

SPRING | SUMMER 2006

# Connections

A BI-ANNUAL PUBLICATION OF THE WASHINGTON COALITION OF SEXUAL ASSAULT PROGRAMS



*Beach Meditation N.2 © Debra Van Tuinen*

## Sexual Assault and Self Care

INSIDE:

**S.U.R.V.I.V.A.L. GUIDE FOR THE COMPASSIONATE CAREGIVER**

**FINDING TIME FOR YOURSELF**

**ONE ADULT SURVIVOR'S JOURNEY TOWARD SELF-CARE**

**FINDING TIME FOR YOURSELF**

**STRESS MANAGEMENT**

**WHY PEOPLE STAY**

**SEXUAL ASSAULT PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS**

# Spring | Summer 2006

VOLUME VIII, NUMBER 5



Connections is pleased to feature the encaustic paintings of Debra Van Tuinen of Olympia, WA.  
All works are copyrighted and may not be reproduced without consent.  
Debra's work can be viewed on line at [www.vantuinenart.com](http://www.vantuinenart.com).

"My art is my life - all that I experience and see becomes part of my work. How I respond physically, spiritually and intellectually to my environment is the essence (the spirit) of my work."  
-Debra Van Tuinen

4

## **DIRECTOR'S DESK**

Renée M. Sparks

5

## **POEM**

harperseed

6

## **S.U.R.V.I.V.A.L. GUIDE FOR THE COMPASSIONATE CAREGIVER**

Kerry Todd

8

## **FINDING TIME FOR YOURSELF**

Evelyn Larsen

10

## **ONE ADULT SURVIVOR'S JOURNEY TOWARD SELF-CARE (CONTINUED)**

Anonymous

# Spring | Summer 2006

VOLUME VIII, NUMBER 5

## 13 **STRESS MANAGEMENT**

Reprinted with permission from UT Learning Center, The University of Texas at Austin

## 15 **WHY PEOPLE STAY**

Evelyn Larsen

## 17 **SEXUAL ASSAULT PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS**

RENÉE M. SPARKS

## 18 **LIBRARY RESOURCES**

## 19 **VISIT US ON LINE**

# Director's Desk

RENÉE M. SPARKS

ADVOCACY EDUCATION DIRECTOR, WCSAP



Renée M. Sparks

*“As with victims and survivors, strategies of self-care often involve thinking differently, behaving differently, and connecting with others differently to experience more support, validation, self-actualization, and effectiveness at home and at work.”*

In previous issues, we have elaborated on skills, knowledge values, and methodologies that constitute theoretical approaches and practical applications to address professional obligation and understanding in providing adequate services to victims and survivors of sexual assault. However, a parallel focus that needs to be incorporated in our acumen and commitment in working to end sexual violence is putting **self** back into care.

This issue actually stemmed out of WCSAP's 2005 Full Access Conference where we initially held a self care workshop. The attendance and the feedback received in regards to that workshop were amazing and confirming. It substantiated and echoed the complex dynamics of the role we serve in working to eradicate sexual violence, and the challenge in sustaining ourselves in the process.

Self care or the lack of self care affects the very work that we do. It has a rippling affect. In addition to secondary trauma, external and internal pressures such as overt and covert barriers, societal forces, socioeconomic and political factors, changing situations and the complexities of everyday life are interconnected and impact individuals and organizations.

Therefore, this issue highlights the importance of self care because there is a need for a paradigm shift that will generate conscious efforts to bring about changes. Changes that channel and compel all of us, who do this work, to integrate self back into care by drawing on alternative interventions and preventive perspectives to encourage a spirit of taking care of ourselves. Changes that organizations adapt, promote and continue to create work structure, systems, and explore and arrange resources that influences appraisal reinforcement, philosophy of value and execute a plan that emulate the soil of an organization with the right culture and the right competency to allow people to respectfully excel in a most supportive way.

However, this issue's focal point is not just what management or organizations can do to enhance a healthy workplace, but also our personal responsibility to ourselves to explore and map techniques and methods that brings the richness of purpose and gratifying balance to our body, mind and spirit. I know it is a challenge, but it is a challenge worth embarking.

Grant yourself permission to pause and be good to yourself without feeling guilty or having a spirit of selfishness. It is appropriate to provide space and time for yourself as needed. As our 2006 Ignite! Leadership, Connection & Rejuvenation Annual Conference keynote speaker, Consuelo Castillo Kickbusch, eloquently stated, “Make love to yourself.” In other words, bear the fruits of taking care of ourselves.

