The Art of Service: 30 years in the field

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Objectives

- Why do individuals choose service work?
- What is the meaning of service work?
- How do we overcome the cycles of burnout?
- What is the legacy of service work?
The Battle Cry

- Service as the core—a warrior’s path turned civilian call to service
- They did us wrong—we each come from a place of injustice
- Internal and external barriers to our work
The Early Years:
Doing the Right Thing

- My first 15 years built the fire in my belly.
- I pushed myself over the edge with the demands I placed on myself.
- How did I keep going?
- I took home the trauma and fear.
Vicarious Trauma

- Vicarious trauma is sometimes called compassion fatigue.
- It describes the phenomenon generally associated with the cost of caring for others.
- It is the emotional residue of exposure that counselors have from working with people as they are hearing their trauma stories and become witnesses to the pain, fear, and terror that trauma survivor endured.

Sources: Perlman & Saakvitne, 1995; Figley, 1982; Fact Sheet #9 American Counseling Association Traumatology Network
Horizontal Violence

- This refers to acts that occur between colleagues in person or online at work or outside of work.
- These acts are perpetrated by one in a higher level of authority and occur over time.
- These acts can be covert or overt verbal or nonverbal aggression.
- Relational aggression is a type of bullying typified by psychological abuse.
- Behaviors include gossiping, withholding information, and ostracism.

Source: Dellasega, C. 2009
Horizontal Violence Effects

- Apathy
- Depression
- Disconnectedness
- Eating disorders
- Hypertension
- Impaired personal relationships
- Low morale

- Nervous conditions
- Poor self-esteem
- Removal from workplace (sick leave, stress level, resignation)
- Sleep disorders
- Suicide
Trauma-Informed Communication

Exchange information through four steps:
1. Observation (acknowledge judgments and set aside)
2. Feelings (“I” statements)
3. Needs (“I” statements)
4. Request (without demands)

Example of what can happen when we are not aware of, identify, and set aside our judgments

Empathy vs. Sympathy

Brené Brown’s video
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw
Managing Work in a Healthy Manner

- Coming clean
- Gifts of sobriety
- Tools
  - Hungry, angry, lonely, tired (HALT)
  - One day at a time
  - This too shall pass
  - Wear life like a loose garment
  - Live and let go
The Seven-Year Itch

- Accept others can do the job
- Learn to let go
- Have courage to make a change
Seven Years Later: It happened again

- Hit the wall; nowhere left to go
- Found need to turn to others; let go of need to be self-reliant
- Found being vulnerable to be my salvation
Vulnerability

- Connection is what gives us purpose and meaning in our lives.
- Vulnerability is the:
  - Courage to be imperfect.
  - Compassion to be kind to yourself and others.
  - Connection as a result of authenticity.
- Vulnerability allows us to live with joy, gratitude, and openheartedness.

Filling The Well

- What does it feel like to have boundless serenity?
- How do we avoid countertransference and bad boundaries?
- How do we find balance at work and at home?
- How do we find hope for all of our relationships?
The Legacy

- What we plant is only the beginning.
- With each life we change there is a domino effect of lives transformed.
- No other work has the same impact as human services.
  - We change the human element one human being at a time.
  - We grow a realm of love and compassion that pushes out against the darkness.