Resilience Strategies for Educators: Techniques for Self-Care and Peer Support
A Train-the-Educator Curriculum

MODULE 1

INTRODUCTION: WHY ARE WE HERE?

Introductions

Site Introduction

Training Introduction
MODULE 2

OBJECTIVES & LEARNING GOALS
Introduction to Module 2

Training Objectives

Increase awareness and understand the impact of stress, burnout, and compassion fatigue on the comprehensive education/academic environment.

Identify signs and symptoms of compassion fatigue, both professionally and personally.

Training Objectives (continued)

Create a professional self-care plan to support and improve effectiveness of current and future work with students impacted by stress, loss, and trauma.

Identify and understand the five steps to PFA: LPC — Model and Teach for use with colleagues.
Learning Goals

Participants will:

• Obtain knowledge and hands-on skills regarding the role of educators and other school personnel on compassion fatigue, self-care, and PFA: LPC — Model and Teach.
• Learn how to implement the five-step model of PFA: LPC to support colleagues impacted by stress, trauma, and loss.
• Create a detailed plan on specific steps and timelines for implementation and application at the local education agency and school levels.

What additional learning goals would YOU like to see?

Federal Agency Partners

Five Preparedness Missions

Before During After
an incident or emergency
Introduction to Self-Care

Ground rules
- Active listening
- Confidential, safe space
- Practice of self-care

Resources for mental health and self-care
- Local resources
- National resources

Participant Introductions

Position?

Connection to this topic?

MODULE 3
RESILIENCY & DIMENSIONS OF COMPASSION FATIGUE
Introduction to Module 3

Basic Caregiver Resilience Assumptions

Caring and compassion are required when working with stress, loss, and trauma.

Caring and compassion require interest, empathy, and interaction.

Exposure to others’ distress can be challenging to educators and other school personnel, particularly if it is associated with their own experiences.

Basic Caregiver Resilience Assumptions (continued)

Working with others impacted by stress, trauma, and loss can be rewarding and inspire a sense of pride and satisfaction.

Most educators and school personnel have the ability to bounce back or even gain a higher level of functioning — to be resilient — after exposure to stress, trauma, or loss.

Building or enhancing and maintaining resilience is the “antidote” to compassion fatigue.
What Is Compassion Fatigue?
Compassion fatigue is a term that emerged in the ‘80s and ‘90s, but is also closely related to the concepts of secondary traumatic stress, secondary victimization, and vicarious traumatization.

What Are the Distinctions Between:
- Secondary Traumatic Stress
- Vicarious Trauma
- Occupational Burnout
- Psychological Burnout
- Compassion Satisfaction

Definitions
Secondary Traumatic Stress – The stress of interpersonal interactions between helper and client; continues to be viewed mainly as a response to dealing with clients, specifically people who have been traumatized. (Galek, Flannely, Greene, & Kudler, 2011)

Vicarious Trauma – A state of tension and preoccupation arising from the stories/trauma experience described by clients.
Definitions (continued)

Occupational Burnout – Plain old job burnout stems from dissatisfaction with the work environment vs. compassion fatigue, which stems from absorbing the suffering of clients. (Figley, 2011)

Psychological Burnout – The experience of long-term exhaustion and diminished interest in one’s work that is often corrected by changing work settings or clients. (Altman & Jackson, 2005)

Definitions (continued)

Compassion Satisfaction – The perceived joys derived from experiencing the suffering of others and succeeding in helping relieve it in some way. (Figley, 2002)

Who Is Vulnerable to Compassion Fatigue?

Those who have experienced some traumatic event(s) in their own lives that are unresolved.

Those who work directly with children.

Those who are empathetic.

Those who help others and often neglect their own feelings and needs.
The ProQOL: A Helpful Resource

A 30-question survey to self-assess the effect that trauma may be having on our professional lives.

Upon completion, individuals can receive a scaled score for compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue (secondary traumatic stress and burnout).

Can be accessed free of charge online in multiple languages at http://www.proqol.org.

