



Coaction Institute

<http://www.coactioninstitute.org>

Preventing 2ry Stress in Community Health Workers ©

Training Goal:

Build institutional and individual capacity to protect Community Health Workers from stressors associated with their work

Training Outcomes:

- Understanding of the difference between primary and secondary stress
- Knowledge about risk factors and protective factors associated with secondary stress among community health workers
- Institutional protective and personal self-care plans
- Integration of the topic of secondary stress into community health worker team meetings
- Institutional norms to reduce stigma associated with asking for help to prevent or address secondary stress

Training Assessment:

- ProQOL Pre/Post Test

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Introduction to Secondary Stress

Learning Objectives:

- Introduce the topic of secondary stress
- Reinforce the team identity and cohesion
- Conduct a baseline on current levels of satisfaction, burnout and secondary stress through the application of the ProQOL pre-test
- Inform participants of upcoming program activities

Learning Activities:

Activity #1: Creating a Team Flag

Length: 30 minutes

- Work together to design the Community Health Workers' Team Flag.
- What colors, symbols and/or words represent who you are together? Your shared values? Team goals? How you like to work together?

Materials Needed: Flipchart paper, pens, markers, crayons

Process: Break participants into groups of three-five people. Ask each group to brainstorm ideas for images and words that represent the team's values, goals, key activities, etc.

Key Message:

Grassroots community work involves working with others, including colleagues, community volunteers, and other stakeholders. The CHW team is an important resource in conducting key activities, as well as providing protection from secondary stress. This exercise provides the opportunity to reflect on and highlight the essential aspects of the team and reinforces the importance of team identity and cohesion.

Activity #2: ProQOL Pre-Test

Length: 30 minutes

What?

- Individual reflection on:
 - Satisfaction with community service ("Satisfaction with Compassion")

- Emotional and physical exhaustion from the work (“Burn-out”)
- Internalized stress of others (“Secondary Stress”)

Why?

- To assess level as a group and individually before training
- Have baseline to compare with levels after training

Materials Needed: ProQOL self-assessment

Process: Present and explain the ProQOL instrument and why it was selected for the program. Instruct the participants in how to complete the survey, verify understanding and provide time for participants to complete the self-assessment.

Key Message:

Pre- and post-tests are used to assess change in knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviors. The ProQOL self-assessment survey instrument has been validated with a variety of populations and has been demonstrated to be a reliable tool to assess levels of secondary stress risks and current status, including Coaction Institute’s use of ProQOL with CHW’s.

Activity #3: Introduction to Secondary Stress

Length: 30 minutes

- Reaction to witnessing or learning about extreme stress experienced by others
 - Exposure to others’ stress that changes your own inner experience
 - Can be a slow, gradual process
 - Can feel “normal”

Materials Needed: PowerPoint Presentation

Process: Present and discuss presentation on what secondary stress is and why it’s important to understand.

Key Message:

Secondary stress can feel like a response to something that the person has experienced directly, however it is an internalization of the empathic feelings generated from sustained exposure to stressors lived by others. Awareness and understanding of secondary stress are critical to its prevention.

Activity #4: Review of Training Curriculum and Process

Length: 15 minutes

- Training on Secondary Stress, risk factors and protective factors
- Institutional Plan to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors on environmental and institutional levels
- Individual Plans to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors on personal level
- Ongoing Check-Ins
- Post-Test Assessment

Materials Needed: PowerPoint Presentation

Process: Review upcoming planned activities

Key Message:

In the coming weeks and months, we will address important aspects of secondary stress, and the particular risks associated with community-based work. After discussing the topics outlined here, the team will work on an institutional plan to promote the protection of the CHWs from secondary stress and each individual will develop a complementary personal self-care plan.

