

Supporting My Team and Myself in the Midst of Grief

Wendy Tabor-Buth, LBSW
Bereavement Coordinator



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Objectives

- Identify sources of grief and loss in the workplace
- Explore ramifications of neglecting self-care
- Identify how one can support self and coworkers
- Develop a personalized self-care plan



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Professional Caregiver

Someone whose employment is to assist others in a way that enables them to live with dignity and respect promoting them to be as independent as possible.

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Professional Caregiver

Advocating and tending to the emotional, physical, social, spiritual, and mental health needs of those who are at risk for vulnerability and may not be able to be a voice for themselves.

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Professional Caregiver

May include nurses, social workers, CNA's, physicians, dietary staff, activities, therapies, members of the clergy, etc.

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What have we learned so far?

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Rachel Naomi Remen

"The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is an unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet."

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Losses We Bring to and Experience at Work

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Personal Loss

- Death of a loved one
- Divorce
- Financial loss
- Loss of health
- Life transitions
- Loss of relationships
- Employment
- Others?

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Uniqueness of Loss and the Professional Caregiver

- Cumulative loss
- Disenfranchised Grief (Doka)
- Balancing work and grief
- Maintaining balance between identification with the patient and detachment from the patient (boundaries)

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Loss (continued)

- Death of a Co-Worker
- Co-worker Illness
- Workplace transition/reorganization (layoffs, terminations, resignations)
- Change in culture, values, and/or mission

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We Bring Ourselves to the Job

- Past and present
- Schemas and beliefs
- Stigmas/Stereotypes
- History of trauma and illness
- Social support systems (+ and -)
- Family and relationships
- Economic situations
- Coping mechanisms

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Pitfalls of Professional Carers

Compassion Fatigue
Burn Out
Boundary Crossings

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Compassion Fatigue

- A state experienced by those helping people in distress; it is an extreme state of tension and preoccupation with the suffering of those being helped to the degree that it can create a secondary traumatic stress for the helper (Figley 2002)
- Negative aspects of helping
- Accumulation of constantly giving energy and compassion to others over time
- Chronic use of emotional empathy (It's who we are)

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Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

- Chronic physical and emotional exhaustion
- Boundary violations
- High absenteeism
- Apathy/flat/no pleasure

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Compassion Fatigue

- Excessive blaming
- Bottled up emotions
- Voicing excessive complaints about admin/mgmt
- Poor self care
- Preoccupied thoughts/difficulty concentrating

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Compassion Satisfaction

- The positive aspects of helping
- Pleasure and satisfaction from working in helping, caregiving systems
- Feeling of “balance”

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Burn Out

- Progressive state of “inoperability”. (Freudenberger 1975)
- “A state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion caused by long term involvement in demanding situations.” (Pines and Aronson, 1988)
- Related to the environment in which we work, and the stresses attached
- Builds gradually over time

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Symptoms of Burnout

- Reduced sense of personal accomplishment or meaning in work
- Decreased interactions with others (isolation)
- Depersonalization (feeling on auto pilot/going through the motions/numb)
- Usually is a process. ("12 Phases of Burnout", Freudenberger and North)

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Self Care Neglect Ramifications

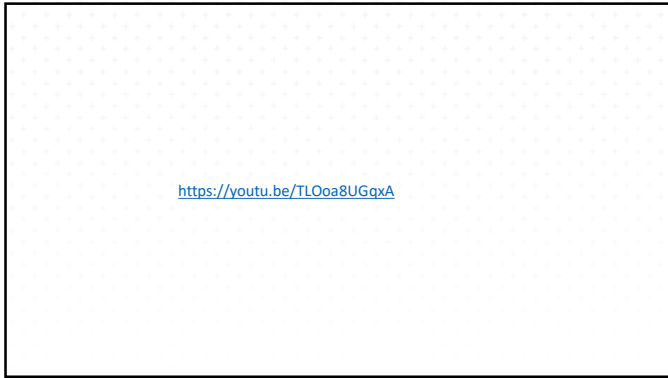
- Feelings of apathy
- Decreased productivity
- Increased irritability and cynicism
- Conflict with coworkers
- Constantly overwhelmed
- Compassion fatigue
- Work absenteeism
- Difficulty staying on task
- Mood instability
- Sleep Disturbances
- Feeling "empty"

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Maintain Healthy Boundaries

- Clearly established limits that allow for a safe connection between you and your clients
- Role definition
- Protects the client, agency, and the professional
- Poor boundaries may include conflict of interest, self-disclosure, dual relationship concerns, over/under involvement
- Boundaries are always the responsibility of the professional

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2.08 Impairment of Colleagues

- (a) Social workers who have direct knowledge of a social work colleague's impairment that is due to personal problems, psychosocial distress, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties and that interferes with practice effectiveness should consult with that colleague when feasible and assist the colleague in taking remedial action.

