

# Emotional Regulation for the service provider

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# What would you like to learn?

- Strategies to help your distressed patients?
- Strategies to help you manage your emotional response while helping distressed patients?



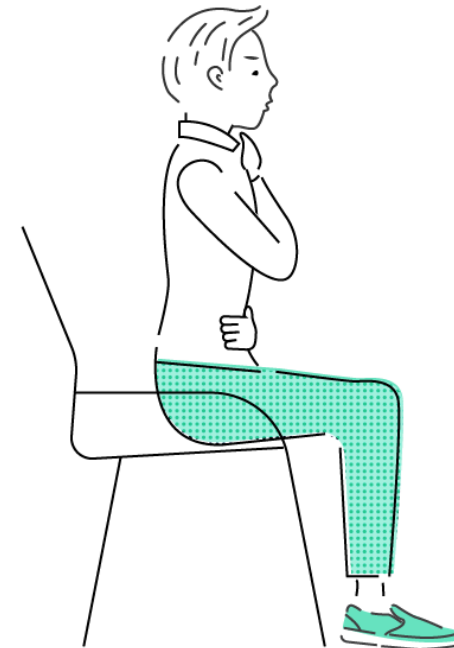
# What you will learn today

- Emotional Contagion
- Vicarious Trauma or Secondary Traumatic Stress
- How to practice safe empathy
- Strategies to prevent emotional contagion and vicarious trauma
  - Self-Regulation
  - Body Awareness
  - Controlling facial mimicry
  - Limiting Trauma Input
- What to do if you experience vicarious trauma

# Group Practice

Bones to the Ground

Sticky Note















# Mirror Neurons

Mirror Neurons: brain cells that reflect the activity of another's brain cells.

You feel what they feel.

Your nervous system will mirror their nervous system.

# Emotional Contagion

“The convergence of one person’s emotions with another’s” (Rothschild, 2006)

Emotions are contagious.

Baby picks up on mother’s anxiety. Unintentional.

Using empathy to understand the patient and their experience.  
Intentional.

Movies – strong affect portrayed by actors elicit emotions in audience

# A day in the life of MDT...



# Emotional Contagion

What types of emotions are you exposed to?

How does it feel in your body – heart rate, breathing, tension, temperature, posture?

What does being around sadness feel like?

What does being around anxiety/fear feel like?

What does being around anger feel like?

# Vicarious Trauma

The transmission of traumatic stress through observation and/or hearing others' stories of traumatic events and results in a shift in your world view and sense of meaning

Similar to PTSD including:

- Intrusive thoughts/memories
- Nightmares
- Psychological distress at exposure to cues
- Avoidance of thoughts/memories
- Change in Worldview – “no one can be trusted” “the world is completely dangerous.

# The Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL)

Compassion Satisfaction

*Burnout*

*Secondary Traumatic Stress*

*Handout*

# Strategies to prevent emotional contagion and vicarious trauma



# Empathy

“Empathy allows us to relate to those in our care, to have a sense of what they are feeling. It also helps us put their experience into perspective, understanding how they are being affected by the incidents that we are trying to mediate” (Rothschild, 2006)

“Empathy is the visceral or emotional experience of another person’s feelings...an automatic mirroring of another’s emotions” (Seppala, 2013)”



# Conscious Empathy

Being mindful and present while empathizing. Self-regulation while empathizing.

Conscious empathy is a desirable capacity, making it possible for us to relate to the experiences of others, to 'walk in their shoes' so to speak.

Leads to compassion by giving us an insight into another's state of being.

# Unconscious Empathy

Not being mindful or present while empathizing.

“Unconscious empathy is the mechanism of emotional infection”  
(Rothschild, 2006).

Catching emotions

# Practicing Safe Empathy

“The better we take care of ourselves and maintain a professional separation from our clients, the more we will be in a position to be truly empathetic, compassionate and useful to them”  
(Rothschild, 2006).

# Self-Regulation

“...refers to the conscious and less conscious management of our physical and emotional impulses, drives and anxieties” (Baker, 2003)

The Resilient Clinician Pg. 124

# Your Nervous System

- Know your stress response warning signs or how your body feels around certain emotions.
- Know how to trigger your relaxation response
- Practice daily and as needed
- Deep breathing with bones to the ground during contact

Handout and Guided Audio

# Body Awareness Exercise

Build awareness of what is happening in your body while you are working with a client or around people with intense emotions.

Signs of Arousal:

- Faster Breathing
- Increased Heart Rate
- Pupils Dilated
- Increased Sweating
- Cold (clammy) Skin

Handout

# Controlling Facial Mimicry

- What your face does impacts your emotions
- Begin to increase awareness of, and control over, your facial mirroring.
- Smiling – observe and control

Handout



# Controlling Facial Mimicry

Dyad – Share a story about a significant event

- Engagement
- Worst Date
- Awkward Job Interview
- Promotion or getting a job
- Buying first car/home
- Birth of first child

# Limiting Trauma Input

The more trauma one is exposed to, the more likely they will experience vicarious trauma. One strategy is to limit trauma input.

## Limit:

- Number of people you work with for trauma in a day
- Informal debriefing with colleagues
- Real trauma in news, TV, internet, social media

# Vicarious Trauma Recovery Process

- Label the experience of vicarious trauma
- Do something to trigger the relaxation response
  - Deep Breathing/PMR/Yoga
  - Let yourself feel grief related to witnessing pain or suffering
- Move your body
- Get fresh air
- Connect with loved ones
- Do something that is nourishing
- Shift into gratitude
- Consult with peers/supervisor if necessary (team care)

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