Not Taking Responsibility Made Me a Better Therapist and Mentor

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NOT TAKING
RESPONSIBILITY
????????
The Healing
• “...the ability to ‘feel with’ others when we are exposed to their distress and suffering while recognizing that the emotions we experience are external to oneself....”

• Neuroscience of empathy – anterior medial cingulate cortex, anterior insula – same brain location as our own emotional experiences

• Creates connection

• Risk – easy to take on others’ pain

(Hofmeyer, Kennedy, Taylor 2020; Klimecki 2015)
• “…a ‘feeling for’ others who are in pain with warmth, empathic concern, capacity to understand their perspective and intentions, and having...a motivation to act ... to relieve their pain.”
• Neuroscience of compassion - medial orbitofrontal cortex, ventral striatum – areas linked to reward and affiliation processing, creates positive feelings
• Focused on action
• Collaborative - Guide others to formulate a new path

(Hofmeyer, Kennedy, Taylor 2020; Klimecki 2015)
"I want to help others"

Why?

• Compassion Satisfaction
  • Feels good to help
  • Doing meaningful work is rewarding
  • Take pleasure in doing the work well
  • Wired for connectedness

• Pattern of Other-directedness

• Unresolved pain and trauma
**Burnout**

- Any profession
- Gradual onset
- “syndrome resulting from chronic work stress that has not been successfully managed” (WHO, ICD-11)

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**Compassion Fatigue**

- Professionals witnessing suffering of others
- Rapid onset
- “extreme state of tension & preoccupation with the suffering of those being helped....” ~Figley 1995
- Empathy Fatigue?
Burnout/Fatigue Risk factors

- Helping profession, such as health care
- Little or no control over your work
- Unclear job expectations
- Extremes of activity - monotonous or chaotic
- Lack of social support - feel isolated
- Heavy workload and work long hours
- Struggle with work-life balance
Individual Signs and Symptoms

- Exhaustion – physically, mentally, emotionally drained
- Depersonalization – disconnected, numb, hardened
- Lack of personal accomplishment – reduced feelings of accomplishment and satisfaction, “achievement void”
- Existential/spiritual – meaningless, worthless, hopeless
- Feelings of isolation, hypervigilance or fear
- Emotional volatility
- Chronic physical symptoms – headaches, GI distress, neck/shoulder pain
- Self-medicating behaviors – substances, food, spending
- Relationship problems
- Denial
Responses to Fatigue

• Continue to sacrifice themselves
• Fear of caring too much
  o Directive, detached, depersonalized care
• Leave the profession
• Seek help and balance
... does not cause fatigue
Empathic communication and compassion in healthcare

- More effective and resilient clinicians
- Higher morale
- Improved quality of care
- Fewer patient complaints
- Improved patient satisfaction
- Better concordance with medical advice
- Decrease of anxiety and distress
- Improved diagnosis, clinical outcomes
- Create a strong relationship

Jeffrey 2016; Hofmeyer, Kennedy, Taylor 2020; Christiansen et al 2015; Lown 2014; Mercer, Reynolds 2002
It isn't the load that weighs you down

it's the way you carry it
Empathic Distress Fatigue

Better descriptor than “Compassion Fatigue”
Empathy with a Lack of Self-Other Distinction
“Self-orientated” perspective
Take on others’ pain as own
• Make assumptions
• Personal distress
• Misunderstand

Hofmeyer 2020, Jeffrey 2016, Russell 2015
Self-other Distinction

• Self as separate
• Compassion, empathy, care and concern for the other
• Empathy: ...the ability to ‘feel with’ others when we are exposed to their distress and suffering while recognizing that the emotions we experience are external to oneself....

Hofmeyer 2020, Jeffrey 2016, Russell 2015
Empathy

• Come alongside
• See world through their eyes
• Feel their pain
• Understand their loss
Who is this person?
• Who is this person?
• Each person responds uniquely
  • Trauma, loss
• Open-ended questions
• Stop. Listen. Really listen.
• Sit in the pain. Don’t try to make it better.
• Reflect to make sure you understand
• Ask permission to use your skills to help guide them
Empathy

Compassion
The table creates a space

Differentiates my responsibility from theirs

Lack of self-other distinction

→ Responsibility FOR
Responsible FOR

When I feel **Responsible FOR** others, I am really trying to **CONTROL** them...

**I:** Fix, Protect, Rescue, Control, Carry their feelings, Don’t listen

**I feel:** Tired, Anxious, Fearful, Liable

**I am concerned with:** The solution, Circumstances, Being right, Details, Performance

**I become:** a negative manipulator

**I expect:** the person to live up to my expectations

~Anonymous
Responsible To

When I feel **Responsible To** others, I am trying to HELP instead of control...

I: Show empathy, Encourage, Share my experiences, Confront, Level, Am sensitive, Listen

**I feel:** Relaxed, Free, Aware, High self-esteem

I am concerned with: Relating person to person, Feelings, The person

I believe that if I share myself, the other person has enough to make it.

I expect the person to be responsible for himself and his own actions. I can trust and let go.

I am a helper and guide. ~Anonymous
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~Anonymous
Resilience
Self regulation
Self awareness
Self Care
Know Your Signs - Reflect
Self-awareness

- Taking problems home
- Can’t stop thinking or dreaming
- Is this part of my role? Do I feel that I am the only one who can meet this person’s needs?
Know your Signs - “Helping”

- Feel for the Righting Response
  You need to …, You should …
  It would be better if you …

- Am I/we fixing the problem rather than empowering the person?
  - Provide resources – allow them to find their own solutions
  - Resist the tendency to do FOR - “If I don’t do it for them….”
Know yourSelf
Self-Care

Our work demands much from our hearts and humanity

Fill up ➔ Pour Out ➔ Repeat
• Process the day... then put it away
• Restore, Refill, Replenish
  • Engage all 5 senses
  • Make a list, Practice daily

What brings you energy? Rejuvenation? What makes you smile on the inside? What do you love to do?
Know your limits

Life demands much from our hearts and humanity

• What am I taking in?
• What am I pouring out?
• Ask for help
Life demands much from our hearts and humanity.
Rehab is a relationship of which Empathy & Compassion are components...

We are responsible to allow and guide our partners to take responsibility for themselves.

Choose the path which protects your ‘self’ and allows presence and connectedness.
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Resources

• Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project – Patricia Smith
  http://compassionfatigue.org/

• Compassion Resilience Toolkit
  https://compassionresiliencetoolkit.org/healthcare/compassion-resilience/

• Professional Quality of Life Measure 5 (ProQol 5) -
  https://proqol.org/proqol-measure

• Brene Brown – Empathy
  https://brenebrown.com/videos/rsa-short-empathy/
References


References cont’d


