Compassion Fatigue, Moral Injury, & Self-Care

For Clinicians Serving Traumatized Populations

What is Compassion Fatigue and Moral Injury?

Compassion fatigue is when you are feeling physically, emotionally, and mentally exhausted from supporting families who have experienced trauma.

Moral injury is the psychological, social, or spiritual distress that happens when a person participates in, witnesses, or fails to prevent an act that violates their deeply held moral or ethical belief.

Signs to Notice in Yourself

- Irritabilty
- Emotional detachment
- Reduced empathy
- Burnout
- Exhaustion
- Heightened anxiety

Secondary Traumatic Stress

When clinicians start to experience the same traumatic stress symptoms as the patients they care for – intrusive thoughts, nightmares, hypervigilance.

Preventing Compassion Fatigue: A-B-C's of Self Care

A Awarenss

Determine how you are feeling, what your stress level is, and whether your behaviors are consistent with who you want to be.

B Balance

Balance among different types of activities including work, personal, family life, rest, and leisure.

C Connections

Building connections and supportive relationships with co-workers, family, and community.

What You Can Do

- Practice self-compassion
- Connect with the "why" of your work
- Create moments of joy and laughter
- Set boundaries
- Seek support from colleagues
- Take care of your physical health (sleep, eating, exercising)
- Spend time with non-trauma exposed children
- Healthy emotion management (relaxation, mindfulness, creative outlets to express your emotions, therapy)
- Engage in additional training, consultation, and supervision with experienced professionals
- Spend time in nature

"Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare"
- Audre Lorde

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