

# EDUCATION CORNER

## Managing Stress & Preventing Burnout

*"...chronic lack of self-care/compassion fatigue, like any other kind of fatigue, reduces our capacity or our interest in bearing the suffering of others" (Figley, 2002, p.1434)*

### Definitions

Secondary Traumatic Stress:	Vicarious Trauma:	Burnout:
A.k.a. Compassion Fatigue. Emotional duress resulting from hearing about firsthand trauma experienced by another.	Changes in the inner experience of the clinician resulting in empathizing with a traumatized individuals.	Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, reduced feelings of accomplishment. Results from general occupational stress with or without trauma exposure.

### Risk Factors

Mental health • history of trauma • lack of training • clarity of role • unsupportive work and social environments • large caseloads/ long working hours • working extensively with severely traumatized people



### Signs & Symptoms

Physical symptoms, i.e. chronic pain/illness • weight changes • guilt • sleep issues • exhaustion • fear • sadness • irritability • anger • lack of creativity • poor boundaries • poor self-care • cynicism/ complaining without solutions

### Self-Care for Prevention & Treatment of Stress & Burnout

It starts with periodically assessing your current status and applying appropriate interventions.

**Burnout** **Assessment Tools:** Are You Burning Out Survey\* / Compassion Fatigue ProQOL

### Interventions

- Eat well, think better.  • If you are what you eat, you are what you think.
-  The Power of Journaling • Expressive writing about trauma has been shown to promote physical and mental health
-  • Assess the comfort and clarity of your office, desk and car spaces
-  • Exercise, creativity and nature: Hike, walk, bike, dance, yoga, run; painting, photography, cooking, playing; observe or get into nature

### Self-Care Plan

Physical • Nutritional • Spiritual  
• Social • Emotional • Financial

- Write down what you do to care for yourself; daily, weekly, monthly, yearly.
- Do you have 3+ things for each category? If not, grow your list.



Taken from a webinar presentation by Michelle A. Post, MA, LMFT (Manager, Donor Family Aftercare, OneLegacy, Los Angeles, CA). Special thanks to Ms. Post for her contributions to this inservice.

### References:

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Phelps, A., Lloyd, D. Creamer, M. & Forbes, D. (2009). Caring for Carers in the Aftermath of Trauma. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 18:313–330, 2009 Copyright © Taylor & Francis Group.

\*Adapted by Michelle Post, MA, LFMT (from *Public Welfare*, Vol. 39, No. 1, 1981, American Public Welfare Association). Contact Michelle Post at [mpost@onelegacy.org](mailto:mpost@onelegacy.org) for assessment tool.

This inservice is also available on The Alliance blog: <http://organdonationalliance.org/education-corner-self-care/>

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