

# Panelists

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**Preventing Burnout:**  
***Supporting Staff Through***  
***Tough Times***

# Helpers Become Stressed

- As helpers---here are talking about professional student affairs staff---we are less effective when under extreme stress.
- The purpose of this training is to identify how stress can have a negative impact on a staff. We will then offer some ways to manage this.

# Stress Reactions

- *Brain, body, and mind are inextricably linked...Alterations in any one of these three will intimately affect the other two."*

—Bessel van der Kolk, M.D., *Traumatic Stress*

# Stress Reactions

- Stress reactions are the signs and symptoms that we experience as a “heads up” from our body in times of turmoil.
- Stress is not an obstacle to be bested, but instead warning signs to be heeded.
- Stress reactions often worsen as the stress and hassles of work collect.

# Stress Reactions

Physical Stress Signs	Cognitive Stress Signs
Headaches	Exhaustion
Teeth grinding	Negative rumination
Insomnia	Inability to focus on a task
Irritability, anger	Reduced libido
Muscle tension	Reduction in joy
Gastric disturbance	Mental fatigue
High blood pressure	Feelings of futility
Rapid heartbeat	Devaluing of co-workers

# Stress Reactions

- We typically experience a reduction in stress symptoms once removed from the environment that is causing the stress.
- If we allow stress reactions to build, they accumulate and their impact spreads beyond our work life into home and relationships.

# Defining Terms...

There are a number of terms out there as they relate to stress reactions...

- Vicarious Trauma
- Secondary Traumatic Stress
  - Compassion Fatigue
    - Burnout



# Vicarious Trauma

- Vicarious Traumatization (VT) (McCann & Pearlman, 1990) refers to harmful changes that occur in professionals' views of themselves, others, and the world as a result of exposure to graphic and/or traumatic material.

– K. Baird & A. C. Kracen

# Vicarious Trauma

- VT can be seen as a normal response to ongoing challenges to a helper's beliefs and values but can result in decreased motivation, efficacy, and empathy.

– K. Baird & A. C. Kracen

# Secondary Traumatic Stress

- Secondary traumatic stress (STS) (Figley, 1995; Stamm, 1999) refers to a syndrome among professional helpers that mimics post-traumatic stress disorder and occurs as a result of exposure to the traumatic experiences of others.

– K. Baird & A. C. Kracen

# Compassion Fatigue

- Compassion fatigue is experienced by caregivers who are overly focused and upset by the cumulative trauma of those they are trying to help.
- The symptoms are similar to those of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

