

SECONDARY TRAUMA: IMPACT AND SOLUTIONS

PHOEBE MULLIGAN, LICSW



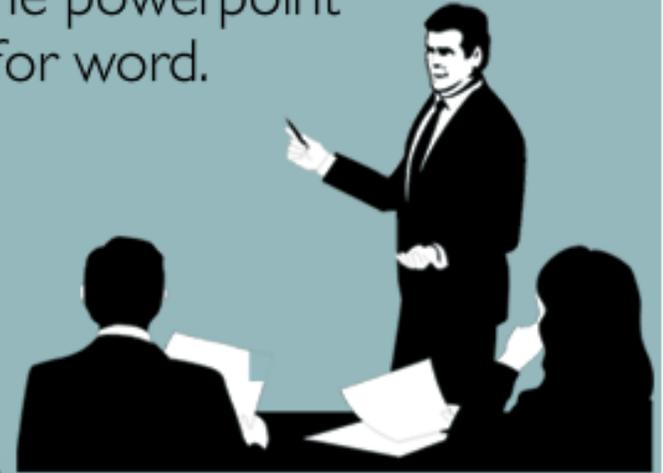
WHO I AM (IN 60 SECONDS OR LESS)

- Social worker (12 years)
- Trained at Harborview Center for Sexual Assault and Traumatic Stress
- Therapist at the Child Advocacy Center in Pierce County
- Clinical Director of non-profit mental health agency
- Private practice, training, CAC, contracts

GOALS FOR TODAY

- Discuss the difference between primary and secondary trauma
- Identify ways that these impact this field specifically
- Discuss ways to manage the impact

For my presentation today, I'll be reading the powerpoint slides word for word.



your  cards
someecards.com

QUESTION:

WHY DON'T WE TALK WITH PEOPLE ABOUT
THE THINGS WE HEAR/KNOW?



DEFINITION OF SECONDARY TRAUMA

- *“The entirety of how we interact with others’ suffering, pain and crisis”*
- The amount of difficult information that we know of and hear about is more than one person should have to process and understand.
- “Self care” is for weak people and is just something that feels insincerely recommended by agencies and motivational speakers.
- It is not a single thought or experience; it is a way of being and interacting with the world.

LEVELS OF SECONDARY TRAUMA

- Personal Dynamics
 - Who we are and where we come from
 - What is our own trauma history?
 - How have we coped with personal challenges in the past?
 - What in life has led us to do this work?

LEVELS OF SECONDARY TRAUMA

- **Organizational Tendencies**
 - Culture of the workplace – not a specific person, group or policy.
 - When people experience organizations as being supportive, they experience lower levels of vicarious trauma.
 - How do we impact our environment (attitude, inclusiveness, acknowledgment of impact)?

LEVELS OF SECONDARY TRAUMA

- **Societal Forces**

- Trauma is amplified by racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, etc.
- Adds another layer to how/why the trauma may have occurred and the impact on us and on the individual.
- Can also be a response to the general unfairness that we witness (court cases lost, children returned home, inability to provide services promised, abuse not being “bad enough” for action, uncaring professionals, etc.).

WARNING SIGNS

- Feeling Helpless/Hopeless
- Sense that you can never do enough
- Hypervigilance
- Diminished Creativity
- Inability to embrace complexity
- Minimizing
- Chronic Exhaustion
- Inability to listen/deliberate avoidance
- Dissociative moments
- Sense of persecution
- Guilt
- Fear
- Can't empathize, numbing
- Anger/Cynicism
- Addictions
- Grandiosity

