Community of Practice – Peer Support 16/7/2020

**Notes from Discussion**

22 participants

Topic for discussion – Vicarious Trauma and Self Care



Literature states that there is a difference between Vicarious Trauma (VT) and Burnout or Compassion Fatigue.

Small group discussion about the difference of definitions.

* Informal debriefing with peers is very important
* Sense of humour is also important
* External factors (personal life) will impact on our individual capacity to deal with VT – being mindful of the impact of these factors.
* Burnout and Compassion fatigue can be a compounding factor to vicarious trauma.
* Hyper vigilance in our external lives.
* Sometimes we need to choose who we spend time with outside of our work – some people “get it” and some do not – the energy used to deal with people who don’t ‘know’ about DFV.

Discussion around limits to working in the sector:

* Passion and political motivation (social justice) are ways to keep us ‘in the work’.
* Strong mentors can make a huge difference in supporting us.
* When we see the signs that the work is taking a toll, workers spoke about concern in it affecting the quality of their work and ability to continue working.
* Reflective practice and self-awareness are critical
* Many practitioners have left the sector and re-engaged in the sector.
* Sometimes being on the ‘front line’ in crisis continually can be overwhelming and so a side-step can be a way to invest in longevity.
* Sometimes work mandated self-care days are not appropriate for all. Some practitioners have very robust self-care practices.
* Participants mentioned that VT can creep up on you.
* Being vulnerable and transparent in a confidential space with colleagues is critical. This allows self-awareness and understanding limitations.
* Creating boundaries can be challenging as awareness of DFV and child protection transfers into our personal life – “once you know, you can’t unknow’.
* Supervision is critical – Having a great manager goes a long way to preventing and identifying VT.

Discussion around self-care and supervision – how do we manage VT?

* Self-care days in an organisation can be challenging as it might not be everyone’s cup of tea. Management need to be aware of this and also be flexible.
* Staff having a safety and self-care plan – everyone is Accountable for each other.

Drowning in Empathy TED talk <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZsaorjIo1Yc>

Self-entitlement - Justification as negative maladaptive behaviours because of the positive things you do.

Question posed about our potential maladaptive beliefs and behaviours eg: I can handle it.

Further thoughts for discussion: Is VT an occupational hazard?

