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David Braley Primary Care Research Collaborative

@McMasterFamMed

Responding to Sensitive Health and Social Issues in Research Interviews

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December 19th, 2017

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Responding to Sensitive Health and Social Issues in Research Interviews

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Agenda

1. Interpersonal techniques: diffusing difficult situations
2. Role play
3. Supporting one another
4. Relevant policies and procedures
5. Self care

Learning Objectives

- Identify and apply interpersonal approaches to diffuse difficult or sensitive situations
- Understand departmental procedures for managing, debriefing, and reporting incidents
- Learn about and practice self-care

Context[1]

- Collecting sensitive research data is typically understood as qualitative (field) research with vulnerable populations

- But these issues can emerge anywhere or any time: we are asking people about their health

- Possible risks to researchers:
  1. From hearing about intensely personal experiences (risk of psychological harm and emotional distress)
  2. From collecting data in homes or other locations (personal safety)

Context[1]

- Possible impacts on researchers:
  - Desensitized to own experiences of conducting sensitive research
  - Desensitized to own personal safety

- Universities beginning to address risk management responsibilities within the ethics clearance process
  - Subjective: it is difficult to assess risk
  - Will review our policies and procedures; more work to do

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INTERPERSONAL TECHNIQUES

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Recognizing Difficult Situations

- Difficult or critical/crisis situations can take a lot of forms, e.g., participant is:
  - Very emotional, tearful, upset
  - Very confused, frazzled
  - Very frustrated, able or unable to verbalize what they want/need
  - Very angry, shouting
  - Expressing threats of physical harm
  - Expressing suicidal thoughts or plans
  - Acting out physically

The Crisis Defusing Process (1-2)[2]

- **Step One: Awareness**
  - Review – the situation, your feelings, location
- **Step Two: Containment**
  - Keep your own emotions in check, talk slowly, be ready to disengage

The Crisis Defusing Process (3-4)[2]

- **Step Three: Recognition**
  - Listen & validate
  - Remember your role is not to counsel or give advice
- **Step Four: Closing**
  - Thank individual for staying connected, work on next procedural step

If a Person Seems to be in Crisis[3]

Most of what you see in people in crisis is fear. Reducing a person's fear can help de-escalate a situation

- **Remain Calm**
- **Communicate** – ask questions, listen, avoid interrupting
- **Don't criticize or ridicule**
- **Offer choices**

If a Person Seems to be in Crisis[3]

- **Decrease distractions.**
- **Make a statement** about the behaviour you're observing and ask about it *(e.g. "You seem to be afraid/angry/confused. Is this right?")*
- **Repeat questions or statements** if necessary
- **Don't assume** what the problem is

If a Person Seems to be in Crisis[3]

- **Be an ally** to the person
- **Avoid judgmental, authoritative statements**
- **Allow the person as much physical space as you can** – don't stand over them, get too close, or block the doorway
- **Don't shout**
- **Explain clearly** what you are doing and why you are doing it

If You Are Verbally Attacked[4]

- **Mentally: separate yourself from the issues a person is dealing with – it's not you!**

- **Don't defend** yourself or retaliate
- **Deal first with their emotions** – acknowledge
- **Invite** the angered party to continue in a concrete fashion
- Use **reflective listening**
- When they attack you, **recast it** as an attack on the problem

If You Are Verbally Attacked[4]

- **Explore ideas** they offer as legitimate options
- **Ask what could be done now** to improve things
- **Agree** on at least one point
- **"Yes – And"**
- **Repeat** their statement slowly, verbatim
- **Keep silent** and maintain normal eye contact

If a Person Displays Violent Behaviour

- If you are faced with a person who is acting out violently or is threatening to act out:
  - Remain calm
  - Give the violent person space
  - Speak in a non-threatening manner
  - Leave the situation, always facing the respondent

If a Person Expresses Suicidal Ideation

- Be empathetic, listen to their story – follow the crisis tips from earlier in this presentation
- If you feel comfortable, work to gauge the level of risk by asking something like:
  - "Are you planning to do something to hurt yourself?" / "Do you have a plan to carry out these thoughts?"
- Follow the departmental procedures for suicidal risk identification and action

