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M5. DIFFICULT SITUATIONS IN THE WORK OF A VOLUNTEER

Everyday activity consists of many professional and social interactions, in which there may be tensions resulting from different needs, different approach to tasks, different values, and social roles played. As a result of the dynamics of processes taking place between people, conflict is a common and natural phenomenon.

A volunteer working with a child may find themselves on a "collision course" with other volunteers, with the organisation, and even with the parent of the child they are taking care of. Moreover, even her/his involvement may cause conflict as a result of a lack of understanding or acceptance of his/her social activity. Therefore, knowledge about conflicts - when and why they arise and how to prevent them, how to eliminate their effects and solve them for the benefit of the parties involved in them, seems extremely necessary.

Another factor that may have a serious impact on the psychophysical condition of a volunteer working with disadvantaged children - the sick, the poor, the excluded who have experienced violence in the past - are their stories. Regular exposure of the volunteer to the experiences of pupils related to violence, exclusion and trauma (e.g. in the context of children exposed to domestic and sexual violence or refugees fleeing from war and persecution) may leave a significant mark on their mental condition, therefore this topic deserves special attention on the part of supervisors and being in charge of the volunteers.

The module *M.5 Difficult Situations in the Work of a Volunteer* consists three sections:

- M5.S1. Dealing with a conflict
- M5.S2. Stress and vicarious traumatization as burn out factors

They contain tools for self-aid when coping with difficult situations. Nevertheless, it is worth remembering and always taking into account that both in the case of a difficult conflict and burnout due to chronic stress or the so-called vicarious traumatization, specialist help from an outside person (facilitator, psychotherapist) may be necessary.

It is in conflict that our values are exposed. (Bernard Beckett)

CONDITIONS FOR CONFLICT

The word conflict comes from the Latin words *conflictus* and *confligere*. Literally translated *conflictus* means COLLISION and *confligere* is the verb of the word. A conflict arises when two or more parties (persons, groups, organisations) are interdependent, that is, that neither party can achieve its goals without the participation or consent of other parties, and when:

- they can see irreconcilable differences (interests, needs, values),
- the parties block the realization of their aspirations.

It is also worth mentioning the cultural basis of disputes, such as racial, ethnic or organisational conflicts. Whether a conflict arises depends on how the situation is perceived and understood and whether and what actions will be taken by the parties to the conflict. Very common reasons for their occurrence are communication errors or communication blockage, such as:

- **Generalization**: instead of talking specifics, i.e. situations or events that caused anger or irritation, people are being labelled and/or stereotypes are used, e.g. towards a friend who is late for a meeting - "you cannot be relied on", about the child's mother, who has problems at school - "she is an indifferent mother", about an immigrant who speaks badly in your language - "he is not very intelligent".
- **The use of the language "you"**: "you are..." "your actions ...", "you do/don't ...", "why do you ..." instead of the message "I": "I've noticed ...", "I feel, I can see that ...". The predominance of the "you" language prompts the interlocutor to act defensively and leads to the escalation of the conflict.
- **Frequent use of communication stoppers** in communication, i.e. judging, criticizing, ordering, challenging, accusing, threatening, distracting attention.
- **Misunderstanding of the other party's intentions**. We tend to judge other people's motives by their behaviour and ours by our intentions. This can block communication; in order to avoid this, it is important to be able to paraphrase statements, i.e. to say what we have understood in our own words, and to be able to reflect the other party's messages.
- **Inconsistency in messages**, e.g. combining negative texts with a positive tone of voice; Therefore, it is important to pay attention not only to the verbal message, but also to realise the importance of non-verbal communication.

AREAS (TYPES) OF CONFLICTS

Conflict area	Motives	The conflict is likely to escalate when...
Data conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of data • contradictory data • different interpretation of data 	... accusations of concealing data, manipulating information, and deliberately misleading appear.
Relations conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strong, difficult emotions between the parties • retaliatory behaviour • stereotypes • inadequate communication 	<p>... the level of satisfaction with contacts is very low.</p> <p>It can arise without objective reasons and even arouse and escalate other conflicts.</p>
Values conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • different (conflicting) values • various ethical and moral principles • a different worldview • recognition and application of other rules of justice 	... different views and values are seen as "unacceptable" - antagonizing people and blocking the possibility of further cooperation.
Structural conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limited space • limited resources • no time • too many tasks • bad organisation (of work, space, etc.) 	... this becomes the cause of other conflicts, such as relationships or values.
Interest/needs conflict	<p>Conflicting (or irreconcilable) needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • material: access to materials, places • procedural: the manner of conducting talks and negotiations • psychological: a sense of security, dignity, respect, trust 	... one or more parties want to meet their needs at the expense of the other.

