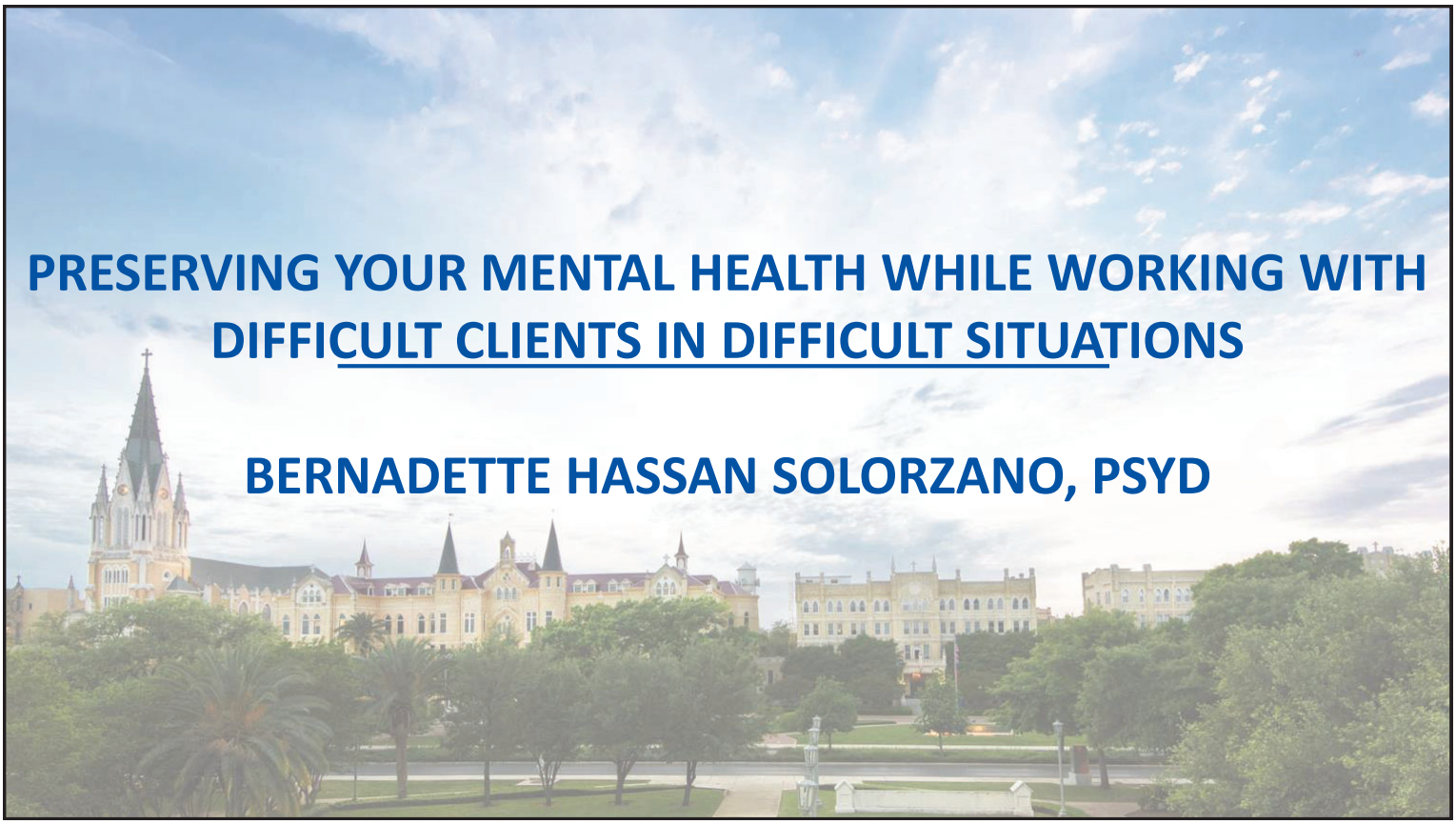

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PRESERVING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH WHILE WORKING WITH DIFFICULT CLIENTS IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS
BERNADETTE HASSAN SOLORZANO, PSYD

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Agenda

- Vicarious Trauma
- PTSD
- Posttraumatic Growth
- Looking for strengths in clients
- Coping and self care

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Vicarious Trauma

- The emotional residue of exposure to traumatic stories and experiences of others through work; witnessing fear, pain, and terror that others have experienced; a pre-occupation with horrific stories told to the professional (American Counseling Association, 2016) ▪ Sometimes referred to as “secondary traumatization, secondary stress disorder, or insidious trauma” (ACA, 2016) ▪ Included in the DSM-5 as part of the cluster of “trauma and stressor-related disorders” ▪ Vicarious Trauma is not the same as “burnout”

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Impact on the Professional

- Professionals working with survivors of trauma (e.g. sexual assault) report changes to how they see the world – for example, that the world is not just or safe (Salston & Figley, 2003). Professionals with previous trauma histories show significantly higher secondary trauma symptoms than those with no trauma histories (Folette, Polusny, & Milbeck, 1994).

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Posttraumatic Stress

- A disorder in which a person has difficulty recovering after experiencing or witnessing a terrifying event.
- The condition may last months or years, with triggers that can bring back memories of the trauma accompanied by intense emotional and physical reactions.
- Symptoms may include nightmares or unwanted memories of the trauma, avoidance of situations that bring back memories of the trauma, heightened reactions, anxiety, or depressed mood.

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