When the Crisis Lasts a Lifetime:
HIV, Burnout, and Emotional Survival

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CRISIS MODE FOR 30+ YEARS

- What is impacted?
  - Adherence
  - Feelings
  - Maneuvering bureaucracy
  - Managing symptoms
  - Providers
  - Support System
  - Attitudes about safer sex
Resulting Negative Feelings

- Bored
- Complacent
- Fatigued
- Passive
- Angry
- Numb
- Seeking escape
Stress, Trauma, and Shock

- Any experience that leaves a footprint of fear can be called traumatic.
- Essential part of learning to help develop defenses.
- Unresolved trauma can lead to shock.
  - Comparable to physical trauma.
The Link of HIV and Trauma

- Substantial use and recovery
- Significant loss
- Domestic Violence
- Diagnosed with a life-threatening illness
- Poverty
- Sexual and/or physical abuse
- Violence
- Others?
Stress Hormones

- **Fight or flight**
  - Sympathetic response
  - Parasympathetic response

- When stress hormones release with no mortal enemy: get hypervigilance, hyperactivity, agitation

- Increases hunger - emotional hunger as well (sensitive to rejection, fear of abandonment)
Cortisol

- Directly affects insulin, metabolism, inflammation
- Hippocampal memory - cognitive memories can be affected - weakened
- Amygdala - emotional memory strengthened
Adrenaline

• The opposite effect - flashbulb memories

• Active with fight or flight
  ◦ Muscles tense
  ◦ Pupils dilate
  ◦ Heart rate increases
  ◦ Blood moves away from digestive tract to limbs
  ◦ Mental focus increases
Stigma

- Layers of stigma
  - Sexuality
  - Addiction
  - Mental health concerns
  - Others?
How Feelings Work

- Emotional “vocabulary”
- Identify feeling and locate in body
- Express feeling in healthy way
- Negative feelings should resolve in a short time
- Connect the thought with the feeling
How Feelings Work

- You have a right to your feelings
- There are no right or wrong feelings
- Feelings are transient
- You have a choice about how to respond to a feeling
Core Beliefs

- Positive or negative (I am…)
  - What conclusions have I drawn about myself?
  - What behaviors have I chosen for myself?
  - Often operate subconsciously
Limiting Core Beliefs

- “If I change, I’ll lose my friends.”
- “If I change, I will lose my lover.”
- “Firm limits will lead to loneliness”
- “There’s no one worth relating to”
- “I won’t get hurt another time” (and insist on utter trustworthiness)
Approval-Seeking Behavior

- Living up to other people's expectations creates enormous stress in our lives.
- “Will you still love me if…”
- Often unconditional love is lacking most significantly within us.
- Trust that we and other people are "good enough."
  - What conditions are in place for your own approval?
Mood Disorders

• Adjustment Disorder
  ◦ Mood, physical complaints, agitation
  ◦ Not usually more than 6 months
    • What about repeated stress events?

• Interventions
  • Psychotherapy
  • Social Support
Mood Disorders

- Dysthymia
- Major Depressive Disorder
  - 36% persons living with HIV
  - Difficult to diagnose
  - Risk of suicide
    - 25% persons living with HIV report hx suicidal thoughts
    - Norvir and SSRI interactions
- Bipolar Disorder
Mood Disorders

- **Anxiety**
  - 45% of persons living with HIV
  - Most often in persons with undetectable VL

- **PTSD**
  - Physical and emotional symptoms
  - Social withdrawal
  - Hopelessness
Addictions

• Both increase risk of HIV and complicate management
• Numb or escape
• Short term relief with huge consequences
Building Emotional Resilience
Optimism

- Will make you healthier
- Positivity bias
- Rostral anterior cingulate
  - Activated by optimism and malfunctions with depression
Interpersonal skills

• Am I a good listener?
  ◦ Verbal
  ◦ Non verbal
  ◦ Mirroring
  ◦ Understanding
  ◦ Expressing empathy

• What are qualities of a good listener?
Interpersonal skills (Listening)

- Avoid unsolicited advice
  - (careful to empathize, not advise)

- Sharing your own experience
  - (perhaps ask if friend would like to hear a similar experience)
Boundaries

- Healthy boundaries create healthy relationships
- Boundaries can be physical or emotional
- Boundaries can be too rigid or too loose
- Healthy boundaries are firm but flexible
- Learning to set boundaries can be uncomfortable
Boundaries

- What are examples of your healthy boundaries?
Interpersonal skills

- Overreacting - seeking immediate solutions
- Ownership of problems - codependency - issues with boundaries
- Acting on facts, not feelings
Living in balance

- Recreation - changing gears
- Staying in the present - not the past and not the future
- Spiritual connection
- Nature
- Awareness of inner self
- A sense of purpose
Self Care

- Rituals - the process
- Meditation
- Relaxation
- Exercise
- Diet
Connections

- Collaborate with healthcare providers
- Friends, family, spirit
- Nurturing relationships
- Giving and receiving
An optimist sees an opportunity in every calamity; a pessimist sees a calamity in every opportunity.

~ Winston Churchill