

Resiliency

Vicarious Trauma and Self Care Strategies

zero abuse a program of

Alison Feigh, Director of Jacob Wetterling Resource Center,
a program of Zero Abuse Project

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Stressed Out About Self Care?



Photo: Traveller.com.au



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Thank You



"I've never parented through a pandemic before, but I do know that when everything is crazy on the outside, children need love on the inside."
—Rebecca Parlakian

www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/parenting-during-coronavirus-you-are-enough



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What is Vicarious Trauma?

(Conte & Donfeld, 2010;
Figley, 1995)

- The "cost of caring"
- Stress resulting from helping traumatized or suffering people. Also referred to as secondary traumatic stress.
- Related to ...
 - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
 - Compassion Fatigue
 - Professional Burnout
 - Empathic Strain



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Professional Burnout

- Cumulative effect of emotionally demanding situations
- Personal stress exceeds individual's coping resources
- Slow, progressive process resulting in belief that professional is incapable of facilitating positive change

Phelps, et al (2009). Caring for Careers in the Aftermath of Trauma, *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 18:313-330.



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Lessons from Heroes

"Working alongside their handlers, the four-legged heroes worked tirelessly climbing huge piles of debris while fires still smoldered. The search for signs of life or human remains was mentally and physically taxing on the dogs, as the search dogs began to get discouraged and lose their drive to search. Aware of the importance of morale in these dogs and to keep their motivation high, their handlers would stage a "mock find" so the dog could feel successful."

www.g11memorial.org



Photo provided by Denise Corliss

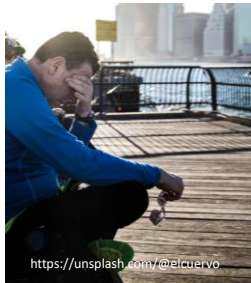


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Impact of Vicarious Trauma

- Re-experiencing images of trauma reports
- Flat affect and withdrawal from others
- Victim-blaming
- Avoidance of reminders of traumatic incidences
- Disruption of deeply-held "schema"

(Conte & Donfeld, 2010;
McCann & Pearlman, 1990)



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Ripple Effect

"Trauma has a ripple effect, same as when someone throws a stone into a still body of water."

**—Laura van
Dernoot Lipsky**



Photo: <https://unsplash.com/@mohamadaz>

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Grounded in Prevention

"There's a dream that we dream how the world should be, where the children are safe and where the children are free. But, we know for this to happen, we must make it so. For we are Jacob's Hope." – Douglas Wood



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Photo: Jean Pieri, Pioneer Press,
October 29, 2015

Photo: Terry Sauer, November 21, 2016 for Star
Tribune

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Who forms your net?



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This isn't just mine to solve

- Share ownership and responsibility.
- You can't be everywhere at once



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Art by Susan Heath Ramsey



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Professional Quality of Life: Compassion Satisfaction and Fatigue Subscales

© B. Hudnall Stamm, 2009. Professional Quality of Life: Compassion Satisfaction and Fatigue Version 5 (ProQOL).

<https://proqol.org>



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Burnout

- **Associated with feelings of hopelessness and difficulties in dealing with work or in doing your job effectively**
 - Gradual onset
 - Belief that efforts make no difference
 - Associated with high workload or non-supportive setting
- **The average score is 23**
 - 50% score between 19 and 28
 - Lower scores = positive feelings about effectiveness
 - Higher scores = hopeless; your work doesn't make a difference; having a "bad day"



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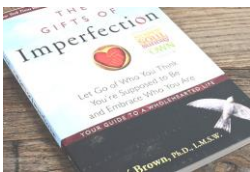
Compassion Fatigue / Secondary Trauma

- **Work-related, secondary exposure to extremely stressful events**
 - Symptoms are usually rapid in onset and associated with a particular event
- **The average score is 13**
 - 50% score between 8 and 17
 - Higher scores = examine how you feel about your work and your work environment
 - Lower scores = minimal vicarious trauma



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In a nutshell...



"We cannot selectively numb emotions, when we numb the painful emotions, we also numb the positive emotions."
 — Brené Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are*



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Shame Personally and Professionally

103 female adult rape survivors surveyed on responses received and mental health:

- Women who disclosed rape and then had a victim blaming response were positively associated with depressive symptoms through rape related shame and experiential avoidance.
- Shame was indirectly related to depression via avoidance.
- Rape related shame and experiential avoidance should be a focus in clinical interventions to target depression.

Bhuptani, Kaufman, Messman-Moore, Gratz, DiLillo (2019).



