

Caring Safely®

Trauma-Informed Education Practices
The Concepts of Caring Safely

The prevalence of trauma

Over 70% of the population has experienced one or more traumatic events in their life

Trauma can happen from many life experiences, such as:

- Physical or sexual abuse, domestic violence, bullying, community violence
- Abandonment, neglect, or betrayal of trust (such as abuse from a primary caregiver)
- Death or loss of a loved one, life-threatening natural disaster
- Automobile accident, life-threatening health situation
- Caregiver having a life-threatening illness
- Military service
- Workplace trauma – primary or secondary

Why trauma-informed education practices

- A trauma-informed approach means approaching each person with the understanding that it's possible they have experienced one or more traumatic events, and that these events may impact their current health, behaviors and/or coping strategies in ways we can't see.
- While the content we'll review will not contain graphic details of trauma, it's recognize that talking about trauma in general can impact each person differently and may cause stress, so it's important to recognize this before beginning and create a plan to address any stress/distress that may arise.
- I would recommend people do this before all learning events that may include discussions on mental/physical health or social/political/media events that may include discussions of trauma.

Strength and Resilience

- Most people who experience a trauma will not develop post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Most people who have lived through adverse experiences have developed strengths and resilience and some have even grown through post-traumatic growth.
- Having a history of trauma or adverse experiences does not mean someone will struggle forever, focusing on strengths and increasing resilience can help people overcome their past trauma.
- Trauma informed practice means knowing there is hope for everyone, focusing on strengths, connecting to resources and increasing resilience. You can do this for yourself as a student and with the people you work with.

Building resilience

- Learning how to manage stress/distress is an important part of building resilience in those who have experienced trauma.
- This means learning how to reduce stress when it begins to rise.
- It also means doing things to reduce and prevent stress overall.
- One way to reduce and prevent stress is to regularly seek support, information, resources and guidance when struggling or dealing with something new.

Connecting to Community and Personal Resources

- Community and personal supports may include:
 - Family and friends
 - Peers and colleagues
 - Counselors, health care providers
 - Yoga, Spiritual or Religious community
 - Cultural communities or volunteer groups
 - Online communities
 - Local services for mental health
 - Local crisis or distress services

Healthy ways to manage stress/distress

- Take a break from what is causing you stress
- Practice something that promotes relaxation (deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, guided visualization, meditation, prayer)
- Move your body – go for a walk, a run, a workout, do yoga, stretch.
- Connect with supports or talk to a friend
- Check in and make sure you're hydrating and eating regularly
- Make sure you're getting adequate sleep
- Keep a file of images of things that comfort you or things you are grateful for
- Connect with health care providers as needed

Respectful learning environments

- You will not be asked to share/discuss personal traumas
- As a teacher I will be facilitating to ensure we don't share graphic details of trauma
- We may discuss case examples with various populations and people who have experienced trauma and psychiatric illness. If you identify as part of a population we discuss, you will not be made to feel as though you need to share your experiences. As a teacher I will do my best to ensure a respectful learning environment when discussing all topics, particularly topics around specific populations.

Learner Self-Care Plan

1. What you will do if you begin to feel distress during a discussion/reading/video, such as leaving the room for a break or take a break from the material?
2. How you will care for yourself if you feel distress, such as; practicing relaxation or mindfulness, prayer, spiritual practice, connecting with a support, exercise, music etc.?
3. What resources you will connect with if you feel your distress is increasing and you're not able to manage it, such as local resources, school resources, community resources?

Optional Activity

Caring Safely®

The Concepts of Caring Safely

The Concepts

The Concepts:

- Compassion
- Compassion Satisfaction
- Compassion Fatigue
- Vicarious Trauma
- Burnout
- Vicarious Posttraumatic Growth
- Sustainable Caring
- Worksheet – Connecting the Concepts

What is Compassion?

“Compassion is defined as the emotional response when perceiving suffering and involves an authentic desire to help” (Seppala, 2013)

“Compassion...involves the recognition and clear seeing of suffering. It also involves feelings of kindness for people who are suffering, so that desire to help – to ameliorate suffering – emerges.” (Neff, 2011)

Two components: identifying with humans suffering and a desire or motivation to do something to relieve this suffering.

