Staying Afloat in Troubled Waters

Support & Self-Care Measures for the Peer Professional Workforce Facing Grief: Suicide, Overdose & Covid-19

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Welcome

John Coppola
Executive Director
ASAPNYS
We Are Glad You Are Here
The Heart of the Matter

Part One
Navigating Grief: The Impact of Overdose & Suicide on Peer Professionals

OMH Emotional Support Helpline: 1-844-863-9314
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A Landscape of Loss

The Changing Tides of Overdose and Suicide Loss During The Covid-19 Pandemic

Experiences of Peer Professionals
Poll #1- Have you or your agency experienced an increase in overdose/suicide loss since the initiation of COVID-19/Quarantine?
“Grief is an inevitable experience within the work we do. The weight of its burden can harden the heart and exhaust our energy.”

-William White

http://www.williamwhitepapers.com/
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The Weight of the Burden

- Coping With Trauma
- Loss and Grief
- Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma
- Burnout

I AM NOT OK
The Heart of the Matter
The Heart of the Matter

Grief and Loss Experiences
Common to Overdose and Suicide

Disenfranchised Grief

Ambiguous Loss (Death)
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Empathy

Our empathy both allows us to relate (lived experiences) and creates a vulnerability to the traumatic experiences of others.
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We have not been directly exposed to the trauma scene, but we hear the story told with such intensity, or we hear similar stories so often, or we have the gift and curse of extreme empathy and we suffer. We feel the feelings of our clients. We experience their fears. We dream their dreams. Eventually, we lose a certain spark of optimism, humor and hope. We tire. We aren't sick, but we aren't ourselves.”

- C. Figley, 1995
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How Can We?

• Give and receive empathy and support?
• Hold our own grief while tending to that of others?
• Serve as role models of resilience and self-care?

We don’t move on from grief. We move forward with it. --Nora McInerny

Questions for Reflection

- It is ok for me to feel __________________
- It is ok for me to need __________________
- I need to trust in ____________________
- I am proud of myself for ________________
- I give myself credit for ________________
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Part Two
Navigating Through The Challenges of Covid-19
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“Covid-19 on top of the continuing onslaught of opioid deaths has intensified these losses as we find ourselves in the midst of twin pandemics.”

-William White
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COVID-19 & Increased Rates of SUD, OD and Suicide

KEY DRIVERS OF CONCERN
ISOLATION        UNCERTAINTY        UNEMPLOYMENT/FINANCIAL LOSS
LACK OF ACCESS TO TREATMENT
DISRUPTION IN SUPPORT

Addiction Epidemic + covid-19 Pandemic = Increased Risk Suicide & Overdose
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PEER PROFESSIONALS ARE ESSENTIAL WORKERS
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Peer Professionals In the Face of Covid-19
FOR-NY Survey: A Collective Call to Action
Here’s What You Told Us

Almost 50% of the Peer Professional Workforce felt their work has been impacted by the pandemic
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How have you, and your work as a Peer Professional, been impacted by the pandemic?
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How have your program participants/recoverees been impacted by the pandemic? How has the pandemic impacted their treatment/recovery services?
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Peer Workers’ Covid-19 Personal Concerns

- Isolation/Loss of connection/support
- Overwhelm
- Both personal and professional loss and grief experiences
- Concerns around own recovery/wellness

Source: FOR-NY Survey: A Collective Call to Action Responses

“Laughter is a symbol of hope, and it becomes one of our greatest needs of life, right up there with toilet paper.” -- Erica Rhodes
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A Response of Resilience
Under Difficult & Sudden Circumstances.

Learned new technologies:
Telemedicine, Zoom group meetings, texting support, check-in sessions

Developed new ways to initiate and access: MAT, treatment, and Harm Reduction Strategies

Employed creativity: Overdose education, outreach, connection

The human capacity for burden is like bamboo—far more flexible than you'd ever believe at first glance.

Jodi Picoult
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The nourishment of pain is yours.

