Joy and Resilience among Hospice Care Professionals: How Do We Get There?

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Presentation Goals

1. Define resilience
2. Understand resiliency research, especially findings that relate to hospice care professionals
3. Examine key factors for cultivating resilience within hospice agency settings
4. Discussion - Advocacy Plans for Intra-Agency Resilience
What is resilience?

Resilience occurs when a person is able to evolve beyond adversity to an increased level of practice wisdom, while experiencing a continual or expanding capacity for compassion (Kapoulitsas & Corcoran, 2015).
Why is resilience important to hospice social workers?

➔ Resilience is a vital mechanism for maintaining hospice social worker well being and for agency best quality outcomes.

➔ Resilient persons are resourceful, flexible & able to effectively problem solve with a wide range of creative responses (Collins).

➔ Resilience minimizes the effects of compassion fatigue.
Roots in positive psychology & well-being theory

Rather than aiming for a work life in which happiness is constant, we should aim to flourish in our professional lives (Seligman, 2011).

SUSTAINABLE WELL-BEING =

Positive emotion +

Engagement +

Relationships +

Meaning +

Achievement
Social work research & positive psychology

Social work research is trending:

➔ away from deficit-oriented examinations of burnout and compassion fatigue

g➔ toward strengths-based discussions of compassion satisfaction and resilience.
The Resilience Continuum (Hanson & Sandquist)

Joy and flourishing

Fulfillment, compassion, and satisfaction

RESILIENCE

Reversible fatigue

Entrenched fatigue and burnout
Cultivating resilience through personal self-care

- Engaging with supportive family and friends
- Taking lunch breaks, vacations, etc.
- Participating in hobbies that take our minds off work
- Working with our own therapists
- Exercising
- Meditating
- Engaging in spiritual practices
Limits of personal self-care

In order to cultivate true resilience among hospice professionals, personal self-care **MUST** exist in the context of an agency environment that is intentionally structured and supportive (Harr, 2013; Newell & MacNeil, 2010; Ungar, 2011).
How do we cultivate intra-agency resilience?

RELATIONAL SUPPORT - We all do it, Let’s own it!

Social and emotional support from colleagues, supervisors, and agency administration is the most often mentioned factor in literature about resilience and compassion satisfaction (Killian et al, 2013; Sardawalla, 2007; Jones, 2005).

Top down celebration of successes (Seligman)
How do we cultivate intra-agency resilience?

SUPERVISION

Research shows that formal supervision (individual and group), as well as informal interactions with supervisors, enhances hospice social worker resilience (Alkema et al 2013; Killian, 2008).
How do we cultivate intra-agency resilience?

OCCASIONS FOR SPIRITUAL AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Regularly scheduled support group meetings, services of remembrance, problem-solving meetings, and occasions for spiritual reflection are strategies for bolstering agency-wide spiritual and emotional support (Harr, 2013; Jones, 2005).
How do we cultivate intra-agency resilience?

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

Administrators should support professional development, education, worker safety, monitor caseloads and implement systems that enhance worker quality of life (Kapoulitsas & Corcoran, 2015; Newell & MacNeil, 2010).
How do we cultivate intra-agency resilience?

SUMMARY

Relational Support
Supervision
Occasions for Spiritual and Emotional Support
Administrative Support
How do we get there?

As social workers trained in advocacy, mental health, and systems theory, we are perfectly positioned to advocate for improved work conditions to address employees’ emotional and spiritual well-being (Alkema, Linton, & Davies, 2008).
Discussion

How does your agency

➔ Promote Intra-Agency Resilience?
➔ How do you propose they could?


