

The Mental Health of Mental Health Providers is Suffering As They Care for Their Clients, Who Cares for Them?

DENVER, CO – May 7, 2020 - Clients who are in dire need of mental health services sometimes can't leave their homes, either due to stay-at-home orders, or the need to self-quarantine due to COVID-19. Much-needed access to care is often provided through teletherapy, which can be like a life-line for clients. Certainly there are benefits for clients, but there are two sides to this coin.

Dr. Dorie McCubbrey, a Licensed Addiction Counselor and Certified Eating Disorder Specialist, isn't surprised that more clients are seeking her services with a higher intensity of issues during the coronavirus pandemic. She's not alone – many Psychologists, Counselors, and Social Workers have been on the front lines, albeit in a different way – by providing teletherapy.

What surprised Dr. McCubbrey – who recently battled with COVID-19 – is the impact that providing teletherapy is having on Mental Health Providers. “In the 25 years that I've been a Clinician, I've never experienced such a range and intensity of emotions that my clients are dealing with. I've noticed that it's more difficult to convey deep empathy while doing teletherapy, as compared to meeting in-person with clients. In my attempts to connect and guide my clients to process their emotions, I find that I've become emotionally and physically exhausted. In all of my previous years of work, this never happened to me.” She wonders whether this influenced her susceptibility to contracting COVID-19.

Burnout can occur when caseloads and the paperwork that go with them become too high. Compassion fatigue can be experienced when a Clinician is working with intense issues, such as trauma. “I believe that Clinicians are experiencing both of these factors right now,” notes McCubbrey, “and this is compounded by providing teletherapy.”

Teletherapy, often conducted via video conference, is taking a physical toll on Clinicians, too. Some of McCubbrey's colleagues report eye exhaustion, after staring at a computer screen all day, which their bodies aren't used to in their previous office visit roles. Other Clinicians note the challenges of working at home, with the distraction of their children needing something in the middle of a session, combined with the additional responsibility of home schooling. McCubbrey says, “It's a lot for us to be dealing with, all at once. We're caring for our clients and families, and in order to continue to do so, we need solutions for our own physical and mental wellbeing.”

Dr. McCubbrey hopes to bring awareness to the challenges that Mental Health Providers are facing, so they can get any assistance they may need. Her message to other Clinicians is, “I want to validate that what you're going through is 'normal' during this crisis, that your previous ways of Self-Care may not be enough, and that it's OK to ask for additional help for yourself.”

Dr. Dorie McCubbrey is the President of the EDIT™ Training Institute, LLC in the Denver area. Here, she trains Clinicians how to provide treatment for eating disorders. She also meets with clients at her private practice, Positive Pathways. She has a Doctorate in Biomedical Engineering and a Masters Degree in Counseling, and this unique combination of degrees allows her to address the complex physical and psychological issues in addiction. She is the author of two books, a professional speaker, and has made hundreds of media appearances.

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