




# EFFECTS OF TRAUMA EXPOSURE ON CARE PROVIDERS

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# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Expand Understanding of Trauma
- Identify Symptoms Related to Trauma Exposure & Ways It Affects Us
- Articulate Ways to Protect Ourselves From Effects of Trauma Exposure

The following story is fictional and does not depict any actual person or event.

Officer Hopp

Police Officer  
Works 60+hour weeks  
Lives alone; hyper-extrovert; 1<sup>st</sup> in her family to go to school; lives away from home.

She comes home from work one day - handled a “domestic call” where she made one arrest, saw one dead body, perp/victim’s kids were in school while drama went down. She was “feelin it” then her BFF Officer Wilde told her she’s a softy, needed to just come out for a drink...



## Officer Hopp



Now she's home alone...

- Hanging out with Wilde was fun but all over now
- She is just sitting in a chair at home, full uniform on and all
- Replaying to scene in her mind
- Wondering who told the children
- She comes from a "stable family home" so she's wondering how that all feels
- Where are the children sleeping if the scene is still being processed?
- Who told the kids?

## Phone rings!



She rolls her eyes  
Puts on a smile  
Answers them on facetime

*"everything's great, mom!"*



### Marge Simpson

Marge was fairly unsatisfied with her marriage so she began online school a few years ago. She recently left her alcoholic husband, is now single-parenting and the sole breadwinner in her household. She likes being a nurse works 3 days on and 4 days off.

She is working the holiday weekend so she is not with kids for Christmas. A 10 year old autistic child with asthma is brought in by EMS – actively giving compressions, she’s got the next open bed. Everyone does their best, *still* the child doesn’t make it.

Marge gets home, looks at her special needs child and is just “so sad.”



## Marge Simpson

- It's been a while since that case but Marge still remembers:
  - The EMTs bringing the kid in while doing chest compressions
  - The chest compressions she did and feeling the broken little ribs from it
  - The mother's loud wailing
  - The siblings looking just like the patient
- Marge notices her scrubs are less fitted, she's had a migraine for days, she hasn't had motivation for much, her sister told Marge she seemed different like zoned out and aimlessly staring at the kids.



## Marge Simpson





HMMM...

### Felonious Gru

Felonious has a big non-traditional family. His family helped him change his ways, he went to medical school and is now a successful emergency room attending physician.

Dr. Gru was chatting with the chaplain on the side of the trauma bed while trauma docs assessed the patient about his disgust with how he had to level the patient but *“the \_\_\_jerk just needs to stop drinking so he won’t fall down the \_\_\_stairs and use up a hospital bed and medical resources he would never appreciate cuz he’s busy being a \_\_\_useless member in society!”*

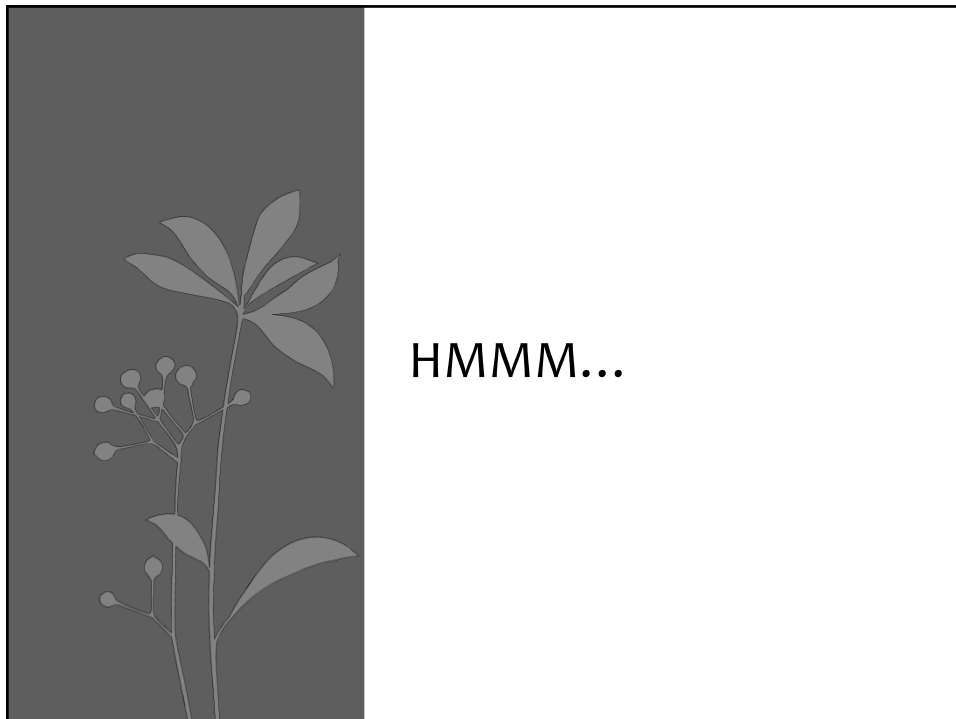
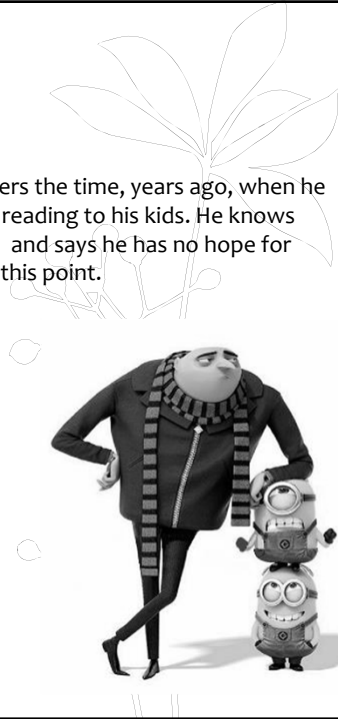


