Managing Stress & Preventing Burnout

“....chronic lack of self-care/compassion fatigue, like any other kind of fatigue, reduces our capacity or our interest in bearing the suffering of others” (Figley, 2002, p.1434)

**Definitions**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Secondary Traumatic Stress:</th>
<th>Vicarious Trauma:</th>
<th>Burnout:</th>
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<td>A.k.a. Compassion Fatigue. Emotional duress resulting from hearing about firsthand trauma experienced by another.</td>
<td>Changes in the inner experience of the clinician resulting in empathizing with a traumatized individuals.</td>
<td>Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, reduced feelings of accomplishment. Results from general occupational stress with or without trauma exposure.</td>
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**Risk Factors**

- Mental health • history of trauma • lack of training • clarity of role • unsupportive work and social environments • large caseloads/long working hours • working extensively with severely traumatized people

**Signs & Symptoms**

- Physical symptoms, i.e. chronic pain/illness • weight changes • guilt • sleep issues • exhaustion • fear • sadness • irritability • anger • lack of creativity • poor boundaries • poor self-care • cynicism/complaining without solutions

**Self-Care for Prevention & Treatment of Stress & Burnout**

It starts with periodically assessing your current status and applying appropriate interventions.

**Assessment Tools:** Are You Burning Out Survey* / Compass Fatigue ProQOL

**Interventions**

- If you are what you eat, you are what you think.
- Expressive writing about trauma has been shown to promote physical and mental health
- Assess the comfort and clarity of your office, desk and car spaces
- Exercise, creativity and nature: Hike, walk, bike, dance, yoga, run; painting, photography, cooking, playing; observe or get into nature

**Self-Care Plan**

- Physical • Nutritional • Spiritual • Social • Emotional • Financial
- Write down what you do to care for yourself; daily, weekly, monthly, yearly.
- Do you have 3+ things for each category? If not, grow your list.


This inservice is also available on The Alliance blog:  
http://organdonationalliance.org/education-corner-self-care/

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