IDENTIFYING & ADDRESSING VICARIOUS TRAUMA: PROMOTING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF PCIT THERAPISTS WORKING IN CHILD WELFARE

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"The initial impact [of trauma] creates repercussions that expand almost infinitely, reaching and having an effect on many people who didn't experience the blows firsthand. The shock waves soon move beyond individual caregivers to influence the organizations and systems in which we work and, ultimately, the society as a whole. The harms of trauma exposure response radiate in this way, but so do the benefits of trauma stewardship."

Laura van Dernoot Lipsky, *Trauma Stewardship*, p. 17

STS, Related Terms, Assessment

- Secondary Traumatic Stress
  - Symptoms
  - Risk/Protective Factors
- Compassion Fatigue
- Compassion Satisfaction
- Burnout
- Vicarious Trauma

- Identifying STS
  - Informal self-assessment
  - Reflective supervision model
  - Formal Assessment

How to make your life better!

- Importance of prevention not intervention
- Big Picture!
- Practical Strategies
- Recommended Resources

SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS (STS)

- Emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the firsthand trauma experiences of another.
- Symptoms mimic those of PTSD:
  - Re-experiencing trauma
  - Increase in arousal
  - Increase in avoidance

SYMPTOMS OF STS

- Chronic exhaustion
- Hopelessness
- Inability to embrace complexity
- Inability to listen or avoidance of clients
- Anger and cynicism
- Minimizing guilt
- Sleeplessness
- Fear
- Physical ailments
- Hypervigilance

CONDITIONS RELATED TO STS

- ▶ Compassion Fatigue:
  - ▶ Less stigmatized way to describe STS; often used interchangeably
- ▶ Compassion Satisfaction:
  - ▶ Positive feelings derived from competent performance as a trauma professional
  - ▶ Positive relationships with colleagues and the conviction that one's work makes a meaningful contribution to clients and societies
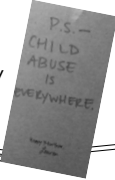
CONDITIONS RELATED TO STS

- ▶ Burnout:
  - ▶ Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, a reduced feeling of personal accomplishment
  - ▶ General occupational stress

CONDITIONS RELATED TO STS

- ▶ Vicarious Trauma:
  - ▶ Changes in the inner experience resulting from empathic engagement with a traumatized client
  - ▶ Theoretical term that focuses less on trauma symptoms and more on covert cognitive changes that occur following cumulative exposure to another person's traumatic material
    - ▶ Disturbances in the professional's cognitive frame of reference:
      - ▶ Trust, safety, control, esteem, and intimacy

RISK FACTORS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF STS

Any professional who works directly with traumatized children and hears the recounting of traumatic experiences.

Risk Factors	Protective Factors
▶ Women	▶ Longer duration of professional experience
▶ Highly empathic individuals	▶ Use of evidence-based practices
▶ Unresolved personal trauma	
▶ Heavy caseload of traumatized children	
▶ Socially or organizationally isolated	
▶ Professionally compromised due to inadequate training	

Is the practice of PCIT protective?
More sustainable?

Another reason awareness matters….

"What cannot be talked about can also not be put to rest"

--Meichenbaum, D. (n.d.). *Self-care for trauma psychotherapists and caregivers: Individual, social, and organizational interventions*. Retrieved from www.melissainstitute.org

IDENTIFYING STS

- ▶ Informal self-assessment strategies
- ▶ Reflective supervision model
- ▶ Formal assessment

FORMAL ASSESSMENT

Burnout, secondary traumatic stress, vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue

Compassion satisfaction

ProQOL:
Burnout
Secondary Traumatic Stress
Compassion Satisfaction

Other Measures:
Compassion Fatigue Scale (Figley)
Compassion Fatigue Test (Florida State University)
Impact of Events Scale (Horowitz)
Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale (Revised, 4th Edition; Bride)

THREE SHATTERED ASSUMPTIONS

- 1). The world is meaningful.
- 2). The world is benevolent.
- 3). The self is worthy.

Mindfulness/ Spirituality

Activities/ Strategies

Individual   Social

Janoff-Bulman, R. (2010). Shattered Assumptions: Toward a New Psychology of Trauma. *Free Press:* New York.

ACTIVITIES/STRATEGIES: MINDFULNESS & SPIRITUALITY

- Make time for regular mindfulness/reflection.
- Foster a spiritual connection and community
- MARC @ UCLA: guided meditations available for download (start as short as 3 minutes!): available at: http://marc.ucla.edu/body.cfm?id=22
- Mindfulness bell widget: will "ding" softly every 30 minutes to remind you to stop whatever you are doing and spend 1 minute in mindful meditation. http://www.mindfulnessdc.org/mindfulclock.html

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ACTIVITIES/STRATEGIES: INDIVIDUAL

- Increase Self-Observation
    - Recognize and chart signs of stress
    - Conduct self-analysis

Reminder: Take Care of Myself

- Emotional Self-care
    - Relaxation, self-soothing activities
    - Physical and mental well being
    - Healthy balance
    - Express feelings regularly
    - Humor strategies (3 belly laughs/ day)

http://www.melissainstitute.org/documents/ meichenbaum_selfcare_11thconf.pdf

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ACTIVITIES/STRATEGIES: INDIVIDUAL

- Cognitive Self-care
    - You are NOT alone
    - Set up achievable goals
    - Challenge negativity
    - Hope file/ "you are not pond scum"

- Behavioral Self-care
    - Balance case loads
    - Take a break!
    - In-office strategies
    - Transition strategies

Intrusive Re-Experiencing Strategies:
- Candle/prayer
- Television/fading
- Hand-washing

http://www.melissainstitute.org/documents/ meichenbaum_selfcare_11thconf.pdf

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ACTIVITIES/STRATEGIES: SOCIAL

- Asses social network
- Provide support for others (but don't overdo it!)
- Use buddy system
- Peer supervision models
- Informal opportunities to connect
- Participate in your own therapy

ACTIVITIES/STRATEGIES: ORGANIZATIONAL

▸ 84% of NCTSN sites surveyed said their organization needed a Secondary Traumatic Stress Intervention

1. Move from "YOU need to practice self-care" to "This organization promotes self-care with the following strategies…"

2. Burnout is easier to prevent than to reverse.

▸ Strategies at the organizational level include:
  - ▸ Discussing STS/burnout in individual supervision
  - ▸ Group supervision about STS/burnout
  - ▸ Debriefing days/difficult cases not for the purpose of supervision
  - ▸ Flex-time
  - ▸ Counseling referrals for therapists
  - ▸ Workshops/trainings on STS/burnout
  - ▸ Encouraging use of days off for supervisees

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

▸ Van Dernoot Lipsky, L. & Burk, C. (2009). Trauma stewardship: An everyday guide to caring for self while caring for others. Berrett-Koehler Publishers: San Francisco.

▸ Smally, S.L. & Winston, D. (2010). Fully present: The science, art and practice of mindfulness. Da Capo Lifelong Books: Boston.

▸ NCTSN website (specifically talks on secondary traumatic stress): http://www.nctsnet.org/

▸ The Headington Institute: http://www.headington-institute.org/Default.aspx?tabid=2208

▸ Rath, T. & Harter, J.K. (2010). Wellbeing: The five essential elements. Gallup Press: New York.