Vicarious Trauma and Vicarious Resiliency: Tools for the Social Justice Struggle

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Outline

• What we do at UST
• What is Secondary Traumatic Stress
• The PROQOL – Let’s take it!
• Action steps we have taken –
  – Class exercise on resiliency
Our work: Time

Predictability v. Unpredictability

Ample time v. Time crunch
Our work: Numbers

Solo practice v. team work

Individuals v. groups

Mass representation

Community Organizing

Group therapy

Individual case work
What Is Secondary Trauma & Why Should We Care???

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University of St. Thomas
Interprofessional Center
Lawyers & Trauma
“Psychological Trauma”

- Experience that involves actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual violence in 1 or more of the following ways:
  1. Direct experience
  2. Witnessing it in person
  3. Learning that it occurred to family or close friend
  4. Repeated/extreme exposure to aversive details of the event

(American Psychiatric Assn 2013)
Vocabulary

• Compassion Satisfaction (Figley, 1995)

• Compassion Fatigue (Figley, 1995)

• Burnout

• Secondary Trauma
CS-CF Model (Beth Hudnall Stamm, 2009)

Professional Quality of Life

Compassion Satisfaction

Compassion Fatigue

Burnout

Secondary Trauma
LAWYERS DRINKING DEPRESSION

A TOUGH JOB
Alcohol abuse and depression rates among lawyers versus the general population

- DEPRESSION
  - LAWYERS: 28%
  - GENERAL POPULATION: 7%

- ALCOHOL ABUSE
  - LAWYERS: 21%
  - GENERAL POPULATION: 6%

A PROBLEM ACROSS PRACTICE SETTINGS
Problematic drinking rates by lawyer employment setting

- 24% BAR/LAWYER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
- 23% PRIVATE PRACTICE
- 19% PRIVATE PRACTICE SOLO
- 19% GOVERNMENT/NONPROFIT
- 18% CORPORATE IN-HOUSE
- 17% COLLEGE/LAW SCHOOL
- 16% JUNIOR

PRIVATE PRACTICE FIRM

- JUNIOR ASSOCIATE: 31%
- SENIOR ASSOCIATE: 20%
- JUNIOR PARTNER: 24%
- MANAGING PARTNER: 21%
- SENIOR PARTNER: 19%

THE GENDER GAP
Male attorneys more susceptible to problem drinking

- 25% MALES
- 16% FEMALES

YOUNGER LAWYERS HIT HARDEST
Problematic drinking rates by lawyer age

- <30: 32%
- 31-40: 25%
- 41-50: 19%
- 51-60: 16%
- 61-70: 14%
- 71+: 12%

(Data Source: The Pennsylvania State University, School of Social Work, 2017)
Key Research in Legal Field

• Demoralization, anxiety, helplessness, exhaustion, & social withdrawal linked to high caseloads & long work hours (Gomme & Hall, 1995)

• Levin & Greisberg (2003) compared domestic violence, family law, & legal aid criminal attorneys with mental health & social service providers. Attorneys showed higher levels of secondary trauma/burnout correlated with high caseload & lack of supervision around trauma & its effects.
Key Research

• 63% of 105 judges reported 1 or more symptoms that they identified as work related to vicarious trauma (Jaffe et al., 2003)

• More depression, subjective stress, & changes in sense of safety & intimacy in criminal attorneys than civil (Vrlevski & Franklin, 2008)

• Piworwarczyzy et al (2008) studied 57 attorneys specializing in asylum cases; hours per week correlated with trauma score.
Key Research

- Attorneys in WI Public Defender Office showed significantly higher PTSD symptoms, depression, secondary trauma, burnout, & functional impairment compared with administrative support staff. Mediated by longer work hours & greater contact with clients who had experienced trauma. (Levin et al., 2011)
Who Is At Risk????

