

# Caring for the Caregivers: Re-imagining Resilience, Wellness, and Hope

Early Childhood Mental Health Conference

San Diego, California  
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Babbi J. Winegarden, Ph.D., M.H.P.E.  
Behavioral Health Program Coordinator/Staff Psychologist  
County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency  
Child and Family Well-Being  
[babbi.winegarden@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:babbi.winegarden@sdcounty.ca.gov)



# OBJECTIVES

- At the end of this Session the participant will be able to:
  - Differentiate Primary Trauma, Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS), Vicarious Trauma (VT), Compassion Fatigue and Burn-out
  - Provide Conscious Oversight of the Meaning of the work you do.
  - Identify Risk Factors for Work-related STS
  - Describe what happens to the brain during a Traumatic event
  - Identify Protective/Mitigating Factors related to STS
  - Develop Conscious Oversight of your current STS Symptoms, your own Risk Factors and your own Protective Factors
  - Develop a list of Coping Tools to Mediate the Effects of Secondary Trauma and Build Resiliency
  - Describe the Five Components for Enhancing Clinical Engagement and Reducing Trauma (CE-CERT)
  - Create your personalized STS Guide





<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wN5BqCKO9DY>



# DIFFERENTIATING TERMS

- **Trauma definition Oxford Dictionary:** “a deeply distressing or disturbing experience”
  - The word Trauma is from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century from Greek, literally means “**Wound**”
- **Secondary Trauma:** Exposure to the details of someone else’s trauma. ex. The story the child tells you.
- **Vicarious Trauma:** Refers to permanent changes in the way you view and make sense of the world as a result of the cumulative effects of working with trauma survivors over time.
  - Sense of safety
  - Ability to trust others
  - Self-esteem
  - Intimacy
  - Sense of control
- **Compassion Fatigue:** Characterized by physical and emotional exhaustion. Seen too much. Given too much.
- **Burnout:** Prolonged interpersonal work-related distress (i.e., not specifically exposure to secondary trauma)
  - Exhaustion
  - Cynicism
  - Inefficiency
- **Compassion Satisfaction**
  - Competence
  - Value
  - Meaning



# POLL

- Signs of Stress
  - Choose **all that apply** over the last 30 days.
  - Take a picture of the QR code or
  - Participants can vote at [Slido.com](https://www.slido.com) with **#2165096**
  - <https://app.sli.do/event/vNgV2fZmSZHFngNmYaPsmk>







# SIGNS OF STRESS

## CURRENT EVENTS

- COVID-19
  - & aftereffects
- Social Trauma
- Race Relations
- Politics
- Trauma Work

**SIGNS OF STRESS**

 PHYSICAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Palpitations</li><li>• Lump in throat</li><li>• Low energy</li><li>• Insomnia</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Unexplained pains</li><li>• Dry mouth</li><li>• Difficulty in swallowing</li><li>• Nervousness &amp; shivering</li></ul>
 EMOTIONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Agitation</li><li>• Irritability</li><li>• Depression</li><li>• Loneliness</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Low Self Esteem</li><li>• Mood Swings</li><li>• Difficulty to relax</li></ul>
 BEHAVIOURAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Constant anxiety</li><li>• Racing thoughts</li><li>• Forgetfulness</li><li>• Dis-organization</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inability to focus</li><li>• Poor judgement</li><li>• Increased pessimism</li></ul>
 PSYCHOLOGICAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fidgeting, pacing</li><li>• Procrastination</li><li>• Substance abuse</li><li>• Nail Biting</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased isolation</li><li>• Relationship issues</li><li>• Avoiding responsibilities</li><li>• Unbalanced appetite</li></ul>

