



Student Wellness Begins with Us

The Impact of Compassion Fatigue, Secondary Traumatic Stress, and Burnout & How We Can Cope

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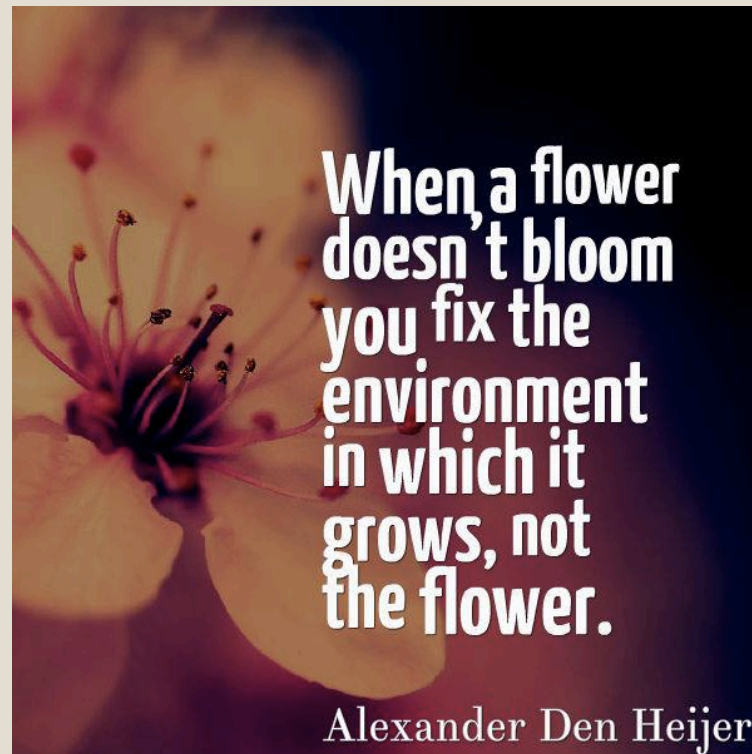
Why does this topic matter?

Schools are changing...


- Schools are becoming increasingly stressful environments to work in
- US Department of Education Data:
 - 79% of public schools across the country reported one or more incidents of violence, theft, or other crimes on their campuses for a total of 1.4 million crimes (Zhang, Musu-Gillette, & Oudekerk, 2016).
 - Teachers are often the first to see and deal with the impact of incidents of violence, traumatic incidents including student suicide, terrorist attacks, school shootings, and natural disasters (Zhang, Musu-Gillette et al., 2016).

The wellness of our youth starts with US

- We must cultivate the climate – we must nourish to flourish



Pulling weeds doesn't grow gardens



Curing the negatives does not produce the positives.

Martin E.P. Seligman

quotefancy

**Consistently working with pain and
trauma changes us**

There is not enough data on the long term impact of working with trauma for helping professionals but...

- Between 40-80% of “helping professionals” develop vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, and/or high rates of traumatic symptoms(Mathieu, 2015)

*“The expectation that we
CAN BE IMMERSED IN SUFFERING
AND LOSS DAILY AND NOT BE
touched by it is as unrealistic
as expecting to be able to
walk through water without
getting wet.”*

-Rachel Naomi Remen

Stress is: pressure or tension exerted onto something

- **Our bodies respond to physical stress and psychological stress in the same way: We will have both physiological and psychological reactions**
- **Physical Manifestations of stress:**
 - Stress Manifests physiologically before it manifests emotionally
 - Being in tune with your body is critical
 - Panic attacks/unmanageable anxiety is our body letting us know we are in the danger zone
- **Emotional Experience of Chronic Stress:**
 - Depression
 - Anxiety: Tension, fatigue, irritability
 - Reminder: Anxiety is a response to thoughts and these thoughts will creep into day to day life and dreams and trigger a stress response
 - Impatience, apathy, sadness
 - Behaviors begin to disrupt relationships (personal and work)

COPING is the antidote to stress...

- Every part of a person, including mind, body, spirit, and relationships is affected by the challenges of daily life
- Each part of a person can also be called upon as a resource for managing life's challenges
- Coping is a skill that must be developed on an ongoing basis. As we change, our coping skills may also need to change.

Stress is what you think & feel about what happens to you.