Judith Jordan (1991a) invites us to “Increase our own self-nurture by developing and sustaining self-empathy-the capacity to notice, care about, and respond to our own felt needs as generously as we attend to the needs of others. As with victims and survivors, strategies of self-care often involve thinking differently, behaving differently, and connecting with others differently to experience more support, validation, self-actualization, and effectiveness at home and at work.”

*Born into this world to journey  
To touch and be touched  
Through daily discovering and daily learning  
That the exploration of life is a gift.*

*We move onward in our pursuits  
Inspired, challenged and reaffirming  
That releasing the talents within  
Is as amazing as the breath of the wind  
Dispensing gentle breezes.*

*Therefore, we journey on  
Compelled to journey  
Striving not only to learn  
But, also learning to teach  
Those who are yet to journey  
By the trails we leave behind.*

*As we continue to embark upon journey  
And to learn and discover  
Let us remember to be kind to ourselves  
And to each other.*

*Because we are born into this world to journey  
To touch and to be touched  
Through daily discovering and daily learning  
That the exploration of life is a gift.*

*harperseed*



*Beach Meditation N.3*

# S.U.R.V.I.V.A.L.

## Guide for the Compassionate Caregiver

Kerry Todd

*Set limits!* We care. That's why we do what we do. But in order to continue to help others effectively, we need to start with ourselves. We can't help anyone if we go belly-up in the process! Maintain clear boundaries between work and play. Say "no!" if your plate is full. Don't take on more than you can handle. Seek out emotional support from others, whether it's from co-workers, friends or family members. Seek out supervision as needed. Limit exposure to traumatic materials! Forget the 6 p.m. news for a night, or reading the newspaper. Develop strategies to take care of yourself!

*Understand* that secondary trauma and compassion fatigue really does exist! Anyone who has exposure to trauma victims is at risk of experiencing secondary trauma at some point. It can happen to anyone by simply learning about the traumatic event. Compassion fatigue, (a term coined by Charles Figley, is, "A state of tension and preoccupation with the individual or cumulative trauma of clients." Until recently, it was believed that only those who experienced the trauma first-hand were "traumatized". We now know that those who help traumatized persons are also at risk of developing the same symptoms. It's important for those caring for victims in any capacity to understand that even a seasoned professional can suddenly feel a sense of hopelessness and despair.

*Recognize the signs and symptoms* of secondary trauma and compassion fatigue not only in ourselves, but in our co-workers as well. Symptoms may overlap with burn out or stress, but, key signs of secondary trauma are: anger; anxiety; depression; sadness; low self-esteem; emotional exhaustion; difficulty making decisions; difficulty concentrating; difficulty remembering things; fatigue; irritability; headaches or body aches; changes in eating or sleeping habits; increase in addictive behaviors; withdrawal from others. Symptoms of compassion fatigue are re-experiencing the traumatic event, avoidance or numbing of reminders of the event, and persistent arousal. There may also be symptoms commonly found in Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, or Acute Stress Disorder, such as intrusive thoughts, recurrent dreams, and intense psychological distress when thinking about or hearing about trauma.

*Vacation!* 5 minutes, 5 days, 5 weeks. Take time out for yourself and what's truly important in your life! Allow yourself a mental health day now and then! Take a break from your routine.

*Identify stressors in your own life.* In a recent workshop with program managers for Washington Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children, a list of stressors was generated that included: family; kids in college; the job; health; financial; pressures from the families served; system failures; and dealing with the outcome of bad decisions made for children and families served. Identify your own stressors and look at ways to eliminate some of these!

*Vulnerability:* As stated by Jon Conte, Ph.D., University of Washington School of Social Work, we need to be able to identify our own "hot spots". What are our triggers? What hits home for us? By having an awareness (continued)

*"...in order to continue to effectively help others, we need to start with ourselves. We can't help anyone if we go belly-up in the process!"*

of what our triggers or “hot spots” are, we create an awareness that will help us be better prepared to deal with these situations. Or...understand what situations we would be better to avoid. Not only is this self-preservation, but it will be in the best interest of those you are working with, as well.

*Accept your reactions!* Reactions to hearing horrible things are normal! Fear, anxiety, depression, grief, irritability, emotional numbness, emotional distancing, intrusive thoughts, confusion, impaired memory, flashbacks, fatigue, sleep disturbances, sexual dysfunction are all normal ways of coping with abnormal situations. Don't be embarrassed or ashamed to talk to someone about these reactions. If these reactions or symptoms continue for more than a month, consider seeking professional help.

