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Is It Over Yet?

The Resilience of Our Profession

Presented by:

Tina Winn, Ed.D.

Lee Anne Paris, Ph.D.

Stephanie Baird, Ph.D.

Oklahoma Christian University



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Why do we feel this way?

- Trauma
- Ego Depletion
- Decision Fatigue

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Psychological Trauma

(Center for Health Care Strategies, 2021)

A response involving complex debilitation of adaptive abilities—emotional, cognitive, physical, spiritual and social—following an event that was perceived by our nervous system as life-threatening to ourselves or others (especially loved ones).

- Trauma is a subjective and unique to each individual.
- Trauma can be triggered a one-time event, a prolonged event or a series of events.
- Trauma that affects a community or a country is called collective trauma.



Trauma

Experiences that may be traumatic include:

- Catastrophic events (tornado, flood, fire)
- Major health issues (personal or family member)
- Sudden, unexplained separation from a loved one
- Violence in the community, war, or terrorism
- Mental health or substance use disorders (personal or family member)
- Childhood neglect
- Poverty
- Racism, discrimination, and oppression
- Physical, sexual, and emotional abuse



Negative Impact of Trauma

- Health risk behaviors (unhealthy eating; tobacco use; or drug and alcohol use)
- Relationships problems (undermined trust; increased anger/aggression; increased feelings of shame, numbing or isolation)
- New or recurrent mental health issues:
 - Disturbing explicit and implicit memories that can be triggered in the present
 - PTSD, anxiety disorders, depression (may be recurring or triggered by past trauma)



Pervasive Nature of Trauma (CHCS)

- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) have cumulative and cascading effects
 - 62% of U.S. adults have at least one ACE
 - 25% of U.S. adults have three or more ACEs
 - ACE risk is highest among those:
 - identified as black, hispanic or multiracial
 - with less than a high-school education, low income or unemployed
 - identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual



Ego Regulation and Ego Depletion

(Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, et al., 1998)

- Ego Regulation: involves regulation of one's own and other's emotions and behaviors
 - Ego regulation taxes cognitive and emotional energy.
- Ego Depletion: idea that ego regulation (self-control) is a finite resource that can be used up
 - How did the pandemic impact ego regulation for you and those you serve? How is re-entry to work/school impacting you and those you serve?



Decision Fatigue

(Pignatiello, Martin, & Hickman, 2018)

- Impaired ability to make decisions and control behavior as a consequence of repeated acts of decision-making
 - results in a measurable shift toward easier, safer, or more gratifying decisions and actions
 - is a symptom of ego depletion




Impact of Decision Fatigue

- Behavioral
 - procrastination; avoidance; less persistence
- Cognitive
 - reduction in executive functioning; inhibited reasoning ability; use of heuristics (mental shortcuts)
- Physiological
 - deterioration in physical endurance

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What Is Resilience?

- Enables us to cope with negative experiences
- Defined as “the ability to mentally and emotionally cope with a crisis or to return to pre-crisis status quickly” (de Terte & Stephens, 2014)




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How to Foster Resilience

(American Psychological Association, 2016)

- Encourage yourself and others to have or develop supportive relationships.
- Help yourself and others create narratives of their lives to help boost their sense of identity and control.
- Hold training workshops to pass along resilience skills, stressing how people need to learn to be flexible and take risks.
- Teach them mindfulness techniques, such as focused breathing.



How to Foster Resilience

(American Psychological Association, 2016)

- Explain that there is no answer to “why me?” Instead, recommend that people ask themselves, “What steps can I take to deal effectively with the situation?”
- Teach ourselves to pause before rushing in to solve a student’s problem.
- Tell yourself and students that mistakes or setbacks are experiences to learn from, not be defeated by.

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Self-Compassion

- Important component of resilience
- People who show self-compassion are:
 - kind to themselves
 - recognize and accept failure as a shared human experience
 - take a balanced approach to emotional setbacks

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Self-Compassion

- Helps us to be more authentic and optimistic
- Enables risk-taking
- Aspects of self-compassion include:
 - reflection
 - growth mindset (focus on getting better rather than being perfect)

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Self-Reflection

- Chen (2018) suggests asking 3 questions on a regular basis:
 - Am I being kind and understanding to myself?
 - Do I acknowledge shortcomings and failure as experiences shared by everyone?
 - Am I keeping my negative feelings in perspective?



Self-Compassion & Ego Depletion

- Stress is an enemy of willpower
- Awareness is a friend of willpower
- Willpower is contagious
- Like a muscle:
 - we must use it or lose it
 - we must rest and restore



Coping Strategies

(McKee & Wiens, 2017)

- Avoid overwork (can result in more stress, isolation, and feeling overwhelmed)
- Practice mindfulness
- Spend time with loved ones
- Get enough sleep
- Acknowledge how you feel and recognize that others would likely feel the same in a similar situation

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Coping Strategies

(McKee & Wiens, 2017)

- Offer empathy appropriately (focus moves from self to others)
- Build friendships at work
- Appreciate people for who they are
- Focus on your students (and faculty)
- *Caution:* be careful of “caring too much;” pay attention to your limits



Other Suggestions?



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Contact Information

Dr. Tina Winn, Chair of Division of Behavioral & Social Sciences & Education
tina.winn@oc.edu / 405.425.5459

Dr. Lee Anne Paris, Dean of Library & Instructional Support
leeanne.paris@oc.edu / 405.425.5317

Dr. Stephanie Baird, Registrar
stephanie.baird@oc.edu / 405.425.5200