Putting On the Oxygen Mask While Flying the Plane: Caring for Yourself and Others When Dealing with Toxic Stress

School Nurses
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HEALTHY CHILDREN LEARN BETTER
SCHOOL NURSES MAKE IT HAPPEN

The Three E's of Trauma

- EVENT and circumstances that involves actual or a threat of physical or psychological harm or severe life-threatening neglect

- **The individual's** EXPERIENCE of these events determine whether it is a traumatic event.

- The long-lasting adverse EFFECTS of the event

- Therefore only the person themselves can determine whether something was traumatic

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study

Summary of Findings

• Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are very common

• ACEs are strong predictors of health risks & disease from adolescence to adulthood

• This combination of findings makes ACEs one of the leading, if not the leading determinant of the health & social well-being of our nation

CDC

Why Do I Need to Understand Trauma?

- Nearly one in three adolescents have been physically or sexually assaulted by the age of 16 (Boney-McCoy & Finkelhor, 1995)

- Violent Crime victimization in youth is twice as high as that for adults (Hashima and Finkelhor, 1999)

- Rates of PTSD among adults who were formerly placed in foster care was found to be twice as high as rates as in US War veterans (Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study, Pecora, et al., 2005)

- More than 35 percent of children exposed to a single traumatic event will develop serious mental health problems

Trauma Effects All Aspects of Life

- Trauma changes the actual **structure** of the brain (especially in very young children).
- It also changes the way the brain **works**.
- Results in problems with individual's social lives, ability to think clearly, and with emotional control.
- Following trauma people often adopt health risk behaviors to cope, like eating disorders, smoking, substance abuse, self-harm, sexual promiscuity, and violence.
- People with trauma also die at a younger age.

Impact on Worldview
Typical Development vs. Developmental Trauma

- Nurturing & stable attachments with adults
- Belief in a predictable & benevolent world/ generally good things will happen to me
- Feeling of positive self-worth /others will see my strengths
- Optimism about the future
- Feeling that I can have a positive impact on the world

- Basic mistrust of adults/inability to depend on others
- Belief that the world is an unsafe place/bad things will happen & they are usually my fault
- Assumption that others will not like me
- Fear & pessimism about future
- Feelings of hopelessness & lack of control

ACE & School Performance

- Children who have been traumatized:
  - 2.5x more likely to fail a grade in school
  - Score lower on standardized achievement tests
  - Have more struggles in receptive & expressive language
  - Are suspended & expelled more often
  - More frequently placed in special education

Impact on Learning and Behavior

- Language and Communication Skills
- Cause-and-Effect Relationships
- Taking Another's Perspective
- Attentiveness to Classroom Tasks
- Regulating Emotions
- Executive Functions

- Reactivity and Impulsivity
- Aggression
- Defiance
- Withdrawal
- Perfectionism
- Impact on Relationship

Journey to Trauma Informed School

Support from School

Change the question or perspective from

"What's wrong with you?"
to
"What happened to you?".

A Culture Shift: The Core Principles of a Being A Trauma-Informed Agency

- <u>Safety</u>: Ensuring physical and emotional safety

- <u>Trustworthiness</u>: Maximizing trustworthiness, making tasks clear, and maintaining appropriate boundaries

- <u>Choice</u>: Prioritizing consumer choice and control

- <u>Collaboration</u>: Maximizing collaboration and sharing of power with consumers

- <u>Empowerment</u>: Prioritizing consumer empowerment and skill-building

Major Steps in Becoming Trauma Informed

- Staff training on trauma

- Focus on staff well-being

- Review of policies and practices

- Review of environment

- Partnership with behavioral and physical health providers

- Leadership in community

Addressing Needs of Students with Trauma

- Understanding triggers
  - Mostly sensory in nature
  - A reminder of the past trauma
  - Student may not be aware
- Understanding Re-enactments
  - May engage in provocative behavior
  - Pulls the adult into the re-enactment
  - Adult requires self-monitoring
  - Adult needs to handle strong emotions
  - Assist in regulation rather than punishment
 - Safety Plans

Directing Attention

- **Student's brain in survival mode with** attention focused on threats to safety, may have intrusive thoughts
  - Build trust
  - Predictability
  - Prompts and reminders

- Oversensitive to anything that may be threat
  - Activities/Overstimulation   -Tone of Voice
  - Name calling   -Physical boundaries

