Secondary Traumatic Stress: Strategies for Prevention and Resilience in Health Providers
Karen VanDeusen, Psy.D., LMSW
Ineke Way, Ph.D., LMSW
WMU School of Social Work
CHHS Interdisciplinary Conference on Diversity and Inclusion
February 24, 2017

Overview
1. Participants will distinguish burnout, vicarious trauma, and secondary traumatic stress (STS).
2. Participants will acquire knowledge about self-assessment tools and identify own strengths and needs related to STS.
3. Participants will acquire knowledge about trauma-informed organizations.
4. Participants will acquire knowledge about evidence-based self-care strategies.

Trauma
Results:
“From an event, series of events, or set of circumstances
That is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening, and
That has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being”


“We are stewards not just of those who allow us into their lives but of our own capacity to be helpful…”

(Conte, J. R., in L. van Dernoot Lipsky, 2009).

STS and Related Terms

Secondary Traumatic Stress
Vicarious Trauma
Compassion Fatigue
Countertransference
Burnout

Secondary Traumatic Stress
• Emotional distress resulting from one or more experiences of indirect trauma exposure (Newell & Nelson-Gardell, 2014)
• Results in PTSD-like symptoms, alterations in memory, perception, and self-efficacy
• May also result in changes in trust, safety, and independence (NCTSN, 2011)
STS in Workers: PTSD-like Effects

- Intrusive thoughts, and
- Avoidance (Brady et al., 1999; Cohen & Collens, 2013; Kassam-Adams, 1995; Steed & Bicknell, 2001; Way et al., 2004)
- Emotional numbing (Farrenkopf, 1992; Schauben & Frazier, 1995)
- Hypervigilance (Jackson et al., 1997; Steed & Bicknell, 2001)

Risk and Protective Factors

- Risk factors include:
  - Female gender, trauma history, highly empathic, high caseload, insufficient training, feeling isolated, and newer to the field (e.g., Cunningham, 2003; Knight, 2010; Pearlman & McLean, 1995)
- Protective factors include:
  - Engage intentionally in personal and professional self-care strategies
  - Seek professional help when needed/prevention strategy

Personal Self-Assessment and Action Plans

- ProQOL 5 (Stamm, B. H., 2009)
- Self-Care Assessment (Butler, L. D. adapted from Saakvitne, Pearlman, & Associates (1996)
- VT Support Systems Exercise (Wilgocki, J., n.d.)
- VT Action Plan (Headington Institute)

Organizational Perspective on STS

- Realize the wide impact of trauma and understands potential paths for healing,
- Recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma in staff, clients, and others, and
- Respond by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, practices, and settings.”

Components of Trauma-Informed Organizations

- Org assessment
- Intervention
- Screening/assessment
- Supervision
- Training
- Policies
- Practices
Trauma-Informed Policies

- Policies
  - Screening / initial assessments
  - Resilience framework
- Human resources policies
  - Hiring interview
  - Paid time off
  - Health insurance coverage
- Orientation and training for staff

Supporting Staff to Reduce / Address STS

- Normalize STS effects as a part of doing this work
- Ongoing support for how workers are doing
- Critical incident debriefing

Organizational Self-Assessment

- Involves input from multiple stakeholders
- Assesses current organizational practices
  - Program procedures
  - Formal policies
  - Trauma screening and services
  - Administrative support
  - Staff training
  - Human resources practices
- Provides basis for planning

ProQOL

Further Reading


Questions?

Karen VanDeusen
karen.vandeusen@wmich.edu

Ineke Way
ineke.way@wmich.edu