Beyond Surviving to Thriving: Compassion Fatigue In Tribal Communities
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Why me?
- FBI: IC VS, ERT, RDF
- Ground Zero, Hurricane Katrina
- Red Lake Nation School Shooting
- Criminal Intelligence, Meth Enforcement
- Sturgis Motorcycle Rallies
- Mexican Border, Canada, Interpol
- 10 years in Tribal Communities
- Training & Technical Assistance
- SDHP CAP-Crash Assistance Program

Learning Objectives
1. Define and describe compassion fatigue
2. Identify negative and positive effects of doing trauma-related work
3. Describe the five core elements of resilience
4. Develop and demonstrate personal strategies to strengthen your resilience

Trigger Warning:
Compassion Fatigue / Resiliency can be triggering topics. There may be content, discussion and images which can be trauma-inducing and may inspire intrusive thoughts for some.

“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 water without getting wet.”

~ Rachel Naomi Remen,
Kitchen Table Wisdom

Discussion Questions
In small groups, please discuss the following:
1. What does the term "compassion fatigue" mean to you? Do you call it by any other names?
2. Have you ever experienced symptoms of compassion fatigue or "burnout"? What were your symptoms?
3. Why is compassion fatigue common in our work?

What’s In A Name?
Impact of Trauma Work

Compassion Fatigue Can Be:
- Secondary stress
- Burnout
- Compassion fatigue
- Vicarious traumatization
- Cumulative stress
- Countertransference
- Emotional contagion
- Inability to bounce back after stressful incident
Resilience

- One’s ability to return to healthy functioning after being in a stressful situation
- The power to cope with adversity and adapt to challenges or change

**Bounce-back factor**

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**Negative Personal Effects of Working in the Trauma Field**

- Numbing defenses
- Rage
- Shame
- Horror
- Grief
- Disturbed sleep
- Anger
- Fear
- Nightmares

- Flashbacks
- Irritability
- Anxiety
- Alienation
- Loss of control
- Suicidal thoughts
- Physical distress
- Low self-esteem
- Disturbing images

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**Positive Aspects of Working in the Victim Service Field**

Many victim service providers are strengthened and energized by the work that they do when trauma responses are acknowledged and processed.

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**Signs Stress is Taking Its Toll:**

- Difficulty communicating thoughts, remembering instructions, maintaining balance, making decisions, and/or concentrating
- Uncharacteristically argumentative or angry
- Limited attention span
- Unnecessary risk-taking
- Tremors/headaches/nausea
- Tunnel vision/muffled hearing
- Cold or flu-like symptoms
- Disorientation or confusion
- Loss of objectivity
- Easily frustrated
- Unable to engage in problem-solving
- Increased use of drugs/alcohol
- Unusual clumsiness

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**Most efforts are focused AFTER**

- AFTER a PTSD diagnosis
- OR
- AFTER a critical incident

Let your program be on the forefront of developing RESILIENCE in our Victim Assistance Workers and first responders BEFORE we reach that point!
Yet, our work can be so stressful that, if we don’t learn how to stay proactive about our wellness...

- We’ll start to break down
- We’ll stop caring about our chosen career
- We might even actively hate it

Nowhere in our job description does it say, “Give up the potential for living a joyful, meaningful and satisfying life, both at home and work.”

Five Core Elements of Resilience

- Self-knowledge and insight
- Sense of hope
- Healthy coping
- Strong relationships
- Personal perspective and meaning

Activity

1st - Quickly find your group, 1-5

2nd - Discuss in groups:

- What does the element mean to you?
- How has it affected you? Others?
- How have you used it? Examples?

Resilience Core Element 1: Self-Knowledge and Insight

- Knowing who you are
- Having a clear sense of what you believe and how you feel
- Identifying your strengths and weaknesses

Components of Self-Knowledge and Insight

- Positive self-esteem
- Strong inner locus of control
- Independence

Strategies To Develop Self-Knowledge and Insight

- Explore motivation for working with victims of crime
- Identify own strengths and challenges
- Identify themes associated with discomfort
- Clarify goals, mission, and boundaries of organization
- Know your code of ethics
- Recognize limits of control
- Get adequate training
- Individualize services to each victim
What is the best and highest use of your time? No one has any more or less of it: 24 hours in a day, 1,440 minutes, 86,400 seconds.

Why do YOU do the work you do?

Have you considered how you really want to leave your mark on humanity?

Reasons we are drawn to become one who “serves and/or protects” victims may be as varied as the many different disciplines critical to constructive case outcomes.