Regulating Emotions

- Fight, flight or freeze/hyper or hypo-aroused

- Movement
  - Rocking, swinging, rhythmic
  - Big movements
  - Deep breathing
  - Validation and self-reflection
  - Muscle relaxation
  - Comfort rooms and corners
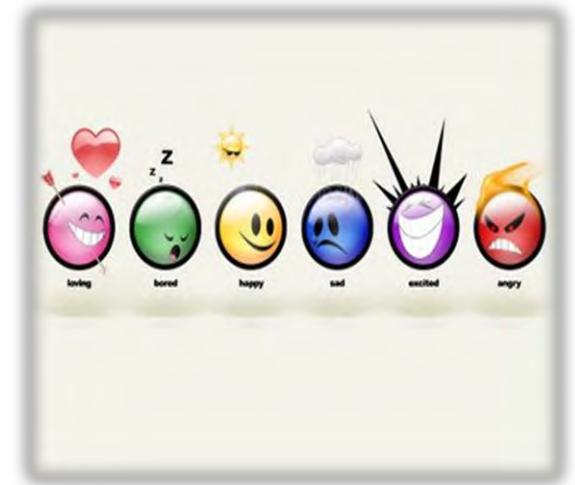
Some Tools and Ideas

- Movement or breathing breaks for all students

- Body Awareness and Mindfulness
  - Start of school day
  - Start of a class
  - Start of an activity
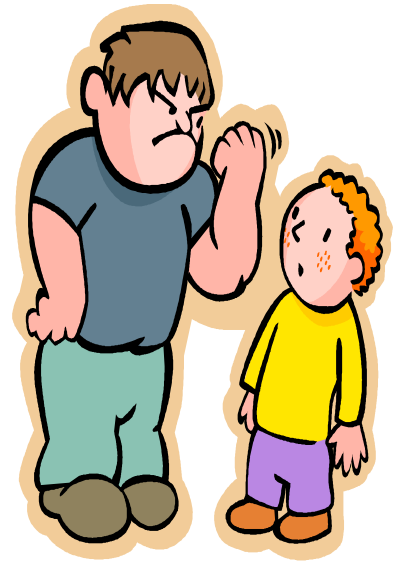 - End of class
  - End of day

Environment

Hallways

Sounds

LIGHTING

SECURITY

Bathrooms

Re-traumatizing School Environments

- Crowded, bustling hallways
- Noise level
- Bullying
- Locked/restricted areas
- Zero Tolerance

Taking Care of Yourself

Put on the Oxygen Mask

Self care is not self indulgence.

Self care is self respect.

– gateway–
women.com

Types of Stress

- These terms are complementary and yet different from one another in cause and impact.

- 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) refers to the profound shift in world view that occurs in helping professions when working with clients who have experienced trauma: helpers notice that their fundamental beliefs about the world are altered and possibly damaged by being repeatedly exposed to traumatic material.

- Burnout is physical and emotional exhaustion experienced when there is low job satisfaction and feelings of powerless and being overwhelmed at work. Burnout does not necessarily mean that our view of the world has been damaged, or that we have lost the ability to feel compassion for others.

