The Virtual Circle:

As the Judiciary... “we choose health and extreme self-care!”

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- NAICJA 2020
Fatigue and vicarious trauma---

- 500 judges surveyed
- Effect of court calendar on them
- 105 judges responded
- 63%-yes work related compassion fatigue
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Disrupts your deeply held beliefs:

• The professional comes to doubt deeply held beliefs about safety and the inherent kindness of others.

  • Richardson, Jan, Guidebook on Vicarious Trauma, National Clearinghouse on Family Violence (2001)
What is compassion fatigue (CF)?

• In judges- it is the result of vicariously becoming worn down and
• emotionally weary from hearing about and
• dealing with situations where people have been physically and emotionally injured,
• hospitalized and all too often killed.
Warning Signs of Compassion Fatigue in Staff

- Exhaustion
- Reduced ability to feel sympathy and empathy
- Anger and irritability
- Increased use of alcohol and drugs
- Dread of working with certain clients
- Diminished sense of enjoyment of career
- Disruption to world view

- Heightened anxiety or irrational fears
- Intrusive imagery or dissociation
- Hypersensitivity or insensitivity to emotional material
- Difficulty separating work life from personal life
- Absenteeism
- Impaired ability to make decisions and care for clients
- Problems with intimacy and in personal relationships

Developed by Christina Clarke, MS, HS-BCP, Coordinator of Continuing Medical Education and faculty, Wake Forest School of Medicine, Northwest AHEC
How does CF affect your court?
Exacerbates CF and contributes to lower morale:

- Poorly run courts
- Inefficient judicial administration
- Systemic glitches
What are the symptoms of CF?

• Internalized symptoms
• Sleeplessness
• Eating disturbances
• Increased anxiety
• Depression
• Hypervigilance
External symptoms of CF

• Increasingly angry
• Irritable
• Intolerant of others
• Fearfulness
• Security consciousness
• Inability to make prompt decisions
• Increased difficult focusing/concentration
ABC’s of CF prevention and avoidance:

• **Awareness***
  • Balance
  • Connection

• *most critical factor b/c we work long hours, cluttered office and car—no time for normal pursuits; Plus poor physical health and issues with family exacerbate;
AWARENESS: (bringing our oral tradition, customs and traditions...in a contemporary context)

- Reassess being a judge
- Continually attend to physical and emotional health in a rigorous and disciplined way
- Holding ourselves personally accountable as well as holding others legally responsible.
  - Town, Mike (Judge), *Compassion Fatigue, Judicial Wellbeing*, “Is Compassion Fatigue an issue for Judges?” (2004).
We have been facing the wrong way....turn around: Balance and connection = important

- Judges find strength in their communities
- Their cultures
- Their faith
- Their colleagues
- And their families
BUFFERS: reaffirming our core values

• Healthy sense of HUMOR
• Active listener
• Adequate sleep
• Friendships
• Hobbies
• Vacations
• Healthy team environment, supervision, support
Self-care

- Empathy
- Relaxation
- Supervision
- Consultation
- Support
- Healthy limits
- Mindfulness
- Knowledge
- Energy
- Exercise
- Skills
- Healthy coping
- Empowerment
- Resilience
- Compassion
- Meditation
- Balance
Pause...and share....

- Reflect and jot down moments where you experienced VT and or CF:
  - What did it look like?
  - How did it affect you?
  - How did you manage?
  - What might you do differently?
~ CLOSING BLESSING ~

Thank You & Stay Safe!