**Maintaining Health and Wellness as a DSS Provider  
  
Don Pool, Jamestown Community College**

**Maintaining Health and Wellness as a DSS Provider**

Requests for this session

Ask Questions

Keep an open mind

Explore your own patterns and needs - **Honestly**

Step outside of your comfort zone

Introduction

Why do we do this?

How many are in it for the money? – Picture of bags of money

Altruism

Altruism

* Most of us are in this profession because we value education
* Above and beyond that we value equity and fairness
* … in short, we want to save the world.
* This makes us vulnerable when we hear injustices
* Picture of hands holding the world

The Pitfalls of Caring

Although honorable, wanting to make the world safe, fair, and just for everyone comes with some pitfalls. Picture of a woman looking wide-eyed. Captioned "Good Morning, Let the Stress Begin..."

Signs you may need self care

You have trouble sleeping through the night

You have physiological symptoms

Your mind races from thought to thought – task to task

You don’t have enough hours in the day and days in the week

AND/OR

You work in a profession responsible for the well being and fair treatment of others.

Why would I be at risk?

What makes our profession different?

Many of us are the “Lone Ranger” – single person departments or very small staff

Other professions have formal outlets for self-care ( Clinical Supervision, Treatment Teams…)

One Area receiving attention currently

Secondary and Vicarious Traumatization

Increasing reports of difficulties among service providers due to the high prevalence of trauma in today’s society

Secondary Traumatization

Secondary traumatization:

Is caused when a person feels empathy for an traumatized individual, causing an indirect impact on those who are close to or working with them.

Stress levels rise in the helper/partner/friend…

The second person can eventually develop symptoms of trauma exposure because of the concern for the individual and feeling the stress through empathy.

Vicarious Traumatization

Vicarious traumatization

Is caused when a helping individual or someone close to the individual begins to experience stress symptoms related to the individual’s traumatic event.

Stress levels rise in the helper/partner/friend…

The second person can eventually develop symptoms of trauma exposure as if they lived through the trauma themselves

Secondary/Vicarious Traumatization

Are Disability Service Professionals at risk?

Absolutely, especially with the prevalence of Trauma on campus (and more students with a trauma history attending)

Professionals must spend more time with the student understanding the barriers and how to overcome them

Already stressed professionals do not allow time to process these encounters and deal with the corresponding emotions and meanings

Exposure to Secondary/Vicarious Traumatization

More trauma survivors attending college –

More veterans returning from multiple deployments, and now attending college

More survivors of domestic violence getting proper care

More individuals in recovery attending college

Avoiding Secondary/Vicarious Traumatization

How do I avoid secondary/vicarious traumatization

Practice self care

Through mindful self-reflection, understand your stress triggers and avoid them or deal with them in a healthy way

Seek help and support

Groups like this provide help, support and information

Campus counseling centers have professionals you can seek help and advice from

Processing feelings with a supervisor/coworker

Mental health counseling is nothing to avoid or be ashamed of. Mental health clinicians receive counseling in the form of supervision and counseling from other clinicians

Maintain a Trauma Informed workplace

STRESS – The Good Side

Positives

Evidence shows that some stress can make us perform better

Adrenaline assisting us in sports or when performing a tasks that requires energy

Recent studies show that some stress can be good for us. Factors include:

Good Social Support

Attitude about the stress and cause

Adaptive coping strategies

STRESS – The Bad News

Negatives

Can get in the way of critical thinking

Leads to poor attention/focus/planning

Long-term exposure with maladaptive coping mechanisms may lead to negative health outcomes

PSY 0001 intro to intro cognitive psych – a simplified look at the stress reaction in the brain

Stress helps keep us alive

A cave person being attacked by a Woolly Mammoth doesn’t have to solve linear calculus problems

The whole thought process is “run fast” “jump high”

The stress response is EXACTLY the same for all stressors – only the intensity changes

PSY 0001

What can trigger stress?

Pictures stating Tiger equals Homer Simpson doing math equals Bear

The chemical and physiological response is exactly the same in all three scenarios above.

(though the math might cause a more intense reaction)

Release of epinephrine, increased heartbeat and circulation, and so on

PSY Continued

Brain with "Job Descriptions" Thalamus (Messenger Boy), Hypothalamus (911 System), Frontal Lobe (Per-Frontal Cortex - Computer), Olfactory Bulb, Amygdala (Security Guard), and Hippocampus (Secretary)

PSY 0001 In Practice

Process flow of the brain Picture of large hairy spider flows to the Thalamus (Messenger Boy). If no threat perceived - flows through Hippocampus (secretary) to Pre Frontal Coretex (Computer) and is processed, used, stored. If a threat is perceived, Flowd to the Amygdala (Security Guard), to the Hypothalamus (911 Stystem) and to the ANS "Hoover Dam" which triggers the fight or flight system.

How Stress Builds

Picture – cracked the word stress on a cracked background

Picture – woman looking stressed

Stress is not compartmentalized or singular

Picture - desk with papers spread out

Picture – Picture of papers piled high in inbox, man looking stressed

You do not have piles of stress for different things

Instead, our stress builds into one large flood of emotional termoil

Stress accumulates, both good and bad stress

Types of stress

“Bad Stress”

Bear attack

Combat

Math test (for me)

“Good Stress”

Weddings

Family Reunions

Graduation

Holidays

Christmas Shopping (for some)

Can I keep my sanity as a DSS Provider?   
Especially during the beginning of the semester?

Yes you can, proper balance through self-care will help you

Picture –two one-way signs pointing in opposite directions. One says sanity, the other says insanity.

Keeping sanity

Balance work/professional and personal life

Take breaks

No one here ever eats at their desk right?

Frequent and appropriate breaks actually allow you to get more done and to be more efficient

Take up a hobby

Do something that will allow you to refocus your attention to something else. We will talk about mindfulness exercises soon

Mindfulness and Meditation

How meditation and mindful breathing works

Close your eyes or focus on a stationary object in the room

Breathe in through your nose

Breathe out slowly through pursed lips, like you are blowing bubbles. Counting as you blow out can help.

Mindfulness and Meditation example

The purpose of mindfulness – living in the moment

Great example is washing the dishes in the book Peace Is Every Step

Tich Nhat Hanh – 1991

In our busy lives, we are never truly working on one task –

Avoiding becoming a   
“Helicopter Professional”

We sometimes go overboard helping students

Picture - Helicopter

“Helicopter Professional”

“Helicopter Professionals usually get very little results and increase their stress loads greatly.

Questions to ask yourself (in the frame of self-care in addition to fairness - am I too invested in this student’s success?)

Is this an accommodation or an advantage?

Would I do this for a non-disabled student?

Am I working harder than the student?

When have I been a   
“Helicopter Professional”?

What are some things that you did to “save” students that you could have handled better?

Is it OK to let a student fail?

Guided Meditation

Questions or discussion