

Vicarious Trauma

Jan Waters, LCPC
Senior Director of Clinical
Services

jwaters@chicagocac.org



Resources, references, and mentors

- Definition and other information taken from Headington Institute on-line training: <http://headington-institute.org/Default.aspx?tabid=2646>
- Mindfulness slides are from The Potential Project as presented by Martin Lyngby-Nielson and Rasmus Hougaard
- Breathing Room/Take Five information is from Breathing Room trainings by Mark Lily and Dani Harris
- Other activities and information are from [16 Guidelines for a Happy Life](http://www.16guidelines.org/) by Dekyi-Lee Oldershaw and Alison Murdoch more information can be obtained at <http://www.16guidelines.org/>
- Activities and information from the book [Buddha's Brain](#) by Rick Hanson and Richard Mendius



Gecko Guide – Building resiliency for people that work with child abuse

The University of Texas at Austin Institute
on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
Center for Social Work Research
School of Social Work



Vicarious Trauma

- Process of change over time
- Because you care about people who have been hurt
- Because you feel committed to help them
- Causes changes
 - Psychological
 - Physical
 - Spiritual



Let's make some room
to breathe


**KEEP
CALM
AND
BREATHE
DEEPLY**



Breathing Room/Take Five



Breathing

- Breathing in – activates the sympathetic nervous system
- Breathing out – activates the parasympathetic nervous system

Buddha's Brain



Neurobiology Response

- Top-down regulation
 - Strengthening your capacity to monitor your body's sensations
 - Mindfulness meditation
 - Yoga
- Bottom-up regulation
 - Recalibrating the autonomic nervous system
 - Breath
 - Movement
 - Touch



Five Pillars of Resilience

- Self-Knowledge and insight
 - Strengthened by self-esteem, sense of control, independence, and self-compassion
- Strong relationships
 - Strengthened by attachment to others, seeking and giving support, and speaking up for a change
- Sense of hope
 - Strengthened by a sense of humor, ability to have fun, optimism
- Healthy coping
 - Strengthened by planning, using skills and abilities to address secondary traumatic stress in the workplace
- Personal perspective and meaning
 - Strengthened by morality and integrity, spirituality, and coherent life meaning



Self-Knowledge and insight

- Strengthened by self-esteem, sense of control, independence, and self-compassion

Gecko Guide



Self-knowledge and insight

Why do you do this work?



Self-knowledge and insight

- “He who knows others is clever; He who knows himself has discernment” – Lao Tsu
- “A man cannot be comfortable without his own approval” – Mark Twain



Strong relationships

- Strengthened by attachment to others, seeking and giving support, and speaking up for a change
- Activity – Getting to know one another



Strong relationships

- “One of the most beautiful qualities of true friendship is to understand and to be understood.” – Lucias Anneaus Seneca
- “Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light.” – Helen Keller



Sense of Hope

- Strengthened by a sense of humor, ability to have fun, optimism
- Activity – Songs of hope



Sense of Hope

- "Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence." – Helen Keller
- "Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all the darkness." – Desmond Tutu



Your brain: basic facts



- 100 billion *neurons*
- 10^{80} atoms in the universe
- $10^{1,000,000,000}$ possible mind states
- Weighs: 2% of body weight
- Uses: 25% glucose and oxygen

References:

Fact 1: Harvard University Press: *The Accidental Brain*, 2007 D. J. Linden.

Fact 2: *The practical neuroscience of happiness...*, 2009, Rick Hanson.

Fact 3: Science 322:1195-1196: *Brain wnts for blood vessels*, 2008, Eckhart Lammer.

Created by The Potential Project for the Foundation for Developing Wisdom and Compassion



Neural networks



- Neurons are connected by synapses
- Each neuron has 5000 synapses
- What fires together wires together

References:

Fact 1: Harvard University Press: *The Accidental Brain*, 2007 D. J. Linden.
 Fact 2: Science 321:48-50: *Transient dynamics for neural processing*, 2008, M. Rabinovich Et Al.
 Created by The Potential Project for the Foundation for Developing Wisdom and Compassion



Healthy Coping

- Activity – Intensifying positive experiences
 - Help positive events become positive experiences
 - Savor the experience; focus attention on all aspects of the experience
 - Allow the experience to soak into you



Mindfulness

- Paying focused attention
 - on purpose
 - without judgment
- to the experience of the present moment.



Healthy Coping

- “Problems are not the problem; coping is the problem.” – Virginia Satir
- “Resilience isn’t a single skill. It’s a variety of skills and coping mechanisms. To bounce back from bumps in the road as well as failures, you should focus on emphasizing the positive.” – Jean Chatzky



Personal perspective and meaning

- Personal reflection
 - What coherent life meaning to you draw on?
 - What role does your morality and integrity play in making meaning of your work?
 - What specific spirituality or philosophy of life keeps you balanced and helps you make meaning of the work you do?
 - Do you have a perspective on human suffering? If so, how does that help you make meaning of your work?



Personal perspective and meaning

- Activity: How do you make meaning of this work?



Personal perspective and meaning

- “Life is about perspective and how you look at something.. Ultimately, you have to zoom out.” – Whitney Wolfe Herd
- “The only thing you sometimes have control over is perspective. You don’t have control over your situation. But you have a choice about how you view it.” – Chris Pine



Finding your Center

Make room to breathe!!