In a conflict situation, the attention of each party may focus on a different plane of the conflict. In such a situation, the conflict cannot be resolved constructively. Moreover, the first three areas may constitute a chronological sequence of a conflict situation: an unexplained data conflict turns into a conflict of relations between the parties, a further lack of a solution causes escalation of the

conflict, leading to a much more serious conflict of values. If the parties are ready to resolve the conflict, it should first of all be reduced to a common, negotiable and solvable level.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS CONFLICTS

How important the subject of the conflict is to you, how strong you feel to act, and how you prefer to deal with conflicts will have an impact on your response to conflict and your choice of strategy: from avoiding the conflict to trying to resolve it, from struggling with a conflict alone to engaging a third party and seeking the support of an authority.

You find it easier to work with some people, and extremely difficult with others. You certainly know people for whom any controversy results in being offended and refusing to cooperate, or aggression and treating you as an enemy. Others withdraw, agreeing to everything or saying that it is okay. For some, however, the same situation is treated as a problem to be solved in the course of discussion and is not perceived as a personal attack. Why is this happening?

The adopted attitude, beliefs, values and experiences make people perceive and react differently to the same situations. A different reaction to conflict may appear in the same person depending on their well being - they will react differently to the same problem being in good psychophysical or emotional condition, differently, when their vitality is reduced (due to fatigue, lack of sleep, overwork).

There are five basic styles of action in a conflict situation, identified according to the focus on the needs, both own or those of other people. Here is an example:

A non-profit organisation with which Charles cooperates implements a programme to prevent exclusion of children from environments where they have experienced both physical and mental violence. For this purpose, it organises extracurricular activities, psychological support and help with homework, as well as sports competitions and excursions. It was planned that one of the excursions would be dedicated to three groups (each with a different volunteer) on three different dates. It turned out that both Charles and his colleagues (Mark and Agata) could go only on one, exactly the same date, which caused a very emotional discussion between them. Each of them gave indisputable arguments, so the proposal to draw quickly failed. When emotions peaked, they decided to postpone the decision to a later date. When they were leaving a feeling of coolness and distrust could be sensed. How can Charles behave? Here are the possible approaches:

1. **Avoidance** – ignoring the conflict and silence, i.e. "burying the head in the sand."

Charles will pretend that the matter does not exist. He is of the opinion that conflict is evil, especially since it costs him so much emotionally. Besides, he doesn't see the possibility of reaching an agreement anyway, since everyone sticks to their guns. He is looking to everyone eventually calming down.

2. **Adaptation/mitigation** – acting in accordance with the interests of the opposing party and giving up one's own goals for fear of losing good relations with others or of being left alone.

Charles, for the sake of the cause, decides to soften his position. He intends to meet the expectations of his colleagues and he sees it as investing in future relationships. "Maybe I insisted on my date too much? Maybe it is worth giving in?" – he wonders.

3. **Fight/confrontation** - this is an approach to a conflict where winning is considered a success, and losing - a weakness and loss of prestige.

Charles states: "Why should I pull back? Enough of this, let Agata and Mark adjust! They did not want to pull back, so now I will not compromise either. "

4. **Compromise** – seeking workable solutions with the accompanying belief that everyone should be able to give up some of their own interests and be more understanding of the interests and needs of others.