# WHO IS AT RISK FOR SECONDARY OR VICARIOUS TRAUMATIC STRESS?

- The development of secondary traumatic stress is recognized as a common occupational hazard for **professionals working with traumatized children**.
- Studies show that from 6% to 26% of therapists working with traumatized populations, and
- Up to 50% of child welfare workers, are at high risk of secondary traumatic stress or the related conditions of PTSD and vicarious trauma.
- Any professional who works directly with traumatized children, and is in a position to hear the recounting of traumatic experiences, is at risk of traumatic stress. Risk appears to be greater among individuals who are highly empathetic by nature or have their own unresolved personal trauma.
- Risk is also higher for professionals who carry a heavy caseload of traumatized children; are socially or organizationally isolated; or feel professionally compromised due to inadequate training.
- Secondary trauma is often seen in First Responders: Police Officers, Emergency Medical Technicians and Emergency Room Personnel, Doctors, and Nurses, and Fire Fighters







# Secondary Trauma: Risks and Resilience

Conscious  
Oversight  
Is Key

Meaning (What is your why?): *To make the world a better place.*

Symptoms

Joy/Happiness/Contentment:

1.

2.

3.

4.

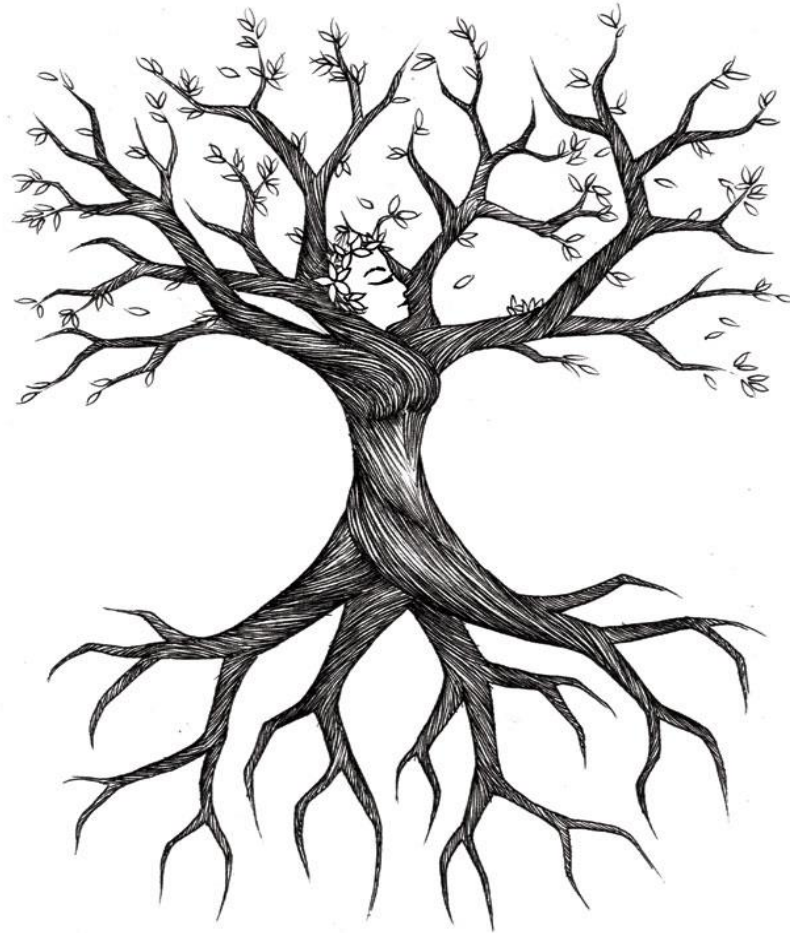
Risk Factors:

1.

2.

3.

4.



Coping Tools

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Protective Factors:

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Meaning (What is your why?): *To make the world a better place.*

## Symptoms

Joy/Happiness/Contentment: Kids, dogs, friends, music, travel, gardening, crafting

1. Anxiety
2. Sleeplessness
3. Fatigue
4. Withdrawal

## Risk Factors:

1. ACES
2. Moral Distress
3. Heavy critical incident load
4. Social cultural context



Protective Factors: : PCE's, Siblings, Friends, BFF at work, supportive supervisor, agency focus on STS

## Coping Tools

1. CBT, Health, Friends, family, spirituality, humor
2. CE-CERT skills
3. Experiential Engagement
4. Reducing Rumination
5. Conscious Narrative
6. Reducing Emotional Labor
7. Parasympathetic Recovery (end of day transition)

# Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

*People who have experienced secondary trauma will have at least one or more of the symptoms commonly associated with PTSD.*

## PTSD

1. Re-experiencing: Intrusive Memories
2. Avoidance of thoughts or situations associated with the event
3. Negative changes in thinking and mood
4. Arousal: Changes in physical and emotional reactions.