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2.08 Impairment of Colleagues

- (b) Social workers who believe that a social work colleague's impairment interferes with practice effectiveness and that the colleague has not taken adequate steps to address the impairment should take action through appropriate channels established by employers, agencies, NASW, licensing and regulatory bodies, and other professional organizations.

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4.05 Impairment

- (a) Social workers should not allow their own personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties to interfere with their professional judgment and performance or to jeopardize the best interests of people for whom they have a professional responsibility.

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4.05 Impairment

- (b) Social workers whose personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties interfere with their professional judgment and performance should immediately seek consultation and take appropriate remedial action by seeking professional help, making adjustments in workload, terminating practice, or taking any other steps necessary to protect clients and others.

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Self Care

- Ask for help
- Learn to when to say “no”
- Attend professional development/continuing education
- Assertiveness/self advocacy
- Self assessment and self-awareness
- Develop a Self Care Plan

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Self Care

- Social support inventory—Identify those you can count on for support both at work and personal life
- Personally invest in something bigger than yourself to instill a sense of personal satisfaction
- Know how and where to access help
- Mind, body and spirit mindfulness (exercise, nutrition, centering self)

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Self Care

- Find ways for creative expression
- Exercise
- Relaxation techniques (yoga, journaling, meditation, prayer etc.)
- Seek professional help (counseling, EAP, spiritual)

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Self Care

- Share your struggle with colleagues and supervisors
- Reminisce and share stories
- Attend prayer service or funeral or workplace memorial service

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Self Care

- Know company policies (PLT, Bereavement Leave, EAP)
- Communicate needs
- Recognize your grief feelings
- Be gentle with others

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Team Support

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Team Support

- Acknowledge that reactions may be different for each team member
- Respect where each team member is at
- Communication with manager
- EAP support (group/individual)

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Team Support

- Stay connected—Touch base often
- Informal and formal debriefing
- Empower others
- Show gratitude
- Take time for laughter and tears
- Uplift and support one another

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Team Support

- Debrief as a team
- Regular team support (purposeful)
- Take time to remember
- Expectations < 100%
- Recognize when more support is needed

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“Code Lavender”

- Coined by Dr. Earl Bakken in 2004 in response to his staff's need for holistic, mind, body, and soul care.
- Psychological first aid
- Stressful workplace events (started in acute care)
- Evidence-Based relaxation and restoration interventions (prayer, Reiki, meditation, art and music therapy,

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Code Lavender

Support is given through Code Lavender by providing:

- a purpose and physical presence
- individual or team support
- debriefing and follow-up
- complementary therapies
- prayer and other affectively based interventions
- tea and snacks

• <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/-/scassets/files/org/locations/hillcrest-hospital/spiritual-services/code-lavender.ashx?la=en>

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Team/Individual Debriefing

- Debriefing allows a teams to reflect on their experience, support each other, share perspectives, identify learning opportunities and agree on improvement needs. Debriefing has long been an integral part of team cohesiveness, problem solving, creating trust, and opportunity for self care.

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Other considerations for self care

- Professional Quality of Life Scale (PROQOL) Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue
www.proqol.org
- Personal Death Awareness exercise
www.summahealth.org

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- Personal Death Awareness exercise
- <https://www.summahealth.org/-/media/files/pdfs/medicals-services/seniorhealth/hospice/110629-personaldeathawareness-hopsice.pdf>

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Self-Care Wheel

- www.OlgaPhoenix.com



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Discussion/Questions/Sharing

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'There is power in sharing strengths. What we might fear to do on our own, we can often do with little fear if there is someone with us. What we feel we cannot bear on our own, we can often bear with the help of others. What we feel we cannot accomplish on our own, we can often accomplish if someone is just beside us. Our wounds can experience healing through the strengths we receive from others and with others.'

Douglas C. Smith, MA, MS, MDiv

Being a Wounded Healer: How to Heal Ourselves While We Are Healing Others

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THANK YOU.

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