Activity #3: Session Feedback

Length: 10 minutes

Materials Needed: Flipchart paper, marker

Process: Provide feedback on the training session:

- One new thing you learned
- One feeling that you had about what we talked about or did
- One thing that worked well for you
- One suggestion that you have for next time

Key Message:

Participant feedback is essential to ensure that the training is meeting their needs and expectations.

Definition, Risk & Protective Factors of Secondary Stress

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the distinction between secondary and primary stress
- Identify the risk and protective factors for secondary stress
- Reflect on personal experience with stress
- Learn about the team's cohort ProQOL Pre-Test results

Learning Activities:

Activity #1: Check-In

Length: 15 minutes

Materials Needed: None

Process: Facilitate discussion among participants on reflections on topics addressed in previous session, questions or challenges that have come up, any opportunities to apply learnings about secondary stress, any new stressors needing discussion and management.

Key Message:

As awareness about secondary stress grows, people will become more sensitive to risks they encounter in their work out in the community. The team is an important protective factor, providing a resource for mutual support and problem solving.

Activity #2: Process Learning Mapping

Length: 30 minutes

Materials Needed: Paper, pens, crayons, markers

Process:

- Reflect on the project process
- Focus on any aspect of the project that seems most important or impacting. Starting at the center of a blank sheet of paper, draw a symbol or write a cut phrase that represents the main theme of your "learning mapping" of the process.

- Use only key words or images that remind you of the concept you are focused on.
- Take every word or image associated with the main theme and proceed from there in the center of the page gradually to the shores
- Check your map and ask yourself if you have any gaps in mapping your ideas about the main topic
- Reorganize map, if needed, aligning or associating your ideas in another way to make the way they flow or connect more emphatic

Key Message:

Learning mapping combines words with images that symbolize the main theme of the mapping (what has been learned in the process you are closing). The use of words and images together makes learning mapping a strong tool to improve memory in the long term of what has been learned.

Activity #3: ProQOL Pre-Test Results (by team)

Length: 30 minutes

Materials Needed: PowerPoint presentation

Process: Review and discuss the team’s collective results on the ProQOL pre-test. Identify initial items for further discussion and possible inclusion in action plans.

Key Message:

The baseline information obtained through the pre-test will be helpful to guide the formulation of the institutional and personal action plans, and provide needed data to assess change.

Activity #4: Session Feedback

Length: 10 minutes

Materials Needed: Flipchart paper, marker

Process: Provide feedback on the training session:

- One new thing you learned
- One feeling that you had about what we talked about or did

- One thing that worked well for you
- One suggestion that you have for next time

Key Message:

Participant feedback is essential to ensure that the training is meeting their needs and expectations.

Action Plans to Prevent Secondary Stress

Learning Objectives:

- Proposed actions identified by CHWs for inclusion in the institutional plan to protect them from secondary stress
- Supervisors acceptance of CHWs' proposed priority actions for consideration in plan
- Individual team members identify two goals and associated objectives and activities to reduce their risk for secondary stress, documented in personal self-care plans

Learning Activities:

Activity #1: Check-In

Length: 15 minutes

Materials Needed: None

Process: Facilitate discussion among participants on reflections on topics addressed in previous session, questions or challenges that have come up, any opportunities to apply learnings about secondary stress, any new stressors needing discussion and management.

Key Message:

As awareness about secondary stress grows, people will become more sensitive to risks they encounter in their work out in the community. The team is an important protective factor, providing a resource for mutual support and problem solving.

Activity #2: Applying Strengths to Increase Happiness

Length: 30 minutes

Materials Needed: Handout

Process: Reflect on your personal and professional strengths. Using the handout provided, identify activities that can help you apply these strengths in stress management.

Key Message:

Research has shown that focusing on strengths builds resilience, increases happiness and reduces risks for depression and anxiety.

Activity #3: Institutional Plan Priorities Brainstorm

Length: 30 minutes

Materials Needed: Flipchart paper, Plan template handout

Process: Review the previous discussion on the results of the team's ProQOL pre-test and brainstorm priority issues and goals for possible inclusion by the supervisors in the institutional action plan to protect the team from secondary stress.