## Types of Trauma

- Natural Disasters
- Human-caused disasters
- Community violence
- School violence
- Family trauma
- Refugee and immigrant trauma
- Medical trauma
- Poverty
- Complex Trauma
- Historical Trauma
- Racial Trauma
- Vicarious/Secondary Trauma



# Secondary Trauma Symptoms

## Physical Reactions

- **Fatigue**
- **Sleep disturbances**
- **Changes in appetite**
- **Headaches**
- **Upset stomach**
- **Chronic muscle tension**
- **Sexual dysfunction**

## Behavioral Reactions

- **Isolation, withdrawal**
- **Restlessness**
- **Changes in alcohol or drug consumption**
- **Changes in relationships with others, personally & professionally**

## Emotional Reactions

- **Feeling overwhelmed/ emotionally spent**
- **Feeling helpless**
- **Feeling inadequate**
- **Sense of vulnerability**
- **Increased mood swings**
- **Irritability**
- **Crying more easily or frequently**
- **Suicidal or violent thoughts or urges**

## Cognitive Reactions

- **Disbelief, sense of numbing**
- **Replaying events in one's mind over & over**
- **Decreased concentration**
- **Confusion or Impaired memory**
- **Difficulty making decisions or problem-solving**
- **Distressing dreams or fantasies**



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## Joy/Happiness/Contentment:



## Coping Tools

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- 6.

## Protective Factors:

# PTSD and the Brain

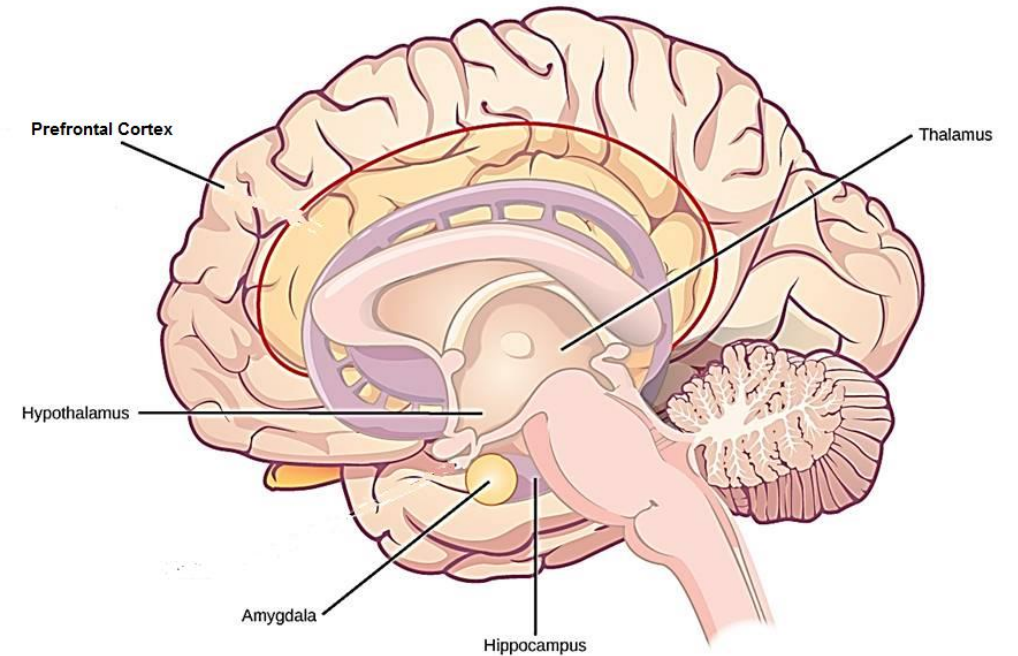
- Fight or Flight Response stays activated
- Amygdala is overstimulated (encoding of fear responses) and can stay overactive.
- Hippocampus/memories functioning lessened (actual structural changes can occur)
- Pre-frontal Cortex functioning lessened (HPA axis prolonged activation)
  - These functions are said to have become dysregulated