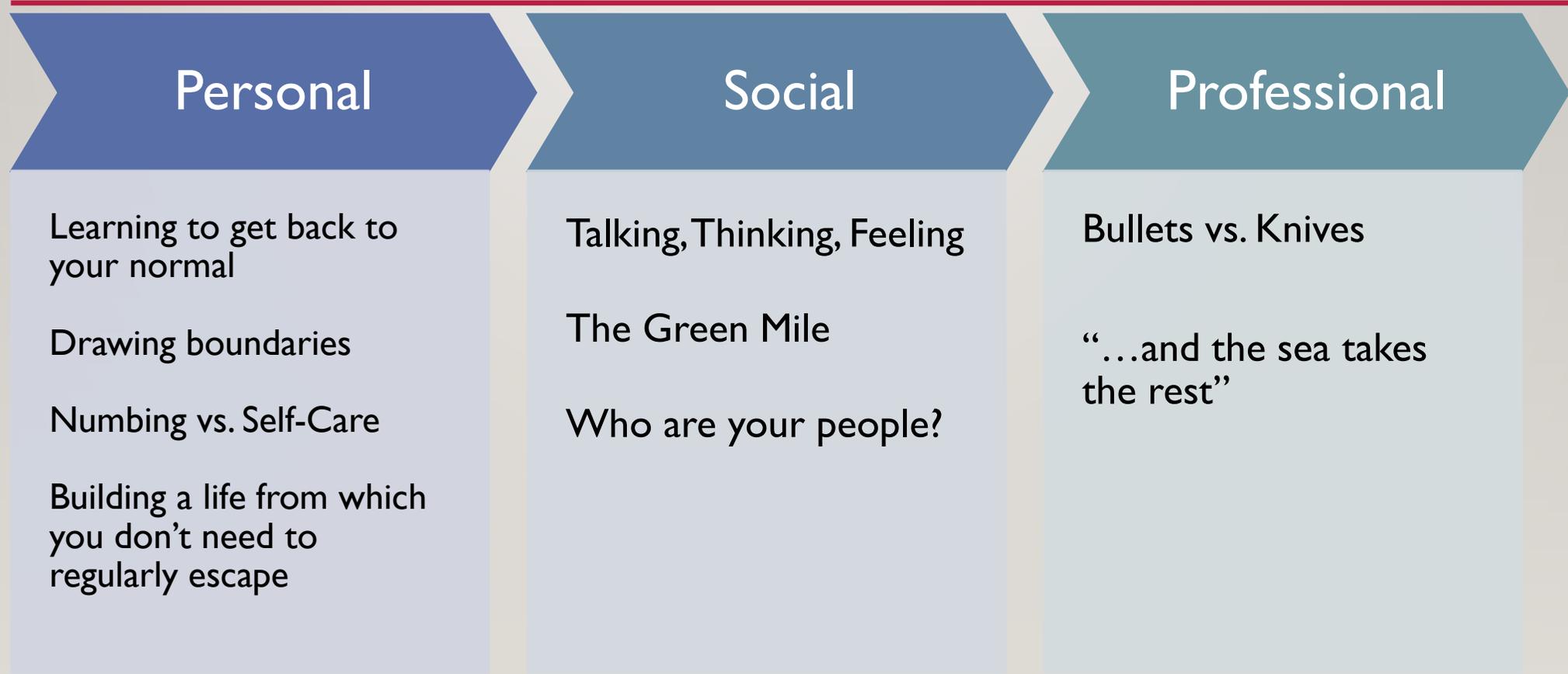
SO WHAT IS THE ANSWER?

- Talking with people that you trust who can listen to the impact of your experiences
- Learning to sit with and experience painful emotions that you've been told you should not feel
- Letting traumatic experiences be characterized as traumatic rather than meaningless

**Your
therapist
lied.**

**The answer
is alcohol.**

MANAGING SECONDARY TRAUMA



Personal

Learning to get back to your normal

Drawing boundaries

Numbing vs. Self-Care

Building a life from which you don't need to regularly escape

Social

Talking, Thinking, Feeling

The Green Mile

Who are your people?

Professional

Bullets vs. Knives

“...and the sea takes the rest”

MY STEPS

- Therapy
- Naturopath
- Supervision
- Bring back a little joy (cooking, children)
- No scary or upsetting movies/books/etc
- Talking and more talking
- Crying when I need to cry
- **THE LIST**

< Notes



Things to return to normal:

- Eat something that is good for me
- Have a cup of coffee or tea
- Take my serotonin pills
- Sleep for 8 hours
- Accomplish something small
- Massage pillow or get a massage
- Take a bubble bath or hot shower
- Listen to Harry Potter, read, watch The Holiday
- Sing or dance
- Listen to 80's sitcom intros
- Magic eraser something
- Talk to someone who will get it
- Write in my journal
- Do an exercise I enjoy (sun salutations, elliptical, stretches)

LET'S REVIEW THE PROCESS...

*“YOU SET OUT TO
CHANGE THE WORLD
AND NOW THE WORLD
IS CHANGING YOU”*

- Baseline: What do you need to do to get out of the hole? How do you set up life in a way that supports you?
- Step 1: recognize and acknowledge that something has impacted you on a different level than the normal day to day job.
- Step 2: find someone to talk with about the impact that this experience has had on you (or write about it if no one is available). This does not necessarily mean sharing the nitty gritty details of what you saw/know.
- Step 3: do the things that make you feel like you again.

QUESTIONS,
THOUGHTS,
CONCERNS?



CONTACT INFO ...

Phoebe Mulligan

pmulligan.licsw@gmail.com

206.498.6998