Compassion Fatigue & Libraries
Introductions

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Agenda

Defining compassion fatigue in public libraries.

Trauma and our bodies.

How do we help ourselves?
What is Compassion Fatigue?

The profound emotional and physical exhaustion that helping professionals and caregivers can develop over the course of their career as helpers.

- Francoise Mathieu
Trauma is a pervasive problem

“It results from exposure to an incident or series of events that are emotionally disturbing or life-threatening with lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, and/or spiritual well-being.”

- Trauma-Informed Care Implementation Resource Center
What's the difference?

01 Primary Trauma
Trauma that happens to you.

02 Vicarious Trauma
Cumulative exposure to traumatic stories or images.

03 Secondary Trauma
Witnessing a traumatic experience.

04 Burnout
Exhaustion due to low job satisfaction or feelings of powerlessness.
you can't remember all of it
it happened a long time ago
people didn't believe you
you are feeling better now
you are feeling better now
realize it was traumatic until later on
you know people who have been through "worse"
your life wasn't threatened
it didn't develop into PTSD
WHAT I BELIEVED

MY WORTH  MY WORK

THE TRUTH

MY WORTH  MY WORK

@LIZ AND MOLLIE
How does this impact library workers?
68.5% Have experienced violent or aggressive behavior from patrons.

85% Have experienced trauma in the workplace and have shared it with others.

83% Stated that they received support from another member of staff.
Group Share

In what ways do we as library workers experience compassion fatigue?
POLYVAGAL CHART

The nervous system with a neuroception of threat:

FREEZE
Collapse • Immobility
Conservation of Energy
Dissociation
Shame
Depression
Shut-Down
Hopelessness
Raised pain threshold
Preparation for death
Helplessness
Trapped

DORSAL VAGAL (LIFE THREAT)
Hypoarousal

PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM
DORSAL VAGAL COMPLEX
Increases
Fuel storage & insulin activity • Immobilization behavior (with fear)
Endorphins that help numb and raise the pain threshold
Conservation of metabolic resources

Decreases
Heart Rate • Blood Pressure • Temperature • Muscle Tone
Facial Expressions & Eye Contact • Depth of Breath • Social Behavior
Attunement to Human Voice • Sexual Responses • Immune Response

SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM
Increases
Blood Pressure • Heart Rate • Fuel Availability • Adrenaline
Oxygen Circulation to Vital Organs • Blood Clotting • Pupil Size
Dilation of Bronchi • Defensive Responses

Decreases
Fuel Storage • Insulin Activity • Digestion • Salivation
Relational Ability • Immune Response

The nervous system with a neuroception of safety:

FIGHT
movement towards
Rage
Panic
Fear
Irritation
Anxiety
Frustration

FLIGHT
movement away

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT
Calmness in connection
Connection • Safety
Settled
Oriented to the Environment
Groundedness

Ventricular Vagal (SAFETY)

PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM
VENTRAL VAGAL COMPLEX
Increases
Digestion • Intestinal Motility • Resistance to Infection
Immune Response • Rest and Recuperation • Health & Vitality
Circulation to non-vital organs (skin, extremities)
Oxytocin (neuromodulator involved in social bonds that allows immobility without fear) • Ability to Relate and Connect
Movement in eyes and head turning • Prosody in voice • Breath

Decreases
Defensive Responses

VVC is the beginning and end of stress response. When VVC is dominant, SNs and DVC are in transient blends which promote healthy physiological functioning.

Adapted by Ruby Jo Walker from Cheryl Sanders, Anthony "Twig" Wheeler, and Steven Porges.
**STRESS SYMPATHETIC**

- Pupils expand
- Fast & shallow breaths
- Heart pumps faster
- Gut inactive

**CALM PARASYMPATHETIC**

- Pupils shrink
- Slow, deep breaths
- Heart slows
- Gut active
So let's talk about self-care.
Limiting Beliefs
Your needs come first.
Overcoming Limiting Beliefs

“What if I’m wrong?”
Create Alternative Beliefs

“How is this belief serving me?”
Test the Alternative Beliefs
self-care

/səlf-ˈkār/ noun
The active process of making your body and mind a pleasant place to inhabit by filling your own cup first.

