New Challenges Facing Frontline Workers: Effectively Serving Our Older Clients during the Pandemic

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World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

JUNE 15

WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY
The purpose of the workshop is to understand ways to help frontline workers with their trauma while working with clients experiencing the same trauma in the time of COVID-19.

Teach webinar participants the skills that promote healthy behaviors while working in the time of COVID-19 and share those skills with their clients and colleagues.
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Recognize stressors in general and stressors due to COVID-19 and the impact of quarantine for yourself, clients, colleagues, and others. (Joanna)

2. Appreciate the effects that a shared trauma has on providers and their work with clients (Randi)

3. Understand the five fundamental principles for health care providers, community members, and others (Randi)

4. Create and practice stress management and routine self-care activities (Joanna)
Workshop Goals

**Benefits to Frontline Workers:**
- Reduce the impact of traumatic symptoms related to the pandemic
- Increase healthier behaviors for staff and clients
- Improved sense of hope and encouragement among workers
- Innovative strategies to address the impact of shared trauma between client and provider

**Benefits to Clients:**
- Willingness to work with provider
- Willingness to trust their worker
- Decrease in pandemic fears
- Decrease in isolation

**Benefits to the Organization:**
- Increased ability to protect the workforce and the client populations

_HUNTER Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging_
Why Are We Here - Online Today?
WHY DO I FEEL THIS WAY, ALL OF THE TIME?
Trauma Stewardship: What Is Happening To Me?
Let’s Talk About Stress, Baby
Let’s Talk About You & Me

Stress and anxiety are unavoidable in all of our lives. It can be protective as long as a person can absorb it or use it to build psychological strength.

While unavoidable, practicing stress management techniques can help us to recognize, as stress is mounting, and avoid impulsive and non-adaptive behaviors.
WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR BODY WHEN YOU EXPERIENCE STRESS?

An event occurs of neutral value or meaning.

The individual appraises whether the event is a threat or a challenge.

The individual responds to the threat or challenge through fight or flight.

Biochemicals are released to enhance the ability of one’s mind and body to respond.

Fatigue follows the depletion of biochemicals from the exertion.

The biochemicals are depleted through the exertion to meet the threat or challenge.

After a period of rest, the individual is able to prepare for and meet a new threat or challenge.
COVID Related Work Stressors

- working from home without sufficient equipment, space and quiet
- personal loss/loss of clients
- constant struggle with work/home/life balance
- fear about job security and potential losses due to economic downturn
- fear about going out, shopping, etc.
- anxiety about how the world will look in the future
- physical strain of protective equipment (dehydration, heat, exhaustion)
- physical isolation (restrictions on touching others, even after working hours)
- constant awareness and vigilance regarding infection control procedures
- pressures regarding procedures that must be followed (lack of spontaneity)
- fear of another wave of the disease or a viral mutation
Stressors We or Our Clients Might Experience

- Food insecurity
- Fixed Income
- Chronic conditions needing treatment and nowhere safe to go
- Limited supports/opportunities to socialize
- Increased burden of illness in low income communities of color and LGBT communities
  - Increased numbers of multi-generational families in one small space
  - Increased number of essential, front line workers
Signs of Stress
Psychological First Aid

Often used as a response to natural disasters and mass violence, Psychological First Aid, aims to reduce immediate stress and improve adaptive functioning in the face of a traumatic event.
Trauma & Stress: What Is The Connection
How Does That Affect My Work

Direct Trauma Exposure
You experience the trauma directly—such as watching a client get hurt or die.

Indirect (Secondary) Trauma
You experience the trauma by listening to your clients’ trauma narratives

Collective (Shared) Trauma
Both you and your client are simultaneously exposed to the same Collective trauma
LET’S LOOK CLOSER AT INDIRECT STRESS
Vicarious Trauma
Secondary Traumatic Stress
Compassion Fatigue
Burnout

Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue:
- Loss of Purpose
- Anxiety
- Sleep Disturbance
- Hypervigilance
- Pervasive Hopelessness
- Self-doubt
- Inability to Concentrate
- Disorientation or Forgetfulness
- Withdrawal/Isolation

Minimization
Appetite Changes
Poor Self-care
Feeling Overwhelmed
Decreased Sexual Intimacy
Emotional Rollercoaster
Anger
Apathy
"State of tension and preoccupation with traumatized patients by re-experiencing the traumatic events, avoidance/numbing of reminders and persistent arousal associated with the patient"

Figley, C., 2013
Burnout

A syndrome of emotional exhaustion, de-personalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment.