PROQOL

Professional Quality of Life

Compassion Satisfaction

Compassion Fatigue
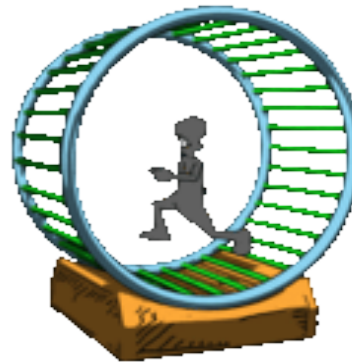
Burnout

Secondary Trauma
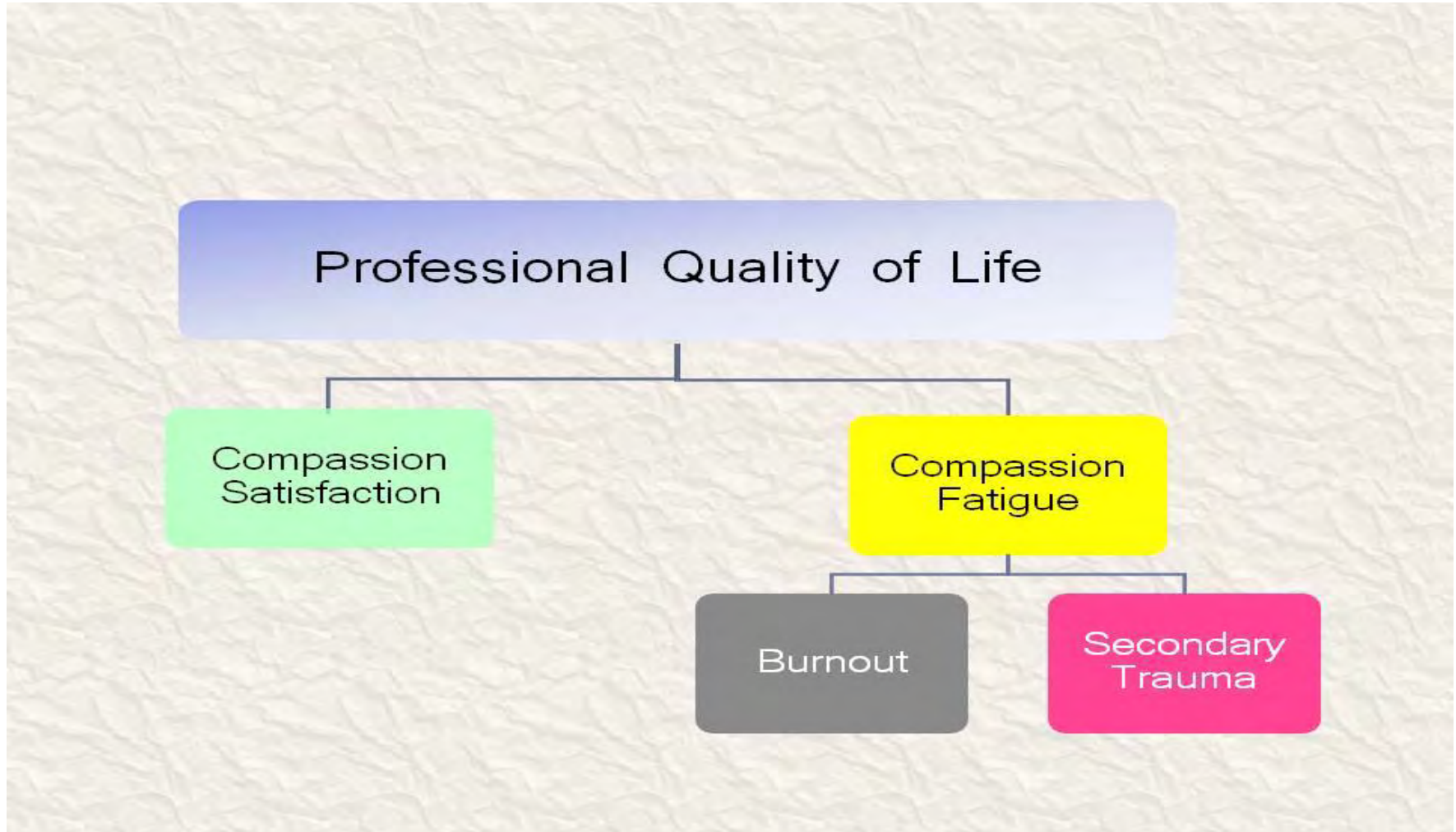
Resiliency Planning

- Individual, personally
  - The ProQOL can help you plan where to put your energy to increase resilience

- Organizational planning
  - Can help organizations find ways to maximize the positive aspects and reduce the negative aspects of helping

- Supportive Supervision
  - The ProQOL can be used as information for discussions

What Causes Burnout?

- **Lack of Control Over One's Destiny**

- Lack of Occupational Feedback and Communication

- Work Overload or Underload

- Contact overload resulting from the necessity for frequent encounters with other people in order to carry out job functions.

- 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.

Excerpts from Job Burnout in Public Education: Symptoms, Causes, and Survival Skills, written by Anthony J. Cedoline, 1982 by the Teachers College, Columbia University.

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

Taking Care of Your Health

- Sleep
- Healthy Eating
- Physical Activities
- Emotional Care
- Social Connectedness
- Cognitive Exercises
- Financial Health
- Spirituality

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

Some Techniques

What You Can Do

- Movement
  - Big Muscles
  - Repetitive
  - Rhythmic

- Breathing

- Mindfulness/Meditation

- Balance of Socialization and Time Alone

KEEP CALM AND LIVE A HEALTHY LIFE

Social Support

- Relationships with family, friends, and colleagues are a vital source of nurturance and comfort.
    - concrete assistance,
    - valuable information,
    - companionship
    - foster a sense of belonging and shared commonality on one hand, and
    - acknowledgment and validation

- 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.

Create Your Plan

- What takes energy from you?
- What pushes your buttons?
- Who are the with whom you struggle?
- Who can you turn to for help?
- What activities can you do?
- How frequently do you engage in this?
- What benefits do you
  notice after the activity?

Resources

- National Child Traumatic Stress Network, http://www.nctsnet.org

- Bessel van der Kolk, http://www.traumacenter.org and <u>The Body Keeps the Score</u>

- Helping Traumatized Children Learn, Massachusetts Advocates for Children 2005 http://www.massadvocates.org/documents/HTCL_9-09.pdf

- The Heart of Learning and Teaching Compassion, Resiliency & Academic Success Wolpow, Ray; Johnson, Mona M.; Hertel, Ron; Kincaid, Susan O. 2009 http://www.k12.wa.us/CompassionateSchools/pubdocs/TheHeartofLearningandTeaching.pdf

Resources

- State of Wisconsin Toolkit
  http://www.dpi.wi.gov/sspw/mhtrauma.html

- American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry www.aacap.org/clinical/ptsdsum.htm

- ProQOL -
  http://www.proqol.org/Compassion_Fatigue.html

- Superfriend (well-being in the workplace)
  https://www.superfriend.com.au/

- Mind Matters (Mentally Healthy schools)
  https://www.mindmatters.edu.au/spotlights/staff-wellbeing