




Vicarious Trauma &
Self Care

PLEASE SECURE YOUR OXYGEN MASK FIRST!

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That which makes
us good at and
committed to this
work



Is also that which
makes it
challenging.

We do this because we care,
because we are naturally empathic,
and because many of us have experienced trauma
ourselves.

Many titles, similar concept

- Burnout
- Compassion Fatigue
- Secondary Traumatic
- Vicarious Trauma



What is the emotional price of caring ?

The stress scores of palliative care workers are almost twice as high as those of newly widowed women and higher than patients newly diagnosed with breast cancer. (Vachon, 1987)

In studies of social workers:

01


39% reported current symptoms of burnout

02

75% reported experiencing burnout at some point in their career (Brown, 2008)

03

73% of social workers have considered leaving their jobs (Maslach, 2003)

- 
- Social workers have higher rates of Social workers have higher rates of burnout than other helping professionals such as occupational professionals (Brown, 2008)
 - In a study of British social workers 74% were experiencing high levels anxiety (Lloyd et al., 2002)
 - 62% of experience Child Protective Service workers scored high on a measure of emotional exhaustion. (Anderson, 2001)

In a study of substance abuse

- 82% reported high psychological stress
- 33% were experiencing emotional exhaustion
- 36% reported diminished feelings of personal accomplishment
personal accomplishment (
(Oyefeso et al., 2008)

We can be as
traumatized as
our clients

- In one study 17.7% of caseworkers suffered from secondary traumatic stress,
- while only 15.2% of Vietnam Vets reported post- traumatic stress disorder (Kulka et al, 1990)

Vicarious Trauma

“Vicarious traumatization is the process through which the therapist inner experience is negatively transformed through empathic engagement with the through client’s trauma material.” (McCann & Pearlman, 1990)

Signs of Compassion Fatigue & Vicarious Trauma

Hypervigilance

Suspicion about people's motives & behaviors

Difficulty sleeping, nightmares

Intrusive images

Anxiety

Numbness

Inability to experience pleasure

Signs of Compassion Fatigue & Vicarious Trauma

Excessive caregiving (on & off the job)

Cynicism

Feelings of shame about no longer feeling like the warm, compassionate & optimistic person caregiver once was

Reactivation of own issues

Anger & irritability often due to fatigue

Signs of Compassion Fatigue & Vicarious Trauma

Reduced tolerance for what are perceived
as others' "petty problems"

Depression

Exhaustion

Increased self-criticism

Feel estranged from others

What contributes to Vicarious Trauma?

Bearing witness to trauma (ex. Death of a child or a young parent, or death due to a traumatic event)

Powerlessness of the person parallels caregiver's powerlessness if they feel a need to "fix it"

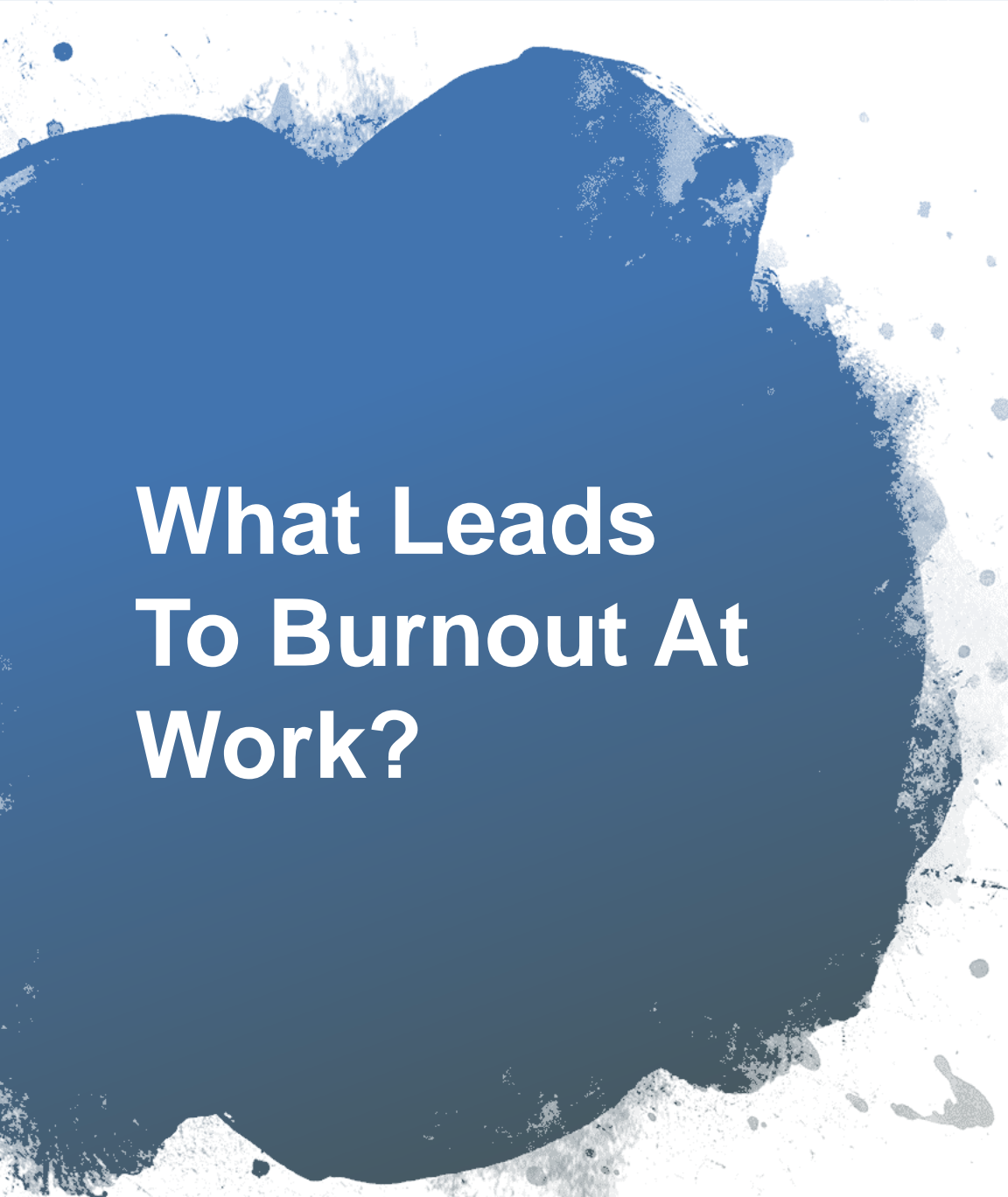
Childhood experience of parentification creates unrealistic expectations in caregiver

Believing that self-care is less important than the care we provide others

Burnout



- Burnout is a cognitive-emotional reaction to stress characterised by high levels of exhaustion resulting from the chronic demands made on a person's resources (Raedeke & Smith, 2009).
- Burnout is a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress.
- It occurs when you feel overwhelmed and unable to meet constant demands. As the stress continues, you begin to lose the interest or motivation that led you to take on a certain role in the first place.



What Leads To Burnout At Work?

- Feeling overwhelmed or overloaded
- Working in a role that is physically, mentally or emotionally demanding a lot of the time
- Feeling bored / not feeling sufficiently challenged
- Feeling under-appreciated
- Experiencing compassion fatigue over a long period
- Isolation

What Are
The Signs
And
Symptoms
Of Burnout?



Difference Between Stress And Burnout

Stress

- Characterized by over-engagement
- Emotions are over-reactive
- Produces urgency and hyperactivity
- Loss of energy
- Leads to anxiety disorders
- Primary damage is physical
- May kill you prematurely

Burnout

- Characterized by disengagement
- Emotions are blunted
- Produces helplessness and hopelessness
- Loss of motivation, ideals, and hope
- Leads to detachment and depression
- Primary damage is emotional
- May make life seem not worth living

Source: Stress and Burnout in Ministry

The ABC's of
Addressing
Vicarious
Trauma:

Awareness (of own needs, limits,
emotions & resources)

Balance (of work & play; taking
care of others & taking care of
yourself)

Connection (to oneself, others & to
something larger)

Ask

Ask for help when you need it

Create

Create an organizational climate that encourages self-care

Make

Make self-care a routine, not an infrequent occurrence

Strategies for Refueling

- Psychologically
 - Journal writing
 - Sharing your feelings
 - Vent emotions in safe ways (throwing ice cubes, play sad music)
 - Visualize a safe & nurturing place and visit it regularly

Safe Place Visualization

- Use affirmations to counter negative thinking:
 - I may not be perfect, but I'm perfectly fine
 - My needs and feelings count too
 - I will treat myself as kindly as I treat others
 - I will respond to myself with compassion

Refueling

- Physically
 - Massage (simple or full body)
 - Ask for comforting touch
 - “Non-should” exercise (walking, playing)
 - Create healing/sacred space in your office & at home
 - Practice radical self-care
 - Create simple pleasures

Refueling

- Socially
 - Make time for pleasing social activities
 - Get out and try new things
 - Ask a friend to “just listen” for 15 minutes
 - Gather with “kindred spirit” (church, support groups, clubs & other organizations)

Refueling

- Socially
 - Connect, Connect, Connect
 - Get involved with social activism & community organizing
 - Join a support group
 - See if others at work would like to start a self-care support group

Refueling

- Spiritually
 - In response to the 3 C's (I didn't cause it, I can't change it, and I can't control it), try the 3 P's (Pause, Pray and Proceed)
 - Engage in a spiritual practice that is meaningful to you
 - Create rituals that speak to you

Spiritually

- Walk in nature
- Do whatever brings you closer to something bigger than yourself
- Read inspirational materials
- Put inspirational quotes, pictures or images around you

Other things that help

- Develop realistic expectations for self & employees
- If possible, set aside some time in staff meetings to allow people to share their feelings
- Don't expect quick fixes

Always remember:

If your compassion does not include
yourself, it is incomplete.

The Buddha



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