



INSTITUTE FOR
HEALTH & RECOVERY

What We Do Affects Us, Too

The Impact of Grief and Secondary Trauma

New England Association of Drug Court Professionals

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www.healthrecovery.org

Relational Balance



Caring for everyone else,
but not ourselves.



Caring for ourselves, so
that we are able to care
for others.



Caring for ourselves, but
no one else.

Please Keep in Mind...

- It is *Normal* to be effected by what you witness
- Profound fear, sadness, grief, frustration and anger are normal reactions
- Acknowledging one's own feelings gives perspective and lessens the burden
- No sector of our society is untouched by abuse
- **Remember**, we cannot undo the horror of the past but we can facilitate changes in the present that result in safer outcomes in the future

Empathy

Key to establishing
connection



So, What is Empathy?

Empathy: the feeling that you understand and share another person's experiences and emotions and the ability to share someone else's feelings, attitudes, roles and perceptions and world of another.

With Clients: You understands the client's feeling and experiences within the client's frame of reference and communicates that understanding without judgment.

Trauma, Grief and Staff

- Staff members may have their own trauma histories
- Universal precautions



Why?

That's what we ask.

The truth is, we may never be able to know for sure why.

But we do know that there is no single “should have done” or “could have done” or “did” or “didn’t do” that would have changed that why.

All that love could do was done.

Grief: Why is it hard for us to talk about.....

- Socially Unacceptable to talk about?
- Death Feels Avoidable
- Unresolved Grief and loss
- Guilt - “what did I miss,” Could the death have been preventable
 - Sense of relief
- Shame - “My fault?” Not doing enough to help, others blame me. “I am bad”
- Stigma & Isolation

Symptoms Associated with Grief & Loss

- **Emotional:** Numbing, Disconnecting, Drained & Overwhelmed, Anger, frustration, hopelessness
- **Cognitive:** Difficulty concentrating, Obsessive thoughts; Struggles with sense of trust, self-esteem, perception of safety, and control
- **Behavioral:** Withdrawal / Isolation, Lost interest in once pleasurable activities, substance abuse, risky behaviors, Avoiding reminders of trauma
- **Physical:** Somatization, Frequent unexplained illness, Weight loss or gain, Feeling fatigued
- **“It’s the kind of TIRED that sleep can’t fix.”** Anonymous

Tips for coping with grief

- Do not grieve in isolation
- Honor what you feel and express your feelings
- Ask for help
- Spirituality and Self Care
- Find tributes and rituals
- Acknowledge cultural and gender differences
- Trust your inner voice
- Tasks of Mourning: Accept, work through the pain, new normal, emotionally relocate the loss and move forward in life.

Grief - How to Help

- **Listen and be present**
- Like a roller coaster / Comes in Waves
- Expect strong emotions including anger
- Honor and support their journey through grief
- There is no one way or right way to grieve
- There is no set timetable, no “getting over it”

When a Loss Affects Your Program

- Have notification process to ensure staff are informed
- Acknowledge the impact the event may have
- Offer staff support and normalize reactions
- Offer additional individual supervision to process
- Conduct critical incident debriefing when necessary
- Schedule time for staff to process together

Critical Incident Debriefing

- Did you do anything during the incident that made you feel good?
- Have you experienced any moments of strength since the incident?
- What has helped you before? What would help you now?
- Who has helped you in the past ?
- What are your most important needs right now?
- Who can you identify that might help with those needs?

How can we, as individuals and as a community make sense of what we have witnessed and / or experienced?





