IT’S ALL ABOUT PERSPECTIVE:
Victim Services and Resilience
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WORKING WITH VICTIMS IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM
• Why do you do this work?

VICTIM SERVICES: LIFE CHANGING WORK
• Meaningful and Rewarding
• Difficult and Painful
WHAT AM I EXPERIENCING?

- Stress
- Burnout
- Secondary Traumatic Stress
- Vicarious Trauma
- Compassion Fatigue
- Bad Hair Day

STRESS

- A mentally or emotionally disruptive or upsetting condition occurring in response to adverse external influences and capable of causing a physiological reaction.

VICTIM SERVICES

- Balance comfort & compassion with outspoken advocacy.
- Working within “the system” creates conflicting roles.
- How much help is enough?
- Exposure to severe trauma & loss.
VICTIM SERVICE STRESS

- Inadequate Job Training
- Funding Pressures
- Frustration with Criminal Justice System
- Irregular Work Schedule
- Extensive Paperwork
- Lack of Referral Agencies
- Interpersonal Conflicts
- External Agency Conflicts
- Inadequate Equipment
- On-going Human Suffering & Cruelty

BURNOUT

- Severe reaction to stress of the work environment that results in:
  - State of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion caused by long term involvement in emotionally demanding situations.
  - Symptoms include: depression, cynicism, boredom, loss of compassion and discouragement

TRAUMATIC STRESS REACTION

- The natural and consequent behaviors and emotions.....a set of conscious and unconscious actions and behaviors associated with dealing with stressors or memories of the experience.

Charles Figley
SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS

• “The normal and universal response to abnormal (violence-induced) or unusual events (disaster) in which you are not the primary victim.”

J. Yassen in Trauma & Its Wake, 1995

VICARIOUS TRAUMA

• Transmission of traumatic stress through observation and/or hearing other's stories of traumatic events and the resulting shifts that occur in the caregiver's perceptual and meaning systems

McCann & Pearlman, 1990

COMPASSION FATIGUE

• The natural consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced by another...the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person.

Charles Figley, 1995, Compassion Fatigue
SELF-CHANGING NATURE OF OUR WORK

- Stressful/traumatic experience
- Reaction
- Challenges beliefs
- Requires reorganization

WHAT WE BRING TO OUR WORK

- Personal history
- Ways of coping
- Current life circumstances

WHAT IS THE COST?

- Ineffective victim services provider
- Violating boundaries in helping relationships
- Withdrawing from family, friends and colleagues
- Making bad judgments
- Leaving the field
COMPASSION FATIGUE
What can victims do about it?

AUTOMATIC STRESS RESPONSE
- Hold Your Breath
- Tense Your Muscles
- Have Self Doubts
- Think Negative
- Become Serious

STRESS MANAGEMENT RESPONSE
- Breathe deeper
- Relax Completely
- Reassure yourself
- Think positively
- Smile and find the humor
CORE ELEMENTS OF RESILIENCE
• Self-knowledge and insight
• Sense of hope
• Healthy coping
• Strong relationships
• Personal perspective and meaning

AGENCY CARE PLAN
• Warn new staff about over identification
• Educate them on vicarious trauma
• Meet regularly to discuss & resolve problems
• Schedule process groups
• Help staff set limits on time spent on the job
• Help staff set limits on expectations
• Help staff establish good boundaries

AGENCY CARE PLAN
• Recognize and reward staff's important work
• Encourage vacations without work, cell phones & pagers
• Promote regular exercise & relaxation
• Provide training opportunities to increase knowledge, skills & confidence
• Express thanks for their hard work
PERSONAL CARE PLAN

• Eat healthy
• Relax & seek solitude
• Tend to your spirit
• Praise yourself
• Enjoy yourself
• Sleep well
• Self reflect
• Practice deep breathing
• Read for pleasure
• Say no more often
• Cry
• Smile
• Exercise
• Spend time w/animals
• Take vacations
• Laugh

VICARIOUS TRAUMA & BURNOUT CLUB

• Never Exercise
• Do everything for everyone
• Feel everyone's pain
• Eat fast food
• Accept responsibility for everything
• Sleep as little as possible
• Work 24/7
• Have your cell phone & pager surgically attached
• Abandon your family
• If you do go home, take work home with
• Never laugh

Laughter is the Best Medicine
TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

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