- If you change what you think about what is going on around you, you can change how you react
- You CAN control the amount of stress in your life
- You CAN choose to do things that create peace for you
- You CAN take charge of the fearful, worried, and anxious thoughts

(Wheeler, 2007)

Secondary Traumatic Stress:

- The presence of re-experiencing, increased arousal and/or avoidance symptoms with rapid onset, following at least one indirect exposure to trauma – similar to PTSD symptoms (Figley, 1999)

Vicarious Trauma:

- Occurs when the stories we hear transfer onto us in a way where we too are traumatized by the images and details despite not experiencing them ourselves – it is CUMMULATIVE – it's not the most difficult story you have heard, it's the culmination the thousands of stories you have heard. These stories can change your world view and challenge our perception of safety.
- **“It is not something client’s do to us; it’s a human consequence of knowing, caring, and facing the reality of trauma.”**

-Laurie Anne Perlman & Karen Saakvitne

Compassion Fatigue:

- This is a pronounced change in the helpers ability to feel empathy for youth/clients/students, loved ones, and co-workers. Tragedy becomes “normal” for us, almost like desensitization, and it begins to affect our home life. (Example)
- “Compassion Fatigue is a disorder that affects those who do their job well”
- “Compassion fatigue is the cost of caring,” – Charles Figly

Burnout



- A long term stress reaction of helping professional who work with people that is usually attributed to work related factors (Noushadd, 2008)
- This is the culmination of all of the stress: people, politics, agency, and client work
- Usually associated with those who have been in the field longer

Compassion Satisfaction

- Characterized by positive relationships with colleagues and the conviction that one's work makes a meaningful contribution to youth and to society.
- Things to remember:
 - After we hold the pain for our youth, we need to give the backpack back! It's not ours!
 - Having this insight and self-awareness into how we are impacted is a gift that allows us to heal ourselves
 - We need to give ourselves a balanced personal life so we can jump into the chaos

(Figley, 2002)

Compassion Satisfaction & Post-Traumatic Growth

We know that as a result of exposure to trauma and crisis, individuals can respond and adjust in three ways:

- (1) Continued Impairment
- (2) Return to Baseline
- (3) Post-Traumatic Growth

(Jaycox et al., 2012; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2014)

Building compassion satisfaction, resilience, and posttraumatic growth requires school staff to make an intentional commitment to their wellness.

(Sadler-Gehrhardt & Stevenson (2011)

So what do we do...

A friendly reminder that

doing your best,

doesn't mean working
yourself to the point of a
mental breakdown



Activity

- Professional Quality of Life Scale Self-Care Assessment Worksheet
- Is anyone willing to share something they discovered or something that surprised them?

Provider Resilience App

- This is geared for military service providers, but it is still relevant for our work:

“Provider Resilience gives health care providers tools to guard against burnout and compassion fatigue as they help service members, veterans, and their families. Your responses to a short self-assessment create ratings of your risk for compassion fatigue, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress. These ratings can also be viewed as graphs so you can monitor them over time. A clock showing time since your last day off, inspirational cards, stretches, and Dilbert comics all encourage you to take restful breaks critical to avoiding burnout. Finally, videos by service members describing the positive impact health care providers had in their lives are there when you need a reminder of the value of what you do.”

Provider Resilience App



Mindfulness: The Benefits

- Variety of physical, psychological and social benefits
- Boosts our immune system's ability to fight off illness
- Increases positive emotions while reducing negative emotions and stress
- Increases stress resilience
- Expands attention span
- Expands working memory
- **Boosts workplace morale & compassion**

(Chaskalson, 2011; Davidson & Kabat-Zin, 2003)

Positive Psychology: Flow

- Also called “the zone”: A mental state where a person is fully immersed, energized, and enjoying an activity
- Happiness is essential for us to feel our flow – happiness must be practiced and cultivated
- The sense of flow is connected to the release of endorphins
- Loosing track of time and sinking into the moment is a sign of being in the flow



NOTHING



INTENSE
CONCENTRATION,
NO ATTENTION
FOR PROBLEMS



Getting in the FLOW for us:

- Be mindful, remain present in the moment whether in or out of work
- Take a break from technology
- Finds something that brings you pleasure and concentrate on that
- Enjoy the journey of your work and conversations, rather than focusing on the final product or the end
- Don't attach to negative thoughts
- Stay in a situation until you feel in your heart that it's finished

Building Belonging:

Loneliness' is as harmful for your well-being as smoking 15 cigarettes a day and as you age, loneliness increases your risks of high blood pressure, heart disease, and dementia. We are losing our connections often due to screen time!