Weave its magic into your life. Let it cloak your shoulders.

Let it open you like a flower.

Let it educate your heart and reveal your superpower. Tanya Markul
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Poll #2 Do you feel you have adequate support and/or resources to manage the impact of these personal and professional challenges?
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Tend and Befriend
Reach Out
We Can Only Get Through This Together
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Part Three

Attending to Wellness Through Self-Care Measures and Workplace Support & Advocacy
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“The most precious things we have to offer those we serve are a ministry of presence and a message of hope in the face of the worst circumstances. Maintaining that presence and our ability to convey hope requires focused self-maintenance.”

-William White
Rituals of replenishment can help keep us centered on the larger meaning of our advocacy and recovery support work as well as help us sustain our personal health and perspective—William White

### Staying Afloat

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<td>• Responsible Citizenship</td>
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<td>• Unpaid &amp; Unacknowledged Acts of Service</td>
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Acts of Responsible Caregiving

One must be careful in carrying light to the community to not leave one’s own home in darkness”

--an adage shared to Bill White from a trainee
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Acts of Responsible Citizenship
and
Unpaid and Unacknowledged Acts of Service
Outside the Professional Helping Role

“These flow from the realization that we must balance our acts of individual healing with efforts to shape a world where wounds can be prevented and the health of the healed can be sustained.”
Self-care has several purposes in the context of peer work:

- Allows peer professionals to check in with their mental and physical state before symptoms of burnout/stress overload become overwhelming;
- Offers a continuous reminder to practice mindfulness and stress reduction;
- Reminds us to manage our vulnerabilities;
- Helps mitigate the potential for compassion fatigue and burnout.
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Centering Rituals

“Usually performed alone, these allow us to reassess life values, clarify personal priorities, maintain congruence between our internal self and social self--helping us to stay grounded and aligned with our aspirational recovery values.”
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Be Kind To Yourself Meditation
A Contemplation to Give You the Compassion You Need

This is a moment of suffering.
Suffering is a part of life.
May I be kind to myself in this moment.
May I give myself the compassion I need.

https://self-compassion.org/
https://self-compassion.org/test-how-self-compassionate-you-are/
Mirroring Rituals

“If centering rituals reveal to me what I need to do, mirroring rituals deliver the people in my life that will help me do those things”
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Workplace Support & Advocacy

- Supervision (Protective for Peer Professional well-being)
- Check-in meetings: Create a safe space for individual/collective input; supporting others through grief experiences
- Review agency policies
- Re-imagine the workplace environment
- Recognition and Appreciation: Personalized, meaningful and frequent

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Workplace and Personal Wellness
Staying Safe in the Work Setting and Beyond

- Social Distancing
- PPE for Self (and Participants)—masks, hand sanitizer, gloves
- Access to Covid-19 Testing
- Support from Leadership
- Harm Reduction
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Hugging!
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Recognition, Appreciation & Gratitude
Angelia Wilson-Smith, Executive Director
Friends of Recovery - New York
Those of you on the frontlines of peer recovery support are writing the future of recovery with your lives. I wish each of you Godspeed on your journey into that future.

- William White
Closing Comments

What’s Next

• This Presentation (slides/recording) will be made available next week along with handouts and resources. Next slide will have list of resources for you today.

• To receive clock hours for certification renewal for: NYS CRPAs / CARCs; Social Work CE’s and CASAC CE’s, please complete the attestation forms at the end of this webinar. (For attendees participating in live webinar only.)

• Watch for the registration links to the upcoming Zoom Series, Dates: July 16th, 23rd, August 6th, and 20th at 1PM.

• Place any final thoughts or questions in the chat box.
Resources

Resources for Mental Health Support
NYS OMH Emotional Support Hotline
1-844-863-9314

Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK (8255) or Text HOME to 741741
There may be a wait time to connect.

FOR-NY Link to COVID-19 and Online Recovery Resources
https://for-ny.org/get-help/

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