The Impact of the Work

Jamy Stammel, MA, LCSW
Assistant Program Director, Best Self Behavioral Health Consultant, Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care

Whitney L. Marris, LMSW
Project Manager, Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care

July 14, 2021
12:00 – 1:00 pm EST
Agenda

• Impacts of trauma on the workforce
• Role of self-/organizational-care & workforce wellness
• Building resilience & staying regulated
Experiences Shared

- Insufficient or no PPE
- Not enough resources
- Fear of catching COVID-19
- Fear of exposing family members to COVID-19
- Lack of communication
- Working long hours
- Blurring of roles
- Increased phone calls & meetings
- Increased risk (getting sick & being mistreated) being a person of color
- Increase in e-mail communication
- Increased collaboration
- Community support
- Vicarious trauma
- No option not to work
- Working long hours
- Re-traumatization
- Compassion fatigue
- Undervalued/unappreciated
- Moral injury/distress
- Decision fatigue
- Peer support & check-ins
- Changes in productivity
- High caseloads/surge in patients
- Illness & death
- Leadership support
- Decision fatigue
- Decision fatigue
- Re-traumatization
- Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) & Wellness

Lunch Room Meetup
"We just haven’t been flapping them hard enough."

(Lipsky & Burk, 2009, p. 59)
Empathy
## Doing the Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible Impact of the Work</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)</td>
<td>Experience of trauma-related symptoms in a worker as a result of witnessing the trauma/adversity of another; typically quick in onset.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicarious Trauma (VT)</td>
<td>Development of negative changes in world view as a result of the cumulative impact of witnessing trauma/adversity over time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnout</td>
<td>Feelings of hopelessness, fatigue and being overwhelmed from excessive workloads and unsupportive work environments; develops gradually over time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassion Fatigue (CF)</td>
<td>Experiencing the combination of STS, VT and/or burnout.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Krause & Green, 2015)
Signs of STS & VT

- Nightmares
- Feeling angry or cynical
- Misplaced feelings of guilt
- Loss of meaning and hope
- Intrusive thoughts of the event
- Isolation from family and friends
- Feeling detached, numb, apathetic
- Decreased capacity for decision making
- Difficulty accepting or feeling okay about yourself
- Somatic complaints (i.e., headache, stomachache, fatigue)

(Bride, 2011; Headington Institute, 2008; Office for Victims of Crime, n.d.)
Signs of Burnout & Compassion Fatigue

- Apathy
- Cynicism
- Irritability
- Blaming others
- Easily frustrated
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Disconnecting from others
- Desire to use substances to cope
- Feeling like nothing you can do will help
- Feeling like a failure/you aren’t doing your job well

(Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018; SAMHSA, 2014)
How do you see the impact of the work happening in your health center/system?
Our human compassion binds us the one to the other — not in pity or patronizingly, but as human beings who have learned how to turn our common suffering into hope for the future.

— Nelson Mandela
## Doing the Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible Impact of the Work</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compassion Satisfaction (CS)</td>
<td>Pleasure that helping professionals derive from being able to perform their work effectively. Includes positive feelings about helping others and contributing to the greater good of society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>The ability of an individual, family, group, or community to cope with and adapt to (or “bounce back” from) change, challenges, adversity, and/or trauma.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicarious Resilience (VR)</td>
<td>Positive meaning-making and shift of an individual’s experience as a result of witnessing the resilience of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Traumatic Growth</td>
<td>Positive psychological changes experienced as a result of enduring challenging life circumstances synonymous with trauma/adversity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicarious Post-Traumatic Growth</td>
<td>Positive growth experienced by individuals as a result of working with persons who have been directly impacted by a traumatic event.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Hernandez et al., 2007; SAMHSA, 2014; Senreich et al., 2020; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996)
(Graphic by Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care, 2020; adapted from Berinato, 2020; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995; Weir, 2020)
What We Focus on Gets Bigger

(Witness
Deficiency
Struggle
Hopelessness
Inability)

(Neuro
Capacity
Success
Hope
Possibility)

(Growth
(Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care, 2020)
"Only I can prevent forest fires? Don't you think you should share some of the responsibility?"
Addressing the Impact of the Work

• Ensuring a supportive, trauma-informed culture through the use of the trauma-informed values/principles
  o Each of us plays a role in addressing the “impact of the work” through our own interactions with our colleagues in our health center/system
  o Our research has shown that as workforce perceptions of safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration and empowerment increase, their self-reported burnout and compassion fatigue decrease

• When self-care is supported and practiced on the organizational level, staff:
  o Are more effective and productive
  o Use fewer unplanned sick days/less leave time
  o Are less likely to quit/search for other jobs
  o Endorse feeling more satisfied with and connected to their work

(SAMHSA, 2014)
Trauma-Informed Policies and Procedures to Prevent and Address STS/VT/Compassion Fatigue

• Implement **regular check-ins** at the beginning of meetings for leadership to quickly get a sense of how the workforce is doing, what is going on that day, and what staff may need moving forward.

