

August 2016

The Advocate

The Wichita Area Sexual Assault Center Newsletter

Exploring Secondary Trauma

Amy Nickell

Volunteer Coordinator

As we talk with friends, family, or loved ones we are often pulled into their experiences. While we listen carefully to their words, we may experience the emotions surrounding their stories and we may begin to take on some of their emotions. Traumatic experiences can be especially harrowing and can trigger stress within the people who support others. This phenomena is known as secondary trauma. Secondary traumatic stress is the emotional stress one may experience from helping or wanting to help someone who is suffering. The symptoms of secondary trauma have been compared to the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Review some of the symptoms commonly associated with secondary trauma that are listed at the end of this article.

Being aware of secondary trauma symptoms is helpful because their impact may extend beyond the person who is providing support. For instance, a survivor, who witnesses their family and friends in duress, due to their trauma, could further alter the difficult emotions they may be experiencing. As a result, some survivors may feel as if they are a burden and may pull away from those who want to help them. Additionally, some survivors may worry



more about their loved one's feelings and choose to avoid working through their own.

Some of the secondary symptoms can occur unconsciously, meaning you are unaware of your reactions. If you are engaging in a support role for someone, remember to "check in" with yourself regularly and be mindful of any changes in your behavior or emotions. It is not uncommon to have symptoms of secondary trauma. You must first tend to yourself before you can tend to others. Being mindful of your own emotions may help you better recognize some of the emotions the survivor may be experiencing. This awareness may help you empathize with their situation, creating a safe haven that may make them comfortable to discuss their feelings and concerns.



If you are experiencing any symptoms of secondary trauma, take time for yourself. Reconnect with activities you enjoy and with people who bring joy to your life. If you have someone you feel comfortable talking to, let them know how you are feeling. Take care of yourself physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. By exploring ways of caring for yourself, you may discover methods to share with the people you are trying to support. Some essentials of caring include eating healthy, getting sufficient sleep, and exercising. These are part of the essential “oxygen” you need to be prepared to help others. Denying yourself of what you need can only amplify a negative response to the world around you.

In an effort to diminish someone’s pain, it is not uncommon to feel like we need to make everything better. However, it is not always within our ability to “fix” someone’s conflict. We can listen and validate their experience. It is okay to say, “I don’t know what to say, but I am really glad you shared this with me.” Taking on someone’s emotions can create unhealthy boundaries between the support person and the survivor, limiting them from discovering ways to cope. Being empathetic with someone can feel “vulnerable”. Establishing healthy boundaries

is helpful for them and you.

When supporting someone, help them utilize various resources. For example, you can offer to accompany them to the library to find reference material related to what they are experiencing. You can also connect them to local organizations for assistance and support. Encourage them to reach out to these agencies for support groups or therapy. The resources you discover together can be helpful for you.

WASAC provides free and confidential support to families, caregivers or friends of survivors. Our 24-hour hotline is available to anyone supporting a loved one, or can be a resource in challenging situations. We also offer a support group for parents and caregivers, allowing a safe space for discussion and support. We appreciate your continued support for survivors of sexual assault. Call our office at 316-263-0185 and let us know how we can help you.



Additional Resources and References:

www.nctsn.org

www.brenebrown.com

www.nctsn.org/resources/topics/secondary-traumatic-stress

Trauma-Sensitive Yoga

Teen Girls: Mondays, 6:30-7:30 pm

Adult Women: Tuesdays, 6:30-7:30 pm

Common Symptoms of Secondary Trauma

Hypervigilance	Minimizing	Physical Ailments	Poor Boundaries
Hopelessness	Anger and Cynicism	Diminished Self-Care	Depression
Illness	Sleeplessness	Social Withdrawal	Guilt
Avoidance	Survival Coping	Chronic Exhaustion	Disconnection
Inability to listen or avoidance of clients		Insensitivity to Violence	Fear

August 30th Lunch and Learn



Sexual Assault Survivors with Disabilities

In this month's lunch and learn we will discuss sexual assault and the impact it has on the disability community. Participants will learn about some of the different types of disabilities and gain new approaches to engage with survivors who have a disability. Those in attendance will be able to identify and use at least one new skill as a result of this training. Bring your lunch and join us. You do not want to miss this opportunity!

Learning objectives:

1. Identify sexual assault.
2. Understand basic definition of disability.
3. Learn about person first language.
4. Utilizing strengths based approaches when working with people with disabilities.

Hosted by: Adele Falk, Outreach Advocate

12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Location: 355 N Waco, Suite 100, 67202

WASAC Calendar of Events

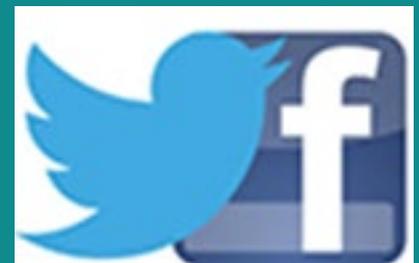
August 17: 6:00-8:00 p.m.
Protective Parenting Program
(court approved)

August 30: 12:00-1:00 p.m.
WASAC Lunch and Learn
Sexual Violence against People
with Disabilities

FREE & CONFIDENTIAL
316-263-0185

**Want
more
WASAC
News?**

Look for us!



WASAC
www.wichitasac.com



Wichita Area Sexual Assault Center

2016



Free and open to all! No RSVP required.

Bring your lunch and join us from 12-1 p.m. on the last Tuesday of each month to learn more about the reality of sexual violence in our community.

July 26 Trauma-Informed Services

August 30 Sexual Violence against People with Disabilities

September 27 Risk and Benefits of Protection Orders

October 25 Sexual and Domestic Violence: Connections

November 29 Navigating the Criminal Justice System

December 27 Practicing Self Care While Caring for Others

All WASAC Lunch & Learn sessions are held at our office at 355 N Waco, Suite 100. For more information, call (316) 263-0185 or visit us online at www.wichitasac.com.



Wichita Area Sexual Assault Center

Teen girls (age 13-17)

- Support group
Monday, 5:30 - 6:30 pm
- Trauma-sensitive yoga
Monday, 6:30 - 7:30 pm

Parents and caregivers

- Support group
Monday, 6:45 - 7:30 pm

Adult women (age 18+)

- Support group
Tuesday, 5:30 - 6:30 pm
- Trauma-sensitive yoga
Tuesday, 6:30 - 7:30 pm

WASAC also offers short-term individual therapy for men, women, and children.

To schedule an appointment, please call our office between 8:30 am and 5:00 pm.

WASAC support groups are confidential, free, and open to survivors at any point in their healing. All groups meet weekly and are open-ended, with no appointment necessary to participate. At this time, child care is not available.

WASAC office

355 N Waco,
Suite 100

SW corner of 3rd/Waco

316-263-0185