

### **Secondary Traumatic Street Recovery and Response: Creating Resilience**

April Naturale, PhD, spoke about developing capacity to work with a traumatized community. She stressed the long-term effort involved, as we have seen in communities across the country such as 9/11, Columbine, Oklahoma City and more.

- Professionals working with people who are grieving should be cognizant of compassion fatigue and secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)
- Signs of STS include:
  - Symptoms parallel those of their client
  - Negative cognitive schemas
  - Questioning beliefs; Sense of helplessness
  - Isolation; Depression;
  - Increased substance use/misuse; Increased rates of physical illness
  - Lower staff morale and productivity; Higher turnover and errors
- There are emotional, physical, personal and workplace indicators of STS, such as anxiety, headaches, isolation, avoidance, etc.; sleeplessness is the number 1 indicator of STS.
- There are physical, emotional, work-related, interpersonal and spiritual impacts of STS such as insomnia, depression, weight changes, loss of productivity, loneliness, hopelessness, etc.
- Know who is at risk: responders, professionals working with traumatized community, family members of traumatized community, gender and ethnicity can have an impact

#### *Tactics to prevent Secondary Traumatic Stress*

##### Supervisors

- Identify the symptoms and provide support; maintain personal and professional support symptoms
- Set boundaries and model self care
- Work life balance

##### Individuals

- Vary caseloads
- Avoid working too many long hours, especially alone
- Work together and share concerns
- Create and follow a stress management plan

#### Individual Stress Management

- Include low impact exercise into your routine, the most effective of which can be breathing and body movement
- Use cognitive strategies to shift your mindset
- Routine self assessment using the ProQOL [www.proqol.org](http://www.proqol.org)  
ProQOL Self Assessment Test – an empirically validated tool that measures Compassion Satisfaction, Compassion Fatigue and Burnout in the helping population. Recommended for Traumatic Stress Specialists to review regularly.

What have you learned that you think are most important for other families and survivors to know?

- It is hard to accept help
- Be cognizant of language i.e. a “new normal” can imply that what a person is going through is not normal or they have to accept something can feel invalidating; check in with survivor about how your communicating and the language you are using
- Help survivor engage a large circle of support
- Local outreach for volunteers out can be helpful in the immediate aftermath with the everyday tasks i.e. babysitting , rides to appointments
- Outreach to all those impacted by tragedy is critical, important to recognize the psychological trauma of all those in the community not just those immediately affected
- Loving caring supporting network is critical – facilitate connections between survivors and families
- Utilize different modalities of therapy – EMDR, yoga, art, etc.
- There is no timeline for healing
- Help survivors recognize limitations and embrace them
- Recognize things that indicate a loss of control
- Create space where survivors can talk about their experience and not feel judged
- Give guidance to survivors when they are out of your care
  - Be cognizant of the fact that images on TV and social media can impact their recovery
- With the prevalence of mass violence, the fear of being forgotten is very strong among survivors

Summary of panel discussion

- Strength of social supports from people who understand and accept your experience is the most powerful tool
- There is no timeline, there is no closure – it is not about closure
- Integrating the experience – learn from it, understand the triggers and how they impact us
- As providers, what is the satisfaction that we get out of this work? What are we learning and how can we help people?
- Being ok with your limitations
- Trauma envy/fear of being forgotten
- Complicated grief [www.complicatedgrief.columbia.edu](http://www.complicatedgrief.columbia.edu)
- If you don't know what to do – don't say anything, take cues from the community on how to move forward and learn