

# Compassion Fatigue

## Fostering the Resilience of the Helping Professional



VTSCA Conference Workshop  
October 29, 2018

Joelle van Lent, Psy.D.  
Licensed Psychologist- doctorate

**Compassion Satisfaction** can be defined as feeling for someone in a manner that allows you to help & support without taking on their anguish as a solution or outcome.

Transforming the Pain (Saakvitne & Pearlman, 1996)

**Compassion Fatigue** is a “disorder that affects those who do their work well.”

“It is characterized by deep emotional and physical exhaustion and by a shift in the helper’s sense of hope and optimism about the future and the value of their work.”

(Dr Charles Figley, 1995)

**Vicarious Trauma** is “the transformation of the helper’s inner experience, resulting from empathic engagement with another’s traumatic material.”

**Burnout** is a different concept and a potential outcome of challenging work.

\* V.T. is inevitable and also unique to the individual/situation.

\* Burnout is avoidable and typically will require support to return that individual to a healthy baseline of functioning.

Overcoming Compassion Fatigue (Martha Teater and John Ludgate, 2014)

# Signs of Compassion Fatigue

- Cognitive-sluggishness, inability to process
- Emotional-anger, sadness, depressive symptoms
- Behavioral-maladaptive avoidance
- Spiritual-change in worldview
- Interpersonal-strained relationships, self-isolation, cynicism
- Physical-headaches, stomach aches, lethargy, etc.
- Job Performance-tardiness, missed meetings, avoidance of certain students
- Morale-negativity toward workplace
- Inability to stop thinking about work/students during personal time

# Student Characteristics & Situational Factors

- Severe, prolonged exposure to trauma (often generational).
- Vulnerability of population- children, women, and marginalized groups of people.
- Oppressing & isolating situations.
- Demographics of the student & similarity to helper.
- Personality of the student.
- Manner of coping of the student.

(Transforming the Pain (Saakvitne & Pearlman, 1996) & Overcoming Compassion Fatigue (Martha Teater and John Ludgate, 2014)

# Professional's Risk Factors

Professional's personal history of trauma

Present-day life stressors

Personal beliefs, world view, & manner of coping

Training on trauma & self-care

Stage of professional development

Willingness to seek support

Expectations of professional self

**Empathy**

(Transforming the Pain (Saakvitne & Pearlman, 1996) & Overcoming Compassion Fatigue (Martha Teater and John Ludgate, 2014))

# Workplace Risk Factors

Burden of responsibility

Productivity Demands

Lack of debriefing in a timely manner & access to ongoing mentoring

Isolation from support of co-workers

Isolation from family & friends

Access to training

Flexibility & involvement of employer

Transforming the Pain (Saakvitne & Pearlman, 1996) & Overcoming Compassion Fatigue (Martha Teater and John Ludgate, 2014)

# Societal Risk Factors

- Lack of resources
- Prejudice
- High tolerance for violence in general
- The de-sensitization of violence through the media
- Victim blaming
- World events that contribute to a sense of despair or hopelessness.

(Transforming the Pain (Saakvitne & Pearlman, 1996)

# Compassion Satisfaction

Positive aspects of our professional identity:

- Pride in the service that you & your colleagues provide
- Comfort with co-workers & work environment
- Pride in the individual talents & resources that you bring to the job

Overcoming Compassion Fatigue (Martha Teater and John Ludgate, 2014)

# Resiliency Factors of the Care Provider

- resourcefulness
- social support
- compassion with healthy detachment
- having vision, goals, and purpose
- altruism
- emotional hardiness and flexibility
- humor
- optimism and hope
- flexibility & an open mind
- adaptability
- active approach to problem solving
- healthy, accurate self-esteem
- spirituality

# The ABC's of Building Your own Resilience

## Awareness

- Stay attuned to needs, limits, emotions, listen to your body, listen to others, practice mindfulness

## Balance

- Work, play, rest
- Inner balance

## Connection

- To others, self, something larger
- Communicate
- Receive validation and support

Transforming the Pain (Saakvitne & Pearlman, 1996)

- Be intentional and thoughtful about how you measure your success and competency.
- Practice Mindfulness: Paying attention to your life, here and now, with kindness and curiosity. (Saltzman, A, 2011)
- Seek mentorship- what would people who have been doing this longer than you suggest?
- Slow down and assess before you jump in. Don't make assumptions!

# The Art of Offering Support

- Productive venting!
- Tell the title- not the whole article
  - Discussion of themes & responses without getting lost in the details or the story
- Listening without trying to “fix” or “solve”

Ideas for leading conversations on this topic in your schools.

Beyond the Cliff: Laura van Dernoot Lipsky

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uOzDGrcvmus&t=12s>

A great link to read and learn more.

<https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/52281/secondary-traumatic-stress-for-educators-understanding-and-mitigating-the-effects>

# Compassion Fatigue Resources

- PROQOL: Professional Quality of Life Scale, B. Hudnall Stamm, 2009-2012 [www.proqol.org](http://www.proqol.org)
- Teater, Martha and John Ludgate. *Overcoming Compassion Fatigue: A practical resilience workbook.*
- van Dernoot Lipsky, Laura and Connie Burk. *Trauma Stewardship: An everyday guide caring for self while caring for others.*
- Saakvitne, Karen and Laurie Anne Pearlman. *Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization.*

# Recommended Resources

## Books

Denton, Paula. The Power of our Words: Teacher Language that Helps Children Learn.

Greene, Ross W., and J. Stuart. Ablon. Treating Explosive Kids: The Collaborative Problem-Solving Approach.

Kuypers, Leah M., and Michelle Garcia. Winner. The Zones of Regulation: A Curriculum Designed to Foster Self-regulation and Emotional Control.

Siegel, Daniel J., and Tina Payne. Bryson. The Whole-brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind.

Souers, Kristin. Fostering Resilient Learners. Strategies for Creating a Trauma-Sensitive Classroom.

The MindUp Curriculum. Brain-focused strategies for learning- and living.

Willis, Judy, M.D. Research-Based Strategies to Ignite Student Learning.

## Websites

Center on the Developing Child- Harvard University- [www.developingchild.harvard.edu](http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu)

Books that heal kids. <http://booksthathealkids.blogspot.com/>

ARC Model: <http://arcframework.org/>