

Surviving and thriving as a trauma therapist

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The Lives of Therapists Psych Today poll, 2008

- 98% reported they usually found work fulfilling
- Most rewarding aspects:
 - Seeing improvements in clients, Functioning as a free agent, Educating others on mental illness/reducing stigma, Financial compensation, Feeling better able to navigate our relationships
- Most frustrating aspects:
 - Insurance companies, Financial compensation, Difficult clients, Solitude of profession, Creating a client base

Potential challenges (Psych Today Poll, 2008)

- Threat of lawsuits
 - Financial/Billing/Insurance
 - Ethical Dilemmas
 - Fear for personal safety
 - Split public and private persona
 - Suicide of patients
 - 25% psychologists, 50% psychiatrists
- (American Academy of Suicide Prevention)

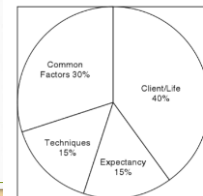
Potential Hazards to the Family

- Members received less emotional support, felt minimized
- Interpretations/Jargon used in parenting
- Confidentiality vs. sharing patient stories
- Jealousy
- Home office

How can chronically sitting with suffering affect us?



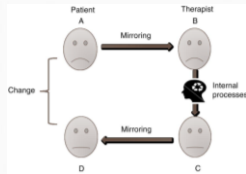
As therapists, the largest piece we have direct access to....



Consistent Findings:

- Cuijpers, et al, 2012
- Lambert et al, 1993
- From Bergin & Garfield, 2004

Lending out your frontal lobe



Overview of Today's talk

- Overview of Concepts
- Experiential Exercises
- Individual Strategies
- Organizational Strategies
- Further Resources

Defining Constructs

- Stress
- Emotional Contagion
- Empathy
- Compassion (fatigue)
- Secondary/Vicarious Traumatization
- Burnout
- Resilience

Burnout & Vicarious Trauma

- Burnout: Sense of emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and feelings of inadequacy.
 - Maslach, 1996
- Vicarious Traumatization/Secondary Traumatization
- Compassion (Fatigue)
 - Figley

Stress

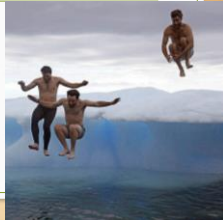
Environmental demands or internal demands that tax the adaptive resources.

Is Stress bad? If you think so...

- Health and Mortality (Keller et al., 2012)

Challenge vs. threat appraisal

- Polar Plunge (Blascovich & Mendes, 2000)



Facial, Affect Mimicry

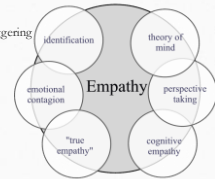


Emotional Contagion



Empathy

- Emotional resonance
- Observing or imaging another's affective state, triggering an isomorphic affective response.

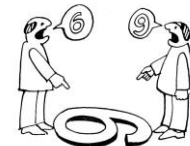


Role play

- Client Actor, Therapist and Observer
- Actor give background and answer questions
- Simulate a therapy session
- Share reactions from both sides and inferences the therapist would make, are they projections? Observer share perceptions.

Empathic Accuracy

- Accuracy inferring the thoughts and feelings of another person
 - Blindness Study (Silverman, Quinn, & Bowman, 2014)



Rationale for empathy

- Sustained empathy is associated with improved performance
 - Fuller histories, higher provider ratings, fewer malpractice complaints, increased treatment adherence (Halpern, 2012)
 - Increased provider ratings of health, wellbeing and professional satisfaction.
- How much does it matter for treatment outcome?
 - Outpatient psychiatrists
 - Substance Use Disorder Treatment, Depression (Imel TBP; Krupnick et al, 1996)

Costs of Empathy

- Resource competition with other cognitive demands
 - Increased errors
- Increased sympathetic and cardiovascular arousal
 - Chronic stress effects
- Increased depression/anxiety
- Increased vulnerability to burnout
 - Decety, 2012



Compassion

- Deep awareness of suffering and a wish to relieve it. Sense of warmth, shared humanity towards another's pain.
 - Neff, 2015
- Compassion is not being a doer mat
- Mindful, Non-Judgmental Stance, Non-attachment to outcome
 - Skillful/unskillful
 - Effective/ineffective

Lending out our frontal lobe

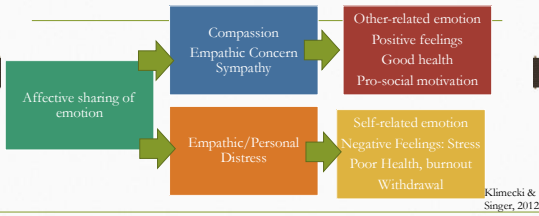
fMRI Studies



Social Baseline Theory

- Neural pathways and hormonal stress responses for ER less active with actual or anticipated social support.
 - Hostinar et al., 2012
 - Coan et al., 2006