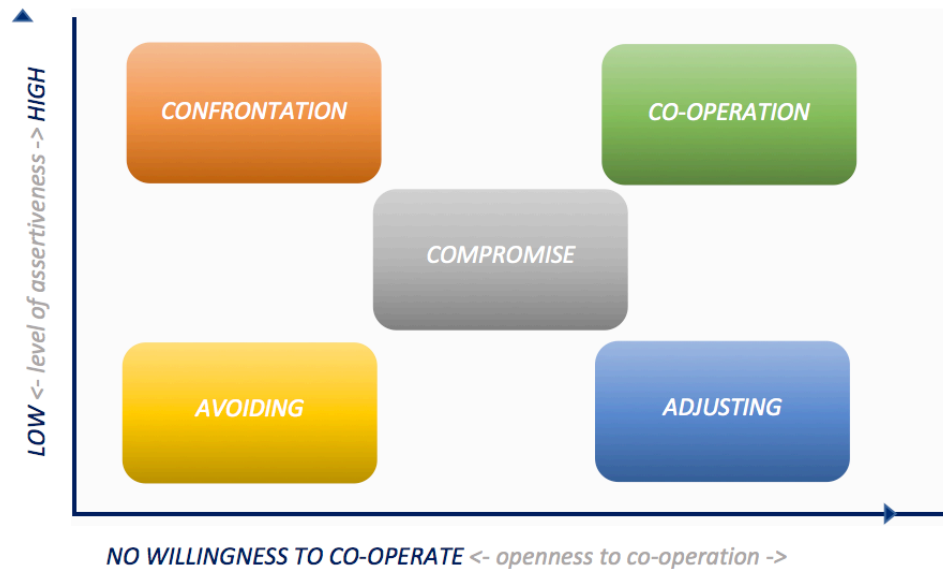
Charles comes to the conclusion that he needs to coolly and objectively look at each situation. Who has some room for manoeuvre about the date and who does not. "Mark will not change the date of his sister's arrival from abroad, but if Agata has previously made an appointment, she may be able to postpone it, I can probably also talk to my colleague about the change of duties, even if she has recently already made me a similar favour ... "

5. **Collaboration/cooperation** - willingness to accept the goals of the other party to the conflict without giving up one's own goals. The ideal solution, which requires, however, creativity and out-of-the-box thinking is a situation in which it is possible to work out such a way out of the conflict, in which each party has a win feeling (win-win solution) and not a feeling of a compromise that no one is fully satisfied with.¹

Charles wants to come up with the initiative to propose one trip for all at the same time, but for organisational reasons it will require the cooperation of three volunteers and sharing tasks, which he intends to convince Mark and Agata to do.

Self-awareness and analysis of one's own style of coping with conflict is very important, especially in its initial phase - it should start the process of reaching an agreement. The adopted attitude and style of action in the face of a conflict will depend on your level of assertiveness (whether you can communicate your needs non-invasively) and willingness to cooperate. The interdependence of these influences is presented in the diagram below:

¹ The Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung, the main founder of the academic discipline of peace and conflict studies, is considered to be the author of this concept.



Source: Own elaboration

STORM WARNING, OR HOW TO RECOGNISE THE SIGNALS OF AN INCOMING CONFLICT

The detectors, i.e. the signals of the impending conflict, are:

- Avoiding direct contact with the other party,
- Making mutual contacts very formal, with lack of patience, irritability and a lack of tolerance even for minor mistakes,
- Provoking partner's impulsive behaviour, waiting for his lapses and malicious comments,
- Emphasizing differences and separateness in mutual relations,
- Attacking the anticipated actions of the partner even before they have been verbalized,
- Refusing to agree to any plans and proposals made by the partner,
- Disrespectful/patronizing treatment of the other party, disregard for views and proposed actions,
- Stubborn sticking to your own opinion - fixation and emotionally violent defence of it in the event of counter argumentation on the part of the partner,
- Accusing the other party of bad will and unclean intentions,
- Showing distrust and readiness for defensive and offensive behaviour in contacts with the other party,
- Limiting the freedom of action of the other party.

Each conflict has its own dynamics. There can be passive conflicts, i.e. situations in which the parties do not direct any activity towards each other, or active conflicts provoking increased activity of the opposing parties, with the potential for resolution or ... escalation.

The optimal level of conflict lies between stagnation - inactivity and too much activity, which can exacerbate the conflict.

HOW TO GET TO RESOLVE THE CONFLICT?

The basic method is meeting and talking, properly prepared and conducted. Such a conversation should consist of the following elements:

1. Establishing contact

By not starting the conversation, you will not solve the problem. If you want to solve the problem, it should be you who initiate the meeting. Be aware that the other party of the conflict may find excuses for not meeting for fear of unpleasantness, confrontation, and fight. This is a natural defensive reaction, so it is worth ensuring that you will not require any concessions from the other party, and the purpose of the conversation is to get to know each side's point of view. If you receive consent for such a meeting, set a date convenient for both parties.

