

Why We Are Vulnerable

Empathy is a major resource that helps trauma workers help traumatized people.

Most trauma workers have experienced some sort of trauma in their own lives.

Why We Are Vulnerable

Unresolved trauma can be activated by the traumatic material we hear from the people we help.

We are most vulnerable when working with the pain of children.

What are the signs?

Physiological reactions:

- increased arousal, agitation
- sleep disturbances
- headaches, stomach aches
- impaired immune system

What are the signs?

Emotional reactions:

- irritability
- uncontrolled emotions
- anxiety or fear
- anger, rage, hostility
- detachment, shutting down
- boredom
- feeling incompetent

What are the signs?

Cognitive reactions:

- diminished concentration
- confusion
- intrusive traumatic imagery
- self doubt
- preoccupation with others' traumas
- perfectionistic thinking

What are the signs?

Behavioral reactions:

- impatience with others
- sleep disturbances
- nightmares
- startle response
- hypervigilance
- use of negative coping
- losing things

What are the signs?

Spiritual reactions:

- loss of purpose
- sense of meaninglessness
- anger at God
- questioning prior spiritual beliefs
- pervasive hopelessness



What are the signs?

Interpersonal reactions:

- withdrawing/isolating
- decreased interest in sex or intimacy
- mistrust of others
- impact on parenting
- projection of anger or blame
- intolerance of others' behaviors



How do we cope?

- We intellectualize
- We deny
- We minimize
- We over identify
- We get depressed
- We get anxious
- We use drugs and alcohol



It is unethical *not* to attend to your self care as a practitioner, because self care prevents harming those we serve.

Charles Figley



How to Prevent Compassion Fatigue

- Balance work and your life outside of work
- Get adequate sleep, nutrition, exercise
- The "two colleagues" guideline
- Remember the joys and achievements of the work



How to Prevent Compassion Fatigue

6 circles exercise



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