-Amazon inspirational quote mental health poster
Macro Self-Care VS Micro Self-Care
Targeted Micro Self-Care

Grounding

Energizing

Relaxing
Shifting Perceptions

External Locus Of Control
- Dysregulated
- Victim
- Demand
- Outcome Driven

Internal Locus of Control
- Regulated
- Empowered
- Choice
- Process Driven
Final Thoughts

What can we do to take care of ourselves?

- Personally
- Organizationally
Bibliography

● Resilience for Professionals by the Counseling Education Center and Sydney Elks, MA LPC.
● Laura van Dernoot Lipsky: Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others
● Rick Hanson: Hardwiring Happiness
● Patricia Katopol: Enough Already: Compassion Fatigue
● Ashley Davis Bush: Little and Often: Using Micro-Practices for Self-Care
● Fobazi Ettarh: Vocational Awe and Librarianship: The Lies we Tell Ourselves
● Fobazi Ettarh and Chris Vidas: The Future of Libraries: Vocational Awe in a “Post-COVID” World
● Urban Libraries Unite: Urban Library Trauma Study
● Trauma Informed Care Resource Center
Resources

Books and Articles

- Grounding Techniques: 30 Examples & How They Help by Nicole Arzt, LMFT
- No Time for Self-Care? Simple Micro Practices to the Rescue by Ashley Davis Bush, LICSW
- Simple Self-Care for Therapists: Restorative Practices to Weave Throughout Your Day by Ashley Davis Bush, LICSW
- A Beginner’s Guide to the Polyvagal Theory by Deb Dana
- The Comfort Book by Matt Haig
- 10% Happier by Dan Harris
- Micro-Moments of Self-Care from A to Z by The Juniper Center Counseling & Therapy
- Real Self Care by Pooja Lakshmin, MD
- The Compassion Fatigue Workbook by Françoise Mathieu
- Selfcarefully: A Self-Helpish Book About Caring for Yourself by Gracy Obuchowica

Videos

- How Does Breathing Impact the Brain? by Dr. Yewande Pearce
- Hardwiring Happiness with Dr. Rick Hanson at TEDxMarin 2013
Resources Continued

Podcasts
- Being Well Podcast with Dr. Rick Hanson and Forrest Hanson
- Happier a podcast with Gretchen Rubin
- The Happiness Lab with Dr. Laurie Santos
- Unlocking Us with Brené Brown
- Life Kit from NPR

Apps
- Mindfulness Coach app developed by U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs National Center for PTSD (free)
- Smiling Mind (free)
- Amaha: Mental Health Self-Care (free app; limited content without a subscription)
- The Fabulous - Build Better Habits
- The Mindfulness App (free app; limited content without a subscription)
- Calm (free app; subscription required offers 7-day free trial)
- Clarity (free app; subscription required offers 7-day free trial)
- Fabulous (free app; subscription required offers 7-day free trial)
Deep Breathing Exercise for Stress Relief

3 - 4 - 5 Vagal Breathing Exercise

This breathing exercise stimulates your vagus nerve which can help parasympathetic nervous system function.

- Gently inhale through your nose for a count of 3, ensure to use belly breathing for this.
- Hold your breath for a count of 4.
- Gentley exhale through your nose for a count of 5.
- Start with several rounds and up to 5 minutes.

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A SIMPLE GROUNDING TECHNIQUE TO COMBAT ANXIETY

1. Acknowledge 5 things you can see around you
2. Acknowledge 4 things you can touch right now
3. Acknowledge 3 things you can hear (external noises or internal, like breathing)
4. Acknowledge 2 things you can smell around you (a pencil, soap)
5. Acknowledge 1 thing you can currently taste

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