Self-Care Assessment

Please take a few minutes to settle in and complete the self-care assessment.
Combating the job hazards of vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue: The importance of self-care in the process of helping others heal

Élida M. Bautista, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, UCSF - SFGH Psychiatry
Laura McArthur, Ph.D.
Staff Psychologist, UCSF Living in a Nonviolent Community

Additional Author: Joyce Dorado, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, UCSF Child and Adolescent Services
Key Learning Points

• 1) Develop a clear understanding of key signs of compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue, which includes vicarious trauma, and burnout.

• 2) Increase self awareness and identify concrete strategies for self-care.
Relaxation script
Trauma

- An overwhelming, overstimulating, extremely painful and/or terrifying experience
- An inability to employ the fight or flight response (e.g., cannot escape)
- At the core of the traumatic stress is a breakdown in the capacity to regulate internal states

(Herman, 1997) (Van der Kolk, 2005)
Insidious trauma: Intersection of Oppression and Trauma

• “posttrauma distress and dysfunction arising from doing battle every day against an army of small toxic agents.”

• “like drops of acid falling on stone”
  – “each drop by itself does little damage”
  – “just enough damage to render the next drop more damaging”
  – “person may appear to crack … when the apparent stressor seems small and not threatening at all”

Compassion Satisfaction

- Pleasure one derives from being able to do one’s work well (Stamm, 2009)
  - Pleasure in helping others through work
  - Positive feelings about colleagues
  - Positive feelings about contributing to work setting and/or to greater good of society
Compassion Fatigue

- Compassion Fatigue has two components (Stamm, 2009):
  - Burnout
  - Secondary Trauma
Burnout

• “A state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion caused by long-term involvement in emotional demanding situations” (Pines & Aronson, 1988)

• Associated with feelings of hopelessness and difficulties in dealing with work or in doing one’s job effectively (Stamm, 2009)

• Gradual onset
Burnout

• Physical symptoms:
  • Fatigue, sleep problems, gastrointestinal difficulties, illness

• Emotional symptoms:
  • Irritability, anxiety, depression, guilt

• Behavioral symptoms:
  • Aggression, callousness, pessimism, substance abuse

• Work-related symptoms:
  • Poor work performance, missing work, being late for work, misuse of work breaks, quitting job

• Interpersonal symptoms:
  • Inability to concentrate/focus on communication
  • Withdrawal from others (clients, coworkers)
  • Dehumanized, intellectualized interactions/excessive distancing

(Kahill, 1988)
Secondary Traumatic Stress/Vicarious Trauma

- Work-related, secondary exposure to extremely or traumatically stressful events
- Secondary Traumatic Stress/Vicarious Trauma can be the result of “the exposure of helpers to experiences” of students, plus “the empathy that they experience for their” students (Collins & Long, 2003)
- Can be sudden and acute
Signs and Symptoms of Vicarious Traumatization
Pearlman and Saakvitne (1995)

- General Symptoms
  - Numbing
  - Social withdrawal
  - Nightmares
  - Despair and hopelessness
  - No time or energy for yourself
  - Disconnection from loved ones
  - Increased sensitivity to violence
Internal transformations

1. Frame of reference:
   - World view (e.g., Question goodness of others, loss of hope or optimism); Identity; Spirituality

2. Diminished self capacities
   - Capacity to tolerate strong affect, and maintain connection with self and others.

3. Alterations in sensory and memory experiences
   - Student’s memories become incorporated into helper’s memory
4. Disrupted psychological needs
   • Safety, trust, esteem, intimacy, control

5. Ego Resources (Internal Resources)
   • Ability to establish and maintain boundaries
   • Ability to take perspective
   • Empathy and sense of humor
   • Ability to strive for personal growth
   • Awareness of psychological needs
   • Clear cognitive processing
   • Ability to be introspective
Pair and Share

• Review case example.
• What symptoms of burnout were present for this person?
• What symptoms of secondary trauma did you notice?
• What are the strengths of this person that will be potential building blocks of self-care?
Strategies for Self-Care Around Burnout and Vicarious Trauma
Reflection on Self-Care Assessment and Vignette

- What strengths did you identify in case study?
- What are you already doing well?
- In which areas would you want to focus?
Gratitude as a Wellness Strategy
Gratitude Increases Well-Being

- **Physical**
  - Stronger immune systems
  - Lower blood pressure
  - Sleep longer and feel more refreshed upon waking

- **Psychological**
  - Reduces depression
  - Blocks toxic, negative emotions
  - Magnifies positive emotions
  - More alert, alive, and awake

- **Social**
  - More helpful, generous, and compassionate
  - More forgiving
  - Feel less lonely and isolated  
Gratitude Activity

• List 5 things you are grateful for.

• For more ideas, look at your handout on “10 ways to become more grateful.”
Mindfulness

Awareness of present experience with acceptance

Paying attention here and now with kindness and curiosity
Mind Full, or Mindful?
Benefits of Cultivating Mindfulness

• Recognition and conscious response vs. reacting
• Decreased stress & anxiety
• Better focus and concentration
• Increased calm
• Enhanced health
• Improved impulse control
• Increased self-awareness
• Skillful ways to respond to difficult emotions
• Increased empathy and understanding of others
• Improved conflict resolution skills

- http://mindfulschools.org/
Mindfulness Strategy
Discuss and Share

• As you leave, what practice do you think you can add to your life?

• What challenges do you anticipate in implementing self-care strategies? What supports can you seek out?
Resources

http://www.NCTSN.org
http://psychology.ucdavis.edu/labs/emmons/
http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/
http://mindfulschools.org/
http://508.center4si.com/SelfCareforCareGivers.pdf
http://www.coe.ucsf.edu/linc/index.html