Develops as a result of general occupational stress; the term is not used to describe the effects of indirect trauma exposure specifically.

Fatigue
Insomnia
Gastrointestinal disturbances
Colds, immunity vulnerability
Headaches

Figley, C., 2013; & NCTSN, 2011
Secondary Traumatic Stress Physical And Emotional Stress Responses To Working With A Highly Traumatized Population

- Hypervigilance
- Hopelessness
- Inability to embrace complexity
- Inability to listen, avoidance of clients
- Anger and cynicism
- Sleeplessness
- Fear
- Chronic exhaustion
- Physical ailments
- Minimizing
- Guilt
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that's triggered by a terrifying event — either experiencing it or witnessing it. Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares and severe anxiety, as well as uncontrollable thoughts about the event.

Mayo Clinic, 2019

Intrusive Memories  Avoidance  Negative Changes in Thoughts & Moods  Changes in Physical & Emotional Reactions  Intensity of Feelings
Vicarious Trauma

Changes in the inner experience of a trauma worker or helper that results from empathic engagement with traumatized clients and their reports of traumatic experiences.

NCTSN, 2011

- Being afraid to take time away from your daily activities
- Thinking the worst in every situation
- Reacting disproportionately
- Never taking a vacation
- Forgetting why you do your job
- Decreased performance at work
- Not getting enough sleep
- Increased arguments with your family
- Decreased social life

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WHAT DO YOU OR YOUR CLIENTS BRING TO THE STRESS TABLE?
ARE THERE EVENTS IN YOUR LIFE COURSE
THAT MAKE YOU MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO STRESS?

- Professional commitments
- Personal/Family commitments
- Physical/mental health conditions
- Self-awareness
- Previous traumatic events from childhood thru adulthood
- Cumulative Disadvantages or Advantages over your life span in areas of education, health care, housing and finances.
Collective (Shared) Trauma

A collective trauma is a traumatic psychological effect shared by a group of people of any size, up to and including an entire society. Traumatic events witnessed by an entire society can stir up collective sentiment, often resulting in a shift in that society's culture and mass actions.
## Collective (Shared) Trauma

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frontline Workers May Feel:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More Vulnerable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fear &amp; Anxiety: personal reactions to direct threats that distract</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional Reactivity: More stronger feelings;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unexpected Reactions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greater emotional &amp; physical exhaustion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased sadness, grief or depression</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presenteeism and Increased Distractibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spiritual Malaise</td>
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<td>Intrusive Imagery: Reactions to symptoms</td>
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<td>Reactions to PPE’s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reactions to people not following social distancing</td>
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How Does a Shared Traumatic Exposure Impact Your Work with Clients?

“I care about...[my clients] professionally, but when you’re hearing, or you’re concerned that somebody might have died, you truly realize how much you love that person as a person, and you want to make sure they’re okay.

So I recall getting calls later from people and crying when they contacted me to let me know they were okay, and similarly, I was getting calls from clients to make sure that I was okay since I’m Downtown.

So what it does is it creates a whole new level of intimacy in the transference/countertransference matrix”

(Tosone, 2014).

https://socialworkpodcast.blogspot.com/2014/09/shared-trauma.html,
The Five Fundamental Principles for Psychological Well-Being for Agencies, Workers and Clients During COVID-19 (PTSD.VA.GOV, 2020)

Note that there are no “cookie-cutter” answers. In fact, during disasters such as this, there are more significant opportunities for innovation and variation to occur in the choice and implementation of how to incorporate these principles.
Five Fundamental Principles for Worker Wellness During A COVID-19 or Other Shared Trauma

1. Promote a sense of safety for workers and clients
2. Raise feelings of efficacy for frontline workers, workplaces and clients
3. Promote a sense of accuracy and accountability from agency to worker and from worker to client
4. Develop new communication methods: intra/inter agency and with clients
5. Build and promote a sense of calm- admin to workers; workers to clients
Who Cares For the Helpers?

When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, ‘Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.’

- Fred Rogers
Be kind.
Be patient.
Be generous.
Be accepting.
Be all of these things to yourself.
That is where it begins.

