

# Staying Afloat in Troubled Waters

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

June 25, 2020

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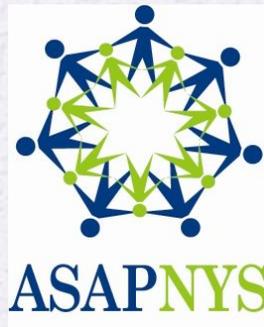
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# Staying Afloat in Troubled Waters

Presented by the Alcoholism & Substance Abuse  
Providers of NYS (ASAP)



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Supports (OASAS)



**Office of Addiction  
Services and Supports**

# Staying Afloat in Troubled Waters

*welcome*

John Coppola  
Executive Director  
ASAPNYS

We Are Glad You Are Here

# A Moment of Silence

A Moment of Silence  
For those lost to Overdose, Suicide, Illness and Violence

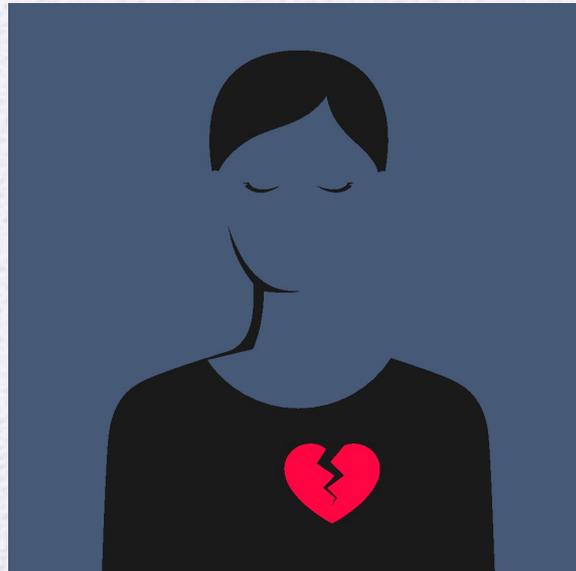


# The Heart of the Matter

## Part One

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

**OMH Emotional Support Helpline: 1-844-863-9314**



# The Heart of the Matter

## A Landscape of Loss

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

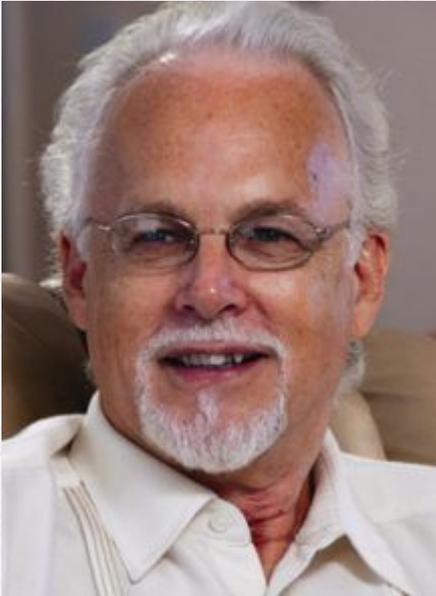
Experiences of Peer Professionals



# The Heart of the Matter

Poll #1- Have you or your agency experienced an increase in overdose/suicide loss since the initiation of COVID-19/Quarantine?

# The Heart of the Matter



*“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*

# The Heart of the Matter

## The Weight of the Burden

Coping  
With  
Trauma  
Loss and  
Grief

Compassion  
Fatigue and  
Vicarious  
Trauma

Burnout



# The Heart of the Matter



# The Heart of the Matter

## Grief and Loss Experiences Common to Overdose and Suicide

Disenfranchised Grief

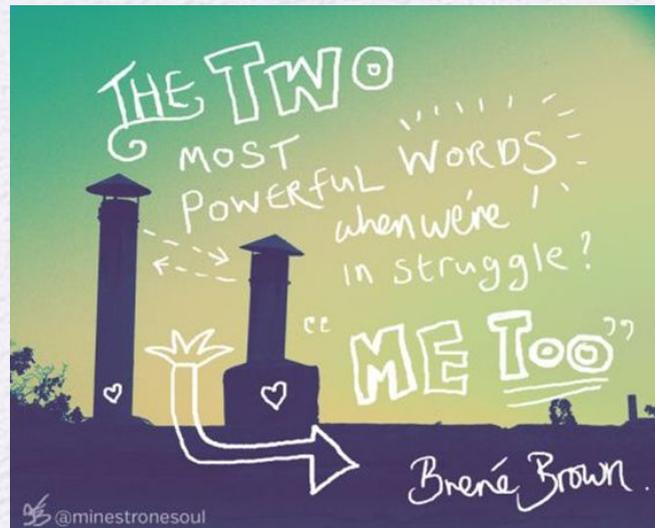
Ambiguous Loss (Death)



