

Mitigating Secondary Trauma experienced by **SCHOOL PROFESSIONALS**



Margaret Howell, MSW, LICSW

Assistant Professor of Social Work

School Social Work Program Coordinator

Trauma Informed Faculty Facilitator

Andrews University



Icebreaker: Human Billboard

- ▶ Using the flip chart and the markers write words, or draw symbols, pictures that best describe you and one way you care of you. Be creative!!!
 - ▶ After 10 minutes are over, cut an X at the top of the flip chart so can you put their head through it and wear their flip chart like a human billboard and it's draping in front of you.
 - ▶ Walk around the room, chat and explain to each other what your human billboard says about you, and tell them how you take care of yourself.
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Course Objectives

- ▶ Understand what secondary trauma is and recognize the symptoms.
- ▶ Recognize the wide range of difficulties that school professionals/social workers with secondary trauma experience.
(Trauma core concept #12: Working with trauma exposed children can evoke distress in providers that make it more difficult to provide good care.)
- ▶ Identify strategies for mitigating secondary trauma and explore helpful resources for those experiencing it.



What is Secondary Trauma or Compassion Fatigue?

- Compassion fatigue has been described as the “cost of caring” for others in emotional pain (Figley, 1982).
 - It is also called “vicarious traumatization” or “secondary traumatization” (Figley, 1995).
 - It differs from burnout, but the two can co-exist!.
 - Burnout is a cumulative process, marked by emotional exhaustion and withdrawal associated with increased workload and institutional stress, not trauma-related.
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The difference between Vicarious/(Secondary) Trauma, Compassion Fatigue and Burnout

- ▶ **Compassion Fatigue** (CF) refers to “the profound emotional and physical erosion that takes place when helpers are unable to refuel and regenerate”.
- ▶ **Vicarious Trauma** (VT) is” the profound shift in world view that occurs in helping professionals when they work with clients who have experienced trauma: Their fundamental beliefs about the world are altered and possibly damaged by being repeatedly exposed to traumatic material. (Pearlman & Saakvitne (1995)
- ▶ **Burnout** describes the physical and emotional exhaustion that workers can experience when they have low job satisfaction and feel powerless and overwhelmed at work. Burnout can be resolved fairly easily. i.e., changing jobs
- ▶ **CF and VT** is not easily resolved. They are cumulative over time and evident in our personal and professional lives. They are also an occupational hazard of working in the social work field. (Saakvitne & Pearlman, 1996



What is Secondary Trauma?

Secondary trauma affects many dimensions of your well-being.

- – Nervous system arousal (Sleep disturbance)
- – Emotional intensity increases
- – Cognitive ability decreases
- – Behavior and judgment is impaired
- – Isolation and loss of morale
- – Depression and PTSD
- – Loss of self-worth and emotional modulation
- – Identity, worldview, and spirituality is impacted
- – Beliefs and psychological needs-safety, trust, esteem, intimacy, and control
- – Loss of hope and meaning=existential despair
- – Anger toward perpetrators or causal events



Self Assessment

- ▶ Take some time to complete the Compassion Fatigue Self Assessment.
 - ▶ What did you learn about yourself?
 - ▶ What changes do you need to consider, to set healthy emotional boundaries as a helping professional?
 - ▶ What supports do you need?
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Social Work/School Professional work

<https://youtu.be/f8Flrc7UClI>



Group Activity

Difficulties, challenges experienced



Strategies for Intervention and Prevention

- **Awareness:** Identify steps that you can take to become more aware
 - **Balance:** What boundaries can you set up to create healthy space
 - **Connection:** How healthy is your support system? How can this impact the way you respond to trauma and how you prevent secondary trauma compassion fatigue?
 - **Help for the Helper**
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Resources

- ▶ **Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project.**
<http://www.compassionfatigue.org/>
- ▶ **Empowered to Connect.** <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/>
- ▶ Rothschild, Babette (2006) ***Help for the Helper: self care strategies for managing burnout and stress.*** New York
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