

# BURNOUT & SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS (STS)

## BURNOUT

### DEFINITION

Exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy emerging over time in response to chronic emotional and interpersonal work stressors.

A condition that applies to all professions but disproportionately affects human service workers.

Develops over time in response to continued conditions of stress

### SYMPTOMS

- Physical and emotional fatigue
- Guilt and perception of inadequacy
- Depression
- Detachment from clients and co-workers
- Chronic tardiness or absenteeism
- Poor concentration
- Loss of motivation

### COPING METHODS

- Flexible working hours
- Reminding co-workers of their accomplishments rather than allowing them to focus on exhaustion and inadequacy
- Adequate supervision especially of inexperienced workers
- Having a culture that acknowledges burnout, vicarious trauma etc as common responses to direct practice
- Helping co-workers to identify symptoms and supporting them either by taking on extra work or offering emotional support

## SEC. TRAUMATIC STRESS

### DEFINITION

Natural behaviours and emotions as a result of exposure to another person's traumatic situation. This is sometimes defined interchangeably with 'vicarious trauma' and 'compassion fatigue' and is specific to workers who deal with traumatic situations.

### SYMPTOMS

- Intrusive trauma-related images or dreams
- Persistent avoidance of trauma-related stimuli
- Alterations in basic beliefs and sense of self

### COPING METHODS

- Positive forms of self expression, e.g. drawing, outdoor activities, cooking
- Spiritual connections: religion, meditation
- Taking enough breaks and rest
- Exercise
- Maintaining positive connections with friends and family
- Psycho-therapy especially for people with a history of trauma
- Setting realistic goals for oneself, acknowledge one's own limitations