“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, 1996
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BURNOUT</th>
<th>COMPASSION FATIGUE</th>
<th>SECONDARY TRAUMA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Builds up over time</td>
<td>Builds up over time/symptoms unique to provider</td>
<td>Immediate; mirrors client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predictable</td>
<td>Less predictable</td>
<td>Less predictable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work dissatisfaction</td>
<td>Life dissatisfaction</td>
<td>Life dissatisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related to work environment conditions</td>
<td>Related to empathic relationship w/MULTIPLE clients’ traumas</td>
<td>Related to empathic relationship w/ONE client’s trauma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can lead to health problems</td>
<td>Can lead to health problems</td>
<td>Can lead to health problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel under pressure</td>
<td>Feel out of control</td>
<td>Feel out of control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted From: Best Start Resource Center, 2012
Possible Signs/Symptoms of Secondary Trauma Include But Are Not Limited To…

- Intrusive thoughts of the case
- Nightmares related to case content
- Fear/Horror
- Helplessness
- Anger/Rage
- Sleep Disturbance
- Irritability
- Concentration problems

- Avoidance/Numbing to avoid thoughts/feelings associated with traumatic events
- Detachment from others
- Increased intake of alcohol or “junk food”
- Reduced intimacy in significant relationships, including reduced interest in sex
- Intense emotional reactions ranging from denial to over-identification
Impact on Provider’s World View

- Feelings of lack of safety, trust or control
- Shattered assumptions about former beliefs about people/life
- Changes in spirituality
- Changes in Identity
<table>
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<th>WORK RISK FACTORS</th>
<th>COMMUNITY RISK FACTORS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personality</strong></td>
<td><strong>Role at work</strong></td>
<td><strong>Culture</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Temperament</td>
<td>✓ Like it? Feeling stuck?</td>
<td>✓ Similar/Conflicting?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Work style</td>
<td>✓ New to the field?</td>
<td>✓ Language Barriers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Coping Style</td>
<td>✓ Realistic expectations?</td>
<td>✓ Cultural Norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal History</strong></td>
<td><strong>Work setting</strong></td>
<td><strong>Community resources</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Triggers from past</td>
<td>✓ Resources</td>
<td>✓ Enough available to meet client needs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Current life circumstances</td>
<td>✓ Quantity of exposure to trauma</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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## Risk Factors for Secondary Trauma

(Adapted from Best Start Resource Center, 2012; Saakvitne & Pearlman, 1996)

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<tr>
<td>Social supports</td>
<td>Work conditions</td>
<td>Other community factors that create obstacles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Training</td>
<td>✓ Other community factors that create obstacles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Continuing education</td>
<td>✓ Other community factors that create obstacles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Time off</td>
<td>✓ Other community factors that create obstacles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Feeling “unsafe” due to inconsistent policies, communication, respect</td>
<td>✓ Other community factors that create obstacles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual connection/resources</td>
<td>Amount of organizational support when difficulties occur</td>
<td>✓ Other community factors that create obstacles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Barriers to supervision &amp; consultation</td>
<td>✓ Other community factors that create obstacles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of motivation/energy</td>
<td>PTSD symptoms</td>
<td>PTSD symptoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No evident triggers</td>
<td>May have triggers unique to service provider</td>
<td>Often triggers similar to client’s triggers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remedy: time away to recharge or changes in work environment</td>
<td>Remedy: Treatment of self-similar to trauma treatment</td>
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</tr>
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</table>
References


• Best Start Resource Center. (2012). *When Compassion Hurts: Burnout, Vicarious Trauma and Secondary Trauma in Prenatal and Early Childhood Service Providers*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Health Nexus


References

The ProQOL

For more information see www.proqol.org
Copyright Beth Hudnall Stamm, 2009
Measuring CS & CF: The Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL)

• The ProQOL is free
• A 30 item self report measure of the positive and negative aspects of caring
• The ProQOL measures Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue
• Compassion Fatigue has two subscales
  – Burnout
  – Secondary Trauma
Why use it?

- Well Established
  - Most widely used measure of the positive and negative aspects of helping in the world
  - Valid measure of compassion satisfaction and fatigue
- Easy to Use
- Easy to Score
Interpreting Scores

- Scores on individual scales tell us about a person’s responses on each of the constructs
- Viewing the combination of scores helps us “paint a picture” of what it’s telling us
- Can be used to track an individual’s CS and CF
- Not a Medical Test
  - screening for stress-related health problems
Let’s do it!