*Live, love, laugh!* Nothing is more important than achieving a balance in your life. Two of Dr. Conte's most important messages at his workshops about secondary trauma is “discharge” and “balance” Get rid of whatever it is that's eating at us and find ways to balance the stress of your work with play. How we accomplish that is up to each one of us! Rollerblade, take your kids fishing, take your dog to the park, kayak, do karaoke, plant a garden, seek spiritual guidance, take a long walk, ride your bike, paint, call a long-lost friend, take a bubble bath, compose a poem, ride a mechanical bull for the first time! Try something new or stick with something you enjoy. There will always be tragedies in our world. But the real tragedy would be if no one was there to care any more. Take of yourselves!

Kerry Todd is currently a social worker at Harborview Center for Sexual Assault and Traumatic Stress, Education and Training. She provides national, state-wide, and local training in the area of child sexual abuse as well as continues to provide counseling for children and youth. Ms. Todd previously provided evaluations and treatment for child victims of sexual assault and trauma at Children's Response Center (affiliated with HCSATS) for almost 13 years. Prior experience includes one year as a forensic child interviewer at San Diego's Chadwick Center and 3 years as an investigator for Child Protective Services in California.



*Beach Mediation  
N.4, N.5, N.6*



# Finding Time for Yourself

EVELYN LARSEN

ORGANIZATIONAL SERVICES DIRECTOR, WCSAP

In May 2005, I attended the Annual WCSAP conference and while perusing the conference outline I spotted a workshop titled: “Balance of the Whole Advocate, Mind, Body and Spirit”. I thought the introductory paragraph as outlined in the conference packet was enticing. This is a subject that lurks in the back of my mind as I am not good at applying proven ideas to myself, although I am quite good at suggesting them to others. I was intrigued about what I might learn so I thought I would give it a try and see if I could be inspired into doing something better for myself.

In the end what truly stood out to me was the overwhelming need of those of us in this field to engage in self care. At the beginning of this workshop the trainer, Angela, had us go around the room and introduce ourselves and say why we were there. As people shared I was astounded at the need for balance and self care that I heard in the voices surrounding me. While we may be excellent care takers of the people who come through our doors we seem extremely needy when it comes to taking care of ourselves.

In thinking about this subject I realized that most of us have a pretty good idea of the things we need to do to find balance in our lives, reduce stress, or just plain love ourselves. The problem lies in prioritizing it and making sure that it happens. Why do we put ourselves last in line and that includes being behind the goldfish. When do we appreciate all that we do on a daily basis and re-fuel so that we can manage our grueling schedules for days on end. Where’s the love? Why is it for everyone but us?

I didn’t find a magic pill at that workshop and what I concluded is the obvious. You just have to make the decision and do it. No one can do it for you. You must come to the realization that you are worthy of it and that you are the one that has to make it happen. You can find any number of excuses to put it off but they are only excuses by you to you. It has to be an internal drive of love of yourself that will enable you to step up to self care. You are a manager of people; manage yourself. Set your self care goals and then hold yourself accountable to them. Make it happen. Period.

Balance by definition is a precarious situation. Having balance in your life will certainly be something that comes and goes and definitely requires work to achieve on any relatively consistent basis. It will require you to prioritize activities in your life. Be sure not to always leave yourself for last for we know what kind of care the last item in a long list gets—none. You deserve more than that. Here are some suggestions for self care:

*Taking deep breaths through your nose.* Breathing through your nose stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system and helps to rest, restore and expand your lower lungs. You will feel better.

*Keep a sense of humor.* Anytime you can add humor to a stressful situation you win. Laughing is truly the best medicine. There is documented evidence that it benefits us both physiologically and psychologically.  
(<http://library.thinkquest.org/25500/index2.htm>)

(continued)

*“...most of us have a pretty good idea of the things we need to do to find balance in our lives, reduce stress, or just plain love ourselves. The problem lies in prioritizing it and making sure that it happens.”*



*Use your vacation time.* Take time off from work even though you don't have an exotic trip planned. Staying at home may be extremely restful and renew your energies. Don't underrate "home sweet home."

*Say "No." Go ahead, give it a try.* Things will happen even if you are not there or not in charge. This is very empowering and gets easier once you've done it once.