# Compassion Fatigue

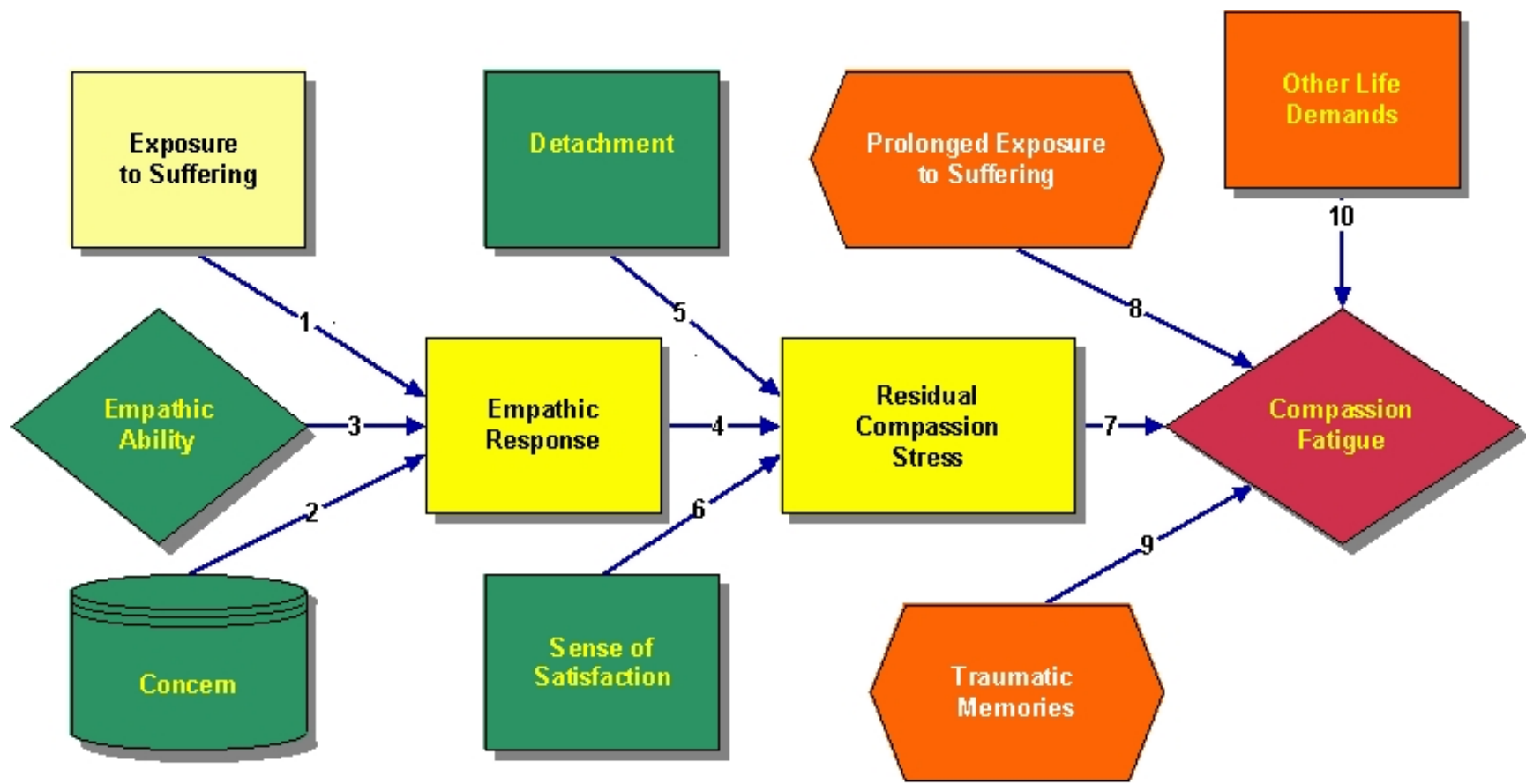
- Caregivers (therapists, resident advisors/directors, judicial officers, police and Deans) take on the trauma of those they work with.
- An over-intensive identification with the survival strategies adopted by students/clients, or inappropriate/lacking personal survival strategies (Figley, 2003).

*“Whoever battles with monsters had better see that it does not turn him into a monster. And if you gaze long into an abyss, the abyss will gaze back into you.”*

- Friedrich Nietzsche

# Compassion Fatigue

- Figley (1995) describes it as:
  - re-experiencing of the primary survivor's traumatic event
  - avoidance of reminders and/or numbing in response to reminders
  - persistent arousal.



**The Compassion Fatigue Process (Figley, 2001)**



# Compassion Fatigue

- Compassion Fatigue is the cumulative outcome of caring – caring too much and for too long with no end to be seen.
- You are absorbing the trauma from the eyes and ears of your clients.
- A natural consequence of working with people who have experienced extremely stressful events (Figley, 1995).

# Burnout

- The state which occurs when stress reactions reach a crisis point. More commonly experienced by staff and caregivers in response to continual exposure to other peoples pain.
- It grows over time and unlike CF, burnout is caused by stress and hassles, rather than over-empathizing with the trauma of those you work with.

# Burnout

- Physical symptoms include:
  - fatigue, low energy
  - poor sleep and headaches
  - irritability
- Emotional symptoms include:
  - anxiety and depression
  - hopelessness
  - aggression and cynicism
  - substance abuse

# Stress vs. Burnout

- Burnout is a defense characterized by disengagement.
- Stress is characterized by over engagement.
- Burnout produces a sense of helplessness and hopelessness.
- Stress produces a sense of urgency and hyperactivity.

Dr. Archibald D. Hart

# Stress vs. Burnout

- Burnout can best be understood as a loss of ideals and hope.
- Stress can best be understood as a loss of fuel and energy.
  
- In Burnout the emotions become blunted.
- In Stress the emotions become over-reactive.

