

12:45-1:45 pm:

THE HELPER'S JOURNEY: EMPATHY, COMPASSION AND THE CHALLENGE OF CARING



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Level of Instruction: Intermediate

Presentation Summary: Working with people facing grief, loss, trauma and serious illness poses critical challenges for the highly motivated and empathic professionals who care for them. We know that *burnout, compassion fatigue, and moral distress are ongoing risks in this intensely emotional work*. Yet, evidence from evolutionary psychology and neuroscience tells us that the tendency to help suffering others is part of our biological inheritance, and that doing so can confer profound psychological and even immunological benefits. How can we put our empathy and compassion to work in a way that enhances both our clinical effectiveness and our personal and professional growth? Our understanding of empathy, compassion, altruism, resilience, teamwork, and the helping relationship provides a clear path to clinical effectiveness and personal growth for providers of compassionate person-centered care.

Objectives: Upon completion of this lecture, the participant will be able to:

- Acknowledge patients as our teachers.
- Develop questions that invite patients to reflect and teach about life.
- Recognize life lessons from encounters with patients and apply the same to one's professional and personal life.

References:

Larson, D. G. (2020). *The helper's journey: Empathy, compassion, and the challenge of caring* (2nd ed.). Champaign, IL: Research Press.

Shanafelt, T. D. (2009). Enhancing meaning in work: A prescription for preventing physician burnout and promoting patient-centered care. *JAMA: Journal of the American Medical Association*, 302(12), 1338-1340.

Cohen, R., Bavishi, C., & Rozanski, A. (2016). Purpose in life and its relationship to all-cause mortality and cardiovascular events: A meta-analysis. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 78(2), 122-133.