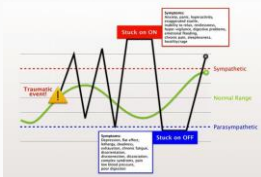
Pathways for Compassion



Putting it all together

		Fx	Example	Outcome
Contagion	Emotion mirroring w/o awareness	Social synchrony	I feel pain	Avoidance, dysregulation, problematic
Empathy	w/ awareness	Provides information, motivates action, builds rapport	I feel your pain	Shared experiencing
Compassion	Sense of caring and desire for shared positive welfare	Promotes healing	I want to alleviate our suffering	Expressions of love and kindness.

Sitting with traumatized clients



Interoception Experiential Exercise

Our own trauma histories

- Trauma History tunes nervous system upward (Porges, 2011)
 - Recruiting our vagal break
- Dialectical impact
- Need for therapist to feel secure in the room.

What is Resiliency?

Use of resources to respond to stressor & conservation of once stressor has passed.

- Elite performers ↑ attuned to body signals

Phillippe & Selzer, 2005



Common Reactions to Burnout

- Exposure control
- Emotion Suppression

The problem of avoidance

- Dissociative strategies in managing adversity
- Overreliance on avoidance
- What are classic psychologist avoidance strategies?

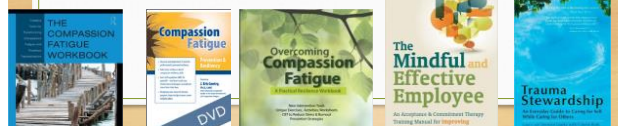
Can I just fake it?



- **No avoiding**
experiencing one's own emotions were associated with problems in empathy (Singer, 2014)
- Expressive suppression (Gross, 1998a), leads to adverse social outcomes.

Programs to Reduce Burnout

- Accelerated Recovery Program
- Acceptance and Commitment Treatment
 - R RCTs including hospital workers, social workers, substance abuse counselors
- Compassion Training (Klimecki, et al., 2012)



Yoga Break



Small Picture Options

- Active Management throughout the day
 - Regulating Breathing
 - Snacks (willpower)
 - (McGonigal, 2014)
 - Movement/Breaks
 - Sense of control/mastery
 - Awareness of expectation/intention
 - Humor/play/give in your schedule

Big Picture Options

- Diverse life interests
- Radical Acceptance (your superpower comes with a few cons)
- Sense of control
- Social support
- Self-care
- Self-compassion
- Meditative/Contemplative Practice
- Ongoing therapy

What are the barriers?

- Awareness
- Vague goals
- Skill deficit
- Problematic contingencies
- Environmental factors are overwhelming
- Intense Emotions
- Unhelpful beliefs
- Willingness

Linchan, 2014

Action Plan for Wellbeing

BURNOUT AWARENESS AND ACTION PLAN			
Thoughts	Behaviors	Situations/Feelings	POSSIBLE RESPONSES
Green			
Yellow			
Red			

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Organizational Factors

- Tension between factors that prevent burnout and trends in modern capitalism and corporate culture.
 - Reliance upon quantitative indices for performance.
 - Decreased direct social interaction
 - Drive for expediency
 - Reinforcing outcome over process

Moss & Coughman, 2012

Environments that curb burnout

- Realistic Job Demands
- Employee perceived fit with position
- Recurrent rewards
 - Personalized reinforcers
- Sense of control
- Perception of Justice/Fairness
- Social cohesion

What we do

- Awareness of Burnout
 - Infused at every meeting
- Link tasks to employee's values
- Supporting social cohesion,
- Sense of control, empowerment with agency
- Challenge vs Threat framing (affects ability to utilize social support)
- Incentivize self-care
 - Dbt Board
 - Health voucher
 - Green yellow red at CCC

ProQol



Self-compassion test

SELF-COMPASSION
Dr. Kristin Neff

HOME ABOUT WORKSHOP/EVENTS RESEARCH PRACTICES RESOURCES CONTACT

Test how self-compassionate you are

Please read each statement carefully before answering. To the left of each item, indicate how often you believe in the stated manner, using the following scale:

Always Never	Occasionally	Sometimes Often/Very Often	Fairly Often Always	Always Never
1	2	3	4	5

Whoever battles with monsters had better see that it does not turn him into a monster. And if you gaze long into an abyss, the abyss will gaze back into you.

-Nietzsche

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