# The Heart of the Matter

## Empathy

Our empathy both allows us to relate (lived experiences) and creates a vulnerability to the traumatic experiences of others



# The Heart of the Matter

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."

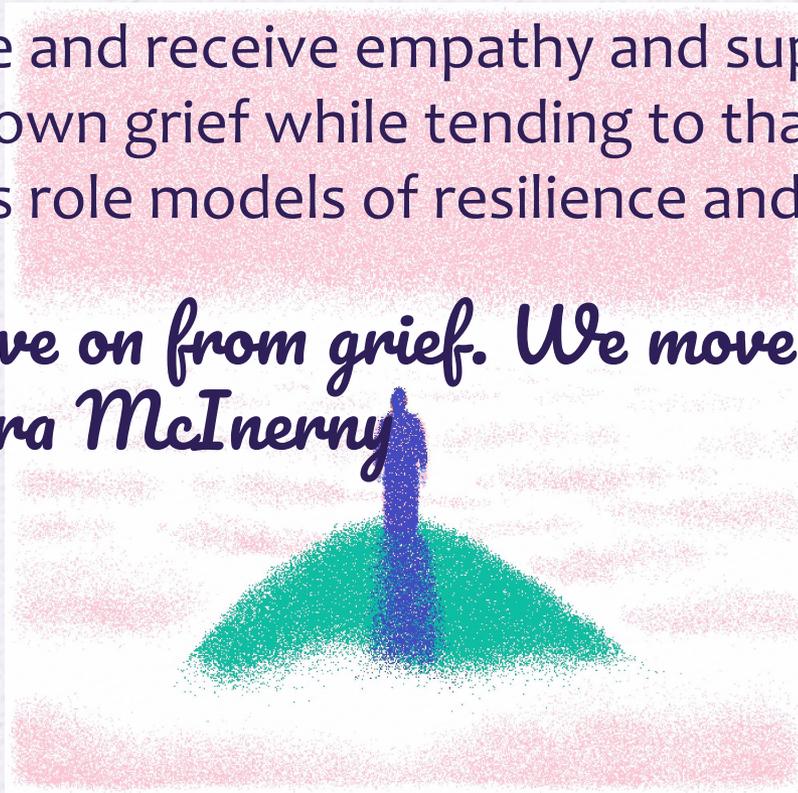
- C. Figley, 1995

# The Heart of the Matter

## 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 McInerney*



# The Heart of the Matter

## *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 \_\_\_\_\_

# Troubled Waters

## Part Two

Navigating Through The Challenges of Covid-19



# Troubled Waters

*"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*

# Troubled Waters

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

### KEY DRIVERS OF CONCERN

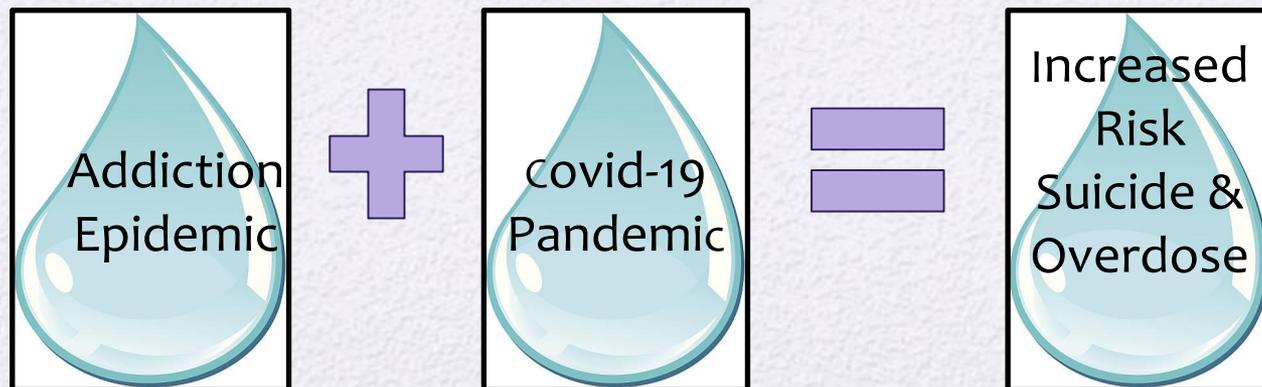
ISOLATION

UNCERTAINTY

UNEMPLOYMENT/FINANCIAL LOSS

LACK OF ACCESS TO TREATMENT

DISRUPTION IN SUPPORT



# Troubled Waters

PEER  
PROFESSIONALS  
ARE  
ESSENTIAL  
WORKERS



# Troubled Waters

## **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

# Troubled Waters

How have you, and your work as a Peer Professional, been impacted by the pandemic?