Seed & Song

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Self-Care for Frontline Workers

- Practice gratitude
- Get moving
- Stay in touch with family and friends
- Unplug
- Get outside
- Slow deep breaths
- Take up a new hobby
- Make sleep a priority
- Get organized
- Begin journaling
- Use a meditation app
Gratitude

The Benefits of Gratitude

- Improves Physical Health
- Improves Sleep
- Improves Psychological Health
- Increases Empathy
- Reduces Aggression
- Enhances Social Connection
- Improves Self-Esteem
- Improves Mental Strength

Source: Morin (2014)

I am grateful for:

- Positive Things About My Life:
  1. 
  2. 
  3. 
  4. 
  5. 
  6. 

- 3 Strengths/Qualities:
  1. 
  2. 
  3. 
  4. 
  5. 

- 3 Things I'm Good At Doing:
  1. 
  2. 
  3. 

- Relations I Am Grateful For:
  1. 
  2. 
  3. 
  4. 

- Activities I Enjoy:
  1. 
  2. 
  3. 
  4. 
  5. 
  6. 

- People Who Have Taught & Supported Me:
  1. 
  2. 
  3. 
  4. 
  5. 
  6. 

- Grateful For A Dream I'm Moving To:
  1. 
  2. 
  3. 
  4. 
  5. 
  6.
A Token of Gratitude

Many ways to express and practice gratitude, some include:

- Gratitude meditation (double whammy for self-care)
- Gratitude jar
- Gratitude journal
- Gratitude email or letter, deliver in person, if able to social distance
- Gratitude stone
- Gratitude self-prompts
  - e.g. I am grateful to hear these 3 things today; I am grateful for these three people in my life; I am grateful that my body can do these 3 things; etc.
The Sitting Disease

We all know the risks of a sedentary lifestyle

- Obesity
- Heart diseases, including coronary artery disease and heart attack
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Stroke
- Metabolic syndrome, hormonal imbalance
- Type 2 diabetes
- Certain cancers, including colon, breast, and uterine cancers
- Osteoporosis and falls
- Increased feelings of depression and anxiety
1. Make your goals **DOABLE** and **MEASURABLE**

No one really likes starting an exercise routine, but rarely complain after they’ve exercised.

Stand/walk when you are on the phone; commit to 30 minutes of low impact exercise while watching your favorite show.

2. Start around the house

3. Commit to purchasing an online video class or at-home equipment

If you can’t purchase one, many free videos are available on-line (YouTube, Peleton App, etc.)
Go Ahead, Be a Social Butterfly

*Science says social connections:*

- Make us happier…
- Allow us to learn better…
- Live longer!!!
The Science Behind Human Connection

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REFERENCES


https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/articles/article-pdf/id30225.pdf

https://relief.unboundmedicine.com/relief/view/PTSD-National-Center-for-PTSD/1230004/all/Practical Assistance

https://www.lidementia.org/simple-self-care-techniques-for-caregivers/

https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/321019
Joyous and Hopeful Videos

• [https://youtu.be/6gpoJNv5dIQ](https://youtu.be/6gpoJNv5dIQ) - You’ll Never Walk Alone- virtual Choir, 15 countries + 500 people

• Martha’s video (?) : Les Mis  [https://youtu.be/LIX1N8FfFIE](https://youtu.be/LIX1N8FfFIE)
POLL QUESTIONS

• Poll #1

1. Do you continue to provide in-person interactions with clients since the beginning of the quarantine?  
   _______ Yes  _______ No

2. Were you given adequate PPE by your agency?  _______ Yes  _______ No

3. Are you only working remotely?  _______ Yes  _______ No

4. Were you trained by your agency about safety protocols when making home visits?  
   _______ Yes  _______ No

5. Do you have children living with you?  _ Yes. Ages _______ _______ No

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POLL #2

1. Do you live with family member(s) who are frontline workers who work outside the home?
   ________ Yes
   ________ No

2. If yes, what type of work do they perform
   ________ Law enforcement (NYPD)
   ________ Fire department
   ________ Medical staff, e.g., Physician, RN, EMT
   ________ Nursing home or rehab center
   ________ Homecare workers
   ________ Restaurant or grocery store employee

3. Is there an elderly person(s) living with you?
   ________ Yes
   ________ No

4. Did someone in your immediate family contract COVID-19?
   ________ Yes, relationship ________
   ________ No

5. Was this person hospitalized?
   ________ Yes
   ________ No

6. Have you lost a family member or someone to COVID-19 with whom you have a close relationship?
   ________ Yes
   ________ No
THANK YOU FOR SHARING THIS TIME WITH US

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