2. Preparation of the appropriate conditions for the meeting

Choose a zone that is relatively isolated, ensuring the comfort of conversation. The best place for dialogue is the place preferred by the other party, so it is best to agree on it. Set aside enough time to make a breakthrough in the conversation. Better more time than not enough time. Ensure mutual confidentiality, as the issues raised during the interview may be very personal or related to current jobs. The presence of third parties during the conversation may unnecessarily encourage the manifestation of eloquence and strength.

3. Conducting the conversation

- a) The first phase is opening: the purpose of the conversation is to overcome the conflict and maintain a relationship with the other person. You will achieve this goal by positively confronting the person involved in the conflict and being honest with her/him. Start the meeting by expressing your satisfaction with the meeting, and then be optimistic about its effects. Recall the established rules of dialogue - we do not fight, we do not blame each other, we do not use ultimatums. Now it's time to present your point of view on the problem.
- b) Then invite the interlocutor to present his/her point of view. Be prepared for behaviours such as trying to change the subject, joking, giving up or silence, or manifesting being offended. In such situations, you need calmness, consistency and patience. Your task is to stick to the topic of the meeting consistently so that the other person opens up. Avoid judgments carefully, while openly expressing your feelings about the situation that is difficult for both sides. Do not allow the creation of an artificial and false situation in which you expect honesty and openness from your partner, without showing any readiness for such an attitude on your own.
- c) The third stage is the dialogue. Dialogue occurs when both sides change their fighting attitude (me against you) to a constructive attitude (us against the problem).

It is the time to explore:

- Where and why did the problem arise?
- Is there a lack of clarity about roles or authority?
- Is the partner overloaded with work?
- Was the conflict caused by the decisions made?
- Are the difficulties caused by a personality conflict?

If you find the source of the problems, you can start working on its elimination or mitigation. The ability to listen actively, be assertive and negotiate is helpful in conducting the dialogue.

4. Conclusion of an agreement / contract

If the meeting was really successful, it will lead to an agreement. It is more psychological than formal and legal, as conflicts most often arise in areas where legal regulations are not binding/in place. If the agreement has been developed through dialogue, it should be balanced, specifying the agreed behaviour of the parties. If the situation requires it, it is good to write down the worked out arrangements - such a document is the best response to the difficulties arising during the implementation of the mutual consensus.

WHEN WE NEED A „PEACEMAKER” – MEANS OF SOLVING CONFLICTS

Sometimes the conflict resolution process requires the participation of third parties. This happens when the parties cannot reach an agreement or when they have exhausted other methods without achieving satisfactory results. The role of the conciliator requires complete impartiality, very clear rules and specific procedures. Conflict resolution with the participation of third parties may take place through: negotiations, mediation, facilitation, and finally in court or by means of arbitration. In a non-profit organisation, most problems can usually be solved with the involvement of only the parties to the conflict, but in more difficult situations, you can use the help of an experienced coordinator or facilitator.

• NEGOTIATIONS

These are direct conversations aimed at bringing the conflict to a negotiable level, reaching an agreement, concluding a transaction or solving a problem. The agreement is concluded when all parties accept it. The course of the negotiations (i.e. how they have been conducted) and the content of the concluded agreement (i.e. what has been agreed) depend solely on the direct participants. Negotiators have full control over both the negotiation process and the substance of the issue. The parties initiate communication, it runs between them and they negotiate in all directions.

• FACILITATION

Sometimes it happens that there are many parties involved in the discussions, the negotiations concern complex problems, the participants have trouble establishing and following the procedures and methods of solving problems. There is then a danger that chaos will arise and prevent us from making final decisions or conflict everyone with everyone else. In such situations, facilitation is necessary, i.e. coordination of the participants' activities, supporting group processes. This role is most often entrusted to an impartial person, whose task is to control the problem-solving process or the group's joint decision-making. Facilitation is a preventive rather than interventional procedure. Its purpose is to protect against data conflicts and relationship conflicts, it is conducive to substantive, psychological and procedural satisfaction of participants. The facilitator is an expert in the procedure.

The merits remain under the full control of the participants who decide what the talks are about and make the final decisions.

