

Did You Know?

Secondary Traumatic Stress, Resiliency, Self-Care

“There is a cost to caring”- Charles Figley²

What is secondary traumatic stress or STS? - “The natural consequent behaviors resulting from knowledge about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other. It is the stress resulting from wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person.”¹

Ongoing involvement with those who have experienced firsthand trauma takes an emotional toll on our well-being that can compromise our professional functioning and diminish our quality of life. STS can present itself in individuals much like Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder².

Indicators of STS

Emotional- Anger, Sadness, Prolonged grief, anxiety, depression, hopelessness, hyper vigilance,

Physical- Headaches, stomach aches, chronic exhaustion, sleeplessness, constipation, and other ailments

Personal- mood swings, cynicism, self-isolation, irritability with spouse/family

Workplace- Avoidance of clients, missed appointments, tardiness, and lack of motivation.

*Women appear to be at greater risk, as well as those individuals who are highly empathetic by nature and those who have unresolved trauma in their own life².

*Studies show 6-26% of therapists working with those who have been traumatized and up to 50% of child welfare workers are at high risk of STS or related conditions of PTSD².

*It has also been shown there is a positive correlation between STS and large caseloads, reduced longevity of career, long working hours and increased contact with traumatized clients⁴



Did You Know?

Facts About Trauma Informed Care

Resiliency

10 Characteristic of a Resilient Worker⁵

1. Resilient workers realize the importance of having a strong social support system.
2. Resilient workers look at the positive side of the situation and are optimistic.
3. Resilient workers have faith in themselves
4. Resilient workers are curious about situations and focus on new possibilities
5. Resilient workers are connected to their values and see meaning and purpose in what they do.
6. Resilient workers focus on the important things and don't fight things they cannot control, save their energy to fight battles that are necessary.
7. Resilient workers take responsibility for their self-care
8. Resilient workers seek solutions when problems arise and can live with uncertainty and ambiguity until they find a solution.
9. Resilient workers always see something negative as an opportunity, adversity is a challenge
10. Resilient workers have a sense of humor about life's challenges.

Self Care

"It is one of the most beautiful compensations in life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself." - Ralph Waldo Emerson¹

Be Aware, Have Supports, Address Your Own Trauma

Physical- Eat regularly and healthy, exercise, get enough sleep, wear clothes you like, take time off when sick, get massages

Emotional- Spend time with others whose company you enjoy, love and praise yourself, find things that make you laugh, allow yourself to cry, find comforting activities you enjoy

Psychological- self-reflect, write in a journal, read something unrelated to work, say no to extra responsibilities sometimes,

Spiritual- spend time with nature, find a spiritual connection/community, cherish your optimism and hope, pray, mediate, sing

Workplace/Professional- take a break during the workday, chat with co-workers, balance your work so no one day is "too much", set limits with clients/colleagues, negotiate for your needs.

1. Child Trauma Academy- The Cost of Caring: Secondary Traumatic Stress and the Impact of working with High-Risk Children and Families (2002).
2. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network: Secondary Traumatic Stress. A Fact Sheet for Child Serving Professionals (2011).
3. National Child Welfare Resource Center for Adoption –ACC Compassion Fatigue –Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization (Norton, 1996).
4. RECOGNITION AND PREVENTION OF SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS: A TRAINING PROGRAM FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS (Sanchez, 2006).
5. The Resilience Alliance from <http://ezinearticles.com>

