COMPASSION FATIGUE AND BURNOUT IN ACADEMIC ADVISORS

Thomas Dickson, Ed. D.
Jeffrey Simms, MA, LPC, NCC

Session C200
INTRODUCTIONS

Jeff Simms

@jeffreysimms

- **Education:**
  - B.S. Psychology
  - M.A. Counseling
  - Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC)
  - National Certified Counselor (NCC)
- **Work:** Disability Services, Student Success Specialist, Faculty, Counseling

Tom Dickson

@drthomasdickson

- **Education:**
  - B.A. Psychology
  - M.Ed. Counseling
  - Ed.D. Higher Ed
- **Work:** Career Counseling, Advising, Advising Administration, HED Adjunct Faculty, Student Affairs Administration
- **Dissertation:** Advising Job Demands/Responsibilities
IN THIS SESSION

• Importance to Academic Advising
• Theories and Models
  • Stress, Burnout, Secondary Traumatic Stress, Compassion Fatigue
• Impacts
• Self-care
IMPORTANCE TO STUDENT AFFAIRS AND ADVISING

- What happens to us, impacts to our students
- Attrition: fewer years connected to higher attrition
  - NACADA Member Survey: 49.5% 0-5 years of experience
  - ACPA Member Survey: 43% were 0-5 years experience
    - Research shows 50-60% attrition in first 5 years
- Job satisfaction
  - 66% Satisfied | 25% intend to leave Student Affairs
- Variety of health impacts to professional
- Knowledge loss and financial costs of turnover

MODELS

Stress, Burnout, Secondary Trauma, & Compassion Fatigue
STRESS
OUR MOTIVATING
FIRES
Figure 1: The Yerkes-Dodson Human Performance and Stress Curve

STRESS

Yerkes & Dodson (1908)
STRESS: ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

- Task demand
  - Repetition
- Job security
- Work overload
- Physical conditions
- Departmental influence
- Lack of resources

Stress is not inherently negative. Moderate stress can lead to increased productivity.
STRESS: POSITIONAL SOURCES

- Time constraints
- Student interaction
- Positional ambiguity
  - Inconsistent demands
  - Unclear expectations
- Promotion and pay increases
  - Reward and recognition
- Professional identity
- Lack of intellectual stimulation
- Over-performance of coworkers
  - Perceived and actual
- Personality clashes
BURNOUT
REduced TO CINDERS
BURNOUT

- Manifestation of negative stress
  - Mental exhaustion
  - Mental distance and depersonalization
  - Feelings of reduced efficacy

- Increased prevalence in service professions

“'A progressive loss of idealism, energy, and purpose experienced by people in the helping professions as a result of the conditions of their work.'”
- Edelwich

12 STEPS - BURNOUT

1. The Compulsion to Prove Oneself
2. Working Harder
3. Neglecting Their Needs
4. Displacement of Conflicts
5. Revision of Values
6. Denial of Emerging Problems
7. Withdrawal
8. Visible Behavioral Changes
9. Depersonalization
10. Inner Emptiness
11. Depression
12. Burnout Syndrome
TRAUMA
LEADS TO
ISOLATION
SELF-PROTECTION
SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS
A.K.A. VICARIOUS TRAUMA

- Occurs when working with the traumatized: Personal trauma or exposure to trauma of others
  - Occurs in both formal and informal spaces
  - Advising, Conduct, Dean of Students, Residential Life, Counseling Centers, Campus Health

- Creates an emotional state change as result of empathy
- We emotionally numb ourselves, for protection

McCann & Pearlman (1990)
COMPASSION FATIGUE
ABSENCE OF FIRE
COMPASSION FATIGUE

Burnout + Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) = Compassion Fatigue
COMPASSION FATIGUE

• Lessening of compassion over time
  • Occurs more frequently in caring professions (nursing, medicine, psychology, counseling, advising, Student Affairs)

• Defined when our energy expended in caring is greater than our ability to restore that energy

• In Student Affairs and Advising, constant in conversation about attrition and burnout but nearly absent in publications and research

HOW DO WE EXPERIENCE FATIGUE?

- Hopelessness
- Decreased satisfaction
- High anxiety
- Reduced enjoyment of hobbies
- Numbness

- Sleeplessness
- Nightmares
- Pervasive negative attitude
- Cynicism
- Isolation/withdrawal
## WHAT DOES FATIGUE DO TO US?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Emotional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Increased weight gain</td>
<td>• Increased anger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased blood pressure</td>
<td>• Breakdown of interpersonal relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Headaches / Backaches</td>
<td>• Over-reactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Nausea</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Impaired vision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Inability to fight a cold</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Drug abuse / Addiction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Freudenberger (1974)
CAREER IMPACTS

- Career
  - Absenteeism
  - Increase grievances
  - Low professional productivity
  - Derailment
  - Dismissal

Inherent limitations in careers, once viewed as minor, shift to become a threat to the very purpose of their work.