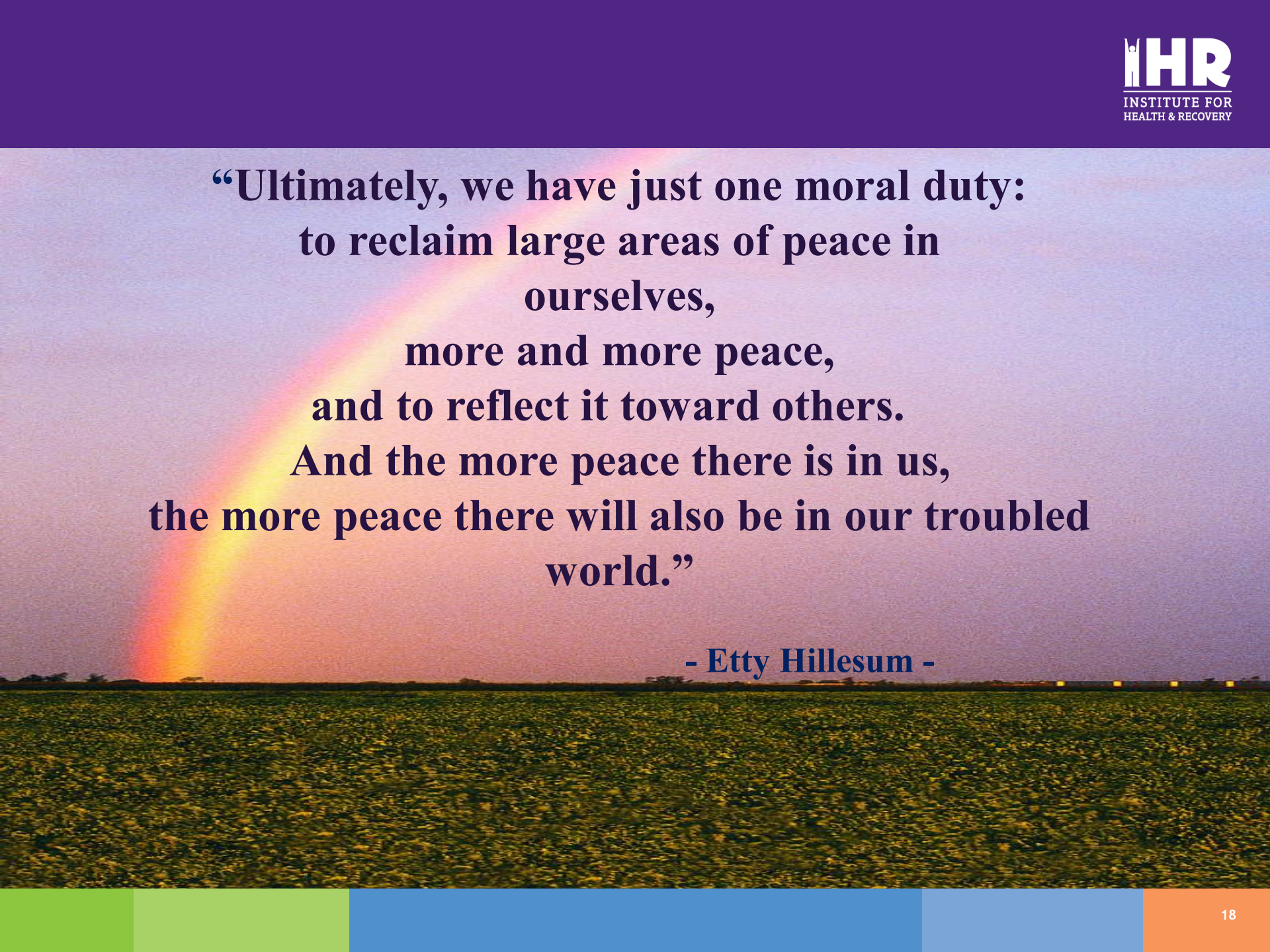
We can:

Find ways of Meaning Making through a
connection to something greater than
ourselves

Allow ourselves to embrace all aspects of
our experience

*Secondary Trauma**

* Often called Compassion Fatigue or
Vicarious Trauma



**“Ultimately, we have just one moral duty:
to reclaim large areas of peace in
ourselves,
more and more peace,
and to reflect it toward others.
And the more peace there is in us,
the more peace there will also be in our troubled
world.”**