# Troubled Waters

How have your program participants/recoverees been impacted by the pandemic? How has the pandemic impacted their treatment/recovery services?



# Troubled Waters

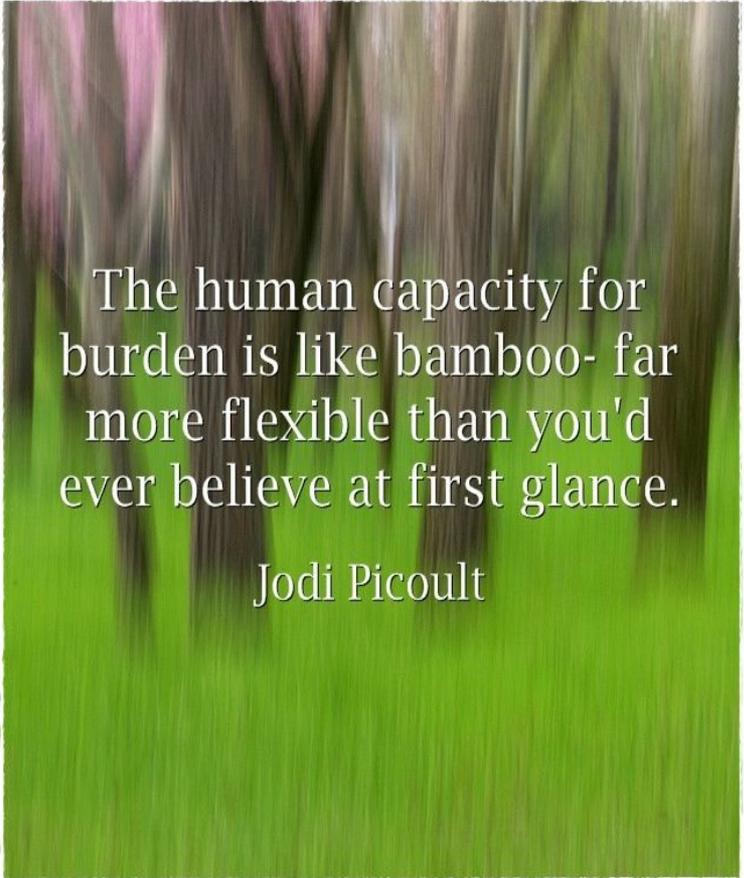
## Peer Workers' Covid-19 Personal Concerns

- 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*

# Troubled Waters



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

Jodi Picoult

## **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

# Troubled Waters



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

# Troubled Waters

Poll #2 Do you feel you have adequate support and/or resources to manage the impact of these personal and professional challenges?

# Staying Afloat

*Tend and Befriend*

*Reach Out*

*We Can Only Get Through This Together*



# Staying Afloat

## Part Three

Attending to Wellness Through Self-Care Measures and  
Workplace Support & Advocacy



# Staying Afloat

*"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*

# Staying Afloat

## Acts of Responsibility

- Responsible Caregiving
- Responsible Citizenship
- Unpaid & Unacknowledged Acts of Service