*Know when to give up on something.* You can't win all of the time. Figure out when you are not going to win and give it up. There are times when the only control you have is over yourself. Recognize these situations and do yourself a favor by letting go of it.

*Take a bath, get a manicure, enjoy a massage.* Do whatever it is that indulges yourself.

*Take a walk.* Not only is the exercise good for you but it is also a proven stress reducer. It is one of the things that we most often choose to put off even though we know it can increase the quality and longevity of our lives. Make a commitment to begin today.

*Accept help.* Guess what? You don't have to do everything yourself. Give yourself permission to accept help when offered or to ask for help when the situation calls for it. Share the burden, it makes for lighter loads all around.

*Get information when it is available.* For example, if you find yourself going through a physical change due to a natural life change such as menopause or perhaps you have a recent diagnosis of diabetes or other disease find out about the topic. It is often comforting to realize that others have gone through the same process as you. You can learn from these folks. So go to the library and get information, go on-line and find local support groups. There is tons of information out there, arm yourself so you can better understand what is going on within your own body.

*Start with small steps.* (It is not helpful if you take on an hour work out six days a week and then chastise yourself when you don't make it past day three.) Begin with a small amount that is doable in your life, and then add increasing amounts as you adjust. And for heavens sake this is about making you feel better not about adding something else for you to feel guilty about. So stop with the self flagellation.

I hope that this article makes you stop for just a minute to think about your life and perhaps give you tools to identify just one thing that you can do to make it better for yourself. Have faith. You can make this work.

*"There is tons of information out there, arm yourself so you can better understand what is going on within your own body."*

# One Adult Survivor's Journey Toward Self-Care (Continued)

ANONYMOUS

If you read my last story in Connections on *“Sexual Assault and the Body,”* you could clearly see that the self-destructive acts I perpetrated against myself are not what we typically consider to be self-care in any traditional sense of the word because I spoke to you about cutting, drugs, suicide attempts, dissociation, running, gorging, puking, splitting, and anything else I could think of to get out of this thing called a body. However, engaging in those brutal self-destructive means, at least in my mind, did make sense at the time, as they were the only ways I knew, the only ways I learned, to let out the pain and devastating woundedness I was feeling. And yes, even in the midst of my distorted thinking, I believed with all my heart that hurting myself was the only way I could use to keep myself alive, even though they were in fact, leading me to death's door. But it didn't matter; the pull was so strong because I desperately needed **SOMEBODY, ANYONE** to see this invisible me. So, if death was a consequence, so be it.

Yet for those who do understand the dynamics of childhood sexual abuse and adult survivors, these behaviors make perfect sense. Survivors do whatever they need to in order to cope, to get through the toxic environment they find themselves in, even though it looks somewhat nutty to outsiders. Yet, even though these horrific things were in fact hurting me and leading me to death's door, I firmly and truly believed they were the only arsenal I had at my disposal to “take care of myself,” because they were motivated by a deep seated and profound need to be seen, to be heard, and to become less isolated.

Asking survivors to engage in self-care is complicated, particularly from my perspective. When I began working toward my recovery in therapy early on, I hated, literally hated my therapist whenever she brought up the topic of self-care. Every time she mentioned it, I would feel enraged. “How dare you make me think about being kind and gentle to myself?” **“No, Absolutely Not. “No, This Is Not Something I Am Willing to Do.”** I would often plead with her to leave the topic alone. My absolute abhorrence of it, and more specifically, my visceral disgust of it, felt like a complete and utter violation.

But here is the crazy part. My hatred of engaging in self-care was based on several premises. If I engaged in more nurturing forms of self-care, then it felt like she and I were colluding in denying the extent of my abuse and at that time I just couldn't or rather wouldn't do that. I still needed to let people see how damaged and wounded I was. I also hated it because I truly thought that engaging in self-care would decrease my connection with people, all the while not realizing that it was driving people away, as my therapist was so eloquently able to point out. She pointed out that what I was doing was in fact, distancing myself away from the very thing I needed the most - connection. Damn, I hated when she was right. And lastly, if I began engaging in self-care, I thought I would not have the opportunity to discuss the memories, and my stories, in a way that was meaningful to me. I wanted to tell those stories while bleeding all over the place so she could not only witness the pain but see it the way I was feeling it. But she reassured me that was absolutely not the case. She reminded me that I could still tell my stories and still take care of myself at the same time. Hmmm, that was a brand new concept for me. She explained that self-care was about learning to be nurturing, to be gentle, and to do something nice for myself while continuing to work on my recovery. She explained that self-care could be used as a tool, a (continued)

*“If I engaged in more nurturing forms of self-care, then it felt like she and I were colluding in denying the extent of my abuse and at that time I just couldn't or rather wouldn't do that.”*

a container of sorts, for the hard feelings, and that I would always have the choice to bring them out again in a place that was safe and nurturing. Again, that was a new concept to me.

