Song-Poetry as an Expression of Responding to and Coping with Addiction Counselor Stress

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To explore the process of creating song-poetry as an effective strategy for counselor self-care and coping with job-related experiences
OBJECTIVES

- Describe the basic elements of clinical fatigue & burnout
- List song-poetry related mechanisms to assist counselor resilience
- Identify specific tactics for facilitating counselor creative process
Background

- Full time clinical practitioner from 1988 to 2003 (15 years)
- Professor from 2003 – 2014
- Just returned to practice
BACKGROUND

- 2008 Journal of Poetry Therapy article
- 2015 CD release “When Angels Play with Sin”
A major cause of burnout in addiction workers is the emotionally demanding interpersonal relationships of professional caregivers with their clients.
Burnout & Clinical Fatigue

How do you define it?
Burnout Symptoms

- Emotional Exhaustion
- Discouragement; Cynicism
- Boredom
- Depression
- < Sense of Accomplishment
- Loss of Compassion
“I SHALL RELATE TO ALL CLIENTS WITH EMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING NO MATTER WHAT THEIR DIAGNOSIS OR PERSONAL HISTORY.”

NAADAC
MECHANISMS FOR COUNSELOR RESILIENCE

The use of Music Therapy

- Literature addresses use with clients
- Not so much with counselors!
- Does indicate that the benefits extend to the counselor
MECHANISMS FOR COUNSELOR RESILIENCE

Music & Addiction

- “The lips that touch liquor”
- “Sunday morning coming down”
- “Sam Stone”
- “From the bottle to the bottom”
- “The pilgrim: Chapter 33”
- “The going up was worth the Coming down.”
MECHANISMS FOR COUNSELOR RESILIENCE

- Mature coping strategies
  - Sublimation
  - Humor
- Song: “Relapse”
- Song: “Early Recovery”
TACTICS FOR FACILITATING COUNSELOR CREATIVE PROCESS

- **Listening**
- **Imitation**
  - Lyric Form
  - Melody
TACTICS FOR FACILITATING COUNSELOR CREATIVE PROCESS

- Coffee House culture
- Songwriter circles
- Collaboration
- Lessons — not!!
- Partnerships
EXAMPLES OF SONGS

- **Written as a subliminal and sometimes humorous coping strategy**

- **Sometimes intentional**

- **Sometimes spontaneous**
  - Addiction
  - Deadliest road
EXAMPLES OF SONGS

- When Angels Play With Sin

- Your Turn!
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