Addressing Secondary Stress: Strong in the Broken Places

Wayne Scott, MA, LCSW
The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong in the broken places.

Ernest Hemingway
An abnormal reaction to an abnormal situation is normal behavior.
OBJECTIVES

❖ To explain the idea of SECONDARY STRESS, its impact on self and others
❖ To identify strategies to build RESILIENCE
❖ To explore what ORGANIZATIONS can do to help
Ground Rules

- **FOCUS** on what matters
- **CONTRIBUTE** your thinking and experience
- **SPEAK** your mind and heart
- Listen to **UNDERSTAND**
- **CONNECT IDEAS** for questions, deeper patterns, and insights.
EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE:
Creating Safety
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What steps have you taken to create a SAFE ENVIRONMENT and SAFE RELATIONSHIPS in your work units?
DVD AND DISCUSSION:

Priest

Best in Show

What does SECONDARY STRESS look like?

What makes individuals VULNERABLE to its impact?
DEFINITION:

Vicarious trauma
(Saakvitne & Pearlman, 1996)

“The CUMULATIVE TRANSFORMATIVE impact upon the [professional] of working with survivors of traumatic life events.... The PERVASIVE effect of doing this work on the IDENTITY, WORLD VIEW, psychological needs and BELIEFS, and MEMORY system of the [professional].”
TRAUMA STEWARDSHIP
(Van Dernoot Lipsky, 2007)

“Trauma stewardship refers to the ENTIRETY of how we interact with others’ suffering, pain, crisis, and trauma. It includes but is not limited to our INTENTION in choosing the work we do, our PHILOSOPHY of what it means to help others, the TONE our caregiving takes, and our daily decisions about HOW WE LIVE OUR LIVES. Trauma stewardship extends even to the ultimate MEANING we extract from our work.”
EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE: Silent Witness

- Write down THREE WAYS you think secondary stress has impacted you.
- These should be impacts you are willing to share with others.
- Circulate SILENTLY throughout the room in APPRECIATIVE WITNESS.
SIGNS of Secondary Stress

- Anxiety
- Addictions
- Startle responses
- Polarized thinking
- Numbing/denial
- Sleep disturbances
- Nightmares
- Depression
- Entrenched cynicism
- Intrusion of traumatic material
- Obsession with evil
- Sexual/eating disturbances
- Reawakening of own past trauma
Secondary stress disrupts our BELIEFS about ourselves and the world.

POWER AND CONTROL
BOUNDARIES
SELF-WORTH
TRUST
EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE: Self-Care Inventory
SMALL GROUP BRAINSTORMING:

Benefits of Adversity
AIDS
Arthritis
Cancer

Birth of seriously ill child
Caring for ill relative Stroke
Sexual abuse

Death of a loved one
House fire
Tornado
Combat in Vietnam

Mass shooting
Plane crash
Tornado
SMALL GROUP BRAINSTORMING:
Benefits of Adversity

❖ What are the **BENEFITS** of working with clients facing extreme adversity?
❖ How has it **IMPROVED** your life at home or at work?
Health enhancing changes in life structure

Stress inoculation

Changed view of others
Transformation through interpretation

Turning symptoms on their heads

Money
I tried to make my mind large, as the universe is large, so that there is room for PARADOXES.

Maxine Hong Kingston
TED TALK

The Power of Vulnerability

Brene Brown
What steps can you take as a team to honor authentic connection?
How can team members assist each other to become “whole-hearted people living from a deep sense of worthiness”?
How do we cultivate the courage, compassion, connection in the workplace?
Connection  Courage  Vulnerability  Compassion
In the place that is my own place, whose earth
I am shaped in and must bear, there is an old tree growing,
A great sycamore that is a wondrous healer of itself.
Fences have been tied to it, nails driven into it,
Hacks and whittles cut in it, the lightening has burned it.
There is no year it has flourished in
That has not harmed it. There is a hollow in it
That is its death, though its living brims whitely
At the lip of the darkness and flows outward.
Over all its scars has come the seamless white
Of the bark. It bears the gnarls of its history
Healed over. It has risen to a strange perfection
In the warp and bending of its long growth.
It has gathered all accidents into its purpose.
It has become the intention and radiance of its dark fate.
It is a fact, sublime, mystical, and unassailable.
In all the country there is no other like it.
I love it as I have seldom loved anything.
I recognize in it a principle, an indwelling
The same as itself, and greater, that I would be ruled by.
I see that it stands in its place, and feeds upon it,
And is fed upon, and is native, and maker.
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