Trauma Informed Self Care
So Where Are We Going Today?

- Understand What Self Care Is
- Recognize Why Self Care Is So Important
- Identify Typical Results Of Poor Self Care
- Recognize The Signs And Symptoms Of Not Doing Self Care
- Explore Various Methods Of Self Care That You Can Use In Your Lives Each Day
What We Have Learned About Trauma and Trauma Informed Care

• Touches the lives of everyone around us
• Widespread
• We assume all are survivors of trauma
• Trauma takes many forms
• Affects the most vulnerable disproportionately
• Many pathways to healing
• The brain CAN change!
You Need Trauma Care Too!!

- We call this Self Care
- Self Care is especially important
  for those who live or work in high stress
  or high trauma environments

“People who wonder if the glass is half empty or half full, miss the true point... The glass is refillable.” ~ Anonymous
Stress Is Good For You!

Say What??!!!
Stress Is....

- A normal part of life
- A response that is hardwired into all of us
- Helpful in SMALL doses
- A way we perform at our peak
- The only route to resilience
POSITIVE
Brief increases in heart rate, mild elevations in stress hormone levels.

TOLERABLE
Serious, temporary stress responses, buffered by supportive relationships.

TOXIC
Prolonged activation of stress response systems in the absence of protective relationships.
When our lives and environments keep us in a continuous state of stress and trauma...

- Brain will shut down to protect itself. Still working, but slows down new connections
- We are more vulnerable to anxiety, depression, less resilience
- Makes us more vulnerable to addictive behavior (smoking, sugar, alcohol, drugs)
- Heightened threat response
- More vulnerable to illness and disease, with or without negative coping strategies (migraines, IBS, flu, chronic fatigue, arthritis, etc.)
- Can be passed on from generation to generation
“The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through the water without getting wet.” ~ Remen
Do you ever.......??
Do you ever.....?

- Get overly frustrated or angry over your child/client’s choices?
- Feel helpless to make your child/client’s life better?
- Avoid your child/client?
- Take on too much responsibility?
Do you ever.....?

- Feel drained and tired during the day?
- Think about your child’s/client’s trauma/problems when they are not there?
- Feel more tense or “jumpy” in your home or other environments?
Do you ever.....?

• Get angry faster then you like?
• Have bad dreams about your child/client?
• See yourself, or your problems, in your child/client?
• Lost joy in caring for your child, or in the work you do?
Do you ever.....?

• Use “safety rituals” now because of your home/work life?

• Have trouble sleeping at night?

These can be signs and symptoms of problems arising from working or living in ongoing trauma and stress environments. Let’s look at a few ways where harm can come from these types of environments ...
Vicarious trauma is the process of change that happens because you care about other people who have been hurt, and feel committed or responsible to help them. Over time this process can lead to changes in your psychological, physical and spiritual well-being.

(Headington Institute)
Happens over time as you interact with survivors of trauma

Identify with the pain of people who have endured terrible things. You bring THEIR grief, fear, anger, and despair into your own awareness and experience.

Constantly pushed out of your comfort zone and forced to question the meaning of events, and their own and others actions and reactions.
Burnout

- Related to feeling of being overloaded
- Work or Life stress
- Joy in helping is lost
- Can occur in any professional/personal setting
- Progresses gradually as a result of emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and feelings of inefficacy.
- Does **NOT** lead to changes in trust, feelings of control, issues of intimacy, safety concerns, and intrusive traumatic imagery that are foundational to Vicarious Trauma.
Compassion Fatigue

• Gradual decrease in the caring and empathetic response to the suffering of others that motivates our desire to help them
• A feeling of hopelessness.
• The exhaustion from the “Cost of Caring”
• A decrease in experiences of pleasure.
• Loss of interest in being connected to, and empathetic with, another's pain.
• A pervasive negative and pessimistic attitude toward our children, clients, and the suffering

• Emotional exhaustion
• Reduced sense of personal accomplishment or meaning in work
• Mental exhaustion
• Decreased interactions with others (isolation)
• Depersonalization (symptoms disconnected from real causes)
• Physical exhaustion
Even Mother Teresa Understood Compassion Fatigue

- She Understood and Recognized the effects of caring for those who are struggling and hurting

- Wrote in her plan to her superiors that it was MANDATORY for her nuns to take an entire year off from their duties every 4-5 years to allow them to heal from the effects of their care-giving work.
Countertransference

- The process of seeing oneself in the client or in your child.
- An emotional reaction
- Over-identifying with your client or child
- Meeting one’s own needs through the client or child.
- Counter-transference occurs when the caregiver or professional begins to project his or her own inner needs or unresolved conflicts onto the patient.
Physical Consequences of Chronic Stress

- Headaches/Migraines
- Heart and Blood Vessel Stress
- Increased Blood Sugar
- Higher Cholesterol
- Chronic Pain
- Shoulder and Back Pain
- Infection and Illness
- Stomach and Intestinal Issues
Emotional/Mental Consequences of Chronic Stress

- Frustrated
- Isolated/Withdrawn
- Anxiety
- Impulsive
- Increased Worry
- Depression
- Suspicious
- Confusion
- Irritable
- Low Interest
- Low energy
- Lethargic
- Negative thinking
- Decreased Decision Making
- Difficulty Concentrating
One can not fully care for others, and help them in finding balance, when they themselves are not in balance.
Self Care Is....

