

Tri-County Batterer Intervention Provider Network Business Meeting Minutes February 9, 2016

Present: (Editor's note: attendance was not taken at this meeting. If you were in attendance at this meeting and your name is not listed, please let me know.) Matt Johnston (Domestic Violence Safe Dialogue), Rachel Smith (PSU), Phil Broyles (Teras), Chelsea Penning (Multnomah County DCJ), Sarah Devine (Lifeworks), Guruseva Mason, Kendra Harding (Lifeworks NW), Jacquie Pancoast (Eastside Concern), Rachael Paris (ARMS), Sarah Van Dyke (Clackamas County DV coordinator), Sandy Rorick (Multnomah County DCJ), Tiffany Hicks, Shannon Barkley

Minutes by Rachel Smith, edited by Chris Huffine, this summary was sent out in August, 2017

Discussion: Vicarious Trauma

Presentation/Discussion facilitated by Matt Johnston

Self-care in general: Even talking about it gets pushed to the side. At the DVSD training, for example, the time for the self-care portion is always pushed aside for a topic that was scheduled before that and ran long. Now Carrie just makes sure to hand out chocolate.

Definition of terms:

Countertransference: redirection of a [psychotherapist's](#) feelings toward a client—or, more generally, as a therapist's emotional entanglement with a client. – Wikipedia

Compassion fatigue: characterized by a gradual lessening of [compassion](#) over time. It is common among individuals that work directly with trauma victims

Burnout: characterized by [exhaustion](#), lack of [enthusiasm](#) and [motivation](#), feelings of ineffectiveness, and also may have the dimension of [frustration](#) or [cynicism](#), and as a result reduced [efficacy](#) within the workplace.

Coping with a hostile environment: do you have more or less energy after that meeting with a community partner?

Vicarious trauma: “a transformation that takes place within us as a result of exposure to the suffering of other living beings or the planet. This transformation can result from deliberate or inadvertent exposure, formal or informal contact, paid or volunteer work. [...] we are talking about ways in which the world looks and feels like a different place to you as a result of your doing your work.”

Compassion fatigue, also known as **secondary traumatic stress (STS)**, is a condition characterized by a gradual lessening of [compassion](#) over time. It is common among individuals that work directly with trauma victims such as, therapists (paid and unpaid), nurses, psychologists, first responders, animal welfare workers, health unit coordinators and anyone who helps out others, especially family members, relatives, and other informal caregivers of patients

suffering from a chronic illness.^[1] It was first diagnosed in nurses in the 1950s. Sufferers can exhibit several symptoms including [hopelessness](#), a decrease in experiences of pleasure, constant stress and anxiety, sleeplessness or nightmares, and a pervasive negative [attitude](#). This can have detrimental effects on individuals, both professionally and personally, including a decrease in productivity, the inability to focus, and the development of new feelings of incompetency and self-doubt.^[2]

Burnout is a type of [psychological stress](#). **Occupational burnout** or **job burnout** is characterized by [exhaustion](#), lack of [enthusiasm](#) and [motivation](#), feelings of ineffectiveness, and also may have the dimension of [frustration](#) or [cynicism](#), and as a result reduced [efficacy](#) within the workplace.^[1]

EXTERNAL FACTORS:

- Sense of work overload
- Sense of control
- Sense of lack of rewards and / or recognition
- Sense of lack of community
- Sense of lack of perceived fairness
- Value conflicts

Coping with a hostile environment

In our case, it's the larger political environment

Reframing: Change How You See Things

Disney cast member (employee) training:

Imagine awful experiences family suffered

Don't take their anger personally

It won't last long

It doesn't need to ruin your day

Just keep smiling

Treat people as VIPs

Hope for the Best; Expect the Worst

Have low expectations

Focus on good things

Be optimistic about how it will all end

Develop Indifference and Emotional Detachment

“All this talk about passion, commitment, and identification with an organization is absolutely correct *if* you are in a good job and treated with dignity and respect.”