Overall Signs of Compassion Fatigue

- Intense connection with those you help
- Increased irritability
- Pushing yourself too much
- Self-esteem changes
- Problems with concentration
- Reactions similar to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Physical complaints

Introducing the Seven Topics: Personal Impact of Compassion Fatigue

- Physical
- Emotional
- Behavioral
- Cognitive
- Interpersonal
- Spiritual
- Professional
Physical Impact of Compassion Fatigue

- Fatigue
- Numbness
- Nausea
- Rapid heartbeat
- Difficulty sleeping
- Impaired immune system

Emotional Impact of Compassion Fatigue

- Emotional roller coaster or shutdown
- Denial
- Anxiety
- Powerlessness
- Sadness
- Hypersensitivity
- Minimization
- Irritability

Behavioral Impact of Compassion Fatigue

- Changes in routine
- Changes in interactions with others
- Withdrawal
- Sleep disturbances
- Absent-mindedness and accident proneness
- Self-harm/suicidal behaviors
Cognitive Impact of Compassion Fatigue
- Diminished concentration
- Difficulty in decision-making
- Apathy
- Rigidity
- Self-doubt
- Thoughts of harm
- Blaming of others

Interpersonal Impact of Compassion Fatigue
- Physically withdrawn
- Emotionally unavailable
- Isolation from family, friends, support systems
- Impact on parenting (protectiveness, abandonment, shame)
- Intolerance
- Loneliness, isolation

Spiritual Impact of Compassion Fatigue
- Questioning the meaning of life
- Loss of purpose
- Anger at God or a Higher Power
- Questioning prior religious or spiritual beliefs
Professional Impact of Compassion Fatigue

• Performance of job tasks
• Morale
• Interpersonal relationships
• Attitude

Scenarios

In small groups, brainstorm and share real-life examples you have witnessed in the following situations:

• Teacher–Principal compassion fatigue
• Teacher–Student compassion fatigue
• Teacher–Parent compassion fatigue
• Educator–Educator compassion fatigue
• Practitioner (i.e., social worker, counselor)–Student compassion fatigue

Now identify signs of resilience that you have witnessed firsthand in these same circumstances/relationships.

Words of Encouragement

Remember ...

• Basic caregiver resilience assumptions discussed earlier in the presentation.
• “Provider Resilience” — The ability of providers to not only SURVIVE but also THRIVE despite adversity if they practice stress management and self-care diligently!
**MODULE 3 REVIEW**

Discussed signs and general impacts of compassion fatigue, as well as impacts at the local level.

Discussed the definition of compassion fatigue.

Examined definitions and distinctions between:
- Psychological and Occupational Burnout
- Compassion Fatigue and Compassion Satisfaction

**MODULE 4**

**PROFESSIONAL & PERSONAL SELF-CARE PLANS**

**Introduction to Module 4**

- Self-Care Defined
- Developing Your Wellness/Self-Care Plan
- Challenges to Self-Care
- Exercise
Self-Care Defined

- Physical
- Intellectual
- Environmental
- Emotional
- Financial
- Social
- Spiritual
- Occupational

Definitions

Physical
Intellectual
Environmental
Emotional

Definitions (continued)

Financial
Social
Spiritual
Occupational
Developing Your Wellness/Self-Care Plan

What commitments will you make today to taking care of yourself ...

- Physically;
- Emotionally;
- Intellectually;
- Socially;
- Financially; and
- Spiritually?

What kind(s) of support do you need to succeed at making your wellness a priority?
Challenges to Self-Care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling guilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believing those around you are doing fine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacking support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exercise: Commitment to Self-Care

Make it part of your daily routine.
Find a self-care buddy.
Advocate for self-care as part of your professional development.
Encourage sharing of self-care ideas.
Continue to monitor your compassion fatigue/Take the ProQOL.
Recognize commitment to self-care actions.

MODULE 4 REVIEW

Types of self-care

Importance of having self-care activities in each category

Commitment to self-care
MODULE 5

PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID (PFA)

PFA: Listen, Protect, Connect — Model and Teach

What Is PFA?

A set of supportive actions that help people cope more effectively during times of stress.

American Red Cross
With PFA

Every adult who interacts with a child plays an important role.

Why Is PFA Important?

