Slide 1

When Helping Others Is Hazardous:
Benefits of Posttraumatic Growth & Self-Care

22nd Annual Midwest Conference on Problem Gambling & Substance Abuse

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Slide 2

Welcome!

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Slide 3

Workshop Goals

- ❖ Analyze hazards in social services, specifically vicarious trauma (VT), secondary traumatic stress (STS), and burnout (BO), and common pathways of development
- ❖ Examine techniques to prevent VT, STS, and BO, specifically posttraumatic growth (PTG) and self-care
- ❖ Generate ideas to increase PTG and self-care initiatives for practitioner wellness

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Agenda

Welcome & Intros

Comorbidity of Trauma

How Client Trauma Affects US

VT, STS, & BO…not body odor 😖

Profession & Personal Symptoms

PTG & Self-Care

What Can We Do

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Definitions:

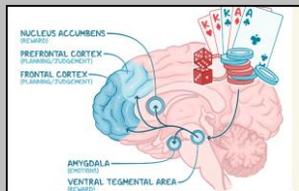• Trauma: an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. (SAMHSA, 2024)

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Gambling & Trauma & SUDs & MH

▪ Most who struggle with GD have experienced trauma of some sort (child, teen, &/or adult)
  ▪ Coping technique????
  ▪ Can help with numbness or to numb/escape pain (Horak et al., 2021)
▪ 95% of people struggling with GD also meet criterial for:
  ▪ SUDs
  ▪ Mental health issues (mood & anxiety disorders; South Pacific Private, 2021)
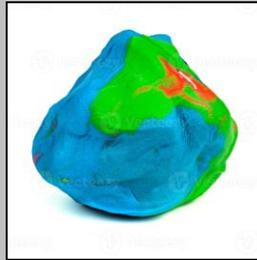

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It's complicated!

- Commonality for our clients to struggle with the phenomena of multiple co-morbidities
- 75% of those seeking SUDs treatment report a history of trauma (McMahon, 2018)
- > 90% of those seeking mental health services struggle with unresolved trauma (NCBH, 2020)
- 45-64% of incarcerated pop struggle with mental health (Collier, 2014)
- 62-100% of incarcerated pop report history of trauma (Thomas, 2019)

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Unfortunately, Our Clients Have It

- 2 SUD Res Programs *n*= 47
- Quantitative Analysis
  - ACE score
  - Additional traumas as adults
- Of all participants, only 6 reported ACE score of 0
  - 87.2% reported at least 1 ACE
- Majority (28 or 59.6%) had an ACE score of 4 or higher
- All females reported abuse both as a child & an adult

ACE Categories	Yes
Psychological abuse	70.7%
Physical abuse	51.2%
Sexual abuse	53.7%
Emotional neglect	63.4%
Physical neglect	31.7%
Divorce/Death	73.2%
Witness to abuse	48.8%
Family mem with SUD	80.5%
Family mem with MH	53.7%
Family mem incarcerated	34.1%

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Trauma is correlated:

And then…..

- SUDs
- Mental health
- Chronic physical health issues
- High risk behaviors
  - Tobacco use
  - Unprotected sex
  - Disordered eating
- Suicidal ideation & attempts
- Relationship issues
- Maintaining education/employment
- Financial issues….and LOTS LOTS more! (SAMHSA, 2024)
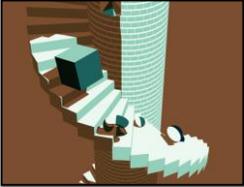
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Close Your Eyes

- **Picture it**
- **Describe it?**
- **What does it look like?**
- **What does it feel like?**
- **What does it smell like?**
- **What does it sound like?**

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How it happens:

- When clients experience trauma, they encode with the memory:
  - Imagery of the event
  - Tactile sensations
  - Smells
  - Sounds

- As we listen to disclosures of trauma, these details are shared, along with the feelings associated.
- **We create their own internal understanding** of the event, and encode the client's traumatic event into their own cognitive schema and world view

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Why us??????