Eventually I started to get it. I started to learn that even in the midst of some horrible memories, painful feelings, or panic attacks, that taking care of myself enabled me to stay connected to others as well as staying in connection with myself, right down to the core of my being. Wow, I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I could share my pain while not having to lose the essence of me in the process. Do you know how **HUGE** that was? And that was not all. I even learned that self-care was a choice, a way of life, and a means that would enable me to get through the day. And the biggest learning of all – self-care was a way for me to stay connected to people in order to break out of the complete and utter sense of isolation I was feeling rather than the other way around. And the final bonus, when I started to practice taking better care of myself, I noticed an increase in my self-esteem and my self-worth. I noticed that I could begin to develop mastery over my intense feelings, and eventually was able to tap into my own personal strengths and inner resources – strengths and inner resources I didn't think I possessed. And the most magical thing of all, I started to build relationships and connections with people who mattered in my life and who I mattered to as well. As my best friend put it, “you’ve learned the value of yourself so as to appreciate others where they are. You’ve learned to love yourself so as to have the chance, the opportunity to love the rest of us, and for the rest of us to love you.”

Although I am in a place where I can and do practice some levels of self-care, it does not always come easy. Adult survivors often carry deeply held beliefs that they are bad, and that we don't deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, even toward ourselves. So when therapists or advocates ask adult survivors to engage in self-care, know that what you are asking can be a two-edge sword. Prepare yourself for the resistance you might encounter. Know that the adult survivor may fight you on it; know that they may think at first that you don't want to hear what they have to say. And know that you might have to give examples of what self-care will look like. I remember thinking – self-care, what the hell is that? But they will get it. Of this I have no doubt. So keep on trying.

I wanted to write this article not so much as to continue to tell my own story but rather because I believe that those who work with sexual assault survivors must understand how complex the issue of self-care can be for adult survivors. Sometimes it will take much more work than just suggesting that they take a walk, that they read a book or that they take a hot bath. No, it can be much more convoluted than that. Even to this day, even after 13 years of therapy, I still have to push those old, angry demons aside when I'm asked to do something to take care of myself, particularly from my therapist. Sometimes it can still feel like a slap in the face because I still have this little voice inside me that says that the therapist doesn't want to hear what I have to say, they don't want to deal with the messy issues. They don't want to see the hurt and pain the way I want them to see it. But what self-care really is about is learning what can be used to empower one's self; and to become fully whole. It can be used as a means to contain intense feelings, while always having the opportunity to bring those hard feelings back at a later time. In essence, what it all boils down to is this - we know the *(continued)*



*Sunrise/Sunset I  
Connecting to the Divine*



*Sunrise/Sunset II*  
*Connecting to the Divine*

damage of childhood sexual abuse – it causes alienation and disconnection from ourselves and from others, and when we begin to practice self-care, what we survivors are doing is really about reuniting with our true selves. It's almost like being introduced to a whole new you.

And one final word for therapists and advocates who work in the field – although it is important to understand the multi-faceted dynamics that may come into play when you ask an adult survivor to engage in self-care, I believe with every bone in my body and fiber of my being that you can, and should, help survivors understand what it means - that self-care equals growth; that self-care equals self-love, that self-care equals nurturance and that self-care equals choice. And if we are able to help them find their way there - helping survivors learn the gift of self-care, then that will be one of the most profound and ultimate gifts you can ever give to an adult survivor. And in my mind, this is what empowerment really means.

In Peace and Forgiveness,  
Survivor of Childhood Sexual Abuse

# Stress Management

Reprinted with permission from UT Learning Center, The University of Texas at Austin  
(<http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/lnres/handouts/1439.html>)

## STRESS TEST

1. Do you worry about the future?
2. Do you sometimes have trouble falling asleep?
3. Do you often reach for a cigarette, a drink, or a tranquilizer in order to reduce tension?
4. Do you become irritated over basically insignificant matters?
5. Do you have less energy than you seem to need or would like to have?
6. Do you have too many things to do and not enough time to do them?
7. Do you have headaches or stomach problems?
8. Do you feel pressure to accomplish or to get things done?
9. Are you very concerned about being either well-liked or successful?
10. Do you perform well enough in life to satisfy yourself?
11. Do you get satisfaction from the small joys or simple pleasures of life?
12. Are you able to really relax and have fun?