Dr. Archibald D. Hart

# Cost of Compassion Fatigue (CF): Stress and Burnout

- Job performance decreases in terms of productivity
- Mistakes increase
- Office morale drops
- Work relationships suffering
- Personal life suffers, increased risk for substance abuse
- Can lead to problems with health

# Cost of CF: Stress and Burnout

- Isolation from support networks
- Decreased sense of self esteem and confidence
- High staff turn over (\$)
- Increase use of sick leave (\$)
- Lack of collaboration with other offices

# Housing Example

- Jordan is an experienced hall director in an upper-class area. Many of the high need students chose to live near each other. Jordan is finding late in the Fall semester that the RA's are highly irritable and unmotivated. Though the winter break helped, the staff, Jordan included, feel as though they have no energy left to give to the residents.



# Housing Example

- As a result, the staff begin to isolate from the students and each other. They find that their time away from campus/work is less satisfying and less energizing.

# Counseling Example

- Irene is a new professional who just completed her first year as a full time therapist. She is expressing feelings of being overwhelmed by paperwork, emotional hollowness and fears that she is being an ineffective therapist during supervision.
- She is beginning to express fear that she has chosen the wrong profession and is simply not cut out to work with college students.

# Counseling Example

- John has been a therapist for a university mental health center for over 15 years. His paperwork and overall therapeutic work are fine and he expresses no concerns about his work environment. He has stopped reading professional journals, does not attend conferences, is not interested in learning new therapeutic technique and frequently makes comments referring to students as 'kids' and 'being all the same'.

# Counseling Example

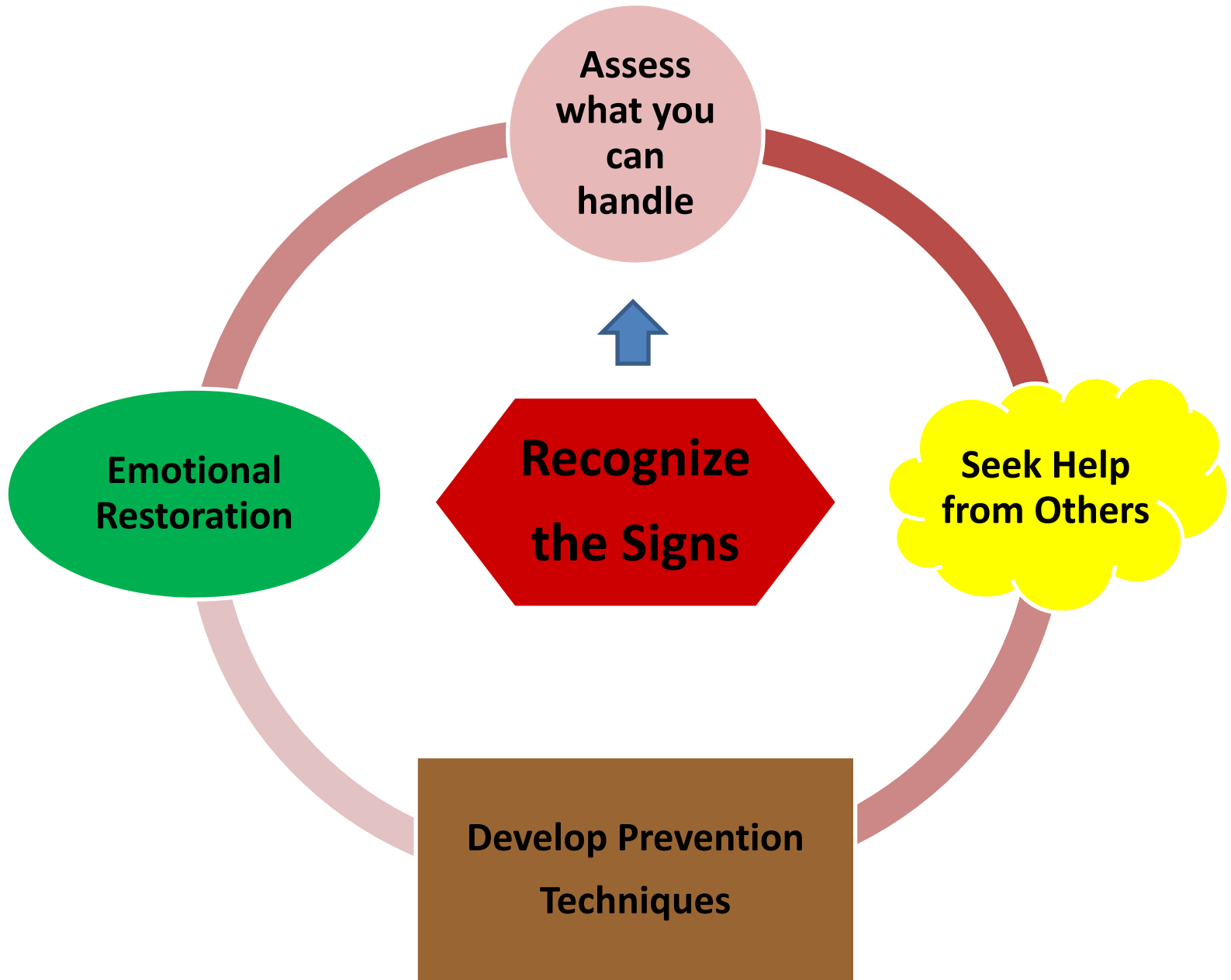
- He finds himself dreaming of retirement, being increasingly dissatisfied with his quality of life and questioning if he can last in this profession much longer.

