

Trauma Informed Teaching – Part Four

Self Care for Educators

Those of us who work with students impacted by trauma are at risk ourselves. Working trauma-adjacent often leads to secondary traumatic stress, also called compassion fatigue or vicarious trauma. As defined by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, compassion fatigue is “the emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the firsthand trauma experiences of another.” Unsurprisingly, the symptoms of compassion fatigue mirror those of trauma:

- isolation
- depression
- difficulty focusing
- aggression
- anxiety
- insomnia
- excessive drinking
- appetite changes
- anger and/or sadness



Many educators experience denial surrounding compassion fatigue. When we are in denial, our ability to assess our levels of fatigue and stress are hindered. This means the healing process cannot take place. The Compassion Fatigue Project offers self-diagnostic tools for educators, healthcare providers and social workers.

Since many educators are in denial about their compassion fatigue, our school organizations, leaders and peers should look for collective symptoms such as:

- chronic absenteeism
- struggles amongst teacher teams
- aggressive staff behaviors
- colleagues feeling overwhelmed or unable to finish their work
- negativity toward school leadership
- resistance to change
- a general apathy toward the school mission and its success

School leaders should consider offering professional development around self-care or mindfulness. Some supports include:

- Meditation or yoga classes on site for staff
- Training on healthy coping skills
- Offer a PD on trauma self-care
- Institute a staff wellness group as a safe space to talk
- Practice positivity by opening meetings with compliments



You can find more resources on teaching through trauma and tragedy [here](#).

This is part of a series of informative articles from the SELF Team to spread best practices for diverse learners. In 2018, SELF integrated trauma informed teaching into its Leadership Fellowship curriculum. In 2020, SELF took the next step forward and created a teacher centered yearlong training program focused exclusively on trauma informed teaching. This year, SELF partnered with New Schools for New Orleans to create a trauma focused hub for ten schools across New Orleans. If you are interested in learning more about how your leaders, teachers or school may get involved with SELF, contact Jeffrey Rothschild at jrothschild@selfnola.org or by text/call at 504.250.7053.

Sources:

<https://www.nctsn.org/trauma-informed-care/secondary-traumatic-stress>

<https://resilienteducator.com/collections/trauma-informed-school-practices/>