Regardless of our role, the secondary trauma of seeing and hearing the many details when working victims’ cases can have a disturbing effect on us as professionals and yes, on our families as well.

Resilience Core Element 2: Sense of Hope

- Believe that situations can get better
- Believe that future will be better than the present or past
- Recognize difficulty of the experiences of the victims you serve, yet maintain a positive view of the challenges of life

She / He who Laughs, LASTS!

Components of Sense of Hope

- Optimism: Capacity to envision a solution
- Sense of humor and ability to have fun

Strategies To Develop Sense of Hope

- Develop opportunities to succeed.
- Practice gratitude.
- Change or expand your job description.
- Give praise.
- Diversify client types.
- Seek advanced professional development.
- Decorate your office.
- Find appropriate ways to have fun.

*Laughter is the best medicine*

2nd Key to Resilience: Sense of Hope

Maintaining an attitude of hope and optimism.

How do we keep our attitudes fresh from becoming burned out?
2nd Key to Resilience

World renowned researcher, Dr. Barbara Frederickson discovered that experiencing positive emotions in a 3-to-1 ratio with negative ones leads people to a tipping point beyond which they naturally become more resilient to adversity. With the 3-to-1 ratio, we can:

• see new possibilities,
• bounce back from setbacks,
• connect with others, and
• become the best version of ourselves.

What's your ratio?
80% of Americans fall short of the ideal 3-to-1 positivity ratio. Take Dr. Frederickson's 2-minute online quiz and see how you score.

Resilience Core Element 3: Healthy Coping

• Balance the negative aspects of work with positive activities
• Pay attention to physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual needs and doing something about them
• Building on skills and abilities, and planning for and addressing negative feelings proactively

Components of Healthy Coping

• Utilization of skills and abilities
• Creativity
• Effective planning
• Addressing negativity proactively

Strategies to Develop Healthy Coping

• Learn to identify your physical stress reactions
• Balance your life
• Get adequate sleep. Myth: It's all about QUANTITY Truth: It IS about QUALITY
• Change the pace
• Develop calming and modulation techniques
• Assess safety in your work environment.
• Use regular supervision
• Use technology and resources wisely

What makes YOU smile?

What's in YOUR hobby chest?

To keep a lamp burning, we have to keep putting oil in it. -Mother Teresa
Physical Aspects of Healthy Coping

- Cognitive Behavioral Techniques
  - Progressive Muscle Relaxation
  - Controlled Breathing
  - Visualization
  - Identifying Enjoyable Activities

- Traditional Techniques
  - Sweat lodge
  - Drumming
  - Meditation
  - Singing/Chanting
  - Prayer
  - Smudging
  - Active Outdoor games
  - Healing Ceremonies

Each Culture Is Rich With Many Choices

Resilience Core Element 4: Strong Relationships

- Belonging is a basic human need
- Positive connections with others
- Personal networks of support

Components of Strong Relationships

- Attachments to others
- Seeking and giving support

Complete Assessment

Strategies To Develop Strong Relationships

- Enhance communication skills
- Learn boundaries of confidentiality
- Collaborate
- Discuss cases
- Seek inclusiveness and diversity
- Foster a team approach
- Address conflict resolution proactively
- Strive to be genuine, empathetic, and warm

Agree? Disagree? Organizational Trauma

Organizations that help traumatized clients can become traumatized themselves.

Google Classroom: The Organizational Self-Care Checklist

4th Key to Resilience: Strong Relationships

1. We often emphasize the importance of building resilience in crime victims. However, we sometimes overlook the need to develop resilience in ourselves.
2. If we are unable to cope with the difficult situations inherent in our work, we are susceptible to compassion fatigue or burnout. To go beyond surviving, then, we providers must learn how to build our own individual resilience.
3. But it is also the ethical responsibility of the organization to create an environment that supports and encourages this critical strength.

Keys to Strong Workplace Relationships: RESILIENCE

Part of taking care of ourselves is understanding which aspects of our life nurture or deplete us - including our workplace dynamics, policies, and physical environment. Is your work environment healthy and functional? Trauma informed? Do you feel supported and appreciated on a daily basis? If not consider these recommendations.

Celebrate Wins: When a victim has an emotional or behavioral breakthrough, it’s a party.

Don’t forget to celebrate your own accomplishments!