Key Message:

The input of all team members into the priority issues to be addressed in the institutional plan is essential. The supervisory team will take that input into account as they formulate a feasible one-year plan; which will have final review by all team members.

Activity #3: Understanding and Strengthening Boundaries

Length: 30 minutes

Materials Needed: Self-Care Inventory handout for examples of types of boundaries

Process:

- Discuss types of boundaries
- Identify signs that boundaries are poorly defined, unclear or being disrespected
- Identify the steps taken to establish and potential challenges to maintaining clear boundaries

Key Message:

Establishing, maintaining and respecting clear boundaries is a critical topic for CHW's and their supervisors; and is an important protective factor for secondary stress.

Understanding boundaries and potential hurdles to establishing and maintaining them is an essential first step in developing and implementing self-care plans.

Activity #5: Personal Self-Care Plans to Prevent Secondary Stress

Length: 30 minutes

Materials Needed: Plan template handout

Process: Reflecting on all the previous discussions, as well as on the ProQOL results, develop a one-year self-care plan that includes two goals and associated objectives and activities supportive of clear and healthy boundaries.

Key Message:

The prevention of secondary stress is a shared responsibility, between the organization and the CHW's themselves. Self-care plans that focus on priorities identified by the team for the institutional plan will be reinforced by the organization's supervisory team.

Activity #6: Wrap-Up

Length: 10 minutes

Materials Needed: None

Process: Check for questions, feedback, review next steps.

Key Message:

Participant feedback is essential to ensure that the training is meeting their needs and expectations.

Follow-Up on Action Plans to Prevent Secondary Stress

Learning Objectives:

- Assess progress on institutional and personal action plans
- Identify facilitating factors and obstacles to progress
- Conduct ProQOL post-test to assess for change
- Identify any additional educational needs for successful completion of the plans

Learning Activities:

Activity #1: Check-In

Length: 15 minutes

Materials Needed: None

Process: Facilitate discussion among participants on reflections on topics addressed in previous session, questions or challenges that have come up, any opportunities to apply learnings about secondary stress, any new stressors needing discussion and management.

Key Message:

As awareness about secondary stress grows, people will become more sensitive to risks they encounter in their work out in the community. The team is an important protective factor, providing a resource for mutual support and problem solving.

Activity #2: Review Progress on Plans

Length: 45 minutes

Materials Needed: Flipchart paper

Process:

- Input will be given by the CHWs on the implementation of the institutional plan, identifying what's working well, what feels different, what isn't working or hasn't yet changed
- The team will brainstorm any potential modifications to the plan
- Each CHW will have 5 minutes to share the highlights of their plan's implementation: what's working well, what feels different, what isn't working or hasn't yet changed

Key Message:

Action plans on living documents, meant to be monitored, reviewed and modified as needed in order to achieve the goals.

Activity #3: ProQOL Post-Test

Length: 30 minutes

Materials Needed: ProQOL self-assessment

Process: Participants repeat the ProQOL self-assessment and submit results to the facilitator for processing and later review. Facilitator to share post-test results with the organization's supervisory team for review and to be shared and discussed with the CHW's.

Key Message:

Pre- and post-tests are used to assess change in knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviors. The ProQOL self-assessment survey instrument has been validated with a variety of populations and has been demonstrated to be a reliable tool to assess levels of secondary stress risks and current status, including Coaction Institute's use of ProQOL with CHW's.

Activity #4: Program Feedback

Length: 15 minutes

Materials Needed: Flipchart paper, marker

Process: Provide feedback on the program:

- The most important thing you learned
- Something that you do differently than you did before the training
- One thing that worked well for you
- One suggestion that you have for next time

Key Message:

Participant feedback is essential to ensure that the training has met their needs and expectations and will be used for ongoing program quality improvement.