## Felonious Gru



He remembers the time, years ago, when he use to enjoy reading to his kids. He knows he's "jaded" and says he has no hope for humanity at this point.

He thinks his oldest kid got a much more happier father than his last kid. He use to be motivated to work on his house but now he just enjoys his man-cave when he is home. He does attend all family functions but has learned to silence his "real thoughts and drinks heavily in preparation for the B\_\_S\_\_.



HMMM...

## Judy Jetson

Judy loved working with people, found herself often helping random people out and so she decided to become a social worker. She did an internship at the hospital and was offered a position with benefits.

She covers multiple areas including the emergency room where this week she has had to find placement for 5 adolescents with mental illness, submitted 3 child abuse reports to DHS, met 4 survivors of assault, and supported the family of a homicide victim.

Her long standing partner had a surprise for Judy when she got home today: a surprise birthday party. Yup, a full house, a big cake, and tickets to the super bowl!



## Judy Jetson

Judy inhales deeply and “*attends*” her own party and as soon as everyone leaves goes off on her partner:

- In what universe would it make sense to celebrate like this?
- You *obviously* don’t know me at all!
- I’m glad your day gave you time to plan this crazy s\_\_\_\_ I didn’t even get a chance to pee!!
- I don’t even know why I try to make this work...







HMMM...

### Fred Flintstone

Fred had long day at work. He picks up hours at the trauma hospital in environmental services regularly and because he is quick and good, he often gets the trauma bay assignment.

He's been cleaning after patients, families, and staff all day. He's been looking forward to the food he left in the fridge yesterday and had the latest episode of the walking dead ready on his DVR for tonight.



## Fred Flintstone

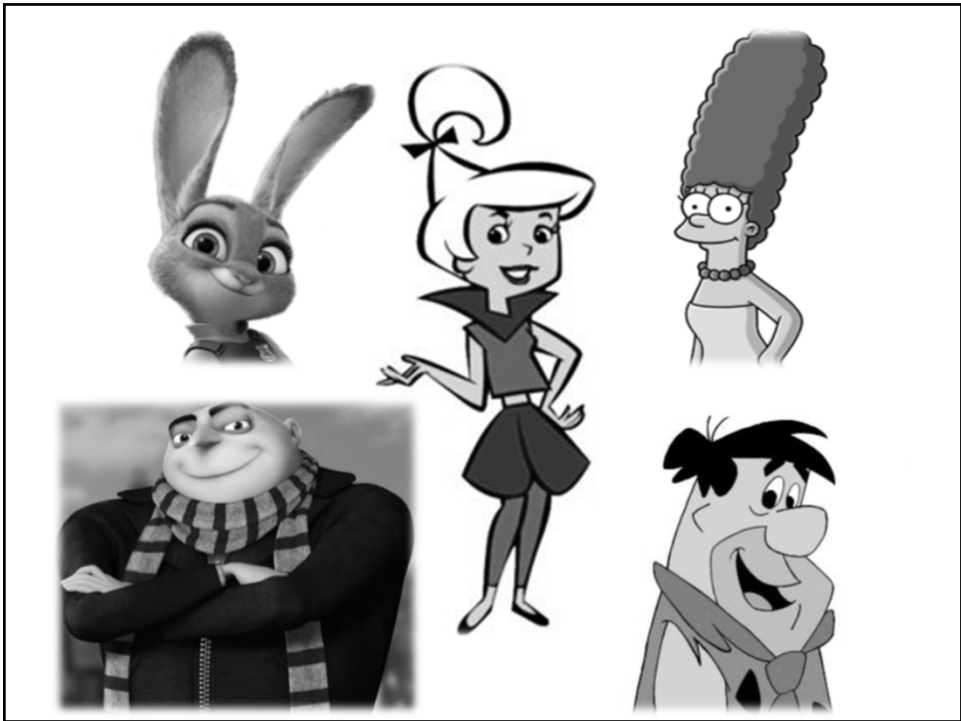


- He walked into the house and immediately stepped on dog poop, which meant his daughter Pebbles forgot to take the dog out!
- Bamm-Bamm & Pebbles are stressing over an unfinished science project – they need a ride to the store for some CRUCIAL material
- And someone *definitely* ate his left-overs!!

