Compassion Fatigue and Self-Care Opportunities for Professional Caregivers

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DISCLOSURE

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Objectives

1. Describe compassion fatigue and its causes.
2. Explore the impact of emotional labor on current practice.
3. Discover remedies for compassion fatigue that can be integrated into practice.
4. Explore writing a personal narrative of well-being and gratitude.

Note: the primary reference sources for this course are below
Professional Care Giving…

- Is a social role with rules of behavior that evolve over time

- Is a social system that defines perceptions of and responses to what is stressful with many disciplines historically embracing the contradiction of a demand for caring while preserving emotional distance

(McNamara, Waddell and Colvin, 1995; Bolton, 2001)
The Care in Care Giving: Empathy

- “Accurate empathy involves the sensitivity to current feelings and the verbal facility to communicate this understanding in a language attuned to the client’s feelings.” (Sabo, 2006)

- Empathy is the ability to identify with another’s experience of the world

- Empathy is not the same thing as compassion
The Care in Care Giving: Compassion

- “Feeling with another while appreciating that the feelings of one are not the same as the feelings of the other...”

- “Compassion affects our actions over time allowing us to continue to act with concern for the welfare for others.”

(Pask, 2003; Blum, 1980)
Emotional Labor Is…

- Managing emotion and emotional displays in accordance with the therapeutic goals of the interaction
- An essential element of care giving
- Often unrecognized
- Marginalized and not recognized as “real work”
- Associated with job stress and/or job satisfaction

(Mann & Cowburn, 2005; Bolton, 2001)
Often the result of emotional labor is institutionalized dissonance between the “felt” experience of the professional care giver and the “expressed” experience of the professional caregiver.

A positive example is therapeutic matching used to convey empathy and generate trust.

A negative example is facial expression that is used to promote compliance and cooperation as in an insincere smile.

(Bolton, 2001; Mann & Cowburn, 2005; Mann, 2005)
Emotional Labor Can Result In...

• Increased job satisfaction and feelings of personal accomplishment when the effort results in the reduction in suffering

• Decreased job satisfaction, decreased feelings of personal accomplishment and burnout when the provider is helpless to impact suffering

(Mann & Cowburn, 2005)
Unrelieved suffering can engender feelings of helplessness.

Holding the suffering of others requires personal energy.

Recurrent witnessing of suffering can infuse the care givers personal space with suffering.

(White, Wilkes, Cooper and Barbato, 2004)
Measured  (Maslach Burnout Inventory)
Professional Satisfaction

(Kravits, Black, Grant, & Kirk, 2010)
Measured (Maslach Burnout Inventory)
Decreased Job Satisfaction

(Kravits, Black, Grant, & Kirk, 2010)
Responses Associated with Indirect Exposure to Another’s Trauma

- Vicarious Trauma
- Countertransference
Countertransference

• A natural and valuable emotional reaction

• Important source of information about client and caregiver and their interactions

• Influences all aspects of the caregiving experience

• Noticing and working with countertransference is important

(Katz & Johnson, 2006)
Vicarious Trauma

• Occurs in response to exposure to the trauma of another
• May be associated with the caregiver experiencing intrusive trauma symptoms
• Frequently occurs for those individuals who have been sensitized by an earlier personal history of trauma
• May result in changes in interpersonal and occupational functioning

(Sabin-Farrell & Turpin, 2003)
Continuum of Stress Syndromes

- Burnout
- Compassion Fatigue
Burnout

• “...a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by long term involvement in emotionally demanding situations...”

(Pines & Aronson, 1988, p. 9)
Definition of Compassion Fatigue

The natural behavior and emotion that arises from knowing about suffering that is experienced by another and the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help that person who is suffering...

(Figley, 1995)
Signs Associated with Compassion Fatigue

Sudden emergence of:

- Sadness
- Depression
- Sleeplessness
- General Anxiety

(Conrad & Kellar-Guenther, 2006)
Personal Characteristics Associated with Compassion Fatigue

- Situational (Recent divorce, death, major life events)
- Personal History (History of trauma)
- Coping Style (Avoidance, isolation)
- Boundaries (Blurry boundaries or over involvement with patients)
- Untreated Anxiety and/or Depression

(Abendroth & Flannery, 2006)
Professional Characteristics Associated with Compassion Fatigue

- Over involvement (blurry professional boundaries)
- Unrealistic personal expectations
- Trying to get personal needs met through work
- Job not a fit for personality
- Crises in personal life

(Maytum, Heiman and Garwick, 2004)
Caregiver Perceptions and Beliefs Associated with Compassion Fatigue

- Belief that there is too much to do and that it can’t all be done
- Watching suffering with the feeling that it can’t be relieved (feelings of helplessness)
- Perceptions that there is not enough time
- Feelings that you are on your own and there is not enough support from the manager

(Maytum, Heiman and Garwick, 2004)
Work Characteristics Associated with Compassion Fatigue

- Workload
- Shift work
- End of life work

(Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002)
Stages of Experience Contributing to Compassion Fatigue and Burnout

- Emotional Exhaustion
- Decreased Personal Accomplishment
- Burnout
- Depersonalization
- Compassion Fatigue
Qualities of Protection

- Active social support: Families of blood and families of heart
- Hardiness: Triumph of hope over experience
- Resiliency: The recognition of internal and external resources

(Sabo, 2006)
Internal Resources 102

Me... Helper Martha

Me... Capable

Sandra

Smart

Competent...

