“Sharing our Struggles, Embracing our Hope: a Self-Care Program for Healthcare Staff”

This workshop will present a Self-Care Program for Healthcare staff. The creation, process and dynamics will be explained to participants utilizing a “Compassion Fatigue Questionnaire” and “talking circles.” Participants will also experience a Self-care Circle in order to better understand the process and become familiar with the dynamics of the program.

I. S. Kathleen presents history/overview and motivation for developing the Self-Care Circle at SCF

II. Mary Rita provides a description of Talking Circles, further rationale for using this approach with healthcare staff and guidelines and elements of Talking Circles (15 min.)

1. Rationale for Self-Care Circle at SCF
   a. Intensity of work/potential for burn out or ‘compassion fatigue’
   b. Focus on others, often leading to isolation & lack of connection with others
   c. Pressure of society as a whole, especially in the U.S., tendency toward equating ‘competency’ with independence, autonomy and hard work.

2. Foundations: Talking Circles
   a. Assume a universal wish to be connected with others in a good way
   b. Connection with others is critical, especially to decrease isolation and increase support
      i. Margaret Wheatley, who writes often about the importance of community, states in a poem, Turning to One Another,
      The is no power greater than a community
      Discovering what it cares about.
      Ask “What’s possible?” not “What’s wrong?”
      Keep asking.
      Notice what you care about.
      Assume that many others share your dreams.
      and she concludes...
      Remember, you don’t fear people whose story you know.
      Real listening always brings people closer together.
      Trust that meaningful conversation can change the work.
      Rely on human goodness. Stay together.
   c. Shared values
      i. Identified and agreed upon before entering dialogue
      ii. Participants claim these values
   d. Interdependence v. independence
      i. We recognize the impact of our behavior on others and acknowledge our interconnectedness
   e. Share a common experience
   f. Allowance for expression of all human experiences
      i. e.g. mental, physical emotional and spiritual
   g. Gives equal voice to all
3. Circle Process:
   a. Seated in circle (no table), usually with a centerpiece in the middle of the circle
   b. Ceremony or rituals
      i. Opening and Closing
      ii. Mark the circle as ‘sacred space’
      iii. Emphasize all aspects of human experience, spiritual as well as emotional
      iv. Different from an ordinary meeting
   c. A Talking Piece
      i. Regulates dialogue, as dialogue moves consecutively around the circle
      ii. Person with talking piece has undivided attention of others; allows for deeper
          sharing, unhurried pace
      iii. Creates space for people who find it difficult to speak, however there is no
          requirement to speak
   d. A Facilitator or keeper
      i. Creates and maintains a respectful tone to the circle
      ii. Stimulates reflection of group through questions/topic suggestions
   e. Guidelines
      i. Describe behaviors participants will use to make the circle safe to speak their
         truth
      ii. Determined by members of the Circle
      iii. Examples include:
         1. Speak from your heart
         2. Listen from your heart
         3. Speak for yourself, not as representative of group or ideology, etc.
         4. See handout for further examples

4. In summary...
   a. Relationship building is key
   b. Kay Pranis, Circle Processes states,
      “Discussing values, creating guidelines and sharing unseen aspects of ourselves are all
      part of creating the foundation for dialogue that engages participant’s spirits and
      emotions, as well as their intellect.”
   c. Wisdom and collective strength comes from sharing personal stories.
   d. Thalhuber and Thompson in Building a Home for the Heart state,
      The power stems from the nature of the Circle space. In Circles, participants are able to engage
      the creative, unpredictable side of human expression, because they draw strength from what is
      constant about Circles: the respect, the listening, the thoughtful pace, the safety. From this
      strength, they gain the courage to explore the free, open, and expansive possibilities for saying
      what is in their minds and hearts. This balance between what is constant and what is
      unpredictable makes Circles safe enough for participants to take risks in addressing some of the
      hardest and most painful issues they face.
5. **Questions –re: Circle Process and/or SCF model** (10 min.)

6. **Module:** (20 min.)
   a. **Opening Ritual**
      i. Relaxation with nature sounds/instrumental music (decompression/‘centering time’)

   b. **Re-cap “Circle process” and rationale for Circle**
      i. Provide a safe space to connect and support one another
      ii. Passing talking piece—opportunity for each person to speak/be heard without interruptions
      iii. Listen and speak from the heart (pre-supposes this has been an agreed-upon guideline).

   c. **Introduction/Questions, e.g.**
      *Caregivers often think of others first. Yet the ‘golden rule’ stresses ‘Love your neighbor as yourself,’ or ‘Love God and your neighbor as you love yourself.’ We start by loving and caring for our self, too.*

   d. **Questions:**
      i. Briefly, how are you feeling as we begin today?
      ii. Sometimes there are too many thoughts, too many people, too much action in our lives. How do you revive your spirit when you are feeling overwhelmed or depleted?
      iii. Is there a time or place in your life where you *take* rather than *give*?

   e. **Closing Ritual:**
      i. *Expressions of care or appreciation*: Ask participants to express one wish for a member of the circle related to self-care, e.g. “Kathleen, I hope you are able to take a walk at Castle Island this weekend!”

7. **Questions/Processing Experience**

8. **Resources (See Bibliography with our email addresses)**