Scoring: 1 point for a yes answer to 1-9 or no answer to 10-12. A score of 4 or more suggests that you may be under significant stress.

## COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT STRESS

1. We always know when we are under stress. Often people become so accustomed to stress that they become unaware of it. Many of us suffer the debilitating effects of stress even though we don't feel tense.
2. Stress is something which affects only those who have high-pressure lives. Many ordinary individuals experience the constant stress of worry, leading unfulfilled lives or of not being what they would like to be.
3. The only way to lower stress is to change your surroundings or to take medication. Changing your outlook on life is the most reliable and effective way of reducing stress. Stress comes from the way we perceive the world, not from the way the world really is.
4. Stress is caused by events that happen to us. To paraphrase the Stoic philosopher Epictetus, it is not events in themselves that cause our distress, but rather the views we take of events.
5. Emotions have a will of their own and cannot be controlled. We can change our feelings by first changing our behavior or by changing our thinking. For example, getting some work done can keep us from worrying about it. Creating a new understanding of a situation can make it less threatening or stressful.

## TIPS FOR REDUCING STRESS

1. Learn to plan. Disorganization can breed stress. Having too many projects going simultaneously often leads to confusion, forgetfulness, and the sense that uncompleted projects are hanging over your head. When possible, take on projects one at a time and work on them until completed.
2. Recognize and accept limits. Most of us set unreasonable and perfectionistic goals for ourselves. We can never be perfect, so we often

(continued)

*“Changing your outlook on life is the most reliable and effective way of reducing stress.”*

*“Learn to tolerate and forgive. Intolerance of others leads to frustration and anger.”*

have a sense of failure or inadequacy no matter how well we perform. Set achievable goals for yourself.

3. Learn to play. You need occasionally to escape from the pressures of life and have fun. Find pastimes which are absorbing and enjoyable to you no matter what your level of ability is.
4. Be a positive person. Avoid criticizing others. Learn to praise the things you like in others. Focus upon the good qualities those around you possess. Be sure to give yourself credit and appreciate your own good qualities, as well.
5. Learn to tolerate and forgive. Intolerance of others leads to frustration and anger. An attempt to really understand the way other people feel can make you more accepting of them. Accept and forgive yourself also.
6. Avoid unnecessary competition. There are many competitive situations in life that we can't avoid. Too much concern with winning in too many areas of life can create excessive tension and anxiety, and make us unnecessarily aggressive.
7. Get regular physical exercise. Check with your physician before beginning any exercise program. You will be more likely to stay with an exercise program if you choose one that you really enjoy rather than one that feels like pure hard work and drudgery.
8. Learn a systematic, drug-free method of relaxing. Meditation, yoga, or any of a variety of relaxation techniques can be learned from various accredited teachers and licensed psychotherapists.
9. Talk out your troubles. Find a friend, member of the clergy, faculty member, counselor, or psycho-therapist you can be open with. Expressing your “bottled up” tension to a sympathetic ear can be incredibly helpful.
10. Change your thinking. How we feel emotionally often depends on our outlook or philosophy of life. Changing one's beliefs is a difficult and painstaking process. There is little practical wisdom in the modern world to guide us through our lives. No one has all the answers, but some answers are available.

[www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/lrnres/handouts/1439.html](http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/lrnres/handouts/1439.html)

This article was adapted from Dr. Frank C. Richardson, Associate Professor, Department of Educational Psychology, Stress, Sanity, and Survival (1439)

For more information or assistance, come by the UT Learning Center, JES A332A, or call 512.471.3614, M-F 9:00am - 4:45pm

Updated: December 16, 2004

Send Comments to: [utlc@www.utexas.edu](mailto:utlc@www.utexas.edu) (UTLC Web Support)  
The University of Texas Learning Center  
Supported by: University of Texas Team Web



# Why People Stay

Evelyn Larsen

ORGANIZATIONAL SERVICES DIRECTOR, WCSAP

Periodically we at WCSAP do salary surveys (the latest one is posted on our web site at [www.wcsap.org](http://www.wcsap.org) under the management link)

This survey gives detailed information about pay ranges for advocates and others working within CSAPs around the state. Although this is interesting information and it can help with budgeting and forecasting, it does not explain some other employee issues, like retention. Let me expand a bit on this.