*For further information: Dr. Siegel's Hand Model of the Brain*

*Promoting integration is key, reflective practice is key*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-m2YcdMdFw>

## PTSD and the Brain



# OFFICIAL FILM TRAILER – PORTRAITS OF PROFESSIONAL CAREGIVERS: THEIR PASSION. THEIR PAIN.

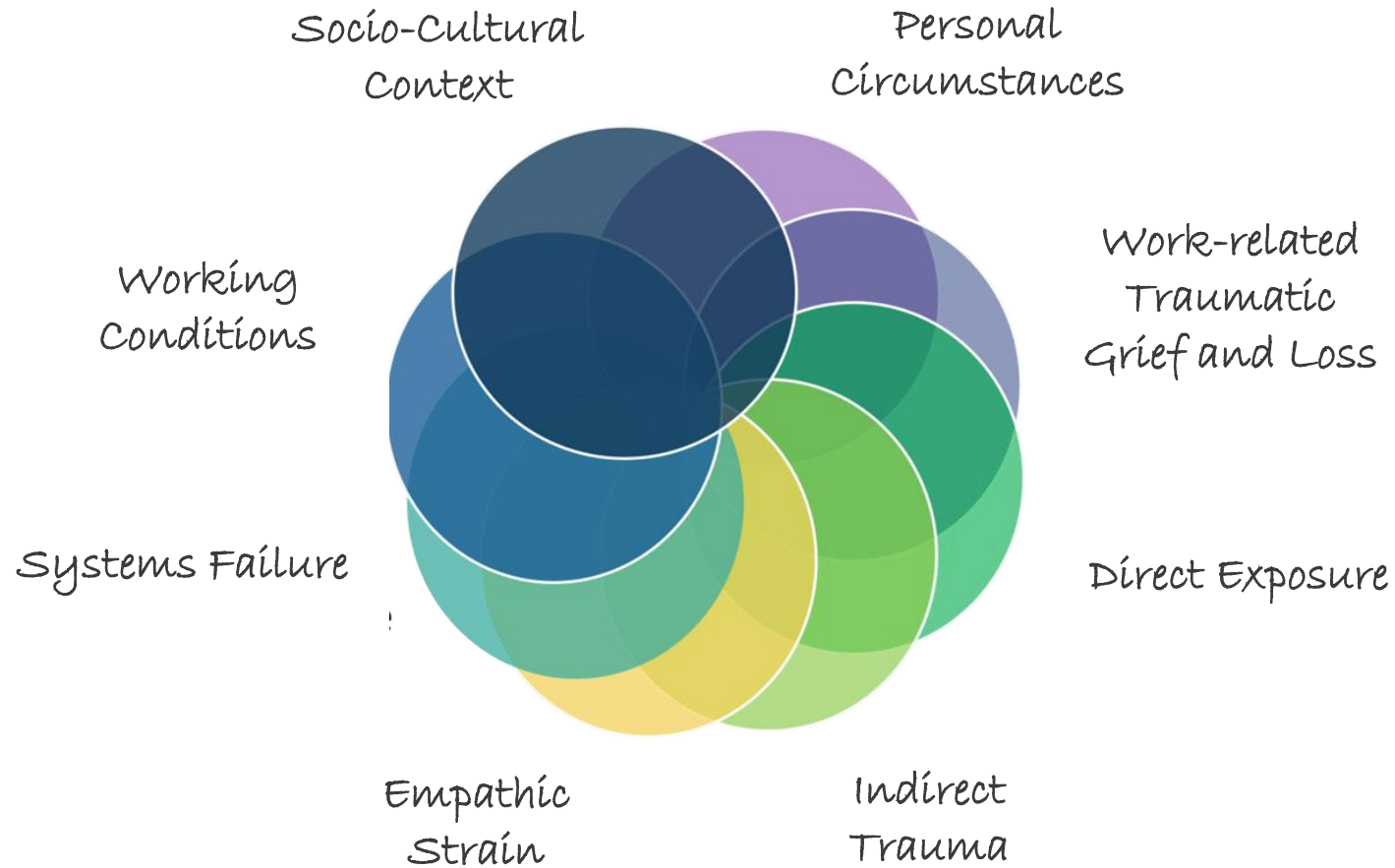


<https://thumbs.dreamstime.com/z/helping-hands-abstract-design-isolated-white-background-53157679.jpg>