- Etty Hillesum -

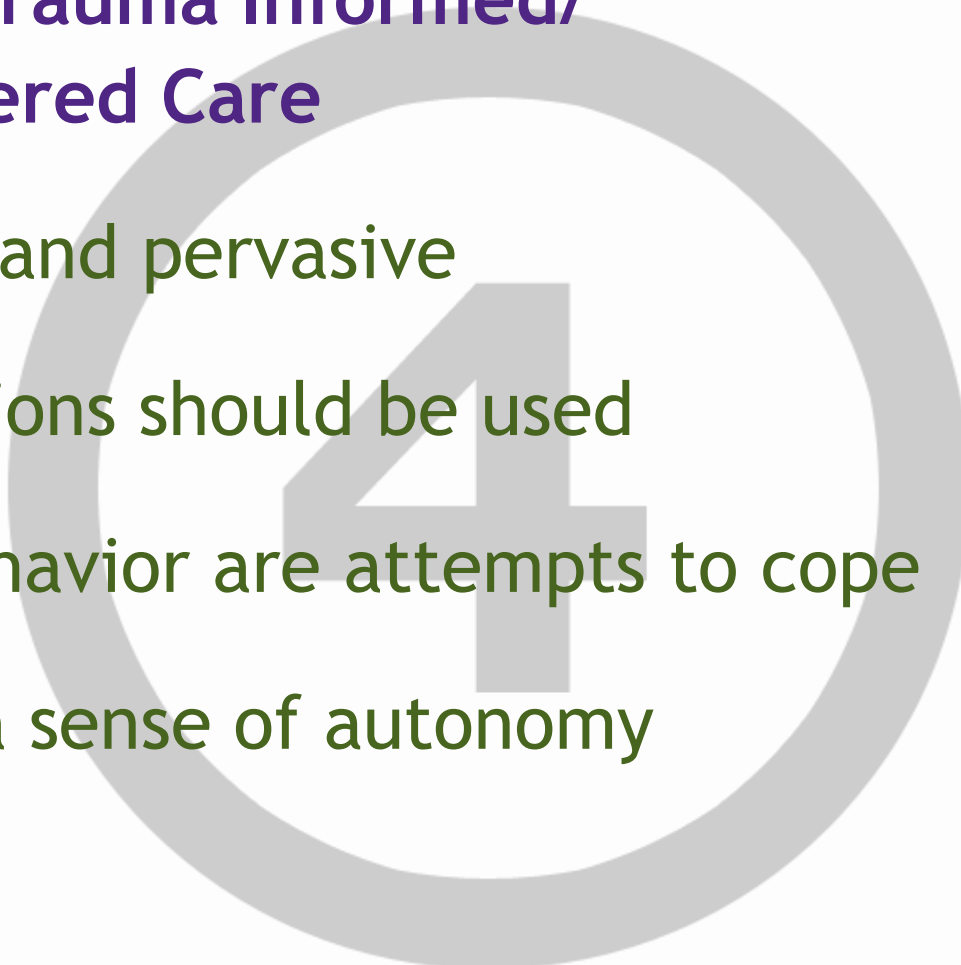
Compassion Fatigue, Secondary Trauma and Burnout EXPLAINED:

- **Compassion Fatigue**: The deep emotional and physical wearing down that takes place when helping professionals are unable to refuel and renew (Figley, 1995)
- **Secondary Trauma**: witness to a traumatic event or series of events (Figley, 1995); profound negative changes in our worldview due to the exposure to traumatic content of clients (Saakvitne & Pearlman, 1996)
- **Vicarious Trauma**: This is when one's inner life or belief system becomes effected: you may start asking yourself "Why do I bother doing this?" or "Am I really helping anyone?"
- **Burnout**: workplace stress & frustration, lack of resources to do your job well, being worn down by the amount and/or the pace of work.