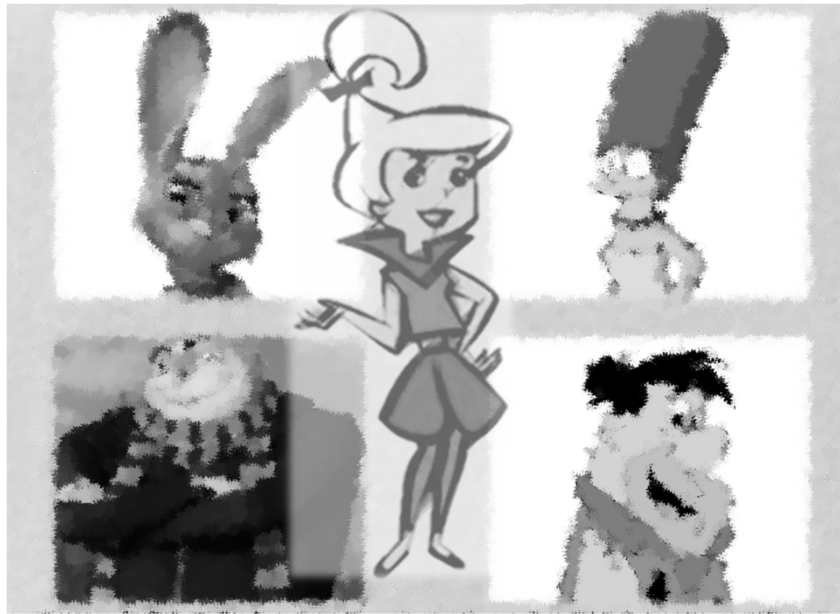
## Fred Flintstone

- Wilma isn't home because it's Wednesday and she and Betty go Bible-study
- But when Wilma gets home...





You are NOT that different



You're still special!



AND trauma affects you!



## Trauma: Expanding the Definition

•Why?

Because...  
some of the  
hardest things  
we see are NOT  
always in the trauma bay.



## Trauma: Expanding the Definition

- Deeply Disturbing or Distressing Experience
- Event that causes sense of horror and/or helplessness
- Threat to serious injury or death



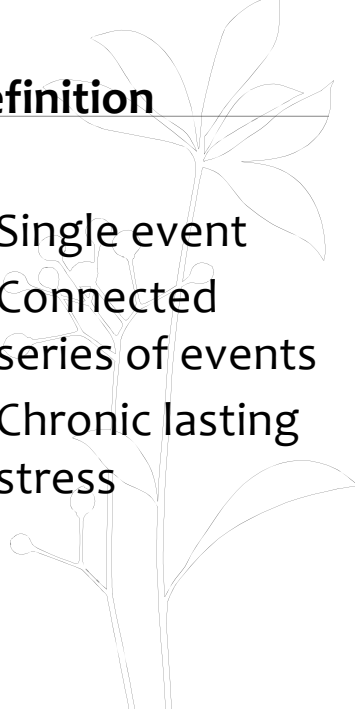
## Trauma: Expanding the Definition

- Sudden
- Unexpected
- Perceived as dangerous
- Diminishes our skills in coping



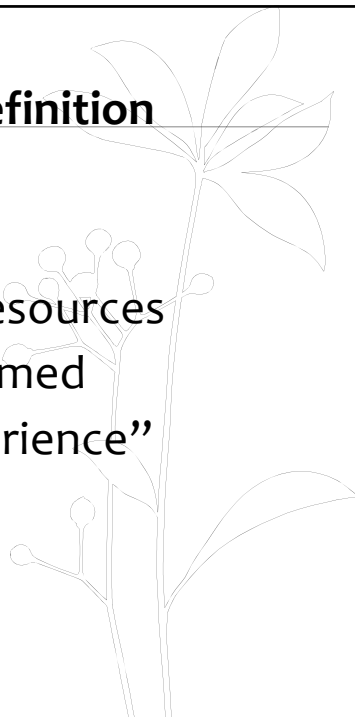
## Trauma: Expanding the Definition

- Single event
- Connected series of events
- Chronic lasting stress



## Trauma: Expanding the Definition

“when internal resources  
are overwhelmed  
by external experience”