# THE VENN DIAGRAM TOOL: IDENTIFYING YOUR RISK FACTORS FOR WORK-RELATED STRESS



# THE VENN DIAGRAM TOOL: IDENTIFYING YOUR RISK FACTORS FOR WORK-RELATED STRESS

Personal Circumstances	Work-related Traumatic Grief and Loss	Direct Exposure	Indirect Trauma	Empathic Strain	Systems Failure	Working Conditions	Socio-Cultural Context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Childhood adversity – Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)</li> <li>COVID impact on work and childcare</li> <li>Family Crisis: Divorce, Loss, Finances</li> <li>Caring for someone with significant needs</li> <li>Significant mental health or physical problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unfinished business: Client passes away, patient discharged from treatment</li> <li>Colleague or leader being fired, retiring, or unexpectedly leaving</li> <li>Death of a colleague</li> <li>Colleague with life-threatening illness</li> <li>Important mentor retiring</li> </ul>	<p>Happening to you or in front of you</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Personal</u></li> <li>Victim of crime</li> <li>Seeking asylum in a new country</li> <li>Serious medical crisis</li> <li><u>Professional</u></li> <li>Being involved in a lock down</li> <li>Being threatened or assaulted</li> <li>Experiencing a hate crime</li> </ul>	<p>Secondary Traumatic Stress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hearing abuse details</li> <li>Reading case files</li> <li>Witnessing graphic testimony during court cases</li> <li>Colleagues debriefings</li> <li>Daily: Graphic news stories and T.V. shows</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emotional &amp; physical exhaustion</li> <li>Disconnection from others</li> <li>Feeling dispirited</li> <li>Experiencing a toxic work environment</li> <li>Frequently breaking confidentiality</li> <li>Short-tempered with loved ones when they come to you for help</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Red Tape or Roadblocks to giving the best possible care</li> <li>Extraneous/tedious paperwork</li> <li>Long waiting lists or convoluted systems of care for your clients</li> <li>Eligibility disagreements</li> <li>Failure to protect employees from physical/psychological harm</li> <li>Result: Moral Distress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relationships with supervisor and colleagues</li> <li>Perception of fairness and appreciation (salary, rewards, benefits, vacation) and workload</li> <li>Quality of working conditions</li> <li>Sense of trust in leadership</li> <li>Quality and timeliness of communication</li> <li>Degree you feel compensated for the work you do</li> <li>Heavy critical incident caseload</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intersection of race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, historical trauma – and other elements of identity may come into daily collision</li> <li>Current crisis or cultural shift that impacts you/your way of life personally</li> <li>Being asked to do tasks outside of your scope because of those identity elements.</li> <li>Lack of representation – not seeing “you” represented in your workplace</li> </ul>

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Meaning (What is your why?): *To make the world a better place.*

## Symptoms

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## Risk Factors:

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## Joy/Happiness/Contentment:



## Coping Tools

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

## Protective Factors:

# Re-imagining Resilience, Wellness, and Hope



# PROTECTIVE/MITIGATING FACTORS

- **HOPE** (Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences) = Key positive childhood experiences
  - **Relationships:** Being in nurturing, supportive relationships are critical for children to develop into healthy, resilient adults.
    - Having key foundational relationships: parents/caregivers who respond to a child's needs and have warm, responsive interactions. ☒
    - Having adults outside of the family that take a genuine interest in a child and support their growth and development.
    - Having healthy, close, and positive relationships with peers.
  - **Safe, stable, and equitable environments**
    - A safe, stable environment, secure in meeting a child's basic needs, including adequate food, shelter, and healthcare.
    - A nurturing home where a child is emotionally secure.
    - A stable school environment where children feel valued and receive high-quality education.
    - A community environment to play and interact with other children safely and equitably.
  - **Social/civic engagement**
    - Being involved in projects, peer-mentoring, or community service through one's school or religious organization.
    - Partaking in family cultural traditions.
    - Participating in organized music, art, or sports.
  - **Social emotional growth**
    - Developing a sense of emotional and behavioral self-regulation
    - Having the ability to respond to challenges in a productive manner
    - Developing key socially and culturally appropriate communication and interpersonal skills



# PROTECTIVE/MITIGATING FACTORS

## **Social support, both personal and professional**

Seeking out support from friends, family, or support groups

Therapist/Clergy – therapeutic support

Managers, supervisors and colleagues are key in mitigating STS

## **Supportive Organizational Culture that builds resilience**

Organizational values aligned with individual goals and values

Strong organizational communication, ethical management practices, visible leadership support.

Professional well-being as mission and vision of organization.

## **Toolbox of Coping Skills – next slides**

<https://www.psychiatrictimes.com/view/vicarious-trauma-clinicians-fostering-resilience-and-preventing-burnou>



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WHAT BRINGS YOU JOY? WHAT MAKES YOU HAPPY? WHERE DO YOU FIND CONTENTMENT?



LIVE WELL  
SAN DIEGO

Add to tree



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# WELLNESS INVENTORY

Mental/Cognitive	Physical	Social	Emotional	Spiritual



# WELLNESS INVENTORY

Mental/Cognitive	Physical	Social	Emotional	Spiritual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can do this.</li> <li>• This too shall pass.</li> <li>• You got this.</li> <li>• Become conscious of your thoughts – learn to change negative thoughts into positive ones – where does your mind live most of the time?</li> <li>• Be very mindful of your thoughts and kind to yourself</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exercise</li> <li>• Hiking</li> <li>• Walking</li> <li>• Eating</li> <li>• Sleeping</li> <li>• Dr. Appts.</li> <li>• Yoga</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family</li> <li>• Friends</li> <li>• Crafting</li> <li>• Hobbies</li> <li>• Community Events</li> <li>• Covid impacted us – have you recovered your social networks?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How comfortable are you with emotions? To Cry/Feel your Emotions</li> <li>• Therapist/healer</li> <li>• Pets</li> <li>• Friends</li> <li>• Family</li> <li>• Songs/Music</li> <li>• Take vacation days</li> <li>• Take breaks during the day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meditation</li> <li>• Mindfulness</li> <li>• Breathing</li> <li>• Faith/Prayer/Gatherings</li> <li>• Nature</li> <li>• Alternative medicine</li> </ul>