*Beach Meditation N.1*

We know that turnover in our industry is high and we can explain it in many different ways, but how often do we look at this from an employee retention standpoint. You have some really good employees; some that are true stars and without them you and your agency would be devastated. You also have some employees that you absolutely depend on because they show up day after day and can be counted on for anything. Life at work would be miserable without them. So what are you doing to retain these folks? Or have you just adopted the fatalistic notion that nothing can be done to keep them so why bother trying?

So if you are interested in retaining these employees here is an idea for you. Schedule a time and sit down with each employee that you have. Prior to scheduling these appointments create a list of questions to ask each of them. The idea behind this list is to find out what it is that keeps them working for you. It will give you ideas on how to create an environment that fulfills their needs and thus gives less incentive for them to move on. It is a retention tool that will cost you nothing but some of your time.

Below is a list of sample questions you might ask. This is an individual agency exercise so use these sample questions to stimulate your thinking and create your own unique list of questions that fit your situation:

- What makes you excited about the work that you do here at XYZ Agency?
- If you were leaving XYZ to work for someone else what would most likely be the cause of that decision?
- If you became suddenly independently wealthy and no longer needed to work what would you miss most about XYZ?
- If you had a magic wand and could change anything about your position (department, agency) what would it be?
- What makes for a great day at work?
- What can I do to make your job more satisfying?
- What can we do to support your long term work goals/career goals? How do you like to be recognized for your work? Do you get enough recognition?

*(continued)*

*“Assumptions are dangerous things and even though you are quite sure, you may be surprised at what some responses you get.”*

- If you were me what changes would you make (use this only after careful consideration and introspection. Are you capable of hearing the answer to this question without becoming defensive or feeling the need to rationalize why you do what you do)?

The point of this conversation is to get information and enhance relationships. It needs to be a positive experience. Do you want to keep those really valuable employees? Then don't assume and don't guess as to why they are staying or why they might leave. Ask them. Then work with the information given to you .

I can almost see the wheels turning in some of your heads, you might be thinking, “But I know what they are going to say and I can't do anything about it.” Without a doubt (given our salary survey) we know that some of them will say what they need to be most happy will be a substantial raise. So in anticipation of that, what are the honest responses you can give? “You are worth more than the thousand dollar raise you just asked for. To me, you are invaluable. The time it takes to find an employee who can even begin to be trained to take on your job responsibilities is huge let alone with the finesse, grace and skill you use every day at work. Money is one of the things that I can't control a great deal. I can promise you I will review the budget (talk to the board, talk to human resource department, etc.) and see what I can do to reward you in this way. Are there other areas of your work that I can affect a change in that would increase your job satisfaction?”

So one way to retain those really valuable staff people is to find out why they are staying and think about what you can do to enhance that experience. Assumptions are dangerous things and even though you are quite sure, you may be surprised at what some responses you get. I challenge you to do this exercise with your employees and then send me an e-mail and let me know how it turns out. A small time investment in your staff may generate a huge return when they realize just how much you care by spending the time and asking them for their opinion. At the very least you will come away with information with which you can begin to work to enhance the work environment. Good Luck! And let me know how it goes.

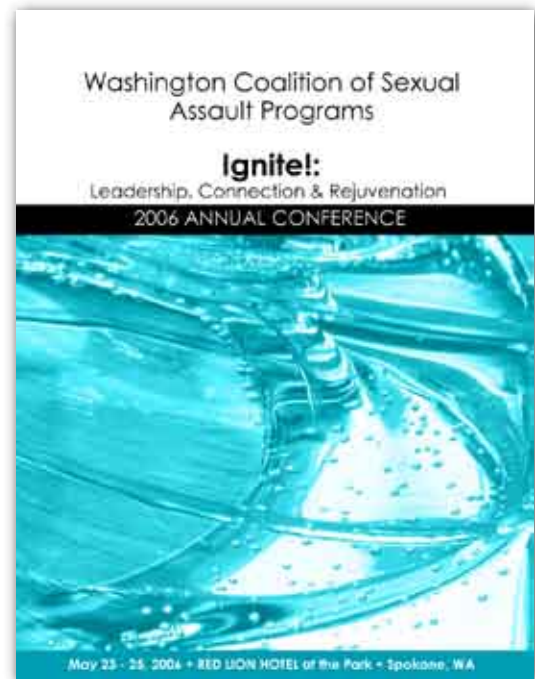
# Sexual Assault Program Highlights

RENÉE M. SPARKS

ADVOCACY EDUCATION DIRECTOR, WCSAP

The information shared in these Sexual Assault Program highlights focuses on feedback in regards to WCSAP's 2006 Ignite! Leadership, Connection and Rejuvenation Conference.