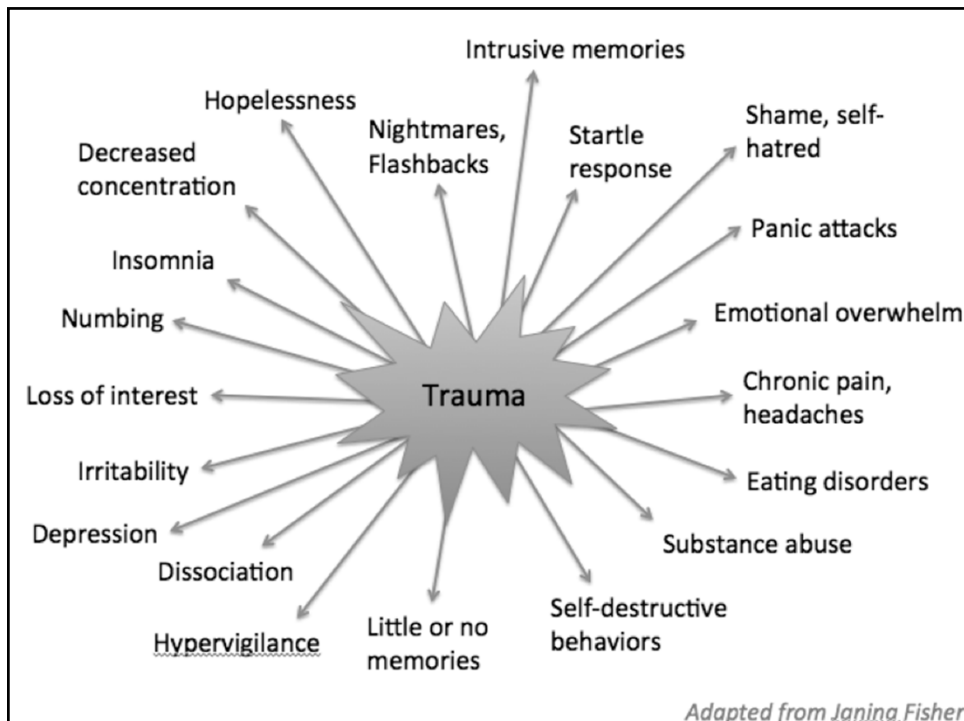
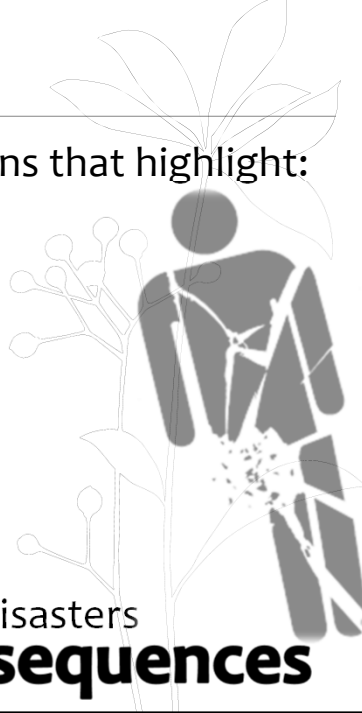


## **Our Exposure**

Clients, Stories, and Conditions that highlight:

- Poverty
- Abuse
- Violence
- Pain
- Death
- Loss
- Natural and Human-Made Disasters

**This all has consequences**





## **(some) Physical Consequences**

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- Gastrointestinal Problems
- Cardiopulmonary Disease
- Heart Disease
- Ulcers
- Diabetes
- Neurological
- Chronic Exhaustion
- Insomnia
- Headaches (Migraines)
- Heartburn
- Hot/Cold Sweats
- Nausea
- Weight gain/loss
- Skin Breakouts (Hives, eczema)
- Sexual Dysfunction
- Frequent Illnesses

## **(some) Mental Consequences**

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- Depression
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Guilt
- Reduced Sense of Personal Accomplishment
- Conflict with Others
- Angry Outbursts
- Difficulty Concentrating
- Issues with Safety, Trust, & Control



## **Our Exposure**

Clients, Stories, and Conditions that highlight:

- Poverty
- Abuse
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- Natural and Human-Made Disasters

**This all has consequences**



**“MY VOICE  
WILL GO WITH YOU”**

-MILTON ERICKSON

**THEIR VOICES GO WITH  
US... THEIR STORIES**

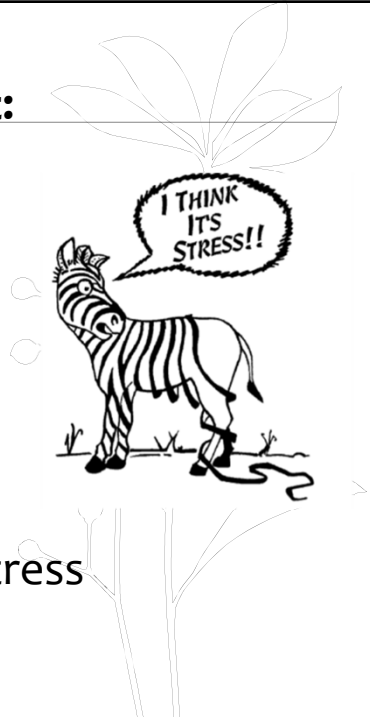
**CHANGE US**

-MICHAEL MAHONEY



## Researchers have called it:

- Job Stress
- Chronic & Toxic Stress
- Vicarious Trauma
- Compassion Fatigue
- Secondary Traumatic Stress
- Burnout



## Some Vocabulary: Vicarious Trauma



**Cumulative transformation** of the inner experience (cognitive schemas and belief systems) resulting from empathic engagement with clients' traumatic experiences

(Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995)

## Some Vocabulary: Secondary Traumatic Stress

The natural and consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowing about traumatizing events experienced by a significant other – the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person.