Consider the Flashlight of Attention – for 15 solid minutes every day be present with someone (How present are you in your relationships?)

Reflect on Purpose:

What is your “why?” What drives you? What inspires you? Those with a firm sense of purpose are more likely to report being happy, have lower risk of heart disease, and live 7 years longer than those who don't. You can bring your purpose to work. What do you love to do and how can you share it with the kids?

Engage in Self-Compassion:

How do you treat the friends you care about the most? Do you think/treat yourself the same way? You can't help someone else and save yourself at the same time

Thankfulness:

An attitude of gratitude...increases happiness and life satisfaction, feelings of optimism, joy, pleasure, and enthusiasm. Gratitude strengthens the immune system, lowers blood pressure, and helps us sleep better. It also boosts resilience strengthens relationships, and reduced both anxiety and depression.

Consider that expressing appreciation for others makes an impact!

Harness Your Thoughts:

Remember that comparison is the thief of joy ... you are the DJ of your mind chose your songs wisely. Sometimes it's easy to get caught in negative mindsets, challenge this!

Our Battery Tank...

- We must be fully charged to be able to fulfill the basics in our own lives – whatever flows out is what we have to give to others.
- Youth can be compromised by a staff that is emotionally depleted
- Do not be defined by your work! You are much more than a staff (Son, Daughter, Mother, Father, Sister, Brother, Partner, Friend)
- We are facilitators: Our youth are on their own journey – we guide, they choose

Reminders:

- Sometimes over thinking takes our joy
- Stress and anxiety are rooted in the future
- Sadness can sometimes be rooted in the past
- We will help more youth if we are aware, healthy, and centered
- The process of letting go is releasing that which does not serve us so that we can be of better service to others
- Acknowledge what it is you have been stuffing/carrying inside
- A thought is harmless unless we believe it – it's not our thoughts but our attachments to our thoughts that causes suffering.

Self-Care

- The big stuff: vacations, hobbies, exercise, social interactions, massages, sleep, diet
- The little stuff: This REALLY matters – these are the simple daily tasks that we can do to nurture, protect, and heal ourselves during our regular days

EXCUSES!!!

- I know self care is a good idea, but I don't have time
- Everything I like to do for self care is expensive
- I feel bad taking time for myself when there is so much to do
- I already exercise and take vacations, that's enough
- I am too tired
- I have too many responsibilities
- I don't want to appear weak and vulnerable...like I can't handle this job

Essentials of Self Care

- Developing healthy habits
- Setting boundaries
- Asking for and accepting help
- Manage perfectionist tendencies (!!!!!)
- Never let self care fall to the back burner
- Implement small changes to take care of Yourself!





Self-Care: The “little things”

- Day to day ways to integrate self care:
 - Keep a gratitude journal – write 3 “gratitudes” at the end of each day
 - Journal to reflect upon aspects of your work that touched you
 - Practice self love: challenge negative automatic thoughts, praise yourself, create a positive self talk dialogue, positive affirmations! (see handout)
 - Every day focus on 3 qualities that you value in yourself
 - When feeling self-doubt, focus on the positive qualities you have identified
 - Deep breathing (What color is stressful for you? What color is calm and loving for you? Breathe in the love, exhale the stress)
 - Respect yourself
 - Let go of the “shoulds” and deal with “what is”
 - HUGS – a 20 second hug reduces the harmful physical effects of stress (blood pressure and heart rate) – a 10 second hug a day fights infection and boosts your immune system, fights fatigue, and fights depression
 - Social Support – it’s important to have good and kind connections to others – we need a community – stay connected to compassionate friends
 - Mindfulness, Read, Write, Sweat, Cry, Pray/Meditate/Spirituality

Self-Care: Be Kind to Yourself

- You are not a super hero
- **The needs in our work will always be greater than the resources**
- The suffering of our youth is not your own
- Be moved by passion and enthusiasm for your work
- Replenish yourself daily
- Know that you are a bright light that banishes darkness

(Ashley Davis Bush)



One more lesson...



Risk factors are NOT
predictive factors because of
protective factors. Each and
every one of you is a
PROTECTIVE FACTOR for our
youth.



THANK YOU!!

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