M5.S2. STRESS AND VICARIOUS TRAUMATISATION – THE MAIN BURNOUT FACTORS

STRESS

Anything that puts you in physical, mental, or emotional tension is stress. It is the body's reaction to emerging threats, blockades, resistance or the foiling of intentions. In general, stress is treated usually exclusively as harmful. However, the creator of the concept himself² saw two types of stimuli in it: positive - when it mobilises to action, and negative - when it blocks or prevents the achievement of important goals. Thus, stress acts as a kind of doping in the face of events that require a response leading to a solution that is favourable to you.

A moderate level of stress strengthens the adaptation abilities of the organism, immunising and stimulating development. Too strong or prolonged stress contributes to a decrease in adaptive abilities, causing anxiety and depressive disorders, and in particularly difficult cases may lead to the development of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

You may not be able to influence some of the stressful events. When you listen to the difficult experiences of those you care for, your body triggers reactions similar to those that would respond to your personal experience. The effects of their impact will depend, inter alia, on how you deal with stressors. Healthy adaptation strategies will include activities that reduce mental tension, bring calming thoughts and emotions, e.g. relaxation, meditation, making the body and mind busy with topics distant from current events. Self-help strategies are best worked out through trial and training - the more you discover and apply those that work for you, the more you'll strengthen your adaptive system and deal with stress better.

Unhealthy adaptation strategies may appear to be equally effective, but their soothing-anaesthetic effects are deceptive and short-term. Alcohol or other stimulants will increase the range of stressors in the long run, reducing work efficiency, the quality of your life and relationships.

REACTIONS TO STRESS

The sympathetic nervous system is responsible for the mobilisation of the organism in the event of a threat (real or imagined). Acceleration of heart rate and breathing and increased perception are the result of preparing your body to fight or flight. Stress and the body's response to it progress in the following stages:

² Hans Hugo Selye (1907-1982), physiopathologist and endocrinologist of Hungarian origin. He introduced the concept of stress. He devoted 50 years of scientific work to researching this phenomenon and its impact on humans.

1. Alarm. It affects the body like activating an alarm siren - there is a high-speed mobilisation of forces and resources necessary to face an unknown or recognized as a threatening situation.
2. Adaptation (resistance). The course of the next stages will depend on how the body copes with the stressors. After the period of excitation, there may be calming down and a return to the normal mode of operation, or the tension may become chronic, which will result in a third phase.
3. Exhaustion. Chronic stress exhausts the immune system, creating conditions for the development of psychosomatic diseases, and in extreme cases it can even lead to death.

One of the possible outcomes of responding to a stressful event is post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It is important to know that reactions to traumatic events are natural and that in case of most people; intense symptoms in response to difficult experiences weaken over time, and eventually disappear completely.

However, there are situations when the help of a specialist may be necessary. Persistent long (over a month) disturbing symptoms, such as: intrusively repetitive images like in a film that cannot be turned off, physiological arousal or obsessive avoidance of any event evoking a dramatic experience can have a serious impact on normal functioning. In this case, it is necessary to seek the help of a psychotherapist.

Long-term stress is equally problematic. As it develops slowly and the increasing symptoms may initially be ignored or unrelated to the stressor, this makes it a more insidious process. Symptoms similar to PTSD (returning to the same thoughts and events over and over again), sleep problems, hyperactivity, decreased concentration or eating disorders are factors that constantly attack the body's immune system, effectively breaking its defences.

THE EFFECTS OF LONG-TERM STRESS

VICARIOUS (SECONDARY) TRAUMA

In recent years, more and more attention has been paid to the phenomenon of the so-called secondary (vicarious) traumatisation, which affects professionals (therapists, paramedics, humanitarian workers, volunteers) working with people who have experienced mental and physical trauma. Secondary trauma is the result of the cumulative impact of the pupils' dramatic experiences, to which caregivers of children in a difficult situation (present or past) are particularly susceptible. Volunteers sometimes find it hard not to think about the shocking stories they have learned and reliving them over and over again. This can lead to states of anxiety, depression, agitation, irritation, sleep and eating disorders, feeling guilty towards the pupil, feeling that not enough has been done for the pupil, loss of satisfaction with things that previously gave this feeling (both at work and in private life), doubts in one's work, inability to define the boundary in the relationship with the pupil, excessive identification with the pupil or the opposite, loss of empathy and feeling of emotional numbness or burnout, etc. The fate of abused children may also trigger a whole range of fears for their own child or a child of a similar age in the immediate family.