I've selected to not include names or agencies, but instead to highlight responses. The quoted information is from advocates and therapists that attended the Conference and work to end sexual violence throughout Washington State.



*"This was my first conference. I wasn't sure what to expect and to my delight, the first day and the keynote, Consuelo Castillo Kickbusch, was an inspiration.*

*I am a survivor of domestic violence and sexual assault and feel that I have now healed. I now want to help others transition to a place of healing. I am excited that I have learned how to heal and give back in helping others in a meaningful and healthy way.*

*Consuelo Castillo Kickbusch has given me the power to look at the positive side with compassion and humour! Thank you, Renee, for finding her and sharing her with all of us."*

*"I want WCSAP to know that in all the 10 years I have been coming to trainings this was the best. Accommodations were great. I felt safe, bed was great; food was very good. Training choices were very good. Only complaint – long ride – Thanks so much."*

*"I had planned to leave my position with the agency I work, not just the agency, but this work all together. I wasn't leaving because I didn't believe in this work, I do. I was leaving because the pressure of this work and life had taken its toll. I felt unappreciated in the workplace, but as a result of attending this conference, I am rejuvenated and ready to continue this mission of working to intervene and educate about the myths and norms in our society surrounding sexual assault."*

# Library Resources



*Her Summer Lightning*

## Web Sites

### **National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress**

<http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/index.html>

This web site has a variety of articles pertaining to post-traumatic stress.

## The Prevention Researcher

### **Post-Traumatic Growth:**

#### **Understanding a New Field of Research**

#### **An Interview with Dr. Mark Chesler**

<http://www.tpronline.org/articles.cfm?article>

### **Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory/Survey**

Questionnaire to help survivors determine their own experiences with PTF

<http://www.apahelpcenter.org/ptgi>

## Books

### **Posttraumatic Growth:**

#### **Positive Changes in the Aftermath of Crisis**

by Lawrence Calhoun, Ph.D & Richard Tedeschi, Ph.D Mahwah, NJ

### **Rebuilding the Garden:**

#### **Healing the Spiritual Wounds of Childhood Sexual Assault**

by Karla McLaren

### **The Rape Recovery Handbook:**

#### **Step-by-Step Help for Survivors of Sexual Assault**

by Aphrodite, Ph.D Matsakis

# Visit Us Online...

## www.wcsap.org

Christiane Hurt  
Bonnie Ruddell  
Kelly O'Connell  
Christina Intrekin  
Catherine Carroll

Acting Executive Director  
Accountant  
Staff Attorney  
Staff Attorney  
Legal Director

Evelyn Larsen  
Veronica Morris  
Kathleen Aredge  
Marilyn Turnbow

Organizational Services Director  
Systems Advocacy Associate  
Organizational Services Coordinator  
Prevention Services Associate

Yahui Chi  
Lydia Guy  
Allen Trimmings  
Janet Anderson  
Renée M. Sparks

Tech Specialist  
Prevention Services Director  
Special Project Manager  
Advocacy Education Director  
Advocacy Education Director

## We want to hear from you

E-mail your letters or opinions to [renee@wcsap.org](mailto:renee@wcsap.org).  
Letters chosen for publication will be edited for length and clarity.

For advocacy technical assistance e-mail [janet@wcsap.org](mailto:janet@wcsap.org)  
or [renee@wcsap.org](mailto:renee@wcsap.org).

For information of other departments  
log on to [www.wcsap.org](http://www.wcsap.org)



**WASHINGTON COALITION OF SEXUAL ASSAULT PROGRAMS**

2415 PACIFIC AVE. SE • OLYMPIA, WA 98501 • 360.754.7583 • [WWW.WCSAP.ORG](http://WWW.WCSAP.ORG)



*You cannot use up  
creativity.  
The more you use  
The more you have. . .*

*Maya Angelou*



2415 Pacific Ave SE  
Olympia, WA 98501  
360-754-7583  
360-709-0305 TTY  
360-786-8707 FAX

Non-Profit Org.  
US Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 282  
Olympia, WA

[www.wcsap.org](http://www.wcsap.org)