Mental Health training / compassion fatigue a growing issue

To say these are unprecedented times, more unique times, or very trying times, is I think we all agree understatements! As we move forward the key question is how will organisations help support staff not just in this crisis but more importantly afterwards particularly with regards to mental health and well being.

There has been a huge increase in interest and delivery of mental health training, stress management and resilience training over the past few years. In the health and social care sector another important training programme has also come to the fore in compassion fatigue, often described as the cost of caring.

A great quote I often use in my compassion fatigue programme states "The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet" (Remen, 1996)

In the coming year I firmly believe that training and support for staff around compassion fatigue will no longer apply just to one sector but will encompass all

sectors and all levels. Training staff and managers in the core fundamentals around compassion fatigue will take us beyond the stress management or resilience training and into a vitally important area which we will all need.

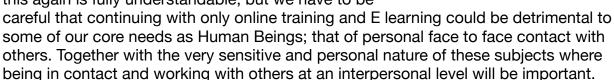
So what is compassion fatigue? It can be best described as a state of tension and preoccupation with individual or cumulative trauma of clients as manifested in one or more ways, Including re-experiencing of traumatic events, avoidance/numbing and persistent arousal. In core terms it is often the natural consequential stress resulting from

caring for and helping traumatised or suffering people

or animals.

One issue is that when times get tough and money gets tight the first target is often training. The olde argument that we cannot afford to run training for staff is not just wrong but in this case almost dangerous as more and more staff struggle with all aspects of their lives. Developing skills in psychological and emotional resilience linked with the core concepts of compassion fatique will be vital.

Of course at present everything is moving online and this again is fully understandable, but we have to be





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At the moment it is all about getting through this but equally it is going to be important to recognise the need for training and support. So to all organisations think carefully before saying we cannot afford to do training because some training will simply be the next lifeline for staff and the wellbeing of the organisation.

So I sincerely hope that organisations in all sectors will assess carefully the need for training in these areas. There is no doubt money will be tight but vital training like this will pay off in many ways.

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