BURNOUT

Depletion of resources as a result of their over-exploitation destabilises the entire organism. Its physical (immune system) and mental defence (coping with stress and emotions) falls under the pressure of stressors, and the more crushed our internal defensive walls, the smaller stimulus is able to threaten them. It is similar to the snowball effect, which in its most dramatic course can become an avalanche.

However, this process of growth does not always have to be clearly visible and felt. Given that "those who weren't on fire will not burn out," the various stages of burnout development - especially the initial ones - may be overlooked or underestimated. Let's look at the classically developing burnout process:

1. A PERIOD OF EXCITEMENT AND ENTHUSIASM – energy and commitment are near to sacrificing. Acceptance of new commitments, high activity, dedication to the greater good also in the sense that it leads to limiting contacts beyond voluntary activity, disregarding one's own needs (body and mind). Increasing fatigue, lack of time for pleasure and meetings with friends, and even minor accidents (falls, cuts, burns) are warning signs of excessive use of the body's psychophysical resources.

2. PERIOD OF DISTANCE – a decrease in the level of commitment in all areas of activity, loss of positive attitude, the emergence of indifference, and even cynicism. Sometimes a reflection may arise: "I don't know what happened to me, where has the previous enthusiasm gone. Actually, I don't care much about it all." Contacts become superficial and fleeting.

3. PERIOD OF EMOTIONAL AROUSAL – we become irritable, critical and dissatisfied. Often there are extreme emotional reactions taking an aggressive form (impulsiveness, negativity, conflict, hostility towards the environment, etc.) or a depressive form (loss of optimism, loss of immunity, a sense of loneliness, emptiness, fear, etc.). This is the stage when vitality and health may decline as a result of neglecting the body's needs (sleep, relaxation, balance).

4. PERIOD OF DISORGANISATION AND CHAOS – decline in the efficiency of basic mental functions, mainly motivational and intellectual. We lack of creativity, concentration, and problem-solving skills. Activity is limited to essential tasks, and it seems almost impossible to distinguish what is important from what is urgent. Unsolved problems on a personal and professional basis begin to accumulate, intensifying the impression that life is falling apart.

5. PERIOD OF INDIFFERENCE – seen as general desensitisation. Emotional involvement in interpersonal and social relationships is limited. There is intolerance, lack of interest in anything, progressive cynicism. People in this state feel like a button-press robot. No human emotions, no sense of life.

6. PERIOD OF DEPERSONALIZATION – this is the period of feeling the loss of identity and purpose. The gradual increase in psychosomatic symptoms in the functioning of the digestive and circulatory systems are conducive to the development of addictions.

7. PERIOD OF DESPARATION – resignation, apathy, withdrawal from life, lack of hope and extreme pessimism towards the future. This breakdown period can lead to abandonment of any activity, leading to depression and suicidal thoughts.

Secondary (vicarious) trauma can only occur in situations where you work directly with traumatised people, but burnout can occur in any environment. In case of people who work with people after trauma, the symptoms of both syndromes may occur at the same time.

STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH STRESS AND VICAROUS TRAUMATISATION

The following strategies are based on the experience of humanitarian aid organisations (such as e.g. Red Cross and UNHCR), whose workers are under long-term exposure to severe stressors. Helping victims of climate, war and humanitarian disasters, they face the most shocking events on a daily basis, so they are forced to use various strategies to deal with long-term stress. A volunteer working with children at risk of exclusion is also exposed to the influence of strong stressors, so in order to maintain energy and motivation to act; these strategies should be treated as personal OHS rules.

RATIONALISATION OF EXPERIENCE AND COMMUNICATION

One of the most valuable strategies you can use is to recognise the fact that the work you are doing is difficult and will inevitably affect your emotions. You can feel a whole range of emotions: shock, resentment, terror, depression, sadness, fear, etc. You can lose your sense of security and feel vulnerable. All these sensations and emotions are completely natural and normal, 99 out of 100 people who do this work will feel exactly the same. So it is good to talk to a trusted person, e.g. a coordinator or mentor in your organisation about your experiences. If you conclude from conversations with other colleagues in the organisation that it is easy for no one to cope with the pressure of such feelings, it is worth asking for a meeting with more experienced people who will show that they also had/have very similar reactions. Their example can be comforting, because after similar experiences, people share coping strategies and advise on how to deal with difficult cases, and importantly, it gives the opportunity for further communication. If you find that you are reflecting on an event or events in general, take it as a sign that you should talk to someone about your experiences. Also, if you are a religious or spiritual person, try to talk to others who share your faith about your experiences and actively use your spirituality to find meaning.