## Acts of Self-Care

- Centering
- Mirroring

*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*

# Rituals of Replenishment

# Staying Afloat

## 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*

# Staying Afloat

## 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.”*

## Staying Afloat

Self care  
is a  
divine  
responsibility

*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.*

# Staying Afloat

## 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.”*

# Staying Afloat

## 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/>

# Staying Afloat

## 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”*

# Staying Afloat

## 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

<https://omh.ny.gov/omhweb/grief-infographic.pdf>



# Staying Afloat

## 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



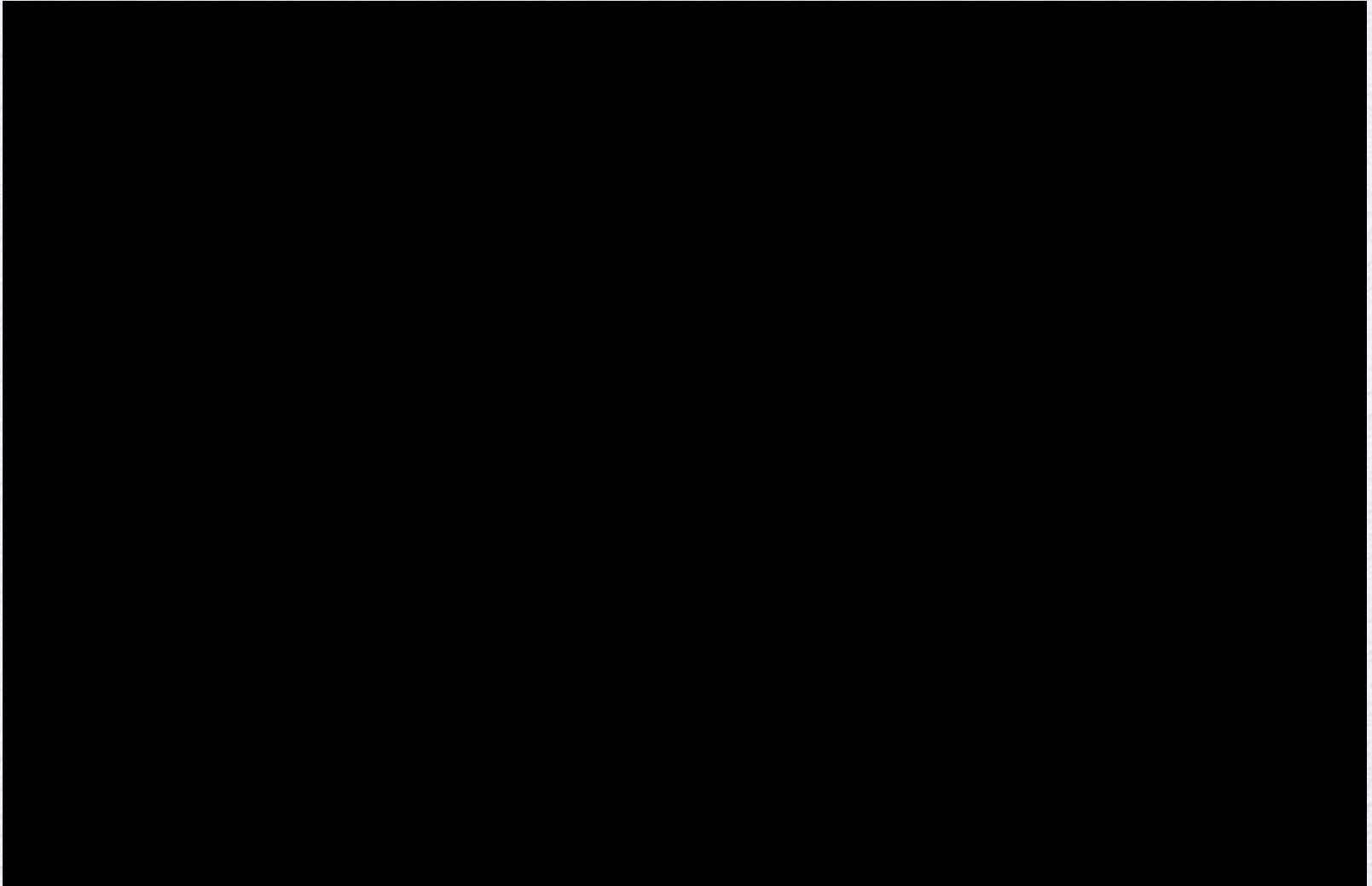
Stay Safe  
and  
Healthy

# Staying Afloat





Angelia Wilson-Smith, Executive Director  
Friends of Recovery - New York



# Closing Comments

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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