Lessons and Strategies for Public Library Workers

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With thanks to:
Adeeba Afshan Rana, Neighborhood Library Supervisor, Bedford
Mindful Movement
A patron will come to the desk and simply ask,

“Can you help me?”

And I say,

“I hope so, what do you need?”
Secondary Trauma

... the natural consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced by another - the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help the traumatized or suffering person. (Figley, 1993)

Trauma Exposure Response

...the transformation that takes place within us as a result of exposure to the suffering of other living beings or the planet...the ways in which the world looks and feels like a different place to you as a result of your doing your work. (van Dernoot Lipsky, 2007)
When thinking about your trauma exposure responses, consider:

**Your personal history**  
History with personal trauma, your resources, connection to your work

**Your organizational culture**  
Trauma Stewardship book references a study by Golie Jansen from 2004 that found “when people perceive their organizations to be supportive, they experience lower levels of trauma”

**Societal forces**  
Oppression, structural violence, social responses to suffering – external factors like global pandemic
Our Team
Practicing Self and Community Care when it's hard

* listening and reflecting
  * taking a moment to pause
* identifying
  * the need that is not being met
* exploring what it means to create a culture of support, even when it is hard
  * practice consistency

Trust will build friendship

ENCOURAGE STAFF TO PRACTICE LOGISTIC FLEXIBILITY LESS BUREAUCRACY

Serving patrons who use abusive language

- DON'T PENALIZING STAFF FOR EST. PERSONAL BOUNDARIES
  - Don’t penalize staff for speaking up for themselves or other staff members
  - Supervisors who are responsive to staff safety (emotional, as well as physical)
  - Check in with staff without prompt after a difficult interaction
  - Supervisors should respect boundaries and techniques of individual staff
  - Tell patron that I am unable to serve if this continues
  - It's OK to ask someone else to take over
  - Clarify policy on belligerent patrons
  - Don’t be dismissive towards staff who have interaction with/abusive patron
Organizational Culture... and Change!

Feeling part of the bigger picture / part of the change you want to see:
- large group town hall meetings (regardless)
- networking / sharing
- self-care strategies
- visiting other branches
- stay positive
- listen to people who might have different opinions
- form a support group
- summer lunch I can’t wait

GOING FINE FREE
- Upper level transparency

Making Meaning out of bad things that should never have happened:

PROVIDING SPACE/TIME FOR REFLECTION/HEALTHY OUTLET
- personal days for recovery?
- have plans in place to deal with aftermath of bad incidents

Know how to reach out to EAP program
- case workers for staff (not a website)
- adequate allotment of personal days (not taking critical incident debriefing
- from our sick or leave balances to take time after an extreme traumatic incident)
Supporting Others Within Your Scope

**General Practice**
- Check in often (schedule time)
- Create an environment that is positive and safe for communication
- Allow colleague to feel
- Encourage social time (Virtual or socially distanced)

**For Supervisors**
- Model Healthy behavior
- Adjust staff procedures and schedules (if possible)
- Offer support from organization (CCA, Union-Personal Service Unit)
- Monitor and Review staff well-being
- Act and face change authentically
- Be informed of institutional practices
- Be as open and transparent as possible
- Have a genuine concern for staff
- Give consistent and clear information
- Identify things at work that causes stress and work with staff member to create a plan and solutions

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I just want to say that this presentation is absolutely terrific. It would be great if all this info were shared at a systemwide presentation.
I loved feeling a deep human connection in a way I hadn't in a long time.

I really like the idea of active listening and not just "waiting your turn" to speak, but actually listening with intent.

I'm going to do my best to give people time to connect at the beginning of a program and take a more active role in participation when a program I do isn't pre-recorded.

I will definitely run librarian meetings with more intention and structure.

It felt like we were able to be open and vulnerable together and the experience was very moving. And respected.

This definitely helped me feel more connected to staff and realize that we're all humans struggling through this together.
Rekindling “The Cover is Blue” Book Club @ BPL
Wellness Kits for All Staff
“Like tiny seeds with potent power to push through tough ground and become mighty trees, we hold innate reserves of unimaginable strength. We are resilient.”

- Catherine Devrye
Let’s Take a Breath
Four Intentions of Council Circle

★ Speak from the heart
★ Listen from the heart
★ Speak spontaneously and responsively
★ Speak Leanly
Take Care of Yourself!

Download the resource documents shared along with this presentation!
Questions to Consider...

What kinds of networks of support have you built at your library, or can you think of any groups or committees you could connect with?

What are your experiences with secondary trauma at the library? Or can you name some trauma exposure responses you have experienced?

These concepts still apply even if you don’t work in a public library. If you don’t work in a public library, can you see this approach fitting into your workplace?
One-Minute Vacation
Who We Are

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Our Rekindling Teammates

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