# Judicial Affairs Example

- Chris is new to judicial affairs and was unprepared for a semester of assaults, racial graffiti found around campus, and the never-ending line of alcohol infractions.
- He finds himself frustrated at his friends and family, dreading coming into work and spending his looking for new jobs on the internet.

# Five Steps to Help

- Recognize the signs of CF and burnout
- Assess what you can handle
- Seek help from others
- Develop prevention techniques
- Emotional Restoration



# Recognize the Signs



Recognize  
the Signs

- Checking email right as it comes in.
- Dreading the start to a new day.
- Hoping for clients to cancel.
- Thinking about work consistently during your personal time.
- Inability to delegate, need to do everything yourself.



# Recognize the Signs



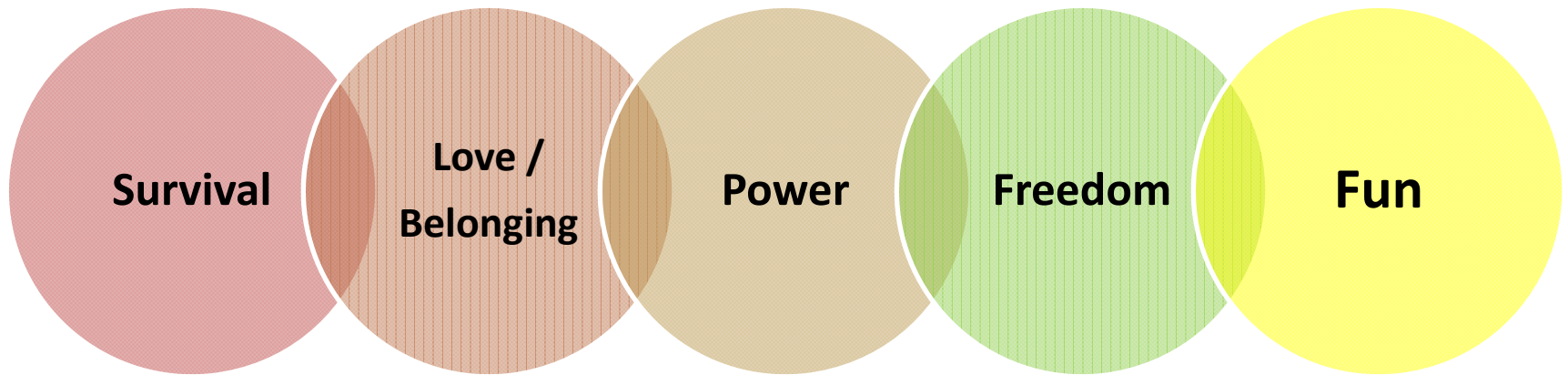
Recognize  
the Signs

- Honestly assess your family life—how are your relationships?
- Does your life have a sense of balance?
- William Glasser, the founder of Reality Therapy, argues that everyone has 5 basic needs. We are happy when these needs are met and in balance.