(Figley, 1995)

*Figley then coined the term “Compassion Fatigue” because a more user friendly term ☺*



Signs can vary but often include:

- Intrusive Negative Thoughts
- Loss of Hope
- Anxiety
- Sleep Disturbances

Physical, Emotional, and Spiritual Exhaustion **because of the “giving of one’s self”**

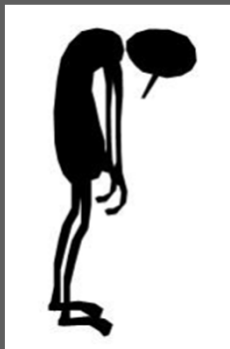




“COMPASSION IS BEING WITH THE HURT PERSON AND DOING THE RIGHT THING AS A RESULT. COMPASSION STRESS IS NOT BEING ABLE TO LET GO OF IT” -FIGLEY

## Compassion Fatigue

### Risk Factors



- Age
- High Case Load
- Lack of Job Experience
- Previous Personal Trauma
- Repeat Exposure to Trauma
- Codependence with Clients
- Lack of Support (home or work)
- Multiple Deaths in Short Period
- Lack of Balance **Work + Rest + Play**

## Some Vocabulary

Result of physical exhaustion



Illustration, resulting in emotional strength, motivation (Maslach, 2003)

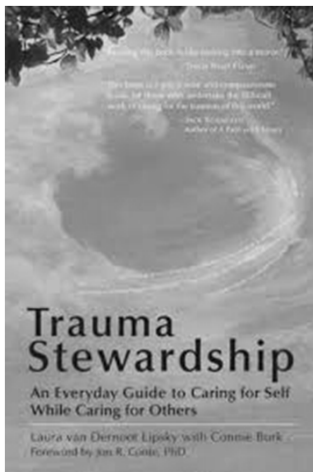
Organizational Stress  
 Workplace Dissatisfaction  
 Apathy  
 Fatalism  
 Decreased Productivity  
 Personal Difficulties



## People Report...

- Fear
- Anxiety
- Deep Sadness
- Fear
- Helplessness
- Moodiness
- Nightmares
- Negative “day dreams”
- Reduction in effective functioning
- Negative outlooks on life
- Increased use of sick time
- Substance Abuse
- Detachment from others
- Aggressive behaviors
- Emotional Numbing
- Resentment
- Inability to Relax
- Dread towards clients/patients/families

## Ted Talk – Laura van Dernoot Lipsky **Beyond the Cliff**





## Encyclopedia of Trauma (edited by Figley)

- Chaplains have hyper-altruistic tendencies and a propensity to NOT acknowledge the same stress-induced symptoms they recognize in others
- THIS leaves chaplains particularly susceptible to physical, emotional, behavioral, professional, and inter personal burnout symptoms
- By definition we join sufferers in their pain and help find hope... which is a constant intense exposure



