center responds to
Supervision with trauma awareness.

- Reflective supervision
- Collaborative effort
- Feedback
- EAP is your best friend
Daily Stress Temperature Reading
What individuals can do to reduce compassion fatigue?
Mind Matters Pinwheel-Tools for Self Care

Self soothing—emotional regulation skills
Develop an observing self
Relationship Skills
Compassion for the hijacked brain
Self care
Live intentionally
San Francisco Public Health Dept. Method of Self Care

- Individual plan to integrate trauma informed principles into their daily life
- Goals provides input for staff training
- Trauma Informed Champion
- Reminders and Support for Change
- Follow up at one year
Montefiore University
Method of Self Care

- 718-920-CALM
- Deep breathing
- Mindfulness
- Calm spaces
- Walking routes
- Buddy System
- EAP
- Debriefing
Front line workers need training in responding compassionately to the stories they hear.

PEARLS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partnership:</th>
<th>“Let’s work together.”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathy:</td>
<td>“That sounds frustrating.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apology:</td>
<td>“I am sorry that happened.”</td>
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<td>Respect:</td>
<td>“You have gone through a lot.”</td>
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<td>Legitimization:</td>
<td>“I understand why you’re upset”</td>
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<td>Support:</td>
<td>“Let’s see what we can do.”</td>
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“The Three Good Things “

• 14 Nights
• Write 3 good things that happened that day.

Label them with one of these positive emotions:
*Joy  * Gratitude  * Serenity  * Interest  * Hope
*Pride  * Amusement  * Inspiration  * Awe
The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet.

Naomi Rachel Remen
Reflect

• What inspired you to be in this field and do this work?

• What motivates you to continue?

• Develop a personal care/service philosophy. Write it down.
Compassion fatigue will always exist because it takes a lot of effort to care for people.

These careers must exist because help is needed every day.

Through it all, it is important to make sure each worker takes self-time everyday, to maintain their quality of work and continue being a provider in this helping service.
Let’s work together to reduce compassion fatigue.