

Healing & Wellness for those we serve & for ourselves



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The goal of this session

...is to offer an opportunity to review, introduce the concept of vicarious trauma and to share traditional as well as alternative methods in order to feel good mentally, physically, and spiritually about ourselves.

In order to nurture and care for others it is important to learn to care for ourselves, and to maintain our health so that we can continue to be the "healers" that we are....

Why we do what we do?

- Job
- Obligation
- Humanitarian
- Expectations
- Advocate for change....



Customs & Traditions



We are connected to those we serve

- In recovery
- Survivor of trauma or victimization
- Family members
- Close relations
- Other deeply rooted connections



Who are those we serve & where do they come from?

Historical Trauma

- 1500-1750 Disease
 - Small pox, Bubonic plague, Measles, Yellow fever, Cholera,
- 1800 Decimation
 - Influenza - the great death
 - Wars & Assimilation
 - *"If the savage resists, civilization, with the ten commandments in one hand and the sword in the other, demands his immediate extermination."* Andrew Jackson *The Indian Killer* 1867 to Congress
- 1900 Boarding School – Assimilation
- Poverty
- Alcohol/Drug Addiction

Addiction

- Alcoholism is at an all time high among native people
- Codependency among families and community members



Impacts of Addiction

- Tends to mask the real source of the problem
- Enhanced Low Self-Esteem
- Personal Trauma
- Loss of sense of belonging or connection to the tribal community or group
 - Possibly stemming from historical trauma
 - Negative boarding school experience
 - Relocation
 - Assimilation

Treatment of Alcohol/Drug Use & Trauma Among Native American's

- Wellness Court process is not a new method
- Crime and conflict were historically addressed through customary and traditional methods
- Traditional native people focus on community
- Modern ways are individualized
- Community vision is what guides native people

Crime & Victimization

Most violent crimes committed in Indian country involve alcohol/drugs on both the part of the offender and the victim

Wounded Healers & Vicarious Trauma



Vicarious Trauma

The negative changes that happen to service providers over time as they witness other people's suffering and need.

- *Definition: Vicarious trauma is the process of change that happens because you care about other people and have been hurt and feel committed or responsible to help them. Over time this process can lead to changes in your psychological, physical and spiritual well being*

(Headington Institute)

Vicarious Trauma (continued)

- Process of Change
 - Cumulative effect of contact with people who are troubled, suffering & struggling
 - Process of change in on going influenced by life experiences – that which you choose and those that happen to you
 - Opportunities to recognize how your work impacts you
 - Opportunities to think about how to protect and care for yourself while doing your work

Questions to ask ourselves

- What are some ways you have changed over time because of your work?
- What kinds of problems or people do you find especially easy to empathize with?
- What are some ways that caring about people who are struggling or who have been hurt affects you?
- Are there ways in which your sense of commitment and responsibility to your work might hurt you? How?

Changes in spirituality- key component of Vicarious Trauma

Vicarious Trauma can impact the way we see the world and deep sense of meaning and hope

- Changes in spirituality positives and negatives
 - Personal Growth
 - Maturity & Broader perspective
 - Balanced perspective of life
 - Greater understanding & appreciation
 - Enhanced empathy with others
 - Question deep belief about the way life and universe work and the nature of meaning and hope

What do we do when we experience Vicarious Trauma?

- Should we stop caring so much?
- Stop empathizing with people?
- Should we stop feeling committed to helping others?
- Should we stop feeling responsible?
- Quit our jobs?

Are there better options....

Understanding Vicarious Trauma can help us decide what we need in order to best prevent and address personal impacts in an ongoing manner

Healing the Healers



What are examples of the ways we take care of ourselves?



Cultural Awareness and Native Spirituality as an option for healing

- Cultural competency
- Not all tribal customs and traditions are the same
- Not all methods of seeking traditional healing are the same
- Not all native people are open to participating in cultural orientated healing practices
- Careful consideration to approaching native healing and seeking traditional medicine for ourselves and our teams

Thank You



Tribal Law & Policy Institute



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