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Other target symptoms of Compassion Fatigue include:

- Increased negative arousal
- Intrusive thoughts/images of another's critical experiences (or caregiver's own historical traumas)
- Difficulty separating work from personal life
- Lowered frustration to tolerance. Increased outbursts of anger or rage.
- Dread of working with certain individuals
- Depression

Gentry & Baranowski, 2013.
COMPASSION FATIGUE RESILIENCY – A NEW ATTITUDE
<http://psychlink.com/ticlearn/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Compassion-Resiliency-A-New-Attitude.pdf>



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At risk for Burnout/ Chronic Fatigue?

- Little or no control over workload
- Lack of recognition or rewards for good work
- High-pressure environment
- working too much without time for relaxing
- Taking on too much without adequate help/reluctance to delegate
- Not getting enough sleep
- Lack of supportive relationships
- Perfectionist tendencies
- Pessimistic view of self
- Type A, high-achiever personality.

MacLaughlin Frandsen "Burnout or
Compassion Fatigue",
LTL Magazine, April 2010



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Recognizing the Signs of VT



<https://pixabay.com/users/hans-2/>

Feeling overly responsible for
community safety

Denying own needs

Viewing all people as potential
abusers or victims

Maladaptive coping skills

Talking all the time about your
cases/job

Sense of loss of control



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School Strategies to Advocacy

The majority of participants reported feeling emotionally exhausted and high levels of task stress and job ambiguity.

Moreover, three job resources were related to job satisfaction:

1. teaching efficacy
2. school connectedness
3. teaching autonomy

Teachers would feel supported if provided resources to develop competence in distance learning, workplace emotional support, and flexibility during COVID-19.

Chan, M.-k., Sharkey, J. D., Lawrie, S. I., Arch, D. A. N., & Nylund-Gibson, K. (2021). Elementary school teacher well-being and supportive measures amid COVID-19: An exploratory study. *School Psychology*, 36(6), 533–545.



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Getting Serious about Teacher Burnout

"Research shows that school leaders who protect teachers' time, invite their input, and support their mental health and well-being through comprehensive programs see higher levels of satisfaction."

"Educators of color experience burnout over workload, but it is the climate of the school which contributes to their demoralization."

By: Tim Walker, Senior Writer
Published: 11/12/2021

<https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/new-from-nea/getting-serious-about-teacher-burnout>



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Refill Your Energy

- How do you treat yourself?
- How do you "treat" yourself?
- Who makes up your support team?
- Do you celebrate your successes?
- Is your work load manageable?
- Do you have mental health coverage?
- What resources are already in place?
- Is this treated as "normal" in your work place?
- Laugh.



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Protective Factors

- Emotional boundaries
- Peer support
- Personality style
- Spiritual beliefs
- Work as rewarding and satisfying
- Team spirit and camaraderie

Phelps, et al (2009)



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Personality Style as Protective Factor

- Sense of commitment to self
- Vigorous approach to life
- Sense of meaningfulness
- Internal locus of control
- Sense of humor



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Polyvictimization Outward vs Inward

"A pattern of threat hypervigilance was found in the single victimization group, while threat avoidance was found in the polyvictimization group."

Herzog S, D'Andrea W, DePiero J, Khedari V. When stress becomes the new normal: Alterations in attention and autonomic reactivity in repeated traumatization. *J Trauma Dissociation*. 2018

"These findings suggest that re-victimization may compound the trauma-related coping adaptations that were elicited by earlier experiences of victimization, such that the person who now is a polyvictim may shift from hypervigilance to threat avoidance in an attempt to cope self-protection."

Julian D. Ford & Brianna C. Delker (2018) Polyvictimization in childhood and its adverse impacts across the lifespan: Introduction to the special issue, *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*.

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Burnout Prevention Formula

- A sustainable workload
- Feelings of choice and control
- Recognition and reward;
- A sense of community;
- Fairness, respect, and justice;
- Meaningful, valued work

(Maslach & Leiter, *The truth about burnout*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 1997).



