Secondary Trauma, Self Care, and Application to Child Fatality Review

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Outline

- Secondary Trauma Defined
- Warning Signs
- Recognition Barriers
- Trauma Stewardship
- Personal & Team Self Care Recommendations
- Examples of Activities
- Q&A/Opportunity for States To Report Out
• Cumulative
• Can catch you by surprise... and will affect your work (and your personal life)
• Recognition and communication within the work setting is key
Defintions- Trauma Exposure Responses

- Vicarious trauma- cumulative transformative effect upon the professional who is working with survivors of traumatic life events.
- Compassion fatigue- the emotional residue of exposure to working with those suffering from the consequences of traumatic events
- Secondary trauma- the emotional and psychological effects experienced through vicarious exposure to the details of the traumatic experiences of others.
Secondary Trauma

• ... the natural consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced by another - the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help the traumatized or suffering person. (Figley, 1993)

• Secondary trauma isn’t an issue of ‘If’ but rather ‘When’
Secondary Trauma as a consequence of participating in child fatality review

- ...a normal response to listening to events that lead to the (unnatural) death of a child who often times experienced traumatic events that either contributed to or caused their early demise. Participation can and often leads to subsequent feelings of hopelessness that arises from wanting to prevent future deaths but often times not having the appropriate resources, or collaboration to create such changes, because sometimes the problems are just too big.
Warnings Signs

- Feeling overwhelmed
- Sleep disturbance/ fatigue
- Numbing of feelings
- Lack of energy
- Disinterest in sex/romance
- Talking all the time about work
- Excessive anger/cynicism
- Viewing people as potential abusers
- Distrusting others
- Feeling overly responsible for community safety
Inability to Embrace Complexity-
- Craving for clear signs of good and bad, right and wrong
- Consequences: generalizing, lack of thoughtfulness, judgmental approach that is often short sighted

Minimizing-
- Trivializing situation by comparing it with another situation that is more dire. Tends to occur when we are ‘saturated’ (defense/coping mechanism)
- Consequences: Can add to negative organizational culture, can cause distress in personal lives
Recognition Barriers

- Self Blame (it’s just me)
- Shame (I’m embarrassed to admit it)
- Denial (It’ll pass if I ignore it)
- Self Sacrifice (Don’t want to bother coworker)
- Job security (I can’t expose my weakness)
- Pressure/Time (I don’t have time)

- I don’t know how to address this...
Trauma Stewardship

“Refers to the entire conversation about how we come to do this work, how we are impacted by our work, and how we subsequently make sense of and learn from our experiences... By talking about trauma in terms of stewardship, we remember that we are being entrusted with people’s stories and their very lives. We understand that this is an honor as well as a tremendous responsibility... We are required to develop and maintain a long term strategy for ourselves such that we can remain whole and helpful to others even amidst their greatest challenges.”
Self Care Recommendations

- Educate Team on Secondary Trauma & Resources
  - Warning signs
  - Potential effects
  - Review potential strategies for intervention
- Facilitate Team Assessment
  - Are there warning signs on the team?
  - What do we do for team self care now?
  - What do we want to do in the future?
  - What supports do we have?
  - What supports do we need?
Self and Team Activity Examples

- Develop/Review Team Mission Statement
- Formal & Informal post review debriefs
- Know your warning signs
- Let’s go fishing
- Find the time: 2, 5, 10, 30 minutes
- Breathe
- Take a break/Mail it in
- Individual Self Care Checklist
- Organizational Self Care Checklist
- Inventory the positive
Let’s Hear From You

- The State of Secondary Trauma Exposure in your State
- One takeaway from this workshop
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Resources

Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others (Laura van Dernoot Lipsky 2007)

What about you? A Workbook for Those Working with Others (National Center on Family Homelessness)