Pouring from empty cups—understanding compassionate fatigue and burnout

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Covid 19 and mental health

- Health disparities
- Racism
- Socioeconomic status
Stress

- Real or imagined threat to physical or psychological integrity of an individual
- Beneficial when it is tolerable and of appropriate duration-leads to feelings of mastery/development
- When prolonged, severe, or recurrent it impairs coping abilities
- Allostasis is the ability to maintain homeostasis or stability through change- this suggests the ability to anticipate stressors versus merely reacting
Fight Flight Freeze response

- State of high alert
- Action, not thought
- Inability to think clearly
- Extreme thoughts
- Hypervigilance
- Attention to threat
- Intense and prolonged anxiety
- Drive to take action
**Fight or Flight Response**

- saliva flow decreases
- eyes pupils dilate
- skin blood vessels constrict
- chills & sweating
- heart rate faster & harder
- stomach output of digestive enzymes decreases
- muscles become more tense; trembling can occur
- lungs quick, deep breathing occurs
- bowel food movement slows down
- blood vessels blood pressure increases as major vessels dilate
- Stress Leads to...
- Damage to the neuroreceptors that control the stress response
- Increase of receptors for cortisol, with the result that it is easier to be triggered
- Chronically high levels of Cortisol and Adrenaline
- Sleeping Problems
- Muscle Tension
- Lack of Focus
- Chest Pains
- Increased Heart Rate
- Upset Stomach
- Nausea
- Acid Reflux
- Reduced Sex Drive
Intense and persistent stress can influence how the brain develops, intensifying negative emotions such as fear and impacting learning and memory.

It can impact health by increasing blood pressure, weakening immunity and causing inflammation in the body.

Discrimination is linked to higher rates of smoking, alcohol use, drug use, and unhealthful eating habits.

The mothers who report experiences of racism are more likely to have babies with a low birth weight.
“There are wounds that never show on the body that are deeper and more hurtful than anything that bleeds.”
— Laurell K. Hamilton, Mistral’s Kiss
Trauma

- Intrusive memories
- Startle response
- Shame, self-hatred
- Panic attacks
- Emotional overwhelm
- Chronic pain, headaches
- Eating disorders
- Substance abuse
- Self-destructive behaviors
- Little or no memories
- Dissociation
- Depression
- Irritability
- Loss of interest
- Numbing
- Insomnia
- Decreased concentration
- Hopelessness
- Hypervigilance
Allostasis is defined as the process of maintaining homeostasis through the adaptive change of the organism's internal environment to meet perceived and anticipated demands.
Allostatic load

- This is the failure or compromise of normal allostatic processes leading to chronic dysregulation
- Secretion of cortisol is a healthy adaptive response to an acute stressor (allostasis)
- Allostatic load- chronic stress and high levels of cortisol. Quantified by measuring Cortisol, DHEA-S, and Norepinephrine and Epinephrine
The allostatic load and trauma leading to detrimental and cumulative effects on physical and mental health of the community.

Younger the age of exposure greater the likely hood of developing depression, anxiety and post traumatic distress.

The sense of persecution can impact self-esteem and identity.
Hierarchy of Nervous System Response

- Fight/Flight
- Social Engagement
- Shutdown

Based on polyvagal theory by Stephen Porges
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Burnout

- Psychological exhaustion due to excessive and prolonged workplace demands as well as an overwhelming of one’s coping mechanisms” - Archive of Internal Medicine
Three Burnout dimensions

- Emotional Exhaustion
- Personal accomplish.
- Depersonaliz./ Cynicism
- loss of enthusiasm for work
- feeling of cynicism (depersonalization)
- low sense of personal accomplishment

– *Gale Encyclopedia of Medicine*
Health care professional burnout represents real suffering among people dedicated to preventing and relieving the suffering of others.

The high prevalence of burnout among health care professionals is cause for concern because it appears to be affecting quality, safety, and health care system performance”.

( NAM)
Compassion fatigue has 3 components:

- **COMPASSION SATISFACTION**
- **VICARIOUS TRAUMA/SECONDARY STRESS SYNDROME**
- **BURN OUT-PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION**
Compassion fatigue-when caring hurts

- It is a condition characterized by emotional and physical exhaustion leading to a diminished ability to empathize or feel compassion for others, often described as the negative cost of caring.
- It is sometimes referred to as secondary traumatic stress (STS)
Signs and symptoms of compassion fatigue

- Cynicism
- Irritability
- Diminished sense of enjoyment
- Problems with intimacy
- Heightened anxiety or irrational fear
- Reduced ability for sympathy or empathy
- Work absenteeism
How do we go from a state of overwhelm, fear and anxiety toward building resilience and internal coherence and coping capacities?

We need more trauma informed care and integrated communities, where cognitive shift can happen from what is wrong with you to what wrong happened to you.

Substance abuse and suicides need to be seen and understood in terms of the underlying pathology and not as moral failings.
An analogy of resilience is a rubber bar or band. When hit by an object, rubber may be stressed (bent), but it can bounce back to its original shape and position. Over time, rubber can also be molded to change its original shape and position, keeping some aspects and improving others.

Defined as the ability to adapt well to adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, and significant sources of stress.
Dealing with painful emotions

• Give yourself time to heal and to mourn any losses you’ve experienced
• Don’t try to force the healing process
• Be patient with the pace of recovery
• Be prepared for difficult and volatile emotions
• Allow yourself to feel whatever you’re feeling without judgment or guilt
• Learn to reconnect with uncomfortable emotions without becoming overwhelmed
- Realization about trauma
- Recognizing the signs of trauma
- Respond to trauma
- Resisting re-traumatization.
Principles of trauma integrated care

- Safety
- Choice
- Collaboration/peer support
- Trustworthiness
- Transparency
- Empowerment.
Balance is the Key to Life
The first gear in this example is **Realization**.

The second gear is **Acceptance**.

The third gear is **Self-care**,
References

- https://www.traumainformedcare.chcs.org/what-is-trauma-informed-care/
- https://www.procare.co.za/employee-wellness-blog/2020/9/30/trauma-2020