## Encyclopedia of Trauma (edited by Figley)

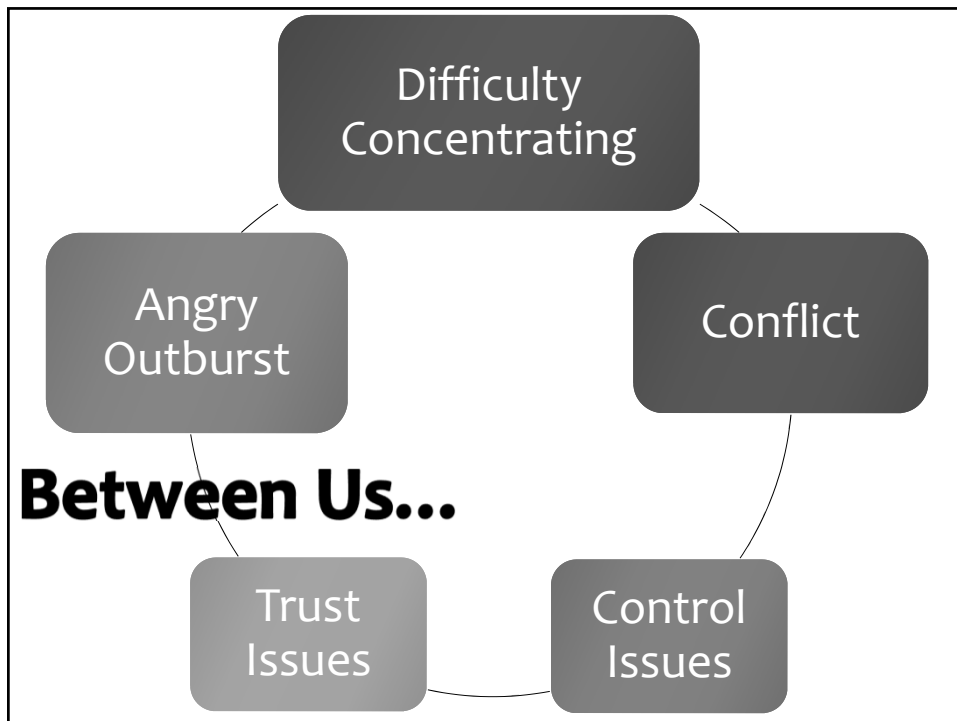
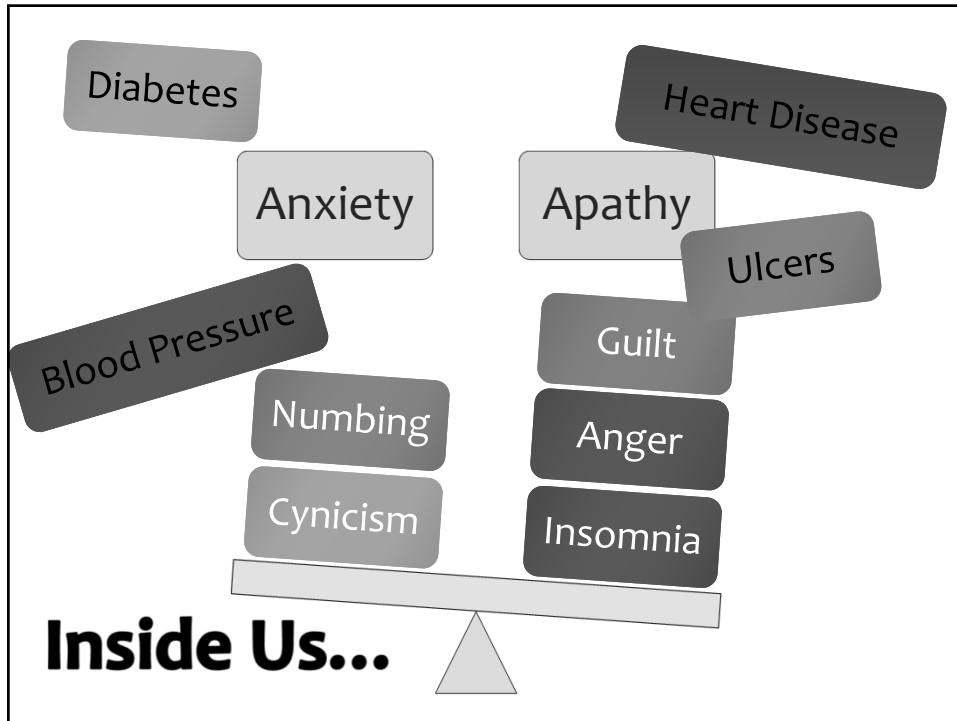
- The accumulation of stressors OR single triggers can result in avoidance behaviors, numbing, workaholic tendencies, hyper-vigilance, difficulty concentrating, sleeping/eating/exercise problems and social withdrawal

- Critical times:  
when another person's spiritual crisis emulates our own → agonizing stress, overwhelming chaotic feelings, and profound self-doubt.



## Encyclopedia of Trauma (edited by Figley)

- Some faith traditions divinely judge or divinely sanction pain
- Difficult questions (unanswered → doubt → confidence erodes)



## Watch out for Empathic Strain

- EMPATHIC WITHDRAWAL

- Blank-screen façade
- Intellectualization

- EMPATHIC REPRESSION

- Distancing
- Denial

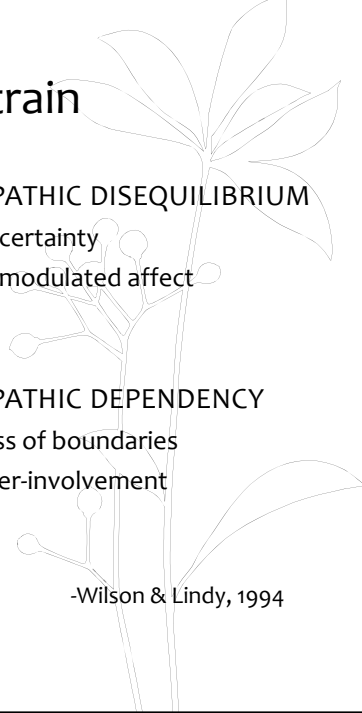
- EMPATHIC DISEQUILIBRIUM

- Uncertainty
- Unmodulated affect

- EMPATHIC DEPENDENCY

- Loss of boundaries
- Over-involvement

-Wilson & Lindy, 1994



BUT WAIT...

