



**Staff Self Care:  
An Intervention to Support  
Children**



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**What We Will Cover**

- Definition of burnout and secondary trauma
- Impact on Services and Organization
- Role of Organization
- Role of Individual
- What Can We Do as an individual or as part of an organization



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**Self Care as an Ethical Obligation**

- “We can’t teach what we don’t know.  
We can’t lead where we won’t go.”  
Malcolm X
- “You cannot give away that  
which you do not have.”  
Juli Alvarado  
Coaching For Life



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### “Stress-resilient” People

- Ability to integrate the trauma with their moral values and/or faith;
- Avoid isolation;
- High degree of personal responsibility to themselves and to others;
- Avoid unnecessary risks, and high-risk events, behaviors and situations;
- Demonstrate appreciation and gratefulness for the fortunate things in their lives;



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### Protective Factors

- Social support
- Optimism and healthy self-esteem
- Spirituality
- Adaptability
- Tendency to seek meaning
- Ability to mentalize
- Curiosity and openness to experience
- Aptitude



Headington Institute

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### Types of Stress

- **Compassion Fatigue** - profound emotional and physical erosion that takes place when helpers are unable to refuel and regenerate. Two Parts of Compassion Fatigue
- **Burnout** is physical and emotional exhaustion experienced when there is low job satisfaction and being overwhelmed at work. Burnout does not our view of the world has been damaged, or that to feel compassion for others.
- **Vicarious trauma** -profound shift in world view when working with people who have experienced trauma: fundamental beliefs about the world are altered and possibly damaged by being repeatedly exposed to traumatic material.



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### What Causes Burnout?

- Lack of Control Over One's Destiny
- Lack of Occupational Feedback and Communication
- Work Overload or Underload
- Role Conflict/Ambiguity (Uncertainty about what one is expected to do at work).
- Training Deficits
- Poor working conditions,
- Lack of job security
- Rapidly changing society that force individuals to make unexpected adjustments in their way of life and work.



Excerpted From Job Burnout in Public Education: Symptoms, Cause, and Survival Skills, written by Anthony J. Catalano, 1982 by the Teachers College, Columbia University

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### Secondary or Vicarious Trauma

- Vicarious trauma is a natural reaction resulting from exposure to experiences and feelings of a traumatic event experienced by another person.
- Vicarious trauma is:
  - Not direct trauma;
  - Caused by second hand exposure;
  - Accrual of exposure to other people's trauma.



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### Vicarious Trauma

Vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue impacts service providers in the following ways:

- Coping mechanisms become overwhelmed;
- Reduces effectiveness of caregiver;
- Helplessness;
- Detachment from co-workers not involved in the work;
- Detachment from family and friends;
- Shortened tenure as service provider.



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### Vicarious Trauma

Vicarious trauma reactions resemble first-hand reactions and responses to traumatic stress including:

- Sleeping problems;
- Nightmares;
- Intrusive thoughts, memories and flashbacks;
- Hyper-vigilance;
- General anxiety and anxiety attacks;
- Isolation and disconnection
- Substance use and high risk behaviors;
- Changes in appetite and sex drive;
- Irritability and depression;
- Cynicism, negativity, and apathy about life and the world.



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### Professional Quality of Life Scale

- Complete the Questionnaire
- Score your questionnaire
- Make a Plan



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### What Helps



- **Working in a healthy organization** Studies show that “who you work for” is one of the biggest determinants of employee wellness.
  - Access to a **supportive, flexible manager** who is open to regular workload assessments in order to **reduce trauma exposure**
  - A manager who encourages staff to attend **ongoing professional education** and who provides **timely and good quality supervision** as needed.
  - Employees who had **more control over their schedule** reported a higher rate of job satisfaction overall.
  - **Reducing hours** spent working directly with traumatized individuals was the single **most effective** way of reducing VT.

<http://www.bfreespirit.co/>

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### Managers



- **Introduce the topic of compassion fatigue at a staff meeting.** Discuss it as an occupational hazard, something that happens to those who do their jobs well, and have a group discussion about ways to deal with it around the workplace such as peer supervision and clinical debriefings. Your staff may have other great suggestions.
- **Offer professional development for your staff,** on topics related to trauma-informed care and other skill-building strategies.
- **Offer counseling** as part of your benefits package and encourage people to use the service. Be sure to use non-judgmental language and explain all aspects related to confidentiality. Make sure providers have expertise in the area.

