

# **Beyond Self-Care: Fostering a Culture of Team Resilience in a Caregiving Organization**

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# Beyond Self-Care: Overview

- Impact of Trauma on Caregivers
- Description of Team Resilience
- Strategies to Build a Resilient Culture

# The REACH Program

“You stick with me even when I’m at my worst”

“How did you find me again?”

“You listen. You really listen.”

(REACH Clients)

Multi-disciplinary outreach and case management  
for homeless adults experiencing addiction, co-  
occurring mental health disorders and chronic  
medical conditions

# Comments from Case Managers

“It’s like a switch has been turned off. I can’t feel anything. I’m afraid it will never come back.”

(REACH Worker, 35 years direct service)

“I was afraid to be alone in my apartment. I kept checking the locks on the doors and windows”

(REACH Worker, 7 years direct service)

# Risks of Trauma Exposure

- Burnout
  - Emotional Exhaustion
- Compassion Fatigue
  - Loss of Self
- Vicarious Trauma
  - Change in Perspective on Life
- Secondary Traumatic Stress
  - Symptoms similar to PTSD

# Burnout

- Emotional exhaustion, diminished caring
- Feelings of failure, cynicism and ineffectiveness

# Compassion Fatigue

- Exhaustion, depression, anger, ineffectiveness
- Apathy and detachment
- Somatic complaints, from headaches to depression
- Loss of Self



# Vicarious Trauma

- Absorbing the emotions, fears and grief of clients, increasing one's own stress and emotional pain
- Change in Perspective on Life, especially related to safety, trust and intimacy



# Secondary Traumatic Stress

Symptoms similar to PTSD:

- Nightmares
- Irritability
- Anxiety
- Difficulty concentrating
- Insomnia

# Resilience

- The capacity to bend without breaking
- To spring back, once bent (Vaillant, 1993)

## System Resilience

- Balance of pain and hope

# Applied Models

- Trauma Stewardship: Self-care for dealing with the risks of trauma exposure (van Dernoot Lipsky, 2009)
- “Holding Environment”: Relational networks as the basis for resilient work environments (Kahn, 2005)
- Organizational Development (OD) : Engaging organization members in the process of learning, growth and change
- Appreciative Inquiry: Positive change through dialogue (Cooperrider, 2005)

# Self-Care

## Trauma Stewardship

“We are required to develop and maintain a long-term strategy for ourselves such that we can remain whole and helpful to others even amidst their greatest challenges.”

(Laura van Dernoot Lipsky, 2009)

- Self Awareness
- Self-forgiveness
- Compassionate Caring
- Empathic Boundaries

# Holding Environment for Clients

“We remember we are being entrusted with people’s stories and their very lives... as good stewards, we create a space for and honor others’ hardship and suffering while not assuming their pain as our own.”

(van Dernoot Lipsky, 2009)

“What enables careseekers to grow, heal, and learn, are relationships in which caregivers are present, and safely distant, simultaneously.”

(Kahn, 2005)

# Holding Environment for Staff

## Results of Team Cohesion:

- Debriefing
- Dispersion of distress
- Creative Problem Solving
- Shared Responsibility

# Fostering a Strengths Based Culture

- Individual Supervision
- Group Case Consultation
- “Team Resilience” Sessions
- Co-Worker Support



# Team Resilience Strategies

- Hiring for Diversity
- Staff Flexibility and Self-Determination
- Learning Community
- Celebration of incremental accomplishments
- Gratitude
- Humor
- Soup Club

# Program Development Example

## Camera Club:

- Beyond survival needs
- Increases staff morale
- Engages whole person, not just dysfunction

# Program Development Example

## Open Space Retreats:

- Staff ownership of program development
- Conflict resolution
- Fosters new communication/alliances

# Next Steps

- What is your organization already doing?
- What do you want to take back to your organization?

# Resources

**Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others**

Laura van Dernoot Lipsky with Connie Burk (2009)

**Holding Fast: The Struggle to Create Resilient Caregiving Organizations**

William A. Kahn (2005)

**Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change**

David L. Cooperrider and Diana Whitney (2005)

**Sharing the Rock: Shaping Our Future through Leadership for the Common Good**

Bill Grace (2011)

**Radical Collaboration with Gracious Space: From Small Openings to Profound Transformation**

Patricia Hughes, Karma Ruder and Dale Nienow (2011)

**Finding Beauty in a Broken World**

Terry Tempest Williams (2008)