Myself...

Strong

Me...

Kravits et al, 2010
External Resources 102

- Cross: 'GOD is MY Hero.'
- Star: 'My Husband.'
- Doughnut: 'My older son.'
- Doughnut: 'My younger son.'

Kravits et al,
Remedies for Compassion Fatigue: Personal Strategies

**Short-Term**
- Participates in self-care activities (i.e.: exercise)
- Enjoys non-work relationships
- Uses humor
- Maintains positive thinking and attitude

**Long-Term**
- Creates personal philosophy of care
- Engaged in self-analysis (i.e.: triggers & new coping strategies)
- Nurtures supportive relationships

(Maytum, Heiman, and Garwick, 2004)
Self-Care Activities

- Meditation
- Sleep
- Exercise
- Diet
- Optimistic Thinking
"try something new"

Stress

WAKEUP
Promise

Shopping for pleasure
Sex for stress relief
Talking to friends

Problems with me
Non-Work Relationships

- Social Support
- Community
- Family
My Garden of peace

Kravits et al, 2010
Maintain Positive Attitude: Affirmations

- “I am learning to love myself and be conscious.”
- “I feel healthy, active and energized.”
- “I am physically energized and emotionally calm.”
Humor
Work Related Coping Strategies

**Short-Term**
- Take time off
- Set limits
- Debrief with colleagues
- Change assignments
- Participate in professional development activities

**Long-Term**
- Develop supportive professional relationships
- Develop a framework for thinking about care giving
- Develop and maintain professional boundaries
- Create rituals for managing loss
- Choose a work environment that matches your values
- Participate in professional development activities

Maytum, Heiman, and Garwick, 2004
Professional Boundaries

- Reflect upon the nature of successful and problematic interactions

- Consider the role of over identification with the suffering of another in compassion fatigue

- Mindfully access empathy and compassion on behalf of reducing the suffering of another while at the same time distinguishing between their suffering and our own
Well-Being

• Positive emotion and pleasure

• Engaged in Life

• Meaningful Life

(Peterson, Park, & Seligman, 2005b)
Happiness and Well-Being

• Can it be increased?

• Research indicates that it can.

• What is required to create a sustained improvement in feelings of happiness and well-being?
Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, and Schkade Model of Happiness (2005)
Environment can influence what genes of our DNA turn on and turn off. We can influence the expression of our genetic material by our interactions with the world around us.
Life Circumstances
Expectations of Life
Attachment History
Trauma History
Volitional Positive Activities
“Becoming Happier Takes Both a Will and a Proper Way”

Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, and Schkade
Model of Happiness (2005)
Expectation and Motivation

- Create an expectation that you can feel better
- Anchor it to those things that give you meaning
- Engage the process with discipline
Optimistic Thinking

- Imagining “best possible future self”

- Write down three things that went well each day

- Regularly reflect and remember a situation in which you were at your best and reflect on the strengths that you demonstrated during that situation. Then consider how you may use those strengths in new ways

- Write down a positive affirmation to reflect upon
Expressing Gratitude

• Write a letter of gratitude and deliver it

• Regularly document in writing those things for which you are grateful

• Recognize and acknowledge your own progress towards well-being
Acknowledging Personal Strengths

• Take some time to identify your own personal strengths

• Pay attention to situations in which you use those strengths

• Identify new ways to use those strengths to create an opportunity for a positive experience
Cross-Cultural Evidence of Strengths Associated with Well-Being

- Kindness
- Fairness
- Authenticity
- Gratitude
- Open-Mindedness

(Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2005a)
Random Acts of Kindness

Positive activities demonstrated to elevate feelings of well-being:

• Committing acts of kindness and “counting one’s blessings” (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, et al, 2005; Koo, Algoe, Wilson, & Gilbert, 2008)

• Engaging in five acts of kindness weekly (e.g. donating blood, feeding a friend’s pets, etc) (Sheldon et al, 2011)
The Stories We Tell

• Our narratives about ourselves provides a vehicle for understanding our beliefs and attitudes

• Our narratives reflect who we are, our identity

• Our narratives can be used to craft a future of well-being
Reminiscence for Well-Being

- What makes life worthwhile for you?
- What have you discovered about life that helps you for the future?
- Reflect on an image of yourself that would be a good metaphor for your life?
- Imagine that you are experiencing a perfect moment of well-being, what do you notice about that moment?

(Bohlmeijer et al, 2009)
Regular involvement in self-directed effortful practice of positive activities with regular re-enforcement.