

Self-Care for Helping Professionals

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Objectives

- To explore issues that may be contributing to Vicarious Trauma responses
- To offer suggestions for reducing stress that can contribute to poor self care
- To encourage participants to make self-care a priority



A Note About Self-Care

- Self-Care is crucial to maintaining good mental health if you are a helping professional
- Self-Care is highly personal- what works for me won't necessarily work for you
- Good Self-Care takes effort and practice



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I practice self-care on a regular basis.

Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

Addressing Vicarious Trauma

- It's important to take an inventory of the things that are impacting our stress levels and may be contributing to VT responses
- Figure out what is, and what is not, in our control
- Develop strategies that are sustainable





What's on your Plate?

Take a thorough inventory of the demands on you:

- Work- number of clients, types of behavioral challenges or disabilities, families' stress, paperwork demands, co-workers, etc.
- Family Life- Needs of family and friends in terms of time, energy, schedule
- Home- upkeep, errands, finances, keeping things going
- Volunteering, spiritual community, school work or school related activities, political or social groups, etc.
- Pandemic related stress



(Mathieu, 2007)



Example of Personal Inventory

Work:

- 35 clients- high risk, high family stress, many needs, families have little support
- Not enough resources to help child and families in the community
- Hearing about trauma regularly
- Deadlines
- Understaffed

Family Life:

- Scheduling conflicts- not enough time in the day
- Transporting kids, school projects, activities, "quality time"
- Caring for mom- should she be in Assisted Living? How is that going to happen?
- Friends asking to see me- no time- feel guilty

Home:

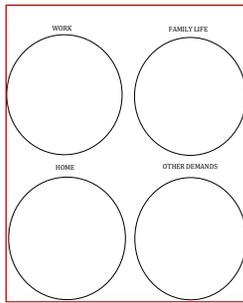
- General upkeep- cleaning, laundry
- Errands- day to day things, grocery shopping
- Home repairs- Putting things off because of lack of time/money
- Yard is a mess
- Car needs an oil change

Other demands:

- Activities within my spiritual community
- Volunteering at kids' school, helping out an ill friend, etc.
- Financial struggles



Personal Inventory of Stressors



What's on your Plate? (continued)

Once you have completed your detailed inventory:

- Take a look at it- What seems to be the sources of the most stress?
- What can you trim for your own health and well being?
- Engage a friend or partner to help you prioritize or challenge how you perceive these demands
- Work on letting go of things you have no control over



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Which plate is the most full of your four plates?

Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

Start gathering ideas about Self-Care

With Friends:

- Get together with friends over a meal or glass of wine to brainstorm things you can be doing for self-care that you are not currently doing
- Sometimes people who know us well are better at identifying our needs that we are

With Colleagues:

- Start a meeting with a self-care activity
- Carve out time for self-care during the week
- Encourage staff to write down ideas on a dry erase board or use a bulletin board for the exclusive purpose of self-care ideas
- Make a commitment to yourself and ask a co-worker to hold you to it
(Mathieu, 2007)



Self-Care: A Two Step Approach

The most effective Self Care for Vicarious Trauma involves:

- Developing a plan for urgent situations (Immediate Response)
- Developing routine skills and using them often (Long Term response)





Personal Management- Immediate Response

To be used following a particularly difficult encounter resulting in some VT symptoms:

- Utilize personal and professional support as quickly as possible
- Create a debriefing journal if immediate support is unavailable
- Make debriefing playlists or CDs and listen to them often
- Utilize breathing, mindfulness and relaxation exercises between student contact (more about this later)
- Take a short but brisk walk or take the stairs
- Try creative visualization



Personal Management- Long Term

- Limit your exposure to traumatic content outside of your work
- Volunteer
- Locate a colleague or two who will agree to be there to process with you and form a support team
- Get fresh air daily
- Be involved in hobbies or creative endeavors



Personal Management

- Spiritually connect
- Set small and attainable goals for yourself and recognize your accomplishments
- Engage in mindfulness
- Challenge negative thinking and challenge cognitive distortions
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet



(Harrison and Westwood, 2009)



Personal Management



- End the day by focusing on the human ability to survive
- Keep a success journal and reference it when needed
- Be aware of your triggers to Vicarious Trauma



Self-Care Strategies



- Massage, hot bath, aromatherapy
- Traveling- getting out of your normal environment
- Engage in spirituality
- Spending time with children who are not struggling emotionally



Deep Breathing



- Controlled breathing reduces anxiety and physiologically calms the body by increasing oxygen intake
- Practice by using bubbles



Self-Care for Good Sleep

- Limit exposure to violent or disturbing television programming or news shows in the late evening
- End screen time on your cellphone, iPad, and laptop at least two hours before bed
- Try lavender essential oil under your nostrils
- Utilize a Positivity or Blessings journal right before bed
- Drink an herbal tea such as Chamomile
- Talk to your doctor about using Melatonin as a sleep aid



Visualization



- Using your five senses to mentally bring you to a place of calm and quiet
- Temporarily taking you out of a stressful environment through the use of peaceful images or thoughts



Find time for yourself- Rebalance your workload

Try to build in short, restful breaks throughout the day

- ❖ Stretch or do a yoga pose between clients
- ❖ Listen to your favorite music during lunch
- ❖ Aromatherapy in between clients
- ❖ Take a quick walk or run up and down the stairs
- ❖ Try to balance your day by staggering your most challenging clients throughout the week instead of seeing them back to back
- ❖ Engage in a least one nourishing activity a day



Delegate- Ask Others for Help Both at Home and at Work

Sometimes we think we can do it all- or should do it all- this leads to exhaustion or resentment

- ❖ If you have kids- give them age appropriate chores
- ❖ Divide larger tasks between you and your partner
- ❖ Have a meal or two in the freezer for when you are "spent"
- ❖ Find a "buddy" at work and share some tasks that can be shared





Have a Transition from Work to Home

- Develop a ritual that you use every day when you leave the office to transition to your home life (and leave the office behind)
- Examples of rituals include:
 - Promptly take off your badge
 - Get into comfortable clothes right away
 - Use essential oils
 - Exercise
 - Stay in your car and listen to music before entering our home
 - Meditate - there are several apps for your phone that can be very helpful



Learn to Say "no" (or yes) more often

Many people who enter the helping professions are nurturers by nature and are eager to offer help but at what cost?

- Do you find yourself volunteering for additional tasks around the office?
- Are you seen as a "go to" person either at work, in your private life or both?
- Do you have perfectionistic qualities?
- Do you say "yes" when you want to say "no" and then resent it?
- Do you someone feels that you would do something better than someone else even though you don't want to volunteer?
- If you don't step up, someone else will (eventually)
- Work on improving your boundaries and practice being assertive



Increase awareness of your vulnerability

- Do you have a loved one with special needs, who is elderly or who has a trauma history?
- Are you in your own therapy or thinking about getting therapy?
- Are you aware of issues related to your family of origin? ("role" in your family, family coping style, communication patterns, boundary issues)
- Why did you decide to become a helping professional and how do you think your own personal experiences led to your decision?
- What do you hope to get out of your experience as a helper ?
- Do you tend to put excessive pressure on yourself?



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True or false: You do not need immediate interventions to combat Vicarious Trauma if you have good long-term strategies.

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Do you have a place to talk about Vicarious Trauma?

- Individual supervision
- Group supervision
- Therapy
- Create a support group



What can you do at CARD?

- Can you create a calendar of Self-Care activities
- Can you have a Self-Care station including aromatherapy, stress balls, soothing pictures?
- Can you organize a volunteer day or activity?
- Is there a way to hold a virtual support group?
- Is there any room to flex your schedule?



Keep in touch!

- If you have any questions regarding this presentation, or would like to learn more about our services learn about our services for children and families call me at (443) 923-5887 or email me at roe@kennedykrieger.org

Take the Feedback Survey!
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- To refer a child, or teen for mental health services call (443) 923-5980