

Secondary Post Traumatic Stress

"The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty" (NASW, 2012).

SOCIAL WORKERS AND INDIRECT EXPOSURE

Through constant exposure, social workers are at risk of experiencing trauma and developing Secondary Traumatic Stress (Gil and Weinberg, 2015). This phenomena is defined as "experience of trauma symptoms as a result of exposure to a client's trauma material (Stamm & Figley, 1995)"



PREVENTION TOOLS

Social workers can use tools during their day to prevent STS. Some include psychoeducation, clinical supervision, workplace self-care such as meditation and open dialogue among staff, creation of a balanced caseload as well as exercise and good nutrition.



SYMPTOMS OF SECONDARY POST TRAUMATIC STRESS

If prevention measure are not taken, symptoms can arise. Some symptoms are sleeplessness; hyper-vigilance; avoidance of clients; anger and cynicism; fear; and guilt. It is important to remember symptoms vary from person to person.



TOOLS TO MANAGE SYMPTOMS

Should symptoms arise there are many tools you can use to support yourself. You can continue to utilize prevention tools alongside cognitive behavioral techniques, mindfulness, self care, reflective supervision, informal gatherings following crisis events, and referrals to assistance programs.



SYMPTOMS OF BURNOUT

Sometimes when symptoms of STS are not supported, burnout can occur. Symptoms can include chronic exhaustion, frequent illness, change in sleep, self-doubt, fear, detachment, hopelessness, loss of motivation, isolation and procrastination. When left unaddressed these symptoms can result in people leaving their profession.

Social Workers Assistance Network (SWAN)



"Let us be there for you...for a change."
Call 1-800-635-SWAN (7926)

"Studies show that if social workers can utilize empathy, they are more likely to obtain compassion satisfaction and are less likely to present the symptoms of secondary traumatic stress (Wagaman et al., 2015)."

"STS results in professionals feeling as if they are reliving their clients' traumatic experiences as well as increased arousal and/or avoidance symptoms with rapid onset, following at least one indirect exposure to traumatic material (Sprang et al., 2006)."

"Through the indirect traumatic experiences they are exposed to, social workers begin to become a vulnerable population of their own (Cieslak et al., 2016)."

powered by

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