Celebrate Wins:
- Write down 3 good things you do every week with the victims you work with. Keeping a list will help you push through the hard times and remember the good.
- Write down 2 things you are grateful for every day. Appreciate both the little and big things that add up to more satisfaction in life.
- Compliment colleagues or support network personally or professionally every week.
- Recognize the small changes you’ve made by celebrating external and internal benchmarks.

Do you foster strong relationships within the workplace?

It takes how many positives to balance out 1 negative in building/maintaining relationships!

Speaking of Communication.....Just how much does it affect your life, family, health, and self-image?

Resilience Core Element #4: Strong Relationships

- No Screen Time 1 hour Before Bed
- No Technology Devices for 3 months
- $1 Million Dollars

Resilience Core Element 5: Personal Perspective and Meaning

- Personal points of view - weighing the costs, losses, and benefits associated with victim services work
- Individual morality, integrity, spirituality
- Coherent meaning for life

Components of Personal Perspective and Meaning

- Morality and integrity
- Spirituality
- Coherent life meaning
### Strategies To Develop Personal Perspective and Meaning

- Assess your personal values.
- Integrate new understanding in your work.
- Assess your perspective of suffering.
- Question old beliefs.
- Foster altruism.
- Engage in social activism.
- Include values in assessment of victims' strengths.
- Discard activities that are not coherent with values.

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**Dr. Dee BigFoot:**

There is the eternal belief among Indigenous peoples that each walk a sacred path occupied by both faith & reasoning.

That there is a purpose...

That there is order & understanding... why we are here & where we are going.

We also realize that we do not walk this path alone; we have many relatives that walk with us.

*Families are an essential feature of this sacred path.*

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**#1 Survival Tool**

Survivors Club.org

- Naval Survival Expert: 
  - Group Cohesion
- Miners: Facing brutal facts with realistic optimism
- Ability to agree to disagree & still come together

**PERSONAL FAITH**

**BELIEF SYSTEM**

**SPIRITUALITY**

- Mental
- Emotional
- Physical

Means something unique to each of us:

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**Correlation between resilience and work that persons find meaningful**

“In the best circumstances, the work becomes an extension of what you naturally want to do. That way you are the same person at home, at work, and in the community. All is integrated and coherent.”

— Thottam 2005

“What a person needs to lead in helping professions is consistent behavior that earns recognition from others. We must be looked to not only for correct information but for our passion and reputation for following through.”

— Sharon English, veteran victim service provider

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**Think through these…**

…and see what YOU can do to help yourself and others to not only SURVIVE, but to THRIVE!

- Self-knowledge and Insight
- Sense of Hope
- Healthy Coping
- Strong Relationships
- Personal Perspective and Meaning

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**With thoughtful self-assessment you may realize that the way you are doing things or expressing yourself no longer fits with your current values.**

- Work with your supervisor/program to change aspects of your work
- Look for employment somewhere else
Positive Aspects of Working in the Victim Service Field

Many victim service providers are strengthened and energized by the work that they do when trauma responses are acknowledged and processed.

Compassion SATISFACTION is INCREASED, Compassion Fatigue is decreased!

“I went to work every day, love my job and couldn’t believe that they paid me for it. It’s the kind of work that touches your soul.”
— Kim Spoonhower – OVS Retired

Additional Handouts Provided on GOOGLE CLASSROOM

- Common Signs & Symbols of a Stress Reaction
- Stress Relief Tips and Thoughts
- Organizational Self-Care Checklist
- Developing Resiliency: Books, Websites, Future Reading

OVC WEBSITE:
The Vicarious Trauma Toolkit contains a wide variety of tools for victim services, emergency medical services, fire services, and law enforcement who experience work-related trauma due to repeated exposure to victims of trauma and violence. Learn more about specific tools that have been gathered and vetted for usefulness and relevance for the fields below:

Victim services
Fire services
Emergency medical services
Law enforcement

1. Take a moment:
WHY do you do this work?

2. Personal Resilience Development Plan

- OVC Training Available -
Building Resiliency in Individuals and Organizations

This training consists of two Webinars held 2 weeks apart, short independent study assignments, followed by a 1-day face-to-face training, concluding with a final Webinar held several weeks following the face-to-face training.

https://www.ovcttac.gov/views/TrainingMaterials/dspBldgResiliencyChildAbuseOrgs.cfm

Reflection

What is one change you will make to protect yourself against compassion fatigue?

BEYOND SURVIVING TO THRIVING:
Closing

Questions?
Comments?

Live a Rich Professional and Personal Life!
There are no experts…
Only people who have tried to do their best
And are willing to share what they have learned!