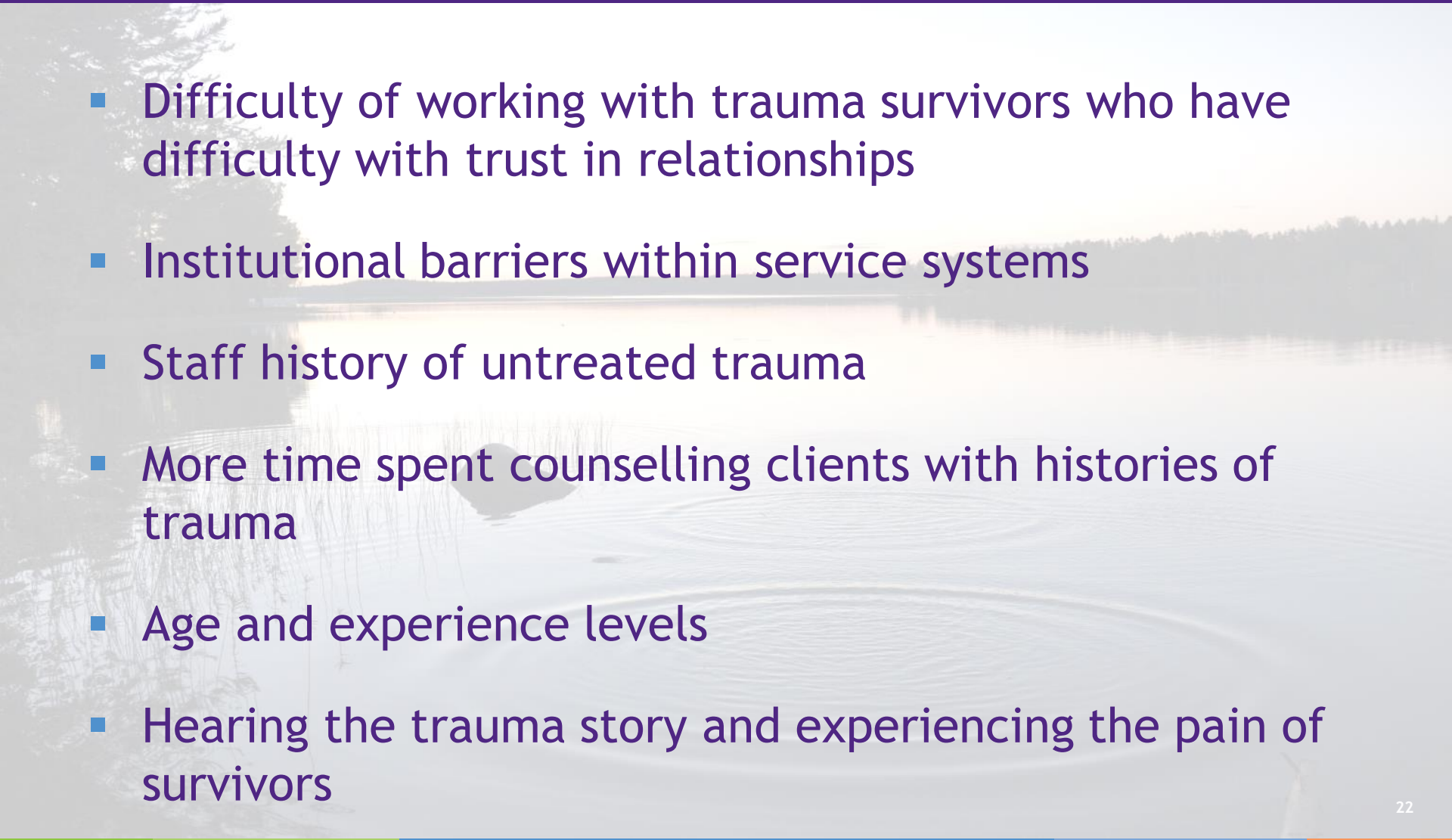
Definition of Trauma

- Extreme stress that creates an overwhelming sense of terror, helplessness and horror
- An experience of a threat to life, bodily integrity or sanity
- Only the individual can decide whether an event or experience is traumatic

Four Principles of Trauma Informed/ Survivor Centered Care

- 
1. Trauma is central and pervasive
 2. Universal precautions should be used
 3. Symptoms and behavior are attempts to cope
 4. Goal is to return a sense of autonomy

Individual Risk Factors

- 
- Difficulty of working with trauma survivors who have difficulty with trust in relationships
 - Institutional barriers within service systems
 - Staff history of untreated trauma
 - More time spent counselling clients with histories of trauma
 - Age and experience levels
 - Hearing the trauma story and experiencing the pain of survivors

Symptoms Resemble Post Traumatic Stress



Intrusive symptoms

- Flashbacks, nightmares, obsessive thoughts

Changes in thinking

- About self, others, the world; loss of trust, perception of safety, sense of control, feeling connected

Difficulties with emotional regulation

- Numbing, dissociation, reactivity

Physical

- Somatization, frequent illness

Resiliency Factors

Awareness

- Of all aspects of one's experience
- Needs, limits, emotions, resources

Balance

- Time for reflection

Connection

- Social support



Self Care



Holding

by Washington Gladded

In the bitter waves of woe,
Beaten and tossed about,
By the sullen winds that blow,
From the desolate shores of doubt,
Where the anchors that faith has cast
Are dragging in the gale,
I am quietly holding fast
To the things that cannot fail.

Taking Care of Self

- Self-care is a priority and necessity, not a luxury, in the work that we do
- You have the power to take care of yourself and to take steps to reduce your risk

Ways To Protect Ourselves

- Be aware of and honestly assess own vulnerabilities
- Give, ask for and encourage peer support
- Freely request supervision and consultation
- Consistently set clear limits and boundaries
- Participate in training
- Stay grounded and maintain balance
- Seek personal therapy when necessary

Self-Care Checklist

Self Care Plan



Countering Secondary Traumatization

Address the stress!

- *Self-Care*
- *Nurturing activities*
- *Escape*
- *Grounding*

Transform the despair!