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### Managers



- **Bring in compassion fatigue specialist** to speak to your team or provide opportunities for staff to attend a compassion fatigue workshop.
- **Provide supportive supervision** for your staff and include compassion fatigue in your discussions, but don't be insulted if they don't want to speak to you directly about it.
- **Get some support yourself,** it's lonely at the top! Many managers we speak to tend to be quite isolated and have very stressful jobs themselves.

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### First Steps in Self-Care

- Understand you are not super human
- Identify supportive people in your life
- Increase Awareness
  - Triggers/Stressors
  - Impact on body, mind and functioning
  - Strengths and likes




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### Taking Care of Your Health

<p>Sleep</p> <p>Healthy Eating</p> <p>Physical Activities</p> <p>Emotional Care</p> <p>Spirituality</p>	<p>Social Connectedness</p> <p>Cognitive Exercises</p> <p>Financial Health</p>	
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### What Helps on a Daily Basis?

- Pace yourself; take breaks when possible
- Talk to someone else—someone helpful
- Develop your own list of self-soothing activities that “fit” at work—and use them
  - Breathing, relaxation, meditation
  - Self-talk that is reassuring
- Monitor your body’s reactions to the day
- Build in transition times between work and home

Adapted from Russo, 2007

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### Some Techniques

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### Mindful Moments

Taking time each day to shift from a mode of doing and action to one of pausing and being with whatever is happening right now. As you sit, stand, or move, notice your feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations as they come and go. Greet whatever you find with an attitude of openness, curiosity, and compassion. Rather than signifying time to "tune or veg out," these are moments to "tune in" more closely to your experience and to respond to life with more clarity and wisdom.



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### Awareness of breathing

Focus your attention on your breathing. Notice your breath as you inhale and as you exhale. Take time to observe your breath and just breathe without forcing it to change in any way. See if you can become aware of your breathing in your abdomen. Place your hand on your belly and notice how it rises and falls. Continue to focus on your breathing as you breathe in and out. When you find your mind wandering, just bring it back gently to your focus on the breath.

(Rosenberg, 1999).



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### Body awareness

Notice whether your body is tense or relaxed. If any parts are tight or constricted, observe the tension and then see if you can soften it or gently let it go. Try tensing this part of your body even more for a second, notice the sensation, and then release it. Don't try to force the tension out or push it away. Bringing gentle awareness and acceptance to the way your body is, without resistance or struggle, can help to reduce the tension that you find. Become aware of your body when you are standing, walking, or engaged in physical exercise. When in motion, be mindful of how your body feels and see if you can focus again on the natural rhythm of your breath.

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### Awareness of thoughts



- Take a moment to see where your thoughts are. Are they focused on what you are doing right now, or are they somewhere else? If they are far away—back in the past or ahead in the future—notice them and bring them back to what you are doing in the present.
- Apply the same curious observation to the content of your thinking itself. Watch your thoughts as they come and go, without holding on to some or pushing away others. Over time you may learn that your thoughts are just thoughts—nothing more. Instead of actively changing your thoughts, mindful attention may enable you to change your relationship to them.

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### Social support

- The relationships you have with family, friends, and colleagues are a vital source of nurturance and comfort.
  - concrete assistance
  - valuable information, and
  - companionship
  - foster a sense of belonging and shared commonality on one hand, and
  - acknowledgment and validation for your uniqueness on the other.
- We are used to being caretakers for others, but many of us are reluctant to allow others to take care of us. Examine your willingness to be on the receiving end of social support, pay attention to your need for help when it occurs, and learn how to build interactions that foster support into your day.

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### Altruism

Find small ways to give to others. Whether it's a warm smile to a stranger, attentive listening to a family member or friend, or planned volunteer activity for a social cause, mindfulness in the form of active compassion helps to transform the stress of both the giver and the receiver alike (Hafen, Karren, Frandsen, & Smith, 1996).

Choose activities that are different from your job, and steer away from those that will only add a new layer of stress.



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### Create Your Plan



- What takes energy from you?
- What pushes your buttons?
- Who are the people that you struggle with interactions?
- What activities can you do?
- How frequently do you engage in this?
- What benefits do you notice after the activity?

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### QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

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**TAKE CARE OF  
YOURSELF**

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