



The Council for Health &
Human Service Ministries

United Church of Christ

Healing When Called to Heal

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2024 CHHSM Annual Gathering: Collaboration as the Gateway to Innovation»

Why is This an Important Discussion?

People working in nonprofit spaces work to fulfill the mission and vision of the organization and support the communities they serve.

People who experience this may eventually disconnect or lose an ability to have empathy or compassion for the client/patient.

“Nonprofit leaders must work to make sure the organization’s actions, resources, and culture are aligned with its values. Your employees need to be shown that they have organizational support when it comes to overcoming mental health concerns and stress brought on by the work they do”. -Jessica Shatzel

Secondary Trauma

“Secondhand, or vicarious, trauma is a condition that affects many people who interact with those who have experienced a traumatic event” -American Counseling Association

“Emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the firsthand trauma experiences of another”. - National Child Traumatic Stress Network

“A single session with a traumatized person may trigger symptoms of secondary trauma”- Good Therapy

Examples

Exposure to trauma experienced by students and their family.

Community violence

Colleagues sharing disturbing details of trauma experienced by students or family when you aren't emotionally prepared to handle what is being shared.

School environment is often chaotic, disorganized, and unpredictable.

Students talk about what they experienced. You experience their physical reaction to the experiences.

Cumulative effect from hearing multiple accounts daily.

All can negatively impact your stress level or emotional state.

Secondary Trauma vs Burnout

“Burnout can be the easiest one to figure out why it matters. “People quit when they experience burnout, which can cost us money in training time, staff deficits, and a loss of institutional knowledge and expertise. However, unlike secondary trauma, burnout isn’t strictly trauma related. It can be caused by any challenging work scenario”.- Berg Raunick

Professions who experience various kinds of secondhand trauma often have an increased risk of burnout.

People Identified as more susceptible

- Prior trauma exposure
- Women
- Fewer years of experience in the field
- Frequency of exposure
- Type of work
- Youthful workers

Things You Can Do

- Exercise
- Relax and Rest
- Spend time with nature
- Fellowship with others/Social support
- Consistent Self-Care
- Awareness of thoughts
- Active
- Enough Sleep
- Do something creative (paint, journal, cook)
- Manage your time and say “no”
- Celebrate yourself
- Identify strategies for your to help you cope
- Trauma-Informed Care Training
- Peer Support

Things to Do as an Organization

- Recognize it when it begins to show up.
- Create safe work environments that help continue to thrive and do life-changing work
- Offer opportunities and strategies for work/life balance.
- Foster a kind and inclusive work culture
- Prioritize employees' emotional well-being and sense of safety and comfort
- Encourage employees to make time for self-care
- Proactively prevent and address toxic aspects of work culture.
- Staff Wellness Days
- Host circles for those who need them.

Circle Time

Welcome and transition into circle: Step away from what you've been doing, taking a deep breath, and committing yourself to being fully in the circle.

Community agreements & Introduction to the timing/ agenda of the circle today.

Introduction: I am _____ and what season are you in within your life and why. 20 min

Prompt: Share your journey in entering this profession. 20 min

Prompt: How does your identity show up in the work that you do? 25 min

Checkout: Reflection on the circle experience. What is the wisdom learned? 20 min

Closing: Poem

Tools and Resources

Calm-Helps reduce anxiety, build self-esteem and experience the other benefits of meditation.

Headspace-Provides meditations to help with concentration, mood, stress and anxiety.

Insight Timer-Provides guided meditation without a subscription fee.

References

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