DETACHMENT

Whichever form of distraction you choose, there must be one condition: to detach you from your work activities when you are no longer at work. Quite often we are absorbed in work to the detriment of other areas of our lives. Find non-work related activities that can occupy your attention; hobbies, sports, trips with friends, etc. Mental and physical symptoms of stress are often related to the fact that we think a lot and relive past events in our minds. Do something else - what you like, enjoy, relax yourself, and keep yourself away from stressors. This will help you recharge your batteries.

Meditation is a good detachment practice. It consists in clearing the mind and not holding any thought that may arise. It can be quite difficult for beginners, but daily practice brings rewarding results. Any exercise that involves clearing your mind of thoughts or focusing on a pleasant or neutral image detaches you from stressful thoughts and, more importantly, keeps you from rumination³.

Learn to relax every day, enjoy your spare time, vacation whenever you have the opportunity. Do not neglect contacts with your friends; maintain regular contact and good relations with them. In addition, they have other problems that will allow you to detach from yours.

SETTING BORDERS

Everything you need to know and be able to do to set limits can be found in the chapter on assertiveness (see module *M3. Effective Communication in the Work of a Volunteer*). When you feel that you have too many responsibilities, learn to say no. Don't try to play the role of a hero; we all have limitations. Time cannot stretch out; resources are not endless. Take only (and up to) as much as you can bear. By taking too much you won't achieve anything, the best you can do is disappoint yourself or others. Too ambitious approach to tasks, oversetting standards, unrealistic estimation of own resources is as prudent as raising the bar in the course of a pole-vault.

Assertiveness is self-respect and an indication to others about how you allow them to treat yourself. If you want to maintain high quality over the long term, if you want to stay committed and high performing, if you want to enjoy helping others, setting clear personal and professional boundaries will help a lot. Setting boundaries in the context of working with people affected by trauma or violence also includes clearly defining your role in the relationship with the other person and knowing that you will not be able to solve/alleviate all their problems. A rational look at the areas where you can provide effective help will avoid frustration, guilt and burnout when confronted with other people's problems and will allow you to use your resources more efficiently.

TAKING CARE OF BODY AND MIND

Depending on your individual preferences, you can choose relaxation techniques that require different levels of physical activity. Pilates, yoga, Tai Chi and Nordic walking are some of them. You may need more physical engagement (runs, long bike rides, gym) or less. If you don't have your favourite activities for now, try a few to see which might become your daily routine. You will find suggestions of several relaxation practices in the exercises attached to this module.

Managing stress in an adaptive manner is facilitated by regular fun and relaxing exercise. The exercises don't have to be demanding or complicated, it's important to practice them (from now on) every day. The second important factor in your welfare is a healthy diet. The excess of duties often causes that we do not eat at all or eat in a hurry, satisfying ourselves with fast food. A bad diet puts additional stress on the body.

³ Rumination – kind of obsessively repetitive thoughts. Sometimes referred to as the constant chewing over your thoughts.

In addition, getting enough sleep and drinking enough water throughout the day can make stress management more effective.

RECOMMENDED EXERCISES AND TOOLS

1. My conflict – exercise for individual work
2. Shields of personal resilience - exercises for individual work or work with a coach
3. Self-test - Are you at risk of burnout?

READING

Recommended reading:

1. Gut. J, Haman. W., *Appreciate the conflict. From combat and manipulation to cooperation*, Wydawnictwo Kontrakt, 1995.
2. Nęcki Z. *Negotiations in business*, Wydawnictwo Profesjonalnej Szkoły Biznesu, 2000.
3. Galtung J., *Transcend and Transform: An Introduction to Conflict Work*, Pluto Press 2004.
4. Cialdini R. B., *Influence. Science and Practice*, Writers of the Round Table Press, 2012.
5. Aronson E., *The Social Animal*, Worth Publishers 2003.

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