• The use of a personal individualized plan to address chronic stress that reflects your culture, needs, interests, desires, creativity, resources and values

• Follows the A, B, C of Health!
Awareness....

- Accepting and acknowledging that we are changed by what we do and the lives we live
- Understanding the effects, signs, and symptoms of chronic/toxic stress
- Being attuned to your needs, limits, emotions and resources
- Knowing your “renewal zones”
Balance....

- Maintaining balance among our life activities – work, play, rest
- Have a personal life!
- Pursue joyful activities
- Building health in the Mind and the Body
Connection....

• To oneself.

• To others.

• To something larger.

• Decreases isolation.

• Increases validation and hope.

• Find one’s own path to a sense of awe, joy, purpose, meaning, and hope and visit it frequently.
Self Care...

Keeps the “Gas peddle and the Brake peddle” inside our body in Balance
What Self Care is NOT:

NOT: just for burned out workers, the weak, the maladjusted.
NOT something we don’t have time to do
DOES NOT mean we focus on ourselves and ignore others
NOT about numbing ourselves
DOES NOT indicate narcissism
IS NOT a luxury and does NOT mean we are self-indulgent.

Cox and Steiner, Self-Care in Social Work (2013)
So What Gets In The Way Of Self Care?
How Can You Knock Some Of These Barriers Down?
Now I Know....
So What Can I
Do?
Body Movement

There are only 3 ways in which we regulate ourselves
1) Body / Sensory Regulation
2) Top Down Regulation
3) Disassociation

The brain stem contains Powerful associations to rhythmic activity created in utero and then reinforced in early life.

Repetitive Body Sensory Experiences are one of the most effective ways to calm the “low brain” so that access to the “high brain” is possible.

What are some ways we can “do” this Body / Sensory Regulation?
Let’s Try It!!
Aromatherapy

Practice of using natural scents to enhance brain functioning, as well as physical and psychological well being.

**Peppermint**: Sense of confidence, brings clarity of thoughts, reduces cortisol and stress hormones.

**Orange**: Reduce anxiety, fight stress response.

**Rosemary**: Increase mental stimulation, speed and accuracy.

**Lavender**: Promotes rest and relaxation.

**Vanilla**: Elevate joy and happiness chemicals.

**Cinnamon**: Boosts brain power, attention, and memory.

**Lemon**: Reduces the stress chemicals in the body.
Relationships

Our most primal pleasure reward occurs when under stress… Super hungry, super thirsty, overheated, etc.

We can get to the pleasure part of the brain in many ways, and one is through relational rewards.

Positive relationships that have “Load Sharing” can reduce the stress response

When you have a lowered access route to these relationships you can trade them out for things like sweet/salty/fatty foods, alcohol, smoking, drugs, and other health damaging activities which puts more stress on the body

Being mindful of our human need for small doses of positive interactions with fully present people can help to fight off toxic stress.

How can you do this??
Breathing

A technique used to activate the parasympathetic nervous response (the “brakes”) when faced with a stress and/or trauma response.

**During stress:** The body breathes from the upper lungs and collar area, mimicking hyperventilation. “Tells” body you are in stress, trouble, danger. Upper chest breathing was a great way to help you get the fast oxygen needed to flee/fight danger.

**We were born “Belly Breathers”** – As you grew, you changed to chest breathing.

**Recreating Belly Breathing helps:** Lower anxiety, lower blood pressure, slow heart rate, reduce cortisol, increase melatonin... and so much more. We will focus on the three above.

Let’s Try It!!!
Let’s Try It!!

You might want to close your eyes.
Mindfulness

Being fully present moment-by moment in one’s thoughts, emotions, sensations, and environment without judgement

Benefits Include:
- Increased immune system response
- Decreases stress and negative emotions
- Increases positive emotions
- Increases brain areas of memory, learning, emotional regulation, and empathy
- More positive relationships with others
- Improved self-reported quality of life
- Used to challenge negative health behaviors (i.e. Mindful eating)
Visualization/Guided Imagery

Creating a mental image or picture of a pleasant, peaceful and attractive environment

Benefits Include:
• Reduces stress hormones
• Can be combined with physical relaxation
• Visualization is fully portable and can be done in short time periods
• Can be done alone or with others
• Can train the brain to have a calming “cue” though association
Let’s Try It!
Nutrition and Sleep

Good nutrition has been linked to physical and emotional health.
• Don’t skip meals! Even when you are busy
• Include more Omega-3’s
• Avoid processed sugars and refined carbohydrates
• Water… It does a body good!

Good sleep has been linked to better physical and emotional health too!
• Poor sleep increases stress hormones
• Sleep is individualized. Average person need 7 to 8 hrs every 24 hrs
• Sleeping pills are not a sustainable answer
• Sleep is a natural way to achieve homeostasis
Some Final Thoughts...
Remember…
There is no “Quick Fix”
If Your Compassion Does Not Include Yourself, It Is Incomplete

~Buddha
Thank You
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