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ROLE PLAY

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SUPPORTING ONE ANOTHER

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Debriefing

Create opportunities to debrief with your team on informal basis

- Schedule them in to team meetings to discuss emotional burden, management of this, and interviewing skills
- Peer support really important; works well

Debriefing cont'd

Consider if more formal debriefing is necessary

- Request PI supervision (or other expertise)
- Employ strategies of reflexivity and ethical mindfulness[5]
- Training for emotional safety
- Build into ethics (how, when, where to access support)
- Schedule into budgets and timelines

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POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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Relevant Policies and Procedures

1. Critical Incident Reporting
   >dfmresearch>Systems and Processes
   >Incident Reporting

2. Suicidality SOP
   >in final approval

3. Home Visiting SOP
   >under development

➢Report any critical incidents or suicidality, or anything else out of the ordinary, to Laura

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SELF CARE

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Self-Nurturing Activities

- Have breakfast in bed
- Get a massage
- Pet your pet
- Walk on a scenic path
- Take a bubble bath
- Visit a zoo
- Stop and smell some flowers
- Go to the beach
- Take a scenic drive
- Meditate
- Browse in a book or record score for as long as you want
- Visit a museum or another interesting place
- Watch the sunset.
- Relax with a good book
- Play your favourite music and dance to it by yourself
- Go to bed early
- Sleep outside under the stars
- Call a good friend
- Work on a puzzle
- Bake or cook something special
- Go window shopping
- Listen to a positive, motivational recording
- Exercise

Homewood Health

- McMaster's Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)
- Confidential counselling available in person, by phone, by video, or online, on topics such as:

•Family/Childcare/Parenting/ Eldercare
•Marital
•Relationships
•Addictions
•Anxiety
•Depression
•Life Transitions/Change
•Grief/Bereavement
•Stress
•Workplace Issues
•Financial/Legal
•Lifestyle
•Other Personal Issues

1-800-663-1142

Other Emotional Wellness Supports at McMaster and Beyond

- Learn about mental health resources at McMaster for faculty and staff
- Explore supports for you and your family
- Support your direct reports. Consider these resources for managers
- Discover ways to manage your stress
- Take a Mental Health First Aid course
- Explore Healthy Workplace Committee initiatives
- National Standard for Mental Health in the Workplace
- Muse Headband research (from Mac too!)

References

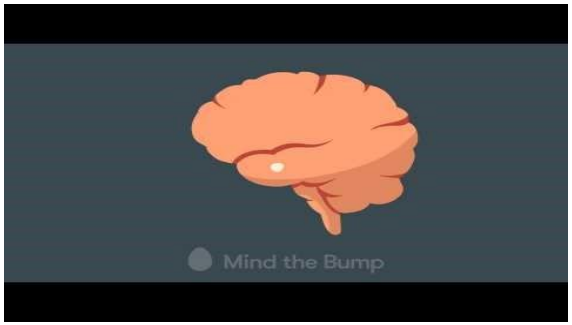
1. Bahn, S. & Weatherill, P. (2012). Qualitative social research: a risky business when it comes to collecting ‘sensitive’ data. *Qualitative Research, 13* (1): pp. 19-35.
2. Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute (CTRI). The Crisis Defusing Process.
3. Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Ontario. (2009). Tip sheet: How to respond to someone in a mental health crisis. *Network Magazine.*
4. SK522, WLU. (2014). *What To Do When You Are Verbally Attacked (handout).*
5. Bowtell, E. C., Sawyer, S. M., Aroni, R. A., Green, J. B., & Duncan, R. E. (2013). “Should I send a condolence card?” Promoting emotional safety in qualitative health research through reflexivity and ethical mindfulness. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *19*(9), 652-663.

Additional Resources

See folder in shared drive

dfmresearch>Training and Resources>In-services
>Responding to Sensitive Health & Social Issues
>Literaure
>Self Care
>Crisis Management

Practicing Mindfulness



https://youtu.be/aNCB1MZDgQA --- Mind the Bump: overview of mindfulness, 3 min
https://youtu.be/8oWmGJc8NWI -- 3 min guided meditation with man's voice
https://youtu.be/SEfs5TJZ6Nk -- 3 min guided meditation with woman's voice
https://youtu.be/1nP5oedmzkM -- a TedTalk from neuroscientist

http://www.choosemuse.com/research/ -- Muse headband research and website

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