## 😊 Vicarious Resilience 😊

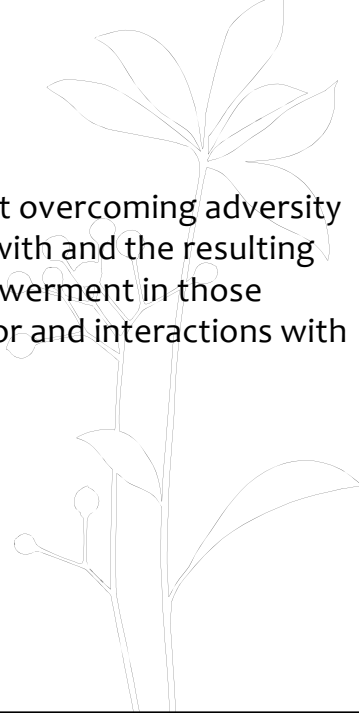


### For Chaplains:

- Chaplains did NOT report high compassion fatigue but instead spoke of POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL GROWTH following their exposure
- Post Traumatic Growth
  - Increased Compassion / Empathy/ Emotional Well-Being
  - Increased Faith / Spiritual Beliefs/ Connection with the Sacred
  - Increased Insight and Understanding of Self and Others
  - Increased Spiritual Practices
  - More Openness to Others

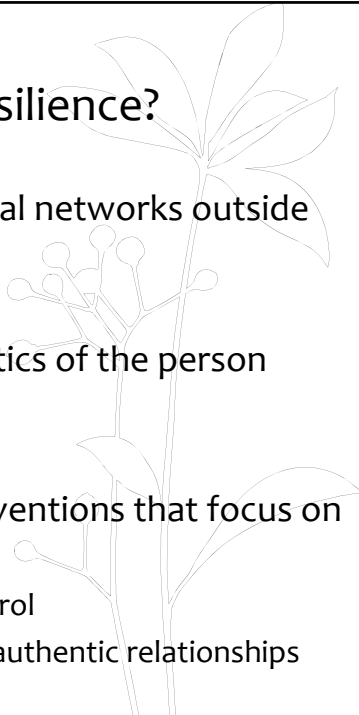
## Vicarious Resilience

- Process of clinicians learning about overcoming adversity from trauma survivors they work with and the resulting positive transformation and empowerment in those clinicians through their empathy for and interactions with clients.



## What Fosters Vicarious Resilience?

- Unconditionally supportive social networks outside survivors families
- Protective personal characteristics of the person developed over time
- Psychological therapeutic interventions that focus on
  - Building strength in client
  - Fostering sense of personal control
  - Promotion and development of authentic relationships



## Research has shown that practitioners...

- Gain an understanding that people CAN transform experiences
- Develop more realistic and less idealistic worldviews
- Gain deeper appreciations for their own lives
- Gain a greater sensitivity to prejudices



## Practitioners also reported

- Increased empathy & compassion
- Profound sense of meaning
- Increased knowledge and awareness of issues
- Enhanced self-esteem
- Increased sense of hope that people endure & overcome trauma



## Resilience Factors

- Optimism
- Self-Confidence
- Enjoy making plans and carrying them out
- Ability to control one's emotions
- Strong support system
- Have a purpose in life
- Gratitude
- Know one makes a difference
- High self-esteem
- Life has meaning
- Sense of Humor
- Flexibility
- Able to think through possibilities
- Spirituality and/or Religion
- Generosity
- Strong role models
- Willing to change
- Self-directed
- Adaptability
- Enjoys learning

- Steven Spidell D. Min. BCC

### RESEARCH SAYS:

- Sociologists have said religious/spiritual beliefs are dynamic and shift w context
- We are designed to feel empathy
- Neuroscience shows brain shifts from exposure to pain of others
- Brain shifts with empathy training and compassion training

What helps prevent negative effects:

- Good Supervision
- Training/ Preparation on variety of topics (feeling prepared for cases/clients/etc.)
- Good Interdisciplinary Team
- Positive Religious Coping (forgiveness, seeking spiritual support, spiritual connections, religious purification)
- Self-Compassion/ Compassion Cultivation Training