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Organizational Strategies

- Specific training for all – including management!
 - Vicarious Trauma / PTSD
 - CSA, exploitation and dynamics of child abuse
 - Other victim service issues
- Training and orientation for new employees
- Adequate supervision – open-door policy
- Professional mentoring programs
- Early detection of workers at high risk for VT
- Limit caseloads
- Understanding self indulgence vs self care



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Organizational Strategies

- Sufficient release time – vacation and sick
- Clear boundaries and policies
- Adequate resources
- Staff autonomy in performing tasks
- Flexible work schedules
- Organizational recognition of successes
- Equitable caseload and workload structuring
- Co-assignment on difficult cases



www.pexels.com/@pavel-danilyuk



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Organizational Strategies

- Team-based decision-making
- EAP programs
- Forums for venting & conflict resolution
- Regular psycho-educational meetings
- Affiliation with multidisciplinary teams
- Debriefing after difficult cases
- Partnerships with local services / schools
- Time off allowance for religious practices



unsplash.com/@wocintechchat



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Shared Power within Organizations

- Reduce hierarchy within organization
- Foster mutuality and respect for differences in the workplace
 - Treat all staff fairly
 - Value differences among staff
 - Combine administrative and service responsibilities within each job description
 - Distribute responsibility for mundane administrative tasks through rotating committees

Slattery and Goodman (2009)



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Organizational Change

- Write down one thing your organization currently does to reduce employee risk for burnout and vicarious trauma
- Write down three things your organization can add to reduce risk of burnout and VT for employees

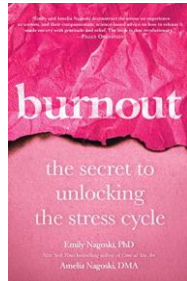


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Community Care

"The cure for burnout is not 'self-care'; it is all of us caring for one another. So we'll say it one more time: Trust your body. Be kind to yourself. You are enough, just as you are right now. Your joy matters. Please tell everyone you know."
— Dr. Emily Nagoski and Amelia Nagoski, DMA

Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle, 2019



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Coping Strategies for the Professional

- How can we create balance?
- How can we create boundaries around time?
- Flex schedules when possible
- Assume as much control over your work as possible (schedule and shared power)
- Access supervision and support networks
- Seek clarity in professional roles and boundaries
- Build a network of professional connections



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Professional Strategies

- Celebrate professional successes
- Learn & practice mediation / negotiation skills
- Learn & practice time-management skills
- Brain or physical breaks
- Get outside
- Take mini-vacations w/o work computer/phone
- Acknowledge humor in stressful situations



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Resiliency

- **Four protective factors demonstrated significant buffering effects to youth exposed to violence**
 - self-regulation
 - family support
 - school support
 - peer support



Yule, et al, Resilience in Children Exposed to Violence: A Meta-analysis of Protective Factors Across Ecological Contexts. *Clin Child Fam Psychol Rev* 22, 406-431. 2019. Examining 118 resiliency studies



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General Individual Strategies

- **Breathe!**
 - Square breathing
 - In for 4, hold for 4
 - Out for 4, hold for 4
 - Slow breathing
 - Dragon Breathing



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Individual Strategies



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- Learn and use relaxation techniques
- Learn anger management techniques
- Avoid volunteer work that is too similar to your professional work
- Avoid alcohol and drugs as means of coping
- Socialize – isolation makes matters worse
- Pamper yourself occasionally
- Make time for things you value



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Individual Coping Strategies



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- Take care of yourself daily: eat properly, rest, exercise, relax
- Limit your exposure to traumatic material (i.e. movies, TV, books)
- Make time for things you value (animals, nature)
- Devote time to relationships and enjoyable activities
- Engage in spiritual self-care (meditation, prayer)



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Perfect is NOT the goal

"Understanding the difference between healthy striving and perfectionism is critical to laying down the shield and picking up your life. Research shows that perfectionism hampers success. In fact, it's often the path to depression, anxiety, addiction, and life paralysis."

— Brené Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are*



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Occupational Identity

"Occupational identity, even well managed, impacts every single part of the social experience."

"Burnout is the inevitable result of an unhealthy connection to the occupational identity."

Dr. Johnanna Ganz, Occupational Identity Researcher specializing in mission driven work, TED x at Hamline University on May 7, 2019,

https://www.ted.com/talks/dr_johnanna_ganz_when_it_s_more_than_just_a_job



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- "Overwhelm is different than being 'needy.' People who seem 'needy' are often wanting your attention and are capable of doing more to care for themselves than they may be doing..."
- When you are with someone who is overwhelmed, you are probably feeling worried about the person. You are thinking, "This is an overwhelming situation."

Sarri Gilman



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#11forJacob

1. Be Fair
2. Be Kind
3. Be Understanding
4. Be Honest
5. Be Thankful
6. Be a Good Sport
7. Be a Good Friend
8. Be Joyful
9. Be Generous
10. Be Gentle with Others
11. Be Positive



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