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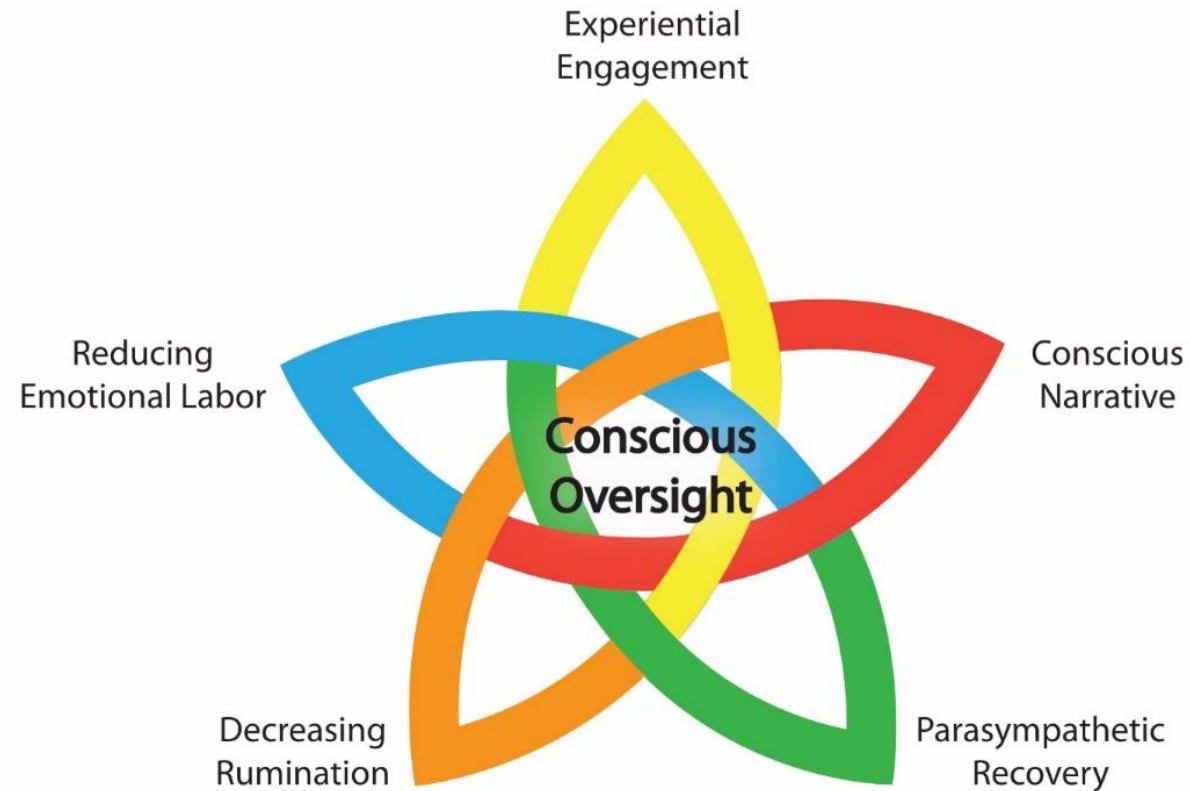


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## Coping Tools

1. CBT, Health, Friends, family, spirituality, humor
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

# CE-CERT: COMPONENTS FOR ENHANCING CAREER ENGAGEMENT AND REDUCING TRAUMA



# Components of CE-CERT

Experiential Engagement	Decreasing Rumination	Conscious Narrative	Reducing Emotional Labor	Parasympathetic Recovery
<p>Experiential engagement can be described as, “<i>avoiding avoidance</i>” that is, opening up to and fully experiencing those feelings we tend to avoid.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open up to the stressful experience</li> <li>• Allow yourself to feel it</li> <li>• Don’t avoid</li> </ul>	<p>Ruminations occur when we get stuck in thinking about a stressful situation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Label it</li> <li>• Can I do anything about it?</li> <li>• If yes, problem solve.</li> <li>• If not, let it go.</li> <li>• Engage in an absorbing activity/connect with support network.</li> </ul>	<p>Intense experiences demand a narrative in order to become integrated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Antecedent Before – Willing to feel stress, seek support</li> <li>• Concurrent During – Confidence,</li> <li>• Consolidation After – Making sense of the experience/radical acceptance of what we cannot change/take away</li> </ul>	<p>To make our work less difficult and more enjoyable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empathy Strain = depletion</li> <li>• Genuine Empathy = replenishing</li> <li>• Radical compassion – become curious - Compassion as a skill</li> <li>• Wholeheartedness – Radical Acceptance and Commitment, Find value in change.</li> <li>• Intentional Learning – Get better at those things that are hard</li> </ul>	<p>To rest and digest throughout your day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conscious Oversight – Notice your body, acknowledge distress and return to homeostasis</li> <li>• Support/Physical Movement/Breathe thru your day</li> <li>• End of Day Transition</li> </ul>

**Note:** Avoidance of negative emotions is the leading cause of burnout and compassion fatigue.

**Note:** Research has shown that the more time we spend in rumination, the less happy and effective we are.

**Note:** Verbal representation quiets the limbic system (harmonizes the hemispheres).

**Note:** Research indicates that those who thrive in this kind of work genuinely like their job.

**Note:** The goal of seeking balance between “work and life” inadvertently creates a tension between work and life. This split makes work seem more onerous.