- Service Providers:
  - -Gregarious
  - -Empathetic
  - -Nonjudgmental
  - -Hypersensitive to injustice
  - -Self-sacrificing
- Our ability to understand, accept, and empathize is the very avenue of VT development (Branson, 2018)

Hello, We're
AWESOME
How can we help you?

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Disclosures Affect & Effect Us

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Special danger for Social Servants

- Vicarious Trauma: the negative psychological changes that can occur in clinicians engaging in an empathic relationship with traumatized clients (Pearlman & Maclan, 1995)

**These changes are unique to clinicians and can permanently affect the view of self, others, and the world. (Branson, 2018)

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Definitions and Differences

Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS):
Can be used interchangeably with compassion fatigue (CF). STS is a natural consequence of bearing witness to others' trauma and suffering, often agitated by one's sincere desire to help the hurting. Presentation can be almost identical to PTSD (Bride, 2007)

- First responders
- Medical personnel

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Continued…

Compassion Fatigue (CF): synonymous with STS--more comprehensive term for loved ones and civilians who suffer emotional distress when helping others (Figley, 1995)

- Volunteers
- Humanitarian aid workers
- Short-term missionaries

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Continued…

- **Burnout:** a process influenced by a lack of administrative support, low financial compensation, high staff turnover, frequent staff shortages, and difficult clients, resulting in emotional exhaustion, the development of a negative outlook on clients and the therapeutic process, reduction of productivity, and a feeling of depersonalization (Bridgen et al., 2023)

Are we all DOOMED??????

- Burnout can get better:
  - Time off
  - Change of position or duties
  - Ebbs and tides

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Symptoms of VT/STS/CF

Professional:

- Cynicism
- Uncharacteristic Anger
- Irritability
- Avoidance of certain clients
- Missing work
- Avoidance of disclosure
- Anxiety (new, specific to client disclosures)
- Decreased productivity
- Leaving the field

inside every cynical person is a disappointed idealist.

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Personal:

- Hypervigilance of safety
  - Self & others
- Feeling of sadness
- Depression
- Intrusive thoughts/images**
- Bad dreams
- Withdrawal (loved ones & socially)
- Avoidance of intimacy
  - Physical & emotional
- Pessimistic view of the world (Branson, 2018)
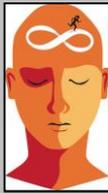
Continued….

Escaping through:

- SUDs
- Food
- Gambling
- Retail therapy
- Media binging
- Internet surfing/games
- Etc.

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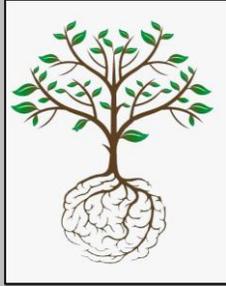
Ultimate: Poor Quality Services

I don't care.

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Posttraumatic Growth

Coined by Tedeschi & Calhoun (1995)

• A purposeful approach to negative experiences to move forward psychologically, seeking meaning in the event, and grow intentionally for future gain

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PTG continued…

• Highly therapeutic!
• Can assist with positive outcomes
• Action-orientated
• Present & Future focused
• Encourages self & others
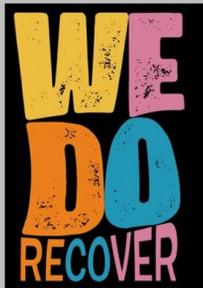• Encourages healthy locus of control
• Empowering

This is the GOOOOOD stuff!

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PTG x 5

1. Appreciation of life & gratitude
2. Appreciation for relationships with others
3. Anticipation of new possibilities
4. Increase in personal strength & self-efficacy
5. Expansion of spirituality (Mostarac & Brajkovic, 2022)

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Anti-PTG…Nasty Unproductive Stuff!