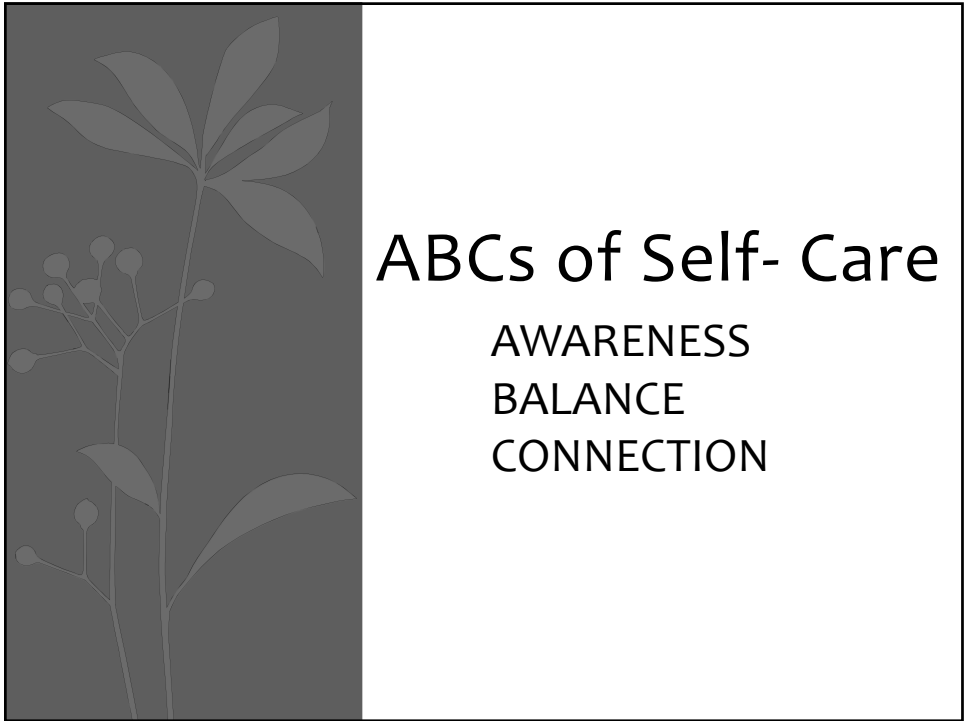
Shift Gears

**Intervention**

**Prevention**







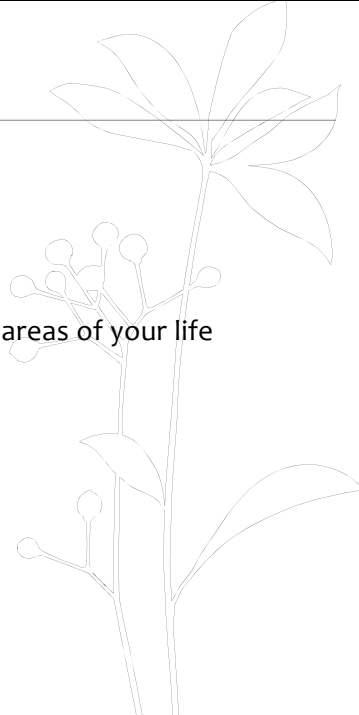
# ABCs of Self- Care

AWARENESS  
BALANCE  
CONNECTION

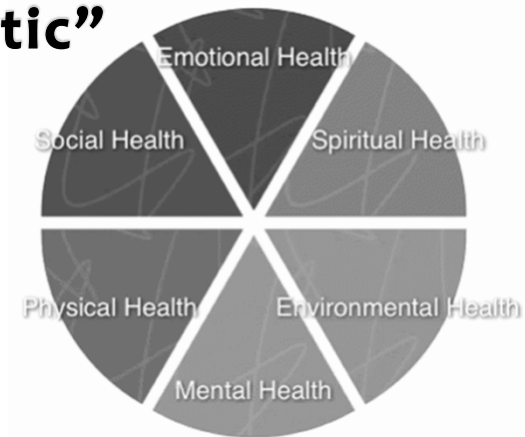
| <b>Awareness</b>  | <b>Balance</b>   | <b>Connection</b>   |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Know your tolerance levels, boundaries, needs, feelings, resources, body sensations</li><li>• Know when your needs/ emotions/ sensations change</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Balance (harmonize) work and life</li><li>• Prioritize</li><li>• Re-evaluate</li><li>• Theory of thirds:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1/3 work</li><li>1/3 play</li><li>1/3 rest</li></ul></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Connect to LIFE-GIVING individuals</li><li>• Connect to bigger purpose or meaning</li><li>• Allow for at least one deep emotional connections with an individual who can be 100% there for you, to support and reflect your image back to you</li></ul> |

## True Self-Care...

- is completely about YOU
- benefits no one else
- is based on YOUR preferences/ context
- gives you life & energy
- deepens satisfaction → affects all other areas of your life
- hurts when you lose it
- is ongoing



## Based on Your Values & Context Think “Wholistic”





Create  
A  
Self-Care Plan

Fail to Plan = Plan to Fail

|          | Spiritual | Mental | Physical | Emotional |
|----------|-----------|--------|----------|-----------|
| HOME     |           |        |          |           |
| WORK     |           |        |          |           |
| ANYWHERE |           |        |          |           |

# Self-Compassion



# Self-Compassion

- Self-Kindness VS Self-Judgment
- Feelings of Common Humanity VS Humanity in Isolation
- Mindfulness VS Over-Identification



- Low SC → ↑ Self Compassion
- High SC → ↓ Self Compassion
- High SC → ↓ Compassion Fatigue
- SC leads Carers to take time off, sleep more, eat well, are less afraid of rejection and failure 😊



THAT WHICH GIVES LIGHT  
MUST ENDURE BURNING  
– VICTOR FRANK

Basic tips in our control

- Healthy Eating
- Good Sleep Hygiene
- Regular Aerobic Exercise
- Regular Social Activities
- Creative Activities/Hobbies
- Spiritual Practices
- Professional Enrichment
- Mindfulness
- Self-Compassion



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