“Dismiss whatever insults your soul.” - Walt Whitman

Look for Small Wins

Langer and Rodin – study of nursing home patients – 18-mo follow-up ->50% lower death rate with patients that had control over trivial things

Limit Your Exposure

Use technology to limit contact, but *only if* you have lots of experience face-to-face that is evidence that they are draining; otherwise technology may be fueling conflict

Build Pockets of Safety, Support, and Sanity

Seeking support only gives small gains in mental health, and can make it worse if there is not a shift to problem-solving or organizing for change

Fight and Win the Right Small Battles

Relentlessly responding to irate people with calmness and respect - Prison guard Franklin Roberts story

Gentle reeducation - LA bus driver Lupita Perez: “Not only do I have to deal with...”

Payback:

Caveat: You risk escalation

Study your oppressor, pick the right moment, be willing to take a risk

The *feeling* that you could do it is more important than actually doing it

Call their bluff

Warning: These strategies may prevent you from leaving a bad situation

Vicarious trauma

Do we really get that much vicarious trauma?

Look at the longevity of everyone here

How are we affected by our work?

Matt will just share: When first starting out, I used to get really angry or appalled at things the men in my groups would say and then ruminate on it. Over time, I learned to respond instead of react. Not spending energy getting offended. For a while, it was really important for me to have

a co-facilitator who was my “sanity buddy”, who would also disagree with what was being said in the room. After a long time, I didn’t need that anymore.

Supervision and outside training also helped. Up your game. There’s a mistrust of the professionalization of the field out there and this can result in not seeking out new training.

We get the “Disney” versions of stories and our job is to bring out the more disturbing elements, so BIP work isn’t that traumatic. The times when I did have vicarious trauma symptoms, it was when I wasn’t doing BIP work and I was focused more on straight alcohol and other drug work. Recently, I feel like it’s changed again with increased contact with partners and survivors.

Can’t watch certain media because it’s like being at work: Breaking Bad, the Sopranos after season 3, Ruby Sparks. Then it switched to other media I couldn’t watch as I had more contact with victims and survivors: Troubled Water, Uzumaki. All well-written; I would recommend them to other people. Thankfully, the list is short, but I’m still frustrated that I even have a list.

Technology is a beautiful thing. Have you tried an electronic dictation program? It makes it easier to get all those pesky notes typed up. I got mine for \$150. The headset makes you look ridiculous, but it’s worth it. Also, Toodledo helps prioritize a chaotic life.

16 signs of trauma exposure response

Feeling Helpless and Hopeless

A Sense That One Can Never Do Enough

Hypervigilance

Diminished Creativity

Inability to Embrace Complexity

Minimizing

Chronic Exhaustion / Physical Ailments

Inability to Listen / Deliberate Avoidance

Dissociative Moments

Sense of Persecution

Guilt

Fear

Anger and Cynicism

Inability to Empathize / Numbing

Addictions

Grandiosity: An Inflated Sense of Importance Related to One's Work

Open the Inquiry

What's Your Origin Story? Is it still relevant?

"Does [your work] edify you? Do you use it to escape your life? Does it bring you joy? Does it support your ego? Is it a place where you can do something about the pain in the world? Does it distract you?"

Practice Self-Care

A Sense of Personal Control

Pursuit of Personally Meaningful Tasks

Healthy Lifestyle Choices

Social Support

Be Patient. "Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase. Just take the first step." - MLK

NORTH: Why Am I Doing What I'm Doing? Is Trauma Mastery a Factor for Me? Is This Working for Me?

EAST: Where Am I Putting My Focus? What Is My Plan B?

SOUTH: Creating a Microculture (encouragement and accountability); Practicing Compassion for Myself and Others; What Can I Do for Large-Scale Systemic Change?

WEST: Engaging with Our Lives Outside of Work; Moving Energy Through; Gratitude

FIFTH DIRECTION: A Daily Practice of Centering Ourselves