

Being Well
Managing Therapist Stress & Distress
A Wellness Workshop for Warriors

ATSA New York
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Promoting Community Safety through Collaboration:
Prevention, Treatment and Supervision

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STRESSORS ASSOCIATED WITH EXPOSURE TO SEXUAL PATHOLOGY AND TRAUMA WORK

CHARACTERISTICS OF OFFENDERS ASSOCIATED WITH STRESS

- Self-centered
 - Lack empathy
 - Denial and minimization
 - Rationalization and projection of responsibility
 - Lack internal motivation for change
 - Manipulative
 - Severe depression
 - Borderline states
 - Narcissistic personalities
 - Extreme dependent behaviors
 - Seductive behavior
 - Ignoring boundaries
- Individuals who engage in:*
- Suicidal pre-occupation
 - Expressions of anger, aggression, passive –aggression
 - Lying, manipulation, hidden agendas
 - Poor impulse control
 - Literal/concrete thinking
 - Socially stigmatized

EXPOSURE TO TRAUMA MATERIAL

Individuals exposed to trauma material report having experienced the following reactions

- Disgust
- Rage
- Nausea
- Shock
- Profound detachment
- Fear
- Revenge/Retribution fantasies
- Arousal
- Sexually aggressive thoughts and impulses
- Trigger own trauma issues

THE THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP

- Level of responsibility
- Equilibrium of intimacy and objectivity
- Non-reciprocal “giving” and attentiveness
- Controlling one’s own emotions
- Boundary Issues
- Experience of separation at termination

EMOTIONAL STRAIN

- Isolation and aloneness/loneliness
- Emotional depletion
- Difficulty leaving issues related to clients and their struggles ‘at the office’

COGNITIONS, BELIEFS, EXPECTATIONS

- Personally responsible
- Must give maximum time, energy and attention on demand
- Irrational belief about the level of competency and efficacy one must achieve

EFFICACY OF TREATMENT

- Doubts about the efficacy of treatment
- Ambiguity in determining progress
- Lack of observable progress
- Impact of recidivism
- An inability to help acutely distressed clients or lack of therapeutic success
- Success demands

BALANCE AND LEVEL OF RESPONSIBILITIES

- High level of personal responsibility
- Serving the offender, agency and community
- Institutional mandates
- Societal demands
- Role ambiguity/conflict

ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

- Poor management
- Excessive work loads
- Too little time to get work done
- Too much paper work
- Limited impact on work policy
- Limited administrative or support staff support
- Limited professional development
- Limited consultation opportunities
- General work atmosphere
- Financial/salary concerns
- Limited appreciation
- Lack of promotional opportunities

INADEQUACIES OF SYSTEMS

- Shortcomings in justice and mental health systems
- System inconsistencies
- System as reactive vs. proactive

DISTRESS

Burnout

- Due to chronic work related stressors
- High job demands
- Lack of resources
- Cumulative
- Three dimensions
 - *Emotional Exhaustion*
 - *Depersonalization*
 - *Personal Accomplishment*

Vicarious Trauma

- Transformation in therapist as a result of working with clients traumatic experiences
- Impact is pervasive (affects all aspects of the persons life)
- Areas of psychological need and corresponding cognitive schemas are disrupted
- Cumulative
- Potentially permanent effects

Compassion Fatigue

- Cost of caring' about and for traumatized people
- Emotional residue of exposure
- Fatigue from empathic engagement
- Sudden onset
- Faster recovery

SYMPTOMS OF DISTRESS

Psychological Symptoms

- Depression, Anxiety
- Feeling:
 - *Overwhelmed*
 - *Depleted/fatigue*
 - *Powerlessness*
 - *Anger*
 - *Guilt*
 - *High job demands*

Destructive Coping Styles

- Substance abuse
- Tobacco
- Food
- Aggression
- Suicidal ideation/attempts

Social Functioning

- Negative impact on:
 - *Marriage*
 - *Parent child relationships*
 - *Friendships*
- General social functioning
- Withdrawal

Health

- Exhaustion
- Increase in stress related illnesses (e.g., heart disease, hypertension, ulcers, headaches)
- Disruption in sleep and appetite

Professional Functioning

- Less effective/efficient
- Absenteeism
- Low moral and job satisfaction
- At greater jeopardy of:
 - *Breaching ethical conduct*
 - *Sexual Misconduct*
 - *Theft*
 - *Quitting*

Have You Seen Me Lately?
Words & Music by Adam F. Duritz, Counting Crows

Get away from me, Get away from me
this isn't gonna be easy but I don't need you, believe me
ya, you got a piece of me
but it's just a little piece of me
I don't need anyone these days
I feel like I'm fading away
like sometimes when I hear myself on the radio

Have you seen me lately?
Have you seen me lately?
Have you seen me lately?

I was out on the radio starting to change
somewhere out in America, it's raining
could you tell me one thing you remember about me, remember about me

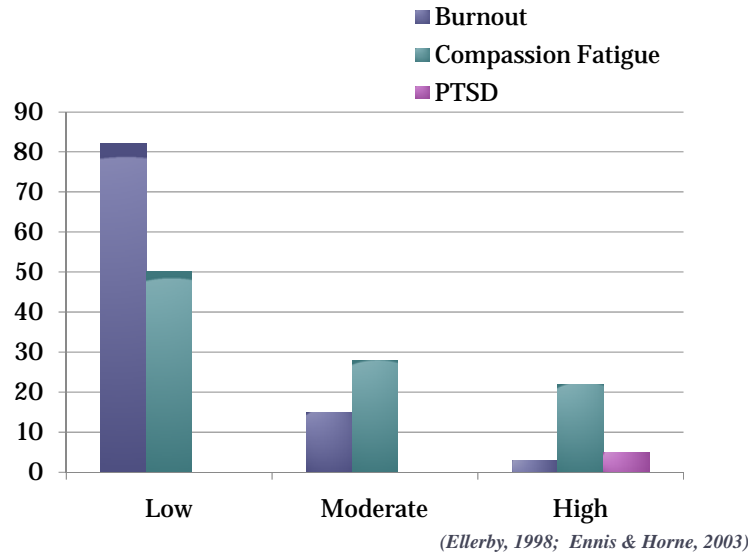
I remember me,
all the little things that make up a memory, she said she loved to watch me sleep
like she said, "it's the breathing, it's the breathing in and out and in and..."
Have you seen me lately? Have you seen me lately? Have you seen me lately?

I was out on the radio starting to change
somewhere out in America, it's raining
could you tell me one thing you remember about me, remember about me
You know I thought that someone would notice
I thought somebody would say something, If I was missing, Well can't you see me?

Come on color me in, Come on color me in, Come on, Come on, Come on
Give me your blue rain, Give me your black sky, Give me your green eyes
Just give me your white skin, give me your white skin, give me your white skin
I was out on the radio starting to change
somewhere out in America, it's raining
could you tell me one thing you remember about me,

just one thing you remember about me
just one thing you remember about me
one thing you remember about me
remember about me

How Are We Doing? Experience of Distress Among SOTP's



Experience of Burnout Among Sex Offender Therapists

(Ellerby, 1998; Shelby, Stoddart, Taylor, 2001)



Emotional Exhaustion Depersonalization

IMPACTS REPORTED BY INDIVIDUALS
DEALING WITH SEXUAL PATHOLOGY AND TRAUMA WORK

- **Shifts in perceptions**

- **Emotional Impact**
 - Generalized Stress
 - Fatigue, Exhaustion
 - Anxiety, Tension
 - Depression, Depressive Episodes
 - Overwhelmed
 - Emotional hardening
 - Frustration
 - Rising anger
 - Helplessness

- **Behaviour Impact**
 - Restlessness
 - Irritability
 - Sleep disturbances
 - Decreased tolerance
 - Increased confrontational behavior
 - Insensitivity to others
 - Time spent thinking of work
 - Disconnected from others

- **Disruption in Sense of Safety**
 - Hyper-vigilant
 - Suspicious, decreased trust
 - Oversensitive to dangerous situations
 - Feeling 'less safe', more vulnerable
 - Increased concern for safety of loved ones
 - Cautious in relationships

- **Impact on Family**
 - Increased protectiveness of children
 - More aware of child's interactions with others
 - More open to discussing sexuality and abuse issues
 - Increased attention to child's media exposure
 - Increased awareness of own contact with children

- **Impact on Sexuality**

	Male (%)	Female (%)
Decreased Interest	26	37
Decreased Behaviour	37	32
Avoid	37	55
Distracted	32	53
Question past behaviour/experiences	68	53

(Ellerby 1997)

- **Specific Impact Identified Related to Trauma Material**

- INTRUSIVE IMAGES
 - Re-experiencing images, thoughts, dreams, physiological reactions
- AVOIDANT SYMPTOMS
 - Numbing in responsiveness
 - Avoidance of trauma-related stimuli
- HYPER-AROUSAL
 - Hyper-vigilant
 - Difficulty concentrating

- **Impact of Recidivism**

Anger	84%
Disillusioned	81%
Depressed	79%
Questioned Competence	74%
Inadequate	58%
Guilty	42%

(Ellerby 1997)

VARIABLES THAT MODERATE DISTRESS

Client Variables

- Sex Offenders as Primary Clients
- Perception of Manageability
- Number of Hours

Practice Setting Variables

- Correctional Institution
- Collegial support
- Agency
- Consultation and Supervision
- Support

Individual Variables

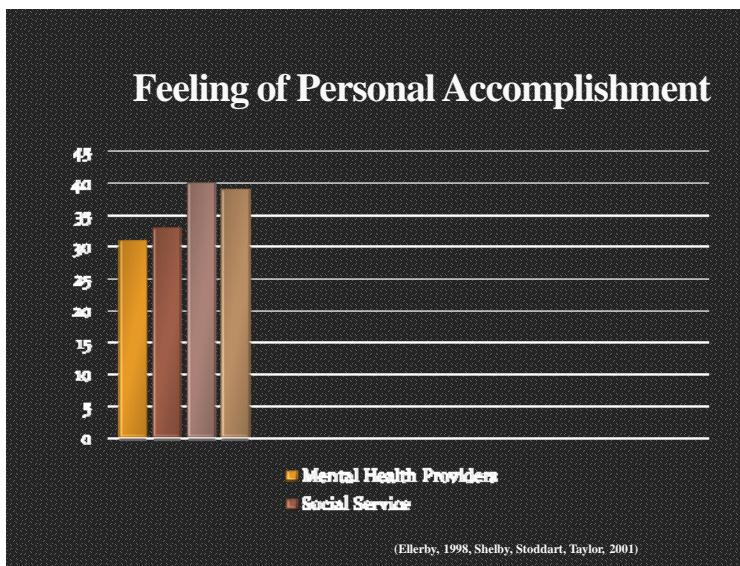
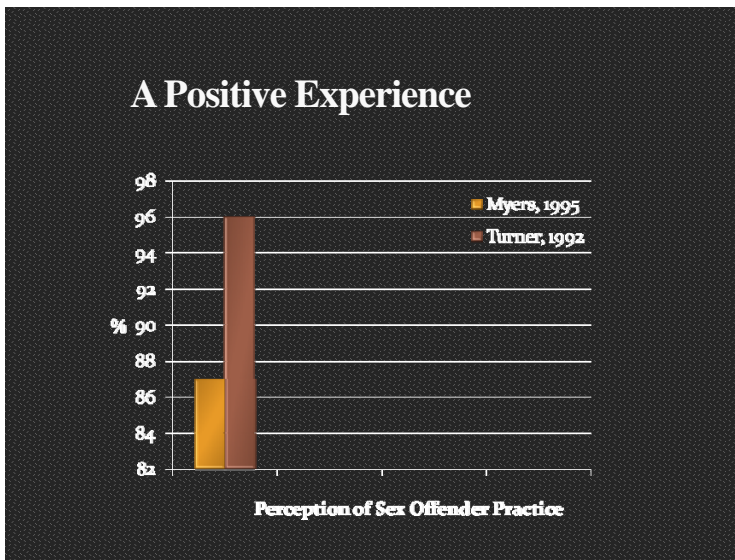
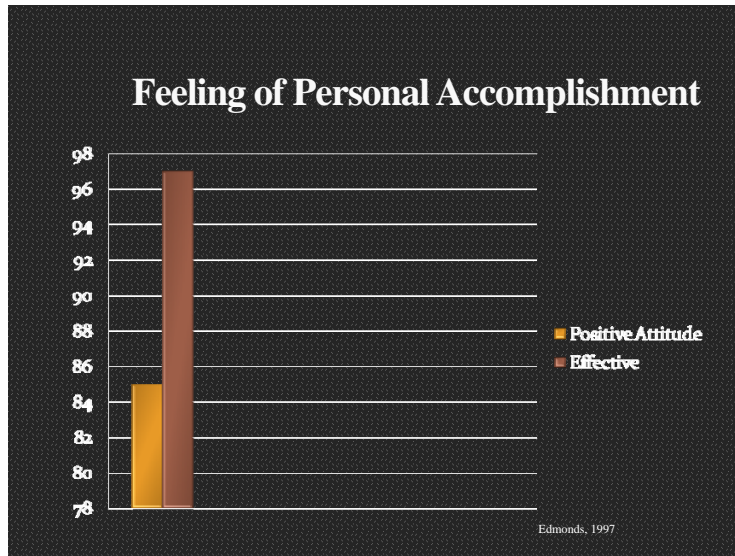
- Age
- Training
- Profession
- Emotional health

COPING WITH STRESSORS

- Training
- Professional development
- Clinical supervision
- Peer support
- Pacing
- Not personalizing recidivism
- Cognitive restructuring
- Diversification of practice
- Separating practice from personal
- Life balance
- Exercise
- Humor
- Nurturing relationships
- Create nourishing environments
- Healthy escapes
 - *At work*
 - *In personal life*
- Spirituality
- Creativity
- Personal growth
- Personal therapy

SATISFACTION AND REWARDS

- “This is it”
- A sense of mission, a larger purpose
- Interesting
- Challenging
- Exciting
- The ‘Mystique’
- Satisfying emotional needs
- Relationships with colleagues
- Participating in the process of change/risk management
- Altruism in practice - ‘Doing Good,’ ‘Protection’
- Professional and personal growth



List 5 things you can take away from this workshop that you can use to support wellness in your work and personal life.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____
