

Understanding Stress and Building Resilience



**First Nations Primary Care +
Mental Health & Wellness Summit**
Weaving Wholistic Wellness into the Health Care System

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I recognize that today's session is on the unceded traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations and give thanks for allowing this workshop to take place on their territory

- **Acquire a basic understanding of stress and critical incident stress.**

Goals



- **Discuss vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue and burnout and their differences and symptoms**
- **Explore various models of healing & intervention.**
- **Discuss self-care choices to build stress resilience.**

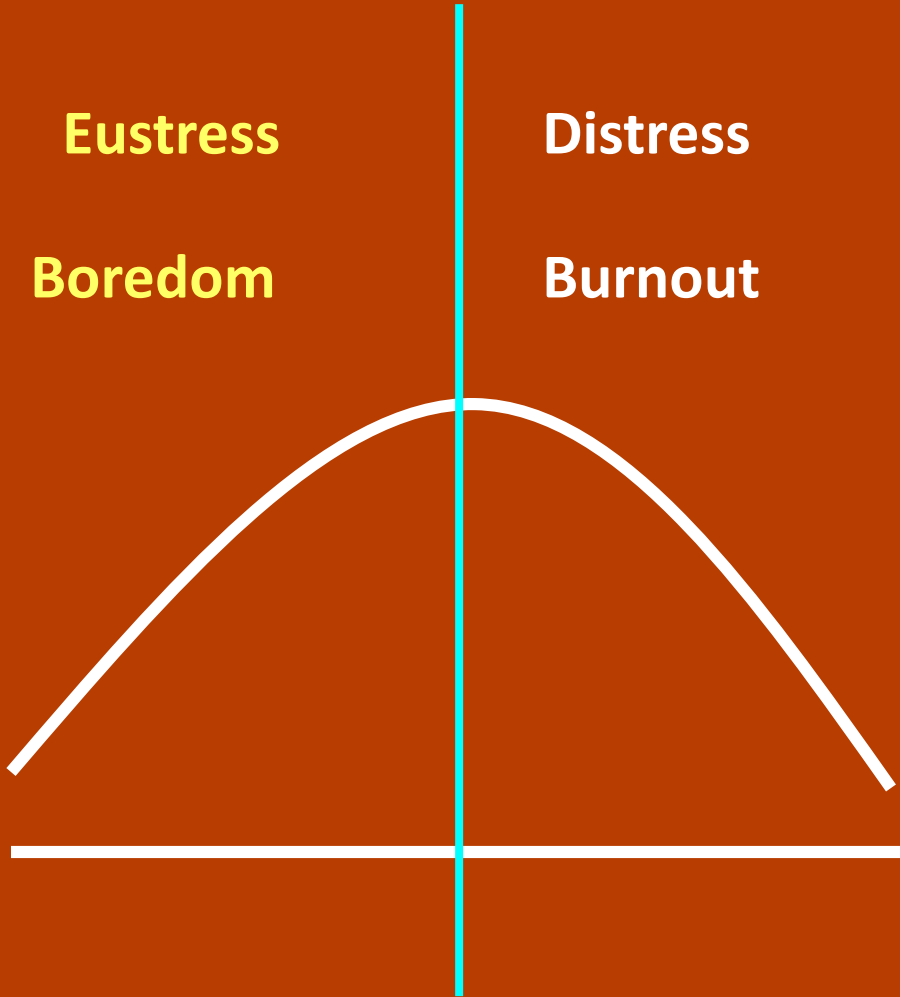
Peak Performance

Eustress

Distress

Boredom

Burnout



What is Stress?

The body's response to situations that pose demands, constraints or opportunities

“Stress has been likened to the tension on the strings of a violin. You need enough to make good music – too much and the strings will snap, too little and there will be no music.”



**What are
Critical
Incidents?**



Critical Incident Stress

An emotional state of stress or discomfort resulting from memories of an extraordinary experience which shatters one's sense of invulnerability to harm.



**What may be a
Critical Incident for
one person may not
be a Critical Incident
for another.**



**Depends on one's perception
of vulnerability and amount
of control over a situation.**

Traumatic Stress:

- physical or
- emotional



- may not be Critical Incident Stress .



Vicarious Trauma

- **Vicarious trauma (VT) is the process of change that happens because you care about other people who have been hurt, and feel committed or responsible to help them.**



Vicarious Trauma

- An **accumulation of memories of clients' traumatic material** that affects and is affected by the therapist's perspective of the world.
- **Hearing traumatic material and experiencing the other's pain**, eventually raises the question of how much one can do in the role of helper.



Vicarious Trauma

- **Over time this process can lead to changes in your psychological, physical, and spiritual well-being.**

(Headington Institute)



Vicarious Traumatization

The cumulative, transformative effect on the helper of working with survivors of traumatic life events.

- **These changes are both positive and negative.**
- Just as PTSD is understood as a response to an abnormal event, vicarious traumatization can also be perceived as a response to working with a traumatized population.

Saakvitne, K.A. & Pearlman, L.A.



Vicarious Traumatization

Pervasive - affects all aspects of
self of the helper

Cumulative - across clients or
interventions

Unique - you carry it with you
into your life

Belief System
Spirituality
Worldview
Identity



Critical Incident Stress

- “normal” reactions to abnormal events

Acute Stress Disorder and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

- “abnormal” reactions to abnormal events



Secondary Traumatic Stress

- **The natural, consequent behaviours and emotions resulting from *knowledge about* a traumatizing event experience by a significant other. It is the stress resulting from *helping or wanting to help* a traumatized or suffering person.**

Compassion Fatigue



- **Compassion** - “feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by suffering or misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate their pain or remove its cause.”
- **Therefore Compassion Fatigue is the inability to do the above by** being compassionate for so many for too long.



Definition of Compassion Fatigue

- Refers to the PTSD-related symptoms due to working with patients and families who have trauma and grief
- Differs from burn-out, but can co-exist
- Rarely due to exposure on one case but generally due to a “cumulative” level of trauma



Definition of Compassion Fatigue

Compassion Requirement: to feel or empathize for another's suffering or misfortune

Compassion Trap: lack of balance between establishing a therapeutic alliances and emotional over-involvement



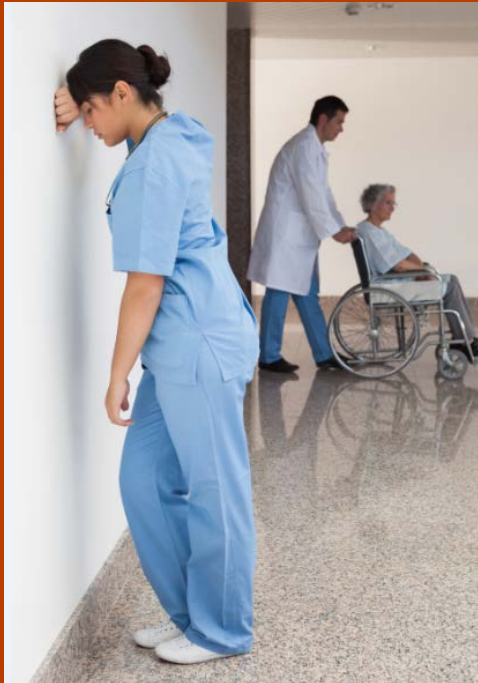
Burnout

- **Loss of enthusiasm, excitement, and sense of mission in one's work**
- **Burnout is *a process* where due to job stress and strain feelings of anxiety, depression, isolation and helplessness occur, a previously dedicated professional disengages from their work**

Burnout

- Emotional exhaustion is really at the heart of burnout

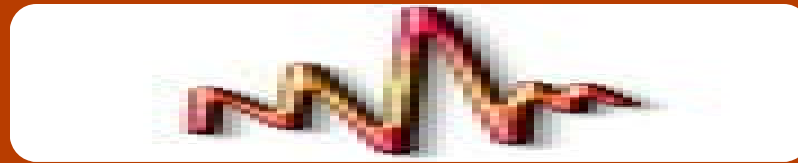
- Can happen to anyone, not just those who work with trauma survivors



Responses to Stress



Acute



Delayed

Secondary

Cumulative

Reactions To Stress

- Physical
- Emotional
- Cognitive
- Behavioural
- Spiritual





Self – Capacities

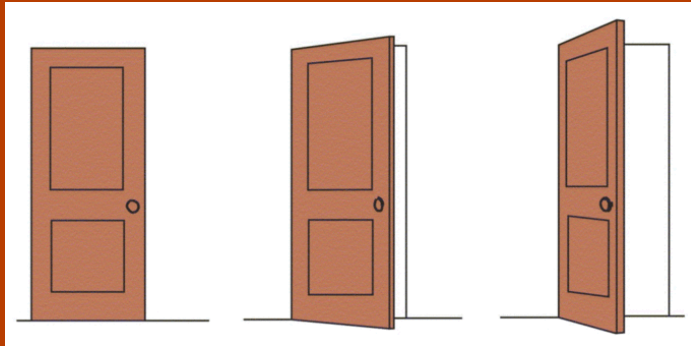
(Bowlby's Secure Base)

- Affects Tolerance
- Inner Sense of Connectedness
(Object Constancy)
- Ability to maintain sense of self
as viable and positive



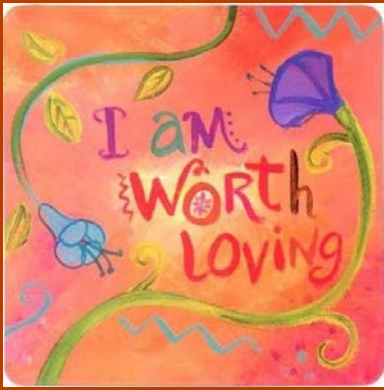
Affect Tolerance

- **Feelings are too strong (anger, fear, sadness)**
- **Feelings are unmanageable**
- **Sensitized to violence- either witnessed or seen on television in news or movies**



Object Constancy

- **Ability to feel connected to those who love you**
- **Sense of existential aloneness**



Sense of Self as Viable

- **Fundamentally** worth loving
- **Deserve to be alive**
 - Endorphins are released both by the pituitary gland and the thalamus during exercise, excitement, pain and pleasure.
 - During traumatic events, they act as analgesics to prevent distraction by pain.

What can We Do About It?

Ethics & Principles

1. Respect Safety, Dignity and Rights

- Do no harm
- Ensure safety where possible
- Help to manage the reactions
- Protect from further harm
- Foster resilience
- Promote recovery

Ethics & Principles

2. Respect Person's Dignity

- Treat with respect
- Consider cultural & social norms
- Embed culture & tradition in response where possible and appropriate

Ethics & Principles

3. Respect an Individual's Rights

- No discrimination
- Be honest & fair
- Provide choices
- Help people to understand rights & access to supports
- Act in an individual's best interests



Rethinking Stress



“How to Make Stress Your Friend”

Critical Incident Stress Management

1. Pre-Crisis Preparation



Critical Incident Stress Management

1. Pre-Crisis Preparation

2. Rest, Information, Transition Services (RITS) or Demobilizations & Staff consultation (rescuers)



Critical Incident Stress Management

1. Pre-Crisis Preparation
2. Demobilizations & Staff consultation (rescuers)
3. Crisis Management Briefing (civilians, schools, businesses)



Critical Incident Stress Management

1. Pre-Crisis Preparation
2. Demobilizations & Staff consultation (rescuers)
3. Crisis Management Briefing (civilians, schools, businesses)
4. Defusing



Defusing

- Introduction
- Exploration
- Education

1 Making contact

2 Acknowledging the incident

3 Inviting the person for a walk and talk

4 Getting agreement

5 Story stage

6 Impact stage

7 Education stage

8 Closure



Critical Incident Stress Management

1. Pre-Crisis Preparation
2. Demobilizations & Staff consultation (rescuers)
3. Crisis Management Briefing (civilians, schools, businesses)
4. Defusing
5. CISD



Debriefing



CISD Debriefing



**A psychological and emotional process for those
persons in the workplace
who are NORMAL with NORMAL reactions and
who have experienced a critical incident
in order to
REDUCE the impact of the event
and
ACCELERATE recovery**

CISD

Debriefing

1. Introduction
2. Facts
3. Thought
4. Reactions
5. Symptoms
6. Teaching
7. Re-entry



Begin with a prayer by an elder
Consider smudging or burning of
sweet grass

Items representing the four
Medicines (Tobacco, Sage,
Sweetgrass, Cedar) may be placed
in the centre of the Circle as well
as other items such as a Smudge
Bowl, a fan, Eagle Feathers,
Talking Stick, hand Drum,
Rattle, and include a box of tissue
Use an eagle feather or talking
stick

Consider how to use local traditions
for cleansing

Critical Incident Stress Management

1. Pre-Crisis Preparation
2. Demobilizations & Staff consultation (rescuers)
3. Crisis Management Briefing (civilians, schools, businesses)
4. Defusing
5. CISD
6. Individual crisis intervention 1:1 SAFER



Critical Incident Stress Management

1. Pre-Crisis Preparation
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4. Defusing
5. CISD
6. Individual crisis intervention 1:1 SAFER
7. Family CISM

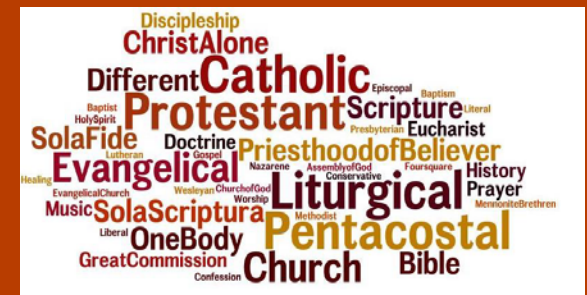


Critical Incident Stress Management

1. Pre-Crisis Preparation
2. Demobilizations & Staff consultation (rescuers)
3. Crisis Management Briefing (civilians, schools, businesses)
4. Defusing
5. CISD
6. Individual crisis intervention 1:1
7. Family CISM
8. Organizational Consultation

Critical Incident Stress Management

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6. Individual crisis intervention 1:1
7. Family CISM
8. Organizational Consultation
9. Pastoral Crisis Intervention



Critical Incident Stress Management

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5. CISD
6. Individual crisis intervention 1:1
7. Family CISM
8. Organizational Consultation
9. Pastoral Crisis Intervention
10. Follow-Up/Referral





Healing Circles

- The use of the circle – a sacred symbol of the interdependence of all forms of life.
- The Talking Circle is a place to teach important lessons of all of life – people internalize and verbalize the learning and the understanding becomes a part of spirituality to maintain the balance of life

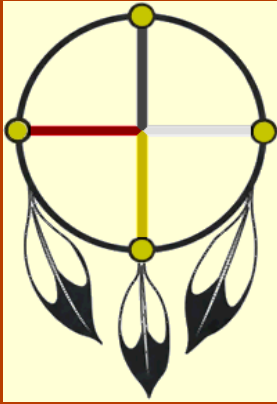


Healing Circles

The Healing Circle brings together people who are experiencing various difficulties to overcome problems – including trauma

The **goals** are:

- To begin the healing process
- To promote understanding
- To prevent or solve problems
- To build trust



Healing Circles

The **goals** are:

- To respect each person and oneself
- To share common experiences
- To realize that we are not alone
- To learn from others and learn about life
- To identify personal issues which help us to understand to grow

Psychological First Aid

What is PFA?



- Providing practical care and support, which does not intrude
- Assessing needs and concerns
- Helping people to address basic needs (for example, food and water, information)
- Listening to people, but not pressuring them to talk;

Psychological First Aid

What is PFA?



- **Comforting people and helping them to feel calm;**
- **Stabilizing people psychologically**
- **Helping people connect to information, services and social supports;**
- **When possible, protecting people from further harm – making referrals**
- **Promotes natural coping skills**

Psychological First Aid

PFA Core Strategies



- Feeling safe, connected to others, calm and hopeful
- Having access to social, physical and emotional support; and
- Feeling able to help themselves, as individuals and communities.

PFA ACTION PRINCIPLES:

LOOK

- » Check for safety.
- » Check for people with obvious urgent basic needs.
- » Check for people with serious distress reactions.



LISTEN

- » Approach people who may need support.
- » Ask about people's needs and concerns.
- » Listen to people, and help them to feel calm.



LINK

- » Help people address basic needs and access services.
- » Help people cope with problems.
- » Give information.
- » Connect people with loved ones and social support.



Plans for Compassion Fatigue

T... Time management

E... Escape

N... Nurture yourself

S... Self-care

E... Enjoy



General Stress Management

- **Techniques to reduce exposure to stressors**

- Problem Solving
- **Time Management**
- Nutritional Techniques
- Avoiding Known Stressors



- **Reappraisal or Reinterpretation of stressors**

- Cognitive Reframing
- Psychotherapy



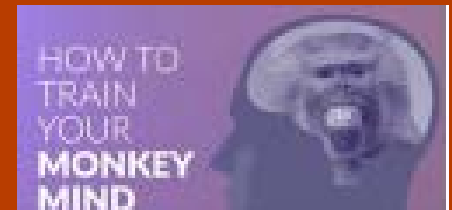
General Stress Management

- **Techniques to Reduce Stress Arousal**

- Proper Sleep Patterns
- Relaxation Response Training (meditation, imagery)
- Prescription Medications

- **Techniques to Ventilate Stress Arousal**

- Physical Exercise
- Catharsis



General Stress Management

Techniques to Reduce Stress Arousal

- If you are hearing a story and can make it in your head ...
- Be aware!
- Practice breathing while listening
- Do left foot/right foot tapping --- this helps info file in the right place, and calm the amygdala



Self-Care and Stress Resilience (Flannery)

1. Taking Personal Control of Your Life

2. Task Involvement

3. Make wise lifestyle choices



Practice Forgiveness

Studies reveal:



- People who are more forgiving report fewer health problems.
- Forgiveness leads to less stress.
- Forgiveness leads to fewer physical symptoms of stress.
- Failure to forgive may be more important than hostility as a risk factor for heart disease.

Strategies
for Self

Practice Forgiveness



- Blaming other people for their troubles - higher incidences of illnesses

- Imagining not forgiving someone - negative changes in blood pressure, muscle tension, and immune response.

- Imagining forgiving their offender - immediate improvement in their cardiovascular, muscular, and nervous systems.

- People with devastating losses can learn to forgive and feel better psychologically and emotionally.

Strategies for Self

Stuff Happens



We Tell a Victim Story



We Take It Personally



We React



We Blame the Offender



**We Form a
Resentment**



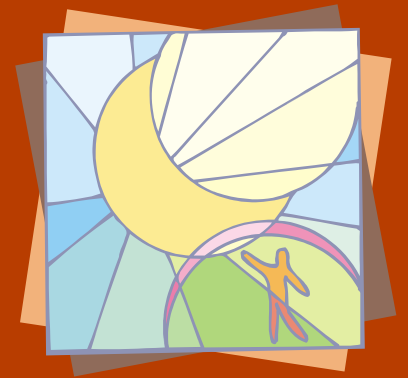
The Four R's of Forgiveness



1. **Reframe** the event & focus on its impersonal aspects – it is what happened to you not about you
2. Take **Responsibility** for your physiological reaction to being harmed – calm yourself
3. **Rewrite** your internal account of what happened – change the focus to you and how you survived not about who harmed you.
4. **Reconnect** with your spiritual self – your Higher Power

Self-Care and Stress Resilience (Flannery)

1. Taking Personal Control of Your Life
2. Task Involvement
3. Make wise lifestyle choices
4. Social Supports
5. Have a sense of humour
6. Be concerned about the welfare of others



THE HELPER'S CREED

When I Feel Responsible
For Someone



When I Feel Responsible **To**
Someone



