

CARE OF THE CLINICIAN

WHY SELF CARE IS IMPORTANT

Clinicians who treat trauma survivors face a unique set of issues and demands stemming, in part, from the powerful emotional needs of these clients.

Some common difficulties for clinicians working with survivors:

- Maintaining boundaries and setting limits
- Clients terminating prematurely
- Clients having difficulty establishing trust
- The length of the healing process
- Dealing with clients' strong emotions
- Managing one's own feelings about the abuse
- Vicarious traumatization within self
 - developing symptoms of PTSD
 - change in beliefs about the world

COUNTERTRANSFERENCE

One's own history, unresolved issues, and unconscious responses to clients can impact the trauma work.

- Clinicians need to be aware of their own issues
- Clinicians need to process the difficult emotions they may experience as they hear stories of abuse (dread, horror, denial, avoidance, shame, pity, disgust, guilt, rage, grief)
- Clinicians need to watch themselves for rescue fantasies, over-investment in meeting clients' needs, loosening of boundaries

THE CLINICIAN SURVIVOR

- Awareness of one's own abuse history, issues, and limitations
- Becoming overly identified with clients
- Dissociation
- Having strong opinions about how the client should handle her abuse experience
- Self-disclosure
- Feeling too overwhelmed to continue the group
- Flashbacks



National Capital Center for Trauma Recovery & Empowerment
Community Connections
Washington, DC

All rights reserved. Do not reproduce without permission of Community Connections.

ELEMENTS OF SELF CARE

Personal

- One's own therapy
- Emotional support (friends)
- Physical health (diet, exercise, sleep)
- Leisure activities (hobbies, music, gardening)
- Spiritually oriented activities (journal, meditation, being outdoors)
- Humor

Professional

- Supervision
- Trust-and safety with co-leader
- Support from colleagues

Organizational

- Support from the larger agency system by recognizing the need for self-care, provision of professional support, time for vacations

Based on information from Care of Clinicians Doing Trauma Work, Ellen Arledge Blancbard, MSW and Mirta Jones, MA in Sexual Abuse in the Lives of Women Diagnosed with Serious Mental Illness, Edited by Maxine Harris, and Ph.D. with Christine Landis, MSW. Harwood Academic Publishers, 1997.



National Capital Center for Trauma Recovery & Empowerment
Community Connections
Washington, DC

All rights reserved. Do not reproduce without permission of Community Connections.