- Focus on hope
- Examine negative beliefs and assumptions
- Participate in community-building activities

Coping with the Effects

Seek Support

- Let your supervisor know when you are overwhelmed or something is troubling
- Talk to your peers
- Allow yourself to be vulnerable with some of your family and friends



Manage your work environment

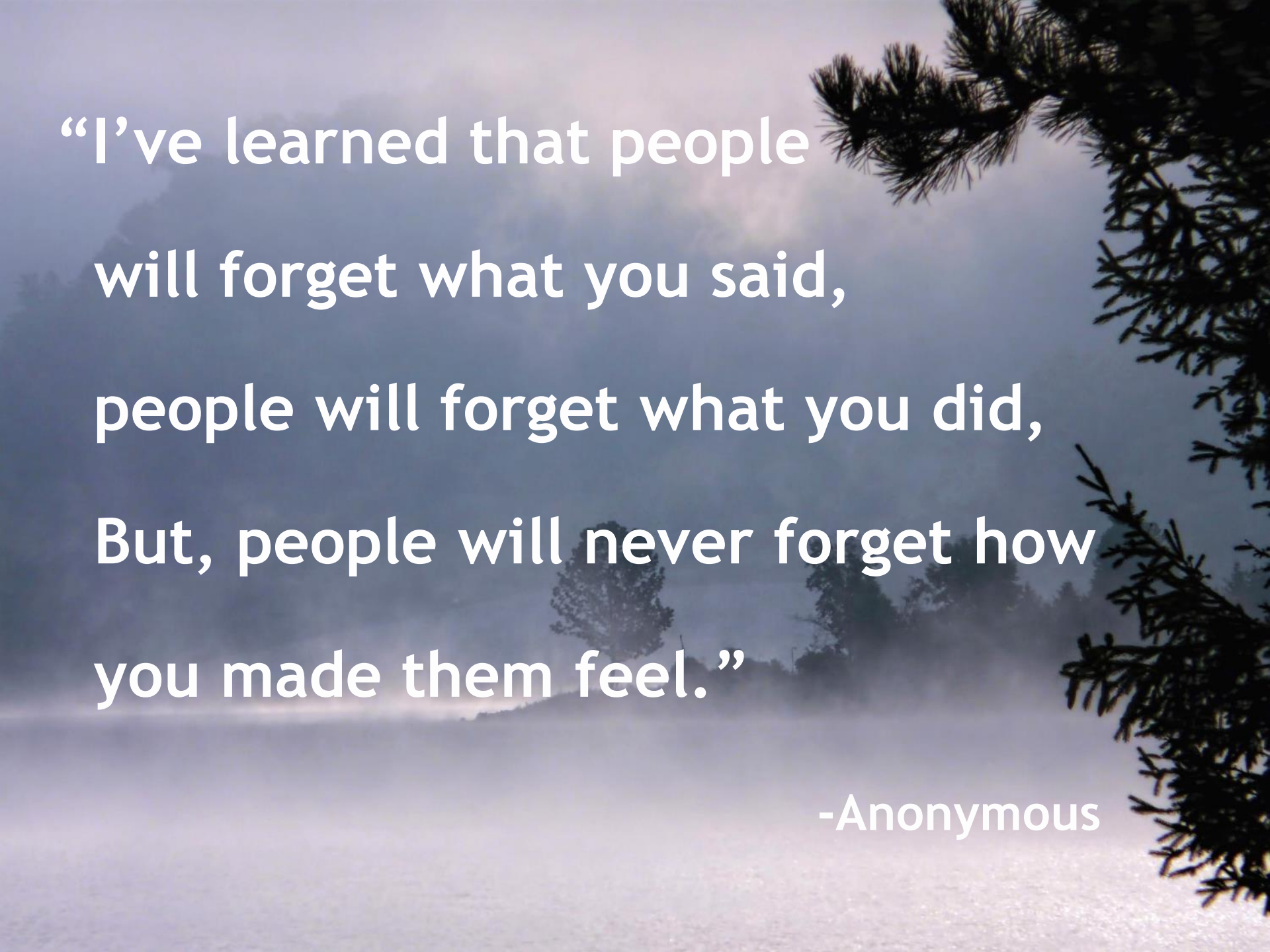


- Pay attention to your own safety and comfort
- Find space and time away from service recipients
- Bring personally meaningful items to your workplace

How Agencies Can Help



- Promote a corporate culture of self-care
- Supervision and consultation are the norm
- Build in supports
 - Team building
 - Social activities to build connection
 - Access to counseling
 - Resources for stress management

The background of the image is a serene landscape. In the foreground, the dark, silhouetted branches of evergreen trees are visible on the right side. The middle ground features a calm body of water, likely a lake, with a soft, hazy light reflecting on its surface. In the distance, a line of trees is visible under a pale, overcast sky. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

“I’ve learned that people
will forget what you said,
people will forget what you did,
But, people will never forget how
you made them feel.”

-Anonymous

Thank You

- Thank you for being here.
- Thank you for doing the work you do.

Comments, Questions