Knowing how to provide PFA can help you:

• Create a compassionate environment for everyone in the school.
• Assess what someone may need at the moment.
• Provide immediate support to those in stressful situations.
• Help others cope in the face of stressful events.

Guidelines for PFA

- Keep boundaries.
- Be tolerant of differences.
- Respect people’s privacy.
- Take care of yourself.
- Know when to ask for help.
## The Goals of PFA

| Establish safety | Stabilize the emotions and behaviors | Return colleagues to an improved mental and emotional state—ready to resume education and re-engage in their family. |

## How Does an Adult Begin To Recover?

It begins with the *perceptions* of safety

AND

the *acknowledgement* that there is a problem.

## For Survivors Directly Affected

- Parents and legal guardians (family) and students turn to schools for help after a community tragedy.
- Schools are often shelters after a disaster and become the primary source of community support.
- K-12 schools are one of the first “service agencies” to resume operations after a community crisis or disaster.
PFA After Traumatic Crises: The Responsibility of Caring Adults

- Listen
- Protect
- Connect
- Model
- Teach

**Listen**

Encourage others to share experiences and express feelings of fear or concern.

Be willing to listen and respond to verbal and nonverbal cues.

Give extra reassurance, support, and encouragement.

**Listen: You Want To Convey Your Interest and Empathy**

Where were you when this crisis happened?

What do you remember about that day?
Protect

Maintain structure, stability, and predictability. Have predictable routines, clear expectations, consistent rules, and immediate feedback.

Keep your ears open and eyes watchful, especially for aggression toward students, families, teachers, or administrators.

Keep the environment free of anything that could retraumatize.

Validate the person’s life experience.

Protect (continued)

What’s the most difficult thing for you to deal with right now?

Are you worried about how you are reacting?

Are you worried about your safety ...
  • Around students?
  • Around adults at school or outside of school?

Connect

Check in with colleagues on a regular basis.

Encourage interaction, activities, team projects, trusted family members, and teachers.

Refer or talk to counselors.

Keep track of and comment on what’s going on in their lives.

Share positive feedback from students, families, teachers, and other adults.
Connect (continued)

What would make things easier to cope with?
What can I do to help you right now?
What can your family members do to help?
What can your peers or administrators do to help?
What can your friends do to help?

Model Calm and Optimistic Behavior

Maintain level emotions and reactions — stay in the middle with no highs or lows — to help them achieve balance.
Take constructive actions to ensure school safety.
Express positive thoughts for the future.
Help colleagues cope with day-to-day problems.

Teach About Normal Stress Symptoms and How To Cope

Acknowledge the normal changes that can occur in people who are traumatized or grieve.

- Physical changes
- Emotional changes
- Cognitive changes
- Changes in spiritual beliefs

Help to problem solve.
- How to come to work/school every day.
- How to stay at school every day.
- How to get along and enjoy friends and family.
- How to manage planning and professional development.
In Order To Recover: A Strength-Based Approach

Educators have the capacity to recover.
Educators can enhance or learn skills to build their resilience.
Educators should take an active role in their healing and recovery, which is supported by other adults.
Educators should be encouraged to take first steps by asking themselves what they can do to make things better.
Educators need friends and caring adults to cope with trauma and grief.

Adults’ Issues That Affect Students

Adults may not recognize distress in students or others.
Adults may be preoccupied with their own issues.
Adults may not validate students’ reactions to trauma.
Communication between adults may be poor.
Adults may be compliant in the aftermath of an event, while silently suffering.

PFA: LPC — Model and Teach in Practice

What is LPC?
- Listen
- Protect
- Connect
- Model
- Teach
LISTEN, PROTECT, CONNECT

• Engage in empathetic, active listening.
• Take steps to protect.
• Connect with them.

MODEL, TEACH

• Map their own supports.
• Build a basic self-care plan with follow-through.

Evaluating Efforts

Desirable Outcomes

• Return to average educator and student attendance.
• Resume peer and student relationships.
• Maintain academic achievement of class(es).
• Look at grades and standardized test scores.

Undesirable Outcomes

• Increased discipline referrals
• Educators’ absenteeism
• Resignation

Extra Understanding and Patience BