

# Definitions

## **Compassion fatigue**

- Reduced capacity for empathy shown through emotional, behavioral, physical, spiritual, interpersonal, and cognitive reactions experienced by a disaster mental health service provider or any individual helping a traumatized person.

# 16 Warning Signs of Compassion Fatigue/Trauma Exposure Response

Feeling helpless/hopeless

Sense that one can never do enough

Hypervigilance

Diminished creativity

Inability to embrace complexity

Minimizing

Chronic exhaustion/physical ailments

Avoidance/inability to listen

Dissociative moments

Sense of persecution

Guilt

Fear

Anger/cynicism

Inability to empathize/numbing

Addictions

Grandiosity

# Compassion Fatigue Causes

- Frequency of exposure
  - Greater levels of “Trauma” and “trauma” both have significant impacts
- Memories/connection to story
- Stage in career
  - Increased risk for new practitioners (ambiguity)
- Other life stress
- Lack of self-care
- Threats to personal safety

# What to do? (Compassion Fatigue)

- Honest assessment and reflection perhaps with loved ones
- Reduce frequency especially those stories which connect with you deeply
  - Dramatically reduce exposure both in personal life and in work
  - Delegate pastoral care issues that are particularly challenging for you and see if there are ways you can offer this support to others
  - Intentionality re: exposure especially to particular topics difficult for you
- Find support especially for those early in their careers
  - Mentorship and peer support
- Take time to address other life stress and self-care as much as possible
- Seek support for previous and current trauma exposure

# Definitions

## **Burnout**

- Cumulative process marked by emotional exhaustion and withdrawal associated with increased workload and institutional stress, not trauma-related.

# Common symptoms of Burnout

Fatigue

Depression

Malaise

Increased absenteeism/sick days

Irritability/anger

Anxious/stressed out

Alcohol/drugs/food

Hopelessness

Automated/robotic

Cynicism

Withdrawal and isolation

Loss of interest and joy

Shutting down

Relational difficulty

Poor work performance

Increased errors

Inefficient/ineffective

Not caring about quality

Critical of others

Subterfuge

Avoiding work

# What to do in general

- Identify where you are - for many, that's hard enough. Admit if you need help.
- Find your agency (and where you can't make change and wisdom to know the difference)
- Limit exposure and set boundaries
- Rest

