Wounded Healer: Healing Ourselves and Others

"The healing that people find in such situations is profoundly natural. It is not the work of experts. Healing does not require our intent; often we heal others simply because of who we are. Then, by some Grace, our very wounds can serve to strengthen the life in others" (Nouwen, 1979).

Objectives

• This presentation will explore the concept of wounded healer and its relevance to working with oncology patients.
• Participants will gain knowledge about the paradoxical mystery of the wounded healer and how to implement the concept into daily therapeutic practice.
• Participants will leave with a greater sense of empathy and ability to identify their own personal wounds that can be used to create healing power in working with our patients.
• We will explore strategies to become passionate advocates of self-care and embrace the importance of mindfulness in daily practice to decrease the risk of compassion fatigue and burn out.

Outline

• Introduction
• Connection
• Owning our wounds
• How to truly be passionate advocates
• Mindfulness and Intentional Self Care
• Reflection and Questions
"We avoid suffering only at the great cost of distancing ourselves from life. In order to live fully we may need to look deeply and respectfully at our own suffering and at the suffering of others. In the depths of every wound we have survived is the strength we need to live. The wisdom our wounds can offer us is a place of refuge. Finding this is not for the faint of heart. But then, neither is life" (Remen, 2000).

The Wounded Healer

Theoretic Concept

Carl Jung (1929) the wounded healer metaphor of Chiron

- Paradoxical mystery: "Why does the healer have to have knowledge (awareness) of his own wound; why does he need to done it again and again to effect the cure? Does this have a relationship to knowledge of, and participation in, the wounds of the patient (Groesbeck, 1975)?"
- Jung believed that those who own their own woundedness has deeper empathy. "A psychotherapist's own experience of being wounded is what helps her [him] face the suffering client in simple relatedness (Larisey, 2012)."

Practice

- Explore your woundedness:
  1) Identify
  2) Process
  3) Meaning making
- Reciprocity in healing
- Empathy
- Advocacy
- Reflective understanding
- Enhance protective measures
- Decrease helplessness
Mindfulness

Just being
Breathe
Be present
Be intentional
Pay attention with no judgment

"the cultivation of mindfulness may just be the hardest work in the world." – Kabat-Zinn

Why do you stay doing what you do?

Being intentional and mindful of each and every day. Ask yourself these questions:

• What surprised me today?
• What moved me or touched me today?
• What inspired me today?
(Remen, 2000)

Challenge yourself to entice a deeper way of thinking about your patients and the care you provide. Time can be limited with busy schedules, large patient loads, limited staff and every day stressors. Even if one minute spent in relatedness and understanding with a patient it is more than no minutes. "It is not about the quantity of time but the quality of time with patients (Dickens, 2013)."

Become a passionate advocate of yourself

• Mindfulness
• Professional Supervision
• Professional Education
• Prayer
• Exercise (mind and body)
Questions / Reflection / Comments or Stories!? 

Bibliography