Compassion Satisfaction

CS is about the pleasure you derive from being able to do your work well. For example, you may feel like it is a pleasure to help others through your work. You may feel positively about your colleagues or your ability to contribute to the work setting or even the greater good of society.

Professional Quality of Life Screening

Descriptions of Compassion Satisfaction

- “I really like having people get better. It is really wonderful helping people.””
- “I did make a difference, I did make it better. I’m in the right profession. I should be here.”
- “The rewards outweigh the challenges by far/”
- “There is no other feeling that can compare to really helping someone who is struggling”

Rewards of Compassion

Compassion leads to connection, which correlates to:

- Better mental and physical health
- Speeds up recovery of disease
- May lengthen our lifespan
- Strengthens our immune system
- Improves self-esteem
- Lowers anxiety and depression
- Increases empathy, trust and cooperation with others = more connection!

Compassion Fatigue

- On a spectrum from mild to severe symptoms.
- A pronounced change in the ability to feel empathy for clients, loved ones and co-workers.
- Deep physical and emotional exhaustion
- Described as feeling you have nothing left to give.
- May or may not include vicarious trauma/secondary traumatic stress
- May lead to burnout with diagnosable mental health condition, such as major depression, generalized anxiety, panic disorder, PTSD.
- It's a serious, but natural, consequence of regularly helping people who are suffering and traumatized.

Descriptions of Compassion Fatigue

- “When you have nothing left to give, you have given so much there is nothing left.”
- “Too many demands – not enough resiliency. It’s a predictable phenomenon.”
- “CF is where you are just listening to this stuff and feeling hopeless and helpless and your being there isn’t changing anything.”
- “Because of your kindness, compassion and empathy, you start to absorb the emotions and reactions of the people you are helping.”
- “The cumulative toll that we, as individuals, experience as a result of exposure to suffering, hardship, crisis and trauma.”

Descriptions of Compassion Fatigue

- “It’s as though I don’t have anymore to give emotionally, so I lose empathy for them.”
- “I become cynical or disbelieving in what they say.”
- Dealing with sick people and giving them what they need emotionally... you just give, give, give all the time.”
- “Every time I’m at work, I feel dread. It’s hard to fill my bucket.”

Vicarious Trauma

- You didn't experience a traumatic event yourself.
- You felt the traumatic stress from hearing or seeing graphic details of trauma experienced by other people.
- You experience a shift in your world view. From "the world is generally a safe place" to "the world is dangerous" or "people are generally good and can be trusted" to "people can't be trusted".

Vicarious Trauma

May experience symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder without meeting criteria for PTSD diagnosis:

- Intrusive thoughts/memories
- Nightmares
- Psychological distress at exposure to cues
- Avoidance of thoughts/memories

May meet full criteria for PTSD from workplace experiences:

A. Exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual violence in one or more of the following ways:

4.a Experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic events (eg. First responders collecting human remains, police officers repeatedly exposed to details of child abuse).

Note: Criterion 4A does not apply to exposure through electronic media, television, or pictures, unless this exposure is work related.

Burnout

Extreme circumstances. It describes anyone whose health is suffering or whose outlook on life has turned negative because of the impact or overload of their work.

Signs and Symptoms have become chronic and physical illness has developed.

Brief interventions no longer help. Psychological and/or medical assistance is necessary.

Burnout

Associated with feelings of hopelessness and difficulties in dealing with work or doing your job effectively. These negative feelings usually have a gradual onset. They can reflect the feeling that your efforts make no difference or they can be associated with a very high workload or a non-supportive environment.

Professional Quality of Life Screening

Vicarious Post-Traumatic Growth

Vicarious Post Traumatic growth refers to the significant positive symptoms derived from trauma work and the impact this has on the personal growth of the worker.

An enhanced sense of meaning and purpose in life that promotes personal change and growth in areas such as self-perception, philosophy of life and interpersonal relationships.

Sustainable Caring

Caring is defined as things that are done to keep someone healthy safe etc.

Sustainable is defined as being able to be used without being completely used up or destroyed.

Sustainable caring **“Ability to consistently provide compassionate care, with resilience, to the pain and suffering of others.”**



Worksheet

Connecting the Concepts

Personalize each of these concepts so that they make sense to you and have meaning for you.

They will change over time as you grow and learn skills to reduce compassion fatigue and burnout while increasing compassion satisfaction and post traumatic vicarious growth.