# Recognize the Signs

Recognize  
the Signs

## William Glasser's Five Basic Needs



# Honest Self-Awareness



Assess  
what you  
can  
handle

- Assess
- Prioritize
- Identify areas you can let go and let others step in.
- Trust your intuition.
- Have a realistic tolerance of failure.

# Honest Self-Awareness



Assess  
what you  
can  
handle

- From Dr. Grosch and Dr. Olsen’s work in *A Perilous Calling*--  
-Consider some family of origin work. Insights may parallel to how you handle conflict at work.
  - Was open conflict permitted? Arguing?
  - What were the “rules of engagement”?
  - Did you always have to remain “calm and reasonable”?

# Honest Self-Awareness



Assess  
what you  
can  
handle

- How was work seen in your family? Was it overvalued or undervalued?
- Was overwork encouraged and rewarded?
- Was it an “all work and no play household?”
- Were there persistent messages about perfectionism?

# Honest Self-Awareness



Assess  
what you  
can  
handle

- Does work function as an addiction and keep the underlying “feelings of emptiness from manifesting?”
- Patterns of over functioning and under functioning should be addressed.

# Seek Help from Others

A yellow, multi-lobed cloud-like graphic with a white outline, containing the text "Seek Help from Others".

Seek Help  
from Others

- Regular professional supervision with an experienced senior colleague.
- Developing and maintaining professional networks.
- Seek a culture of support (or seek to create this culture in your workplace).

# Prevention Techniques

Develop Prevention  
Techniques

- Schedule “re-charge” times in your day where you cannot be reached (no cell, email or phone).
- Identify healing activities and attend to spiritual needs.
- Learn the techniques of “cycle breathing” see attached MP3.



# Prevention Techniques

Develop Prevention  
Techniques

- Take time for relaxation and for lunch, and take at least two consecutive weeks for vacation.
- Take care of your body, through diet and exercise.
- Set boundaries between home and work: Don't play therapist in personal relationships (Create “Safe Spaces”).

# Prevention Techniques

Develop Prevention  
Techniques

- To avoid isolation, get involved in professional organizations where you can meet and discuss events and mutual problems.
- Learning mindfulness meditation.
- Journaling to reflect on life events.

# Emotional Restoration



Emotional  
Restoration

Emotional Restoration is the process of reducing mental fatigue, increasing attentional capacity, and restoring emotional well-being.

– Kaplan (1989)

# Emotional Restoration



Emotional  
Restoration

## Restorative Environments

- Stress is triggered and/or exacerbated by environmental cues.
- Specific environments will reduce or increase burnout.
  - If your stress increases when you are in your office, the office itself becomes stress producing.

# Emotional Restoration



Emotional  
Restoration

- Create a 'no-stress zone' or 'safe space' in the office environment such as an outdoor court yard for breaks. Encourage (and model) using vacation days that allow for physical time away.
- Create outdoor break space away from the dumpster and not overlooking the parking lot.

# Emotional Restoration



Emotional  
Restoration

- Boredom is extremely stressful and enhances feelings of burn-out. Change up the office routine, move furniture, do more interesting task at 'low' points in the day and get the tedious tasks done first.