# End of Day Transition

What I accomplished today:

/ /

What I will pick up tomorrow:

Send 1 – 2 Thank You's (Team Support, Narrative of Gratitude):

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5. Conscious Narrative
6. Reducing Emotional Labor
7. Parasympathetic Recovery (end of day transition)



# RESILIENCE CAN BE LEARNED

- Practice gratitude
- Find redeeming potential or value in change, change can be stressful
- Live to learn – Use challenges to learn and grow
- Open your heart – Being of service to others/Acts of kindness/Radical Compassion
- Hang onto humor and joy – Laughing reduces tension
- Take care of yourself – Daily habits do count
- Learn skills specific to addressing secondary trauma



# RESOURCES FOR TAKING CARE OF YOU

- <https://211sandiego.org/>
- Self help and support groups
- Books and other publications
- Online resources
- Licensed mental health professional
- Spiritual Counselor
- Social Support
- <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>



Thank you for all that you do!

Remember to take care of you too 😊



# REFERENCES

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- Miller, Brian C. (2022). *Reducing Secondary Traumatic Stress* 1<sup>st</sup> Edition. Routledge. NY.
- National District Attorneys Association, Well-being is No Longer Optional <http://ndaa.org/wp-content/uploads/Wellbeing-Not-Optional-Article-FINAL.pdf>
- <https://ndaajustice.medium.com/vicarious-trauma-is-real-and-i-learned-the-hard-way-6793a9750db3>
- <http://www.nctsn.org/resources/topics/secondary-traumatic-stress>
- <https://blogs.psychcentral.com/caregivers/2015/06/7-ways-to-avoid-re-traumatizing-a-trauma-victim/>
- <http://traumainformedcareproject.org/>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8214870/>
- <https://www.psychiatrictimes.com/view/vicarious-trauma-clinicians-fostering-resilience-and-preventing-burnout>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wN5BqCKO9DY>



# RESOURCES

- Did You Know? Prosecutor Wellness, Prosecutors' Center for Excellence, <https://pceinc.org/prosecutor-wellness/>
- [The Vicarious Trauma Toolkit, https://ovc.ojp.gov/program/vtt/introduction](https://ovc.ojp.gov/program/vtt/introduction)
- Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale
  - [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254364576\\_The\\_Secondary\\_Traumatic\\_Stress\\_Scale\\_STSS](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254364576_The_Secondary_Traumatic_Stress_Scale_STSS)
- Secondary Traumatic Stress-Informed Organizational Assessment (STSI-OA)
  - <http://www.uky.edu/CTAC/STSI-OA>
- Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL)
  - <https://proqol.org/>
- Secondary Traumatic Stress, Compassion Fatigue, and Vicarious Trauma, Special Issue of Traumatology
  - <http://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/special/6232302.aspx>



# RESOURCES

- Figley, C.R. (Ed.). (1995) *Compassion Fatigue: Coping with Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder in those who Treat the Traumatized*. New York. NY: Brunner/Mazel.
- Stamm, B.H. (Ed.) (1995). *Secondary Traumatic Stress: Self-care Issues for Clinicians, Researchers, and Educators*. Baltimore, MD: The Sidran Press.
- The Compassion Fatigue Workbook: Creative Tools for Transforming Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Traumatization (Psychosocial Stress Series)
  - [https://www.amazon.com/Compassion-Fatigue-Workbook-Transforming-Traumatization/dp/0415897904/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1536083933&sr=8-1&keywords=compassion+fatigue](https://www.amazon.com/Compassion-Fatigue-Workbook-Transforming-Traumatization/dp/0415897904/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1536083933&sr=8-1&keywords=compassion+fatigue)
- The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma
  - [https://www.amazon.com/Body-Keeps-Score-Healing-Trauma/dp/0143127748/ref=sr\\_1\\_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1536084059&sr=8-2&keywords=vicarious+trauma](https://www.amazon.com/Body-Keeps-Score-Healing-Trauma/dp/0143127748/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1536084059&sr=8-2&keywords=vicarious+trauma)
- The Complex PTSD Workbook
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