**TRP’s Quarterly Trauma-Informed E-Newsletter**



This e-newsletter is part two of an in depth series on self-care (see bottom left of triangle with components for trauma informed care) for those in the helping professions (part one was issue in August and is included below for your review).  In part 1, we discussed how to create and sustain an ongoing self-care program.  During this newsletter we will discuss how to reduce your risk to vicarious trauma by using specific experiential skills following a potentially traumatic event occurring in your work or personal life.

We have all had a moment in which we are particularly impacted by an interaction with a person or our baring witness to their story of trauma.  Staying present and compassionate while the interaction is happing is challenging and could be the topic of a future newsletter.  For this quarter we will focus on how to process and move through the experience so that it will be less likely to impact you that day and the days ahead.  These interactions can keep you awake at night, snapping at your children, or eating a dozen donuts.  There is not a person that has not been guilty of taking care of ourselves with an unhealthy coping mechanism.  I propose a healthy and more effective way!

Try these techniques the next time you have a particularly difficult interaction at work:





For **reflection** on your own, try journaling or just thinking about things that you learned, what you accomplished, what your goal was, what really happened, how it impacted you, what it reminded you of from your past, etc…  For some, reflection with a workplace buddy or reflecting on the experience with a mentor/supervisor may be more effective than doing this on your own. Take some time to decide what will work best for you. Don’t get stuck in the negativity bias (reflecting too often or for too long makes you remember it more negatively than it actually was).

For **release** try to take a deep breath with a sigh on the exhale (do a big loud one in private or with your workplace buddy, it feels awesome).  A good laugh or a powerful body posture (see below for a link to the TED talk by Amy Cuddy) does a great job too. There are many ways to release and let go.  Take time to figure out what feels good for you and chose one that can fit the time frame you have.

For **reconnect** try some techniques to reconnect with yourself like focusing on what you are doing and how it feels in your body, while rubbing your hands with lotion, taking a drink, splashing our faces with cool water, smile, or giving yourself a hug.  It can be important for some to do reflection on their own and then use their workplace buddy or mentor to reconnect with another human being, perhaps sharing what you are grateful for.  Try reconnecting with someone outside of your work as well like a friend or family member that is in a different profession.  Reconnecting with the natural world can be so healing.  Try sitting beneath a tree and gazing up, caring for your office plants, looking out the window if you can’t get out, or a picture of a beautiful scene.  One of my favorite ways to reconnect with nature is petting my dogs when I get home.

As for **rejoice,** I know you have your own ways of doing this already and when you know you have done good healthy work, you will feel **renewed**.

No amount of these techniques will keep you from being impacted by the work that you do.  Please remember that a self-care plan that is long term is your best way to increase resiliency.  Also keep in mind that getting professional help when you are experiencing secondary traumatic stress or compassion fatigue, makes you a strong person and an excellent role model.

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to read this.  I hope that you will take a bit more time and check out some of the resources below.  These can be all day conference topics on their own, so the resources will give you more details that cannot be included in a brief e-newsletter.  My apologies to folks who got additional copies of this email as you are on a number of the email lists.  I added some non-clinical personnel to this e-newsletter as I think that this can impact you as you deal with clients/patients over the phone/checking them in and with the clinicians that are doing this difficult work. Thank you all for what you do for your clients/patients/colleagues!

Please feel free to contact me with any comments, concerns, or questions.

Sincerely,

Jennifer

**Jennifer Holzhauer, MSW, LCSW**

Program Co-Director/Clinician

Trauma Response Program

Washington University School of Medicine-Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

4444 Forest Park Ave. Suite 2600

St. Louis, MO 63108

Direct line:  314-286-0392

Clinic:  314-286-1700

Fax:  314-286-1730

Resources for the above e-newsletter:

1. <https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are#t-552469>
2. <https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/secondary_traumatic_stress_child_serving_professionals.pdf>
3. <https://www.nctsn.org/trauma-informed-care/secondary-traumatic-stress/nctsn-resources>
4. <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/ptsd-trauma/traumatic-stress.htm>