- **Cognitive spirals**: negative or illogical thought patterns that escalate in a discouraging manner & lead to artificially inflated feelings of defeatism, hopelessness, cynicism, being overwhelmed, or excessive worry (Allen, 2020)

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Continued…

Rumination: dwelling on past events or adversities in a manner that stunts one's ability to emotionally move forward

- There is a time to visit the past
- There is a time to leave the past (Hepworth et al., 2022)
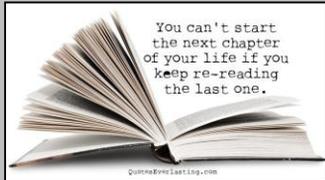
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An Oldie, But a Goodie….

Self-pity: excessive, self-absorbed, unhappiness over one's own troubles

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However….

PTG is NOT intuitive

THAT'S A BIG 10-4!

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Being Purposeful & Intentional

WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO NOW?

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Self Care

- **Intentional** engagement of physical, emotional, cognitive, mental, &/or spiritual activities that enhance well being through reflection assessment, and purposeful actions for sustained renewal.

- Misunderstood term
  - Expensive treats and feel-good activities
  - Lack of self care can increase potential for unprofessional and unethical practice

"self-care"

TYPES OF SELF-CARE

Physical   Emotional
-Exercise   -Mindfulness
-Nutrition   -Journaling
-Sleep   -Therapy

Social   Mental   Spiritual
-Connection -Hobbies   -Gratitude
-Boundaries -Learning   -Meditation
-Community   -Digital Detox -Nature

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We all know it…but we don't do it!

- People who want to help others struggle with self-care
  - I know what it is
  - I suggest it to other people
  - I know that I should…but….

It is counterintuitive to what drives us

Research shows that when we need self-care the most, we are more likely to dig in and work harder…THEN, I'll take some self-care (Branson, 2016)

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Take a Look-Pictures are Magical

- Screen Saver
- Picture Books
- Calendars
- Pick somewhere you have been or desire to go
- 3 minutes of looking &/or remembering can be very relaxing
  - Describe it?
  - What does it look like?
  - What does it feel like?
  - What does it smell like?
  - What does it sound like?
  - Remember all those senses….

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Squishy & Touchy

Stress balls, Squishy toys, Worry stones

- A little tension and release goes a long way
- If you are naturally fidgety—no one questions
- Help to remind of positive & productive thoughts
- Push negative & unproductive thoughts
- Some reflexology at work

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Breathe…just breathe!!!

The Burn—my personal favorite:

• Breathe in for 4 (nose), hold for 7 (belly), and out for 8 (mouth)

Box breathing:
  • Inhale for 4
  • Exhale for 4
  • Hold for 4
  • Repeat

Diaphragmatic
  • One hand on chest, other on belly
  • Inhale through nose allowing belly to rise, chest stays still
  • Exhale though mouth allowing belly to fall
  • Repeat

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Some Reminders

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VkUi4qdZStQ

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fRc3OD_bxZ8

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Adult coloring books

• **Mandala:** is a spiritual and ritual symbol (literally-circle) in Indian religions, representing the universe. Now a generic term for any diagram, chart or geometric pattern that represents the cosmos metaphysically or symbolically; a microcosm of the universe.
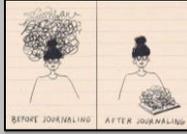 • Meditation &/or prayer
  • Stress relief **
  • Adult ADD clients to pay attention
  • Distraction doodle
  • Its just pretty!!
  • Sense of accomplishment
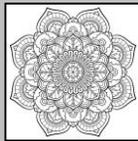
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An arsenal for bad days

- Music
- Ritual
  - Sitting down with tea
- A little mind-candy
  - TV, Movies, Streaming, Book that is not work related
- Comfort food
  - I need a cheeseburger!!!!
- Spend time with your Higher Power
  - Pray & Meditate
- Journaling

Control the thinking errors that try to sneak in
Control what you entertain in your brain

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Thank you for coming!

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Through It

5t Devotions
for
Difficult Journeys

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