• **Ongoing trainings for all staff** that provide information on the impact of the work and strategies to manage stress related to trauma exposure.

• Establish **manageable workloads to the extent possible** and facilitate building work schedules that allow for staff to establish and uphold reasonable work-life boundaries.

• Trauma-informed **conflict resolution** policy for conflict **between staff** as well as for conflict **between staff and patients**.

• Integrate familiarizing new hires with **wellness resources** and providing information and time for new staff to create a **self-care plan** into the standard onboarding process.
Trauma-Informed Policies and Procedures to Prevent and Address STS/VT/Compassion Fatigue

- Supports for **peer-to-peer activities** such as trauma-informed mentoring and/or wellness/support groups where staff can discuss their workplace experiences and share strategies to manage the impact of the work
- Policy including **trauma-informed debriefing and support** for those impacted by critical incidents
- Code of conduct policy stating all staff are expected to participate in **creating a safe environment**
- Clear procedures for staff and/or patients to communicate when they experience the environment and/or interpersonal interactions as unsafe **without fear of retaliation**
- Benefits policy or plan that includes **confidential access to services and supports**, including (but not limited to) behavioral health services, employee assistance programs, and affordable, easily accessible wellness activities
What is a “Regulating Dose”? 

Neural networks change in response to brief, repetitive stimulations. Typically very brief – seconds long – activations are sufficient to bring about the signal for ‘change’.

After a burst of repetitive activation, neural networks become ‘refractory’ (non-responsive). Sensitivity of synaptic dynamics change as a function of these patterns of activity. For long-term change, a pattern of brief stimulation (e.g., four three-minute bursts of stimulation within an hour) is followed by a consolidation period.

During this time, protein synthesis and synaptic micro-architecture is modified in ways that allow changes related to ‘memory’.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value/Principle</th>
<th>Self/Colleague</th>
<th>Workforce</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Safety         | • Check in and debrief regularly  
• Develop informal opportunities to connect  
• Engage in self-awareness/self-check-ins | • Acknowledge/witness the impact the work may be having  
• Promote the use of wellness and self-care strategies  
• Ensure ongoing reflective supervision and/or team meetings |
| Trustworthiness | • Maintain boundaries with providing support  
• Communicate expectations for self and others  
• Follow-through on commitments | • Encourage and provide routine that includes breaks  
• Focus on what IS expected rather than what is not  
• Be transparent about policy/protocol changes and reasoning behind them |
| Choice         | • Ask what already works or what worked before  
• Offer the option to engage/connect  
• Engage in activities that refuel you | • Balance need for flexibility while defining parameters  
• Highlight any small options in how they do their work  
• Offer choice and be creative around supports provided |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value/Principle</th>
<th>Self/Colleague</th>
<th>Workforce</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Collaboration** | • **Utilize** peer supervision/consultation teams  
• **Create** and use a buddy system  
• **Join** others around a common purpose or value | • **Elicit** feedback around what is working and what is needed  
• **Encourage** staff to work together as a team when possible  
• **Provide** space for affinity groups and peer support |
| **Empowerment** | • **Attend** training opportunities  
• **Notice** capacity, success, possibility  
• **Participate** in activities that promote health center-/community-building | • **Provide** education and training on the impact of the work  
• **Invite** the workforce to engage with self-assessment tools  
• **Help** the workforce notice what is working, how they are managing, and what is already in place |

**Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) & Wellness**

**Lunch Room Meetup**
Reflection Point

• What are you already doing to support a trauma-informed work environment?
• Where would you like to see growth in your ability to think and act in ways that support wellness for all?
• What staff behaviors and attitudes would lead to such an environment? What opportunities to you have to support/enhance these behaviors?
Self-Care and the Journey for Healing and Growth

Amy Cunningham: Drowning in Empathy (full video link)

Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) & Wellness

Lunch Room Meetup
Building Individual and Organizational Resilience

Expectations
- Realistic for you
- Realistic for others

Boundaries
- What makes sense to say "yes" to?
- Respect for others'

Culture
- Connecting in a way that heals/helps
- Meaningful, accessible wellness supports

Self-Care
- Physical
- Emotional
- Spiritual
- Intellectual
- Social

(National Council for Behavioral Health)
Taking the Pulse (click links below to access)

- **Professional Quality of Life Assessment (ProQOL)**
  - Note: Some items are reverse scored, so please follow the instructions carefully
  - Available in 29 languages

- **Vicarious Trauma Organizational Readiness Guide (VT-ORG)**
  - Assessment instrument for emergency medical services
  - Assessment instrument for victim services *(appropriate for anyone who interfaces with trauma)*

- **Organizational Self-Care and Personal Self-Care Assessment Tools**
Please completed the evaluation survey: https://forms.office.com/r/vJwz7yPc6C

We truly value your feedback!