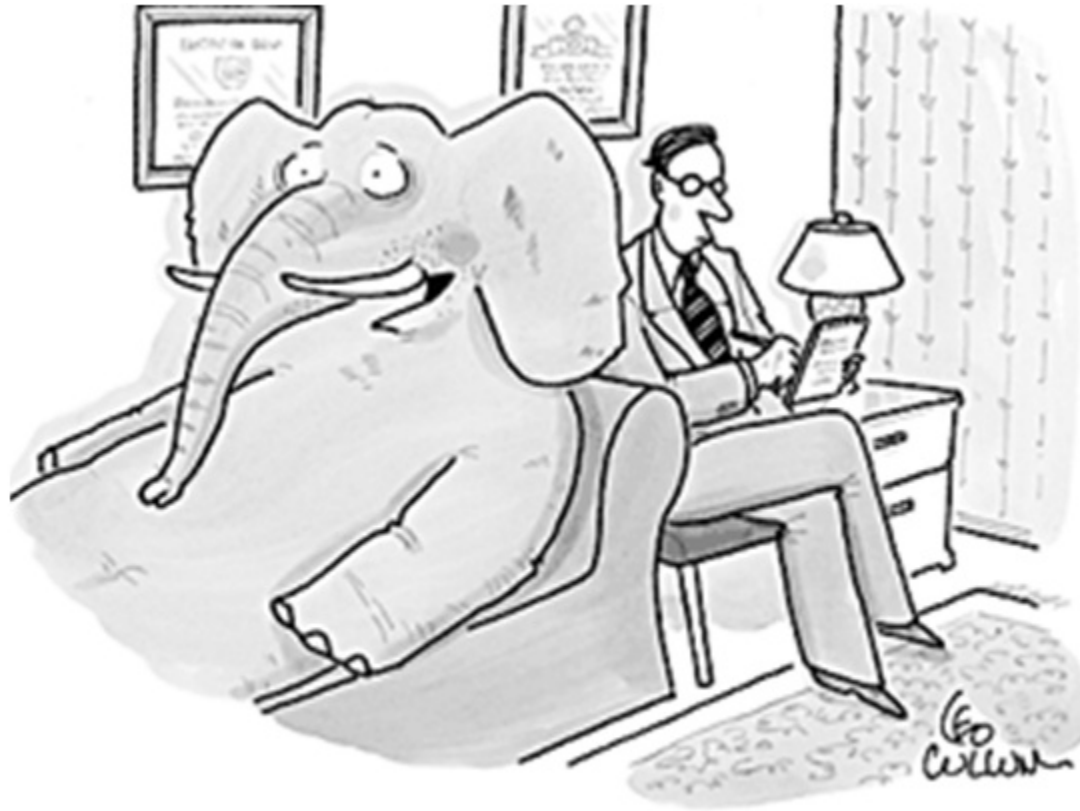
# Emotional Restoration



Emotional  
Restoration

- Restorative spaces support the needs and relaxation of the people using them. Don't take your staff on a nature walk up a mountain if the staff is not a group of hikers.
- Move your 'no-stress zone' in the office away from the fax machine and telephone.

# Counselors and Therapists



*"I'm right there in the room, and no one even acknowledges me."*



# How to Help Others

- When approaching your colleagues about their stress, compassion fatigue or burnout---make sure to have this conversation while they are not distracted or overly stressed.
- Identify stress-relief solutions such as retreats and workshops.

# Psychotherapist's Disease

- Dr. Edward Smith, in Sussman's book, *A Perilous Calling*, makes the following points:
  - When we first begin the practice of psychotherapy, “Craziness” looks alien and strange.
  - As we continue to see pathology all around in our patients---we tend to develop a “broken” and biased view of behavior.

# Psychotherapist's Disease

- For example:
  - Sadness (as in grieving and loss) becomes depression.
  - The energetic, extroverted child becomes hyperactive
  - The introverted child becomes “avoidant” or “schizod”

# Psychotherapist's Disease

- Be aware of a maladjustment bias---whenever a natural or adaptive behavior is labeled or conceptualized in pathological terms.
- If you arrive at a meeting early, you are anxious.
- If you arrive on time, then you are compulsive.
- But, if you arrive late, you are passive-aggressive.

# Psychotherapist Disease

- Dr. Smith gives the example of a friend who ran into him at a conference. He signed up for a native American sweat-lodge program and his friend said “Wow, you are really getting addicted to those!”
- In reality, he hadn't been to a sweat-lodge for 24 months. She knew he had attended one at the previous conference 2yrs ago and interpreted the behavior under the framework of pathology.

# Psychotherapist Disease

- The “cure” for this disease is to maintain a broad perspective and a large context. The ideas of humanistic psychology and positive psychology---seeing patients and behavior as responsive to the environment and not pathological serves as a protective force.

# Conclusions from Baird & Kracen

- Having a personal history of trauma is linked to the development of Vicarious Trauma.
- The amount of exposure (including hours with trauma clients, percentage on caseload, and cumulative exposure) to the traumatic material of clients increases the likelihood of Secondary Trauma Stress.

# Conclusions from Baird & Kracen

- Perceived coping ability is a protective factor for Vicarious Trauma.
- Having supervision is a protective factor for Vicarious Trauma.



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# Web Resources

- Website on CF
  - <http://www.breathofrelief.com/>
- Great resource for Pro-QOL survey
  - <http://www.isu.edu/~bhstamm/tests.htm>