• Only for your viewing
  – If your neighbor is looking over you shoulder, poke them with your pen.
• Won’t be collected
• Use the information for your benefit.
Don’t: water your plants with whiskey

Vicarious Resiliency and Coping with Secondary Trauma
Sources:

- Brittany Stringfellow Otey, *Buffering Burnout: Preparing the Online Generation for the Occupational Hazards of the Legal Profession*, 24 S. CAL. INTERDISC. L.J. 147 (Fall 2014)
- Danielle R. Cover, *Good Grief*, 22 CLINICAL L. REV. 55 (Fall 2015)
- Comments by colleagues Carl Warren, Ngeri Nnachi, Carmeann Foster
A few quick points and some exercises

• AMBIGUOUS LOSS
• MILLENNIALS AND VICARIOUS TRAUMA
• VICARIOUS RESILIENCY
• STRENGTH FOR THE STRUGGLE
• ACTION STEPS
• RESILIENCY EXERCISE
“Vicarious”

- **Vicarious** - “Performed or achieved . . . by one person on behalf of another” Oxford English Dictionary
- **Vicar** – minister, servant, representative of the sacred
- **Vicis**. Latin root word for vicarious and vicar has multiple meanings – “stead” “office” “change” “turn”

As attorneys we represent others, we stand in the stead of others, we are agents of change and transformation.
Ambiguous loss

• “Ambiguous loss [is defined] as an unclear loss that defies resolution and that can create long-term confusion in its lack of resolution.”
• “The legal profession itself promotes the tendency to deny the ambiguity and unpredictability of the human condition, to ignore loss entirely, and to encourage a ‘get over it and move on’ mentality.
• “Serving marginalized populations requires recognizing . . . the diametrically opposed realities that working within the legal system can both help and hurt a client. “
• “Ambiguous loss . . . holds as its root uncertainty. To the extent that the attorney has lost some control over a case or a client, confusion and uncertainty about what to do may arise when there is no clear resolution of the problem. . . . In a profession such as lawyering where control and problem solving are paramount, many people will not tolerate well the inability to remain in control.”

Danielle R. Cover; Good Grief, 22 Clinical L. Rev. 55 (Fall 2015)
Millennials & Vulnerability to Burnout and Secondary Trauma

- “Digital Natives”
- Flexibility Afforded by Technology
- Socially Connected and Collaborative
- Civic-Minded and Socially Conscious
- Have Increased Vulnerability to Vicarious Trauma

Vicarious resiliency

“How [professionals] may strengthen their own well-being by appreciating and incorporating what they learn from their clients’ healing processes”

Client Phenomena

• **Posttraumatic Growth** – “positive changes that go beyond adjustment in spite of adversity”

• **Altruism Born of Suffering** – “processes by which individuals move from survivorship to an active quest to help others.”

Strength for the Struggle: Above and beyond individual case work

- immigration detention work
- Jamar Clark shot by police - 11/15/15
  - 4th precinct occupation & shooting of occupiers
- Philando Castile shot by police – 7/6/16
  - Defense of protestors
Action steps in general

PSYCHOEDUCATION

• Attorneys Must Understand the Psychological Aspects of Lawyering
• Professional Impairment is a Matter of Professional Responsibility

PREPAREDNESS

• Self-Awareness
• Social Support
• Self-Care
• Organizational Support
Action steps at the IPC

PSYCHOEDUCATION classes
• Resiliency
• Working with Clients in Crisis
• Working with Survivors of Torture and Trauma
• Dealing with Secondary Trauma
• Health and Wellness

ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT
• “Sanctuary” room
• Debriefing
Action steps on an institutional level

• Organizational systems
  – Student counseling
  – Critical incident stress management (CISM)
  – Grief groups
  – Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
Action steps on issues of race and social justice

• Classes
  – Opening our Eyes I, II & III
    • History of race relations, implicit bias, white privilege
  – Immigration and Race
• Organizational Support - suggestions
  – Mission Roundtables
  – Fora on race and criminal justice
  – “Back coverage” by director, dean, and president
  – Clinic as a safe space
  – Informal support groups for attorneys of color
Do: water your “plants” with water...

And friendship, exercise, healthy eating, time off, reflection, appropriate self-care . . . .