- Edelwich

Examples?
Studies have shown turnover costs 3.4-5.8% of total annual operating budget.

“...revenue neutral to offer every...(employee) a 33% retention supplement every year.”

PROFESSIONAL IMPACTS

• Organization
  • High turnover
    • Training costs
    • Knowledge loss
  • Low commitment levels
  • Absenteeism
  • Job dissatisfaction
  • Disengagement
SELF-CARE
RESTORATION
IN THE PAST YEAR HOW MUCH STRESS HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED?
ABBY ADVISOR

Abby is a 33-year old Academic Advisor who recently talked with her supervisor about being overwhelmed and exhausted after a very busy season. Abby was tearful during the conversation. Abby is in her 2nd year as an Academic Advisor and has a caseload of 750 students at a community college and runs a weekly group advising session for first generational students. About half of Abby’s students are high-risk for stopping out, have low GPA, and limited social support. Abby isn’t sleeping well and had nightmares about some of her students and what they’ve experienced; worried constantly about her other students; lacks confidence in her advising skills, and irritable with her spouse and two children under the age of 5.
JOHNNY ADVISOR

Johnny has been academically advising for 17-years and is 47-years old. Johnny is short with his advisees and keeps saying that students have the “right to fail.” Johnny believes his supervisor has it in for him and thinks he could be out of a job soon, despite the hard work he puts in every day. When the clock hits 4:45 Johnny quickly gathers his things and is out the door by 4:50 more days than not. The first stop on the way home is the store where Johnny purchases a six-pack of Bell’s Two-Hearted Ale. Johnny barely makes it inside his house before cracking open a bottle. By 5:30 Johnny is on his second beer and spends the rest of the night watching the National Geographic channel’s special “When Animals Attack Part 9!” while responding to emails about those “pesky students and their questions.”
ABBY AND JOHNNY...

- Are Abby and Johnny experiencing CF or burnout?
- What are the flags for Abby and Johnny?
- What could Abby and Johnny do differently?
HOW DO YOU PRACTICE SELF-CARE?

Text JEFFSIMMS515 and your response to 37607
SELF CARE IS MAKING ACTIVE DECISIONS TOWARDS A MORE SATISFYING AND SUCCESSFUL LIFE
WHY IS SELF-CARE IMPORTANT TO #ACADV?
1 REASON WHY SELF-CARE IS IMPORTANT

• You are ethically mandated to practice self-care!
• Advisors are responsible for their professional practices and for themselves personally (NACADA Core Value #6)
  • “establish appropriate relationships and boundaries with advisees, and create environments that promote physical, emotional, and spiritual health. Advisors maintain a healthy balance in their lives” (NACADA Core Value #6)
• If you’re a counselor
  • “counselors engage in self-care activities to maintain and promote their own emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual well-being to best meet their professional responsibilities” (ACA Code of Ethics, 2014)
The Six Dimensions of Wellness

©1976
Bill Hettler, MD, Co-Founder,
National Wellness Institute
SELF-CARE ACTIVITIES

- Diet, nutrition, exercise
- Mental health, decision-making
- Problem solving
- Support systems, friends, colleagues
- Religion, mindfulness, spiritual practices, altruism
- Noise, light, smell, touch
HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU ARE BURNED OUT OR HAVE COMPASSION FATIGUE?

• Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL) : free at proqol.org
  • 30 item self-assessment inventory
  • Scored on
    • Compassion satisfaction
    • Burnout
    • Secondary trauma
• Check-in with yourself
• Ask you close colleagues or supervisor
IF YOU ARE BURNED OUT OR EXPERIENCING FATIGUE...

Seek appropriate support through supervision, lunch with a colleague, or a mental health professional
PERSONAL SHIFTS

• Find your fit
  • Where we work matters
• Build your support network
• Find your mentors
• Identify your sponsors

• Make the right decisions for yourself
  • We hold responsibility for own relationships
• Give to self what you give to others
• Finding centering places
• Prioritize ‘me’
MANAGERIAL SHIFTS

- Different things to different people
- Donuts don’t equal happiness
  - Short term gains
- Invest in creating a positive and productive work environment
INTER-PERSONAL SHIFTS

- Create a positive work environment
- Demonstrate balance
- Appreciation and celebration
- What is the identity of your workplace?

- Ask the question AND listen to the answer
  - Listen between the lines
  - Name the elephant
  - Find opportunity to develop the whole
  - Life exists at all levels
ENVIRONMENTAL SHIFTS

- Identify what can be controlled
  - Name the things you cannot and strategically advocate for yourself
- Structure physical spaces for productivity
- Clarify vision, mission and goals
  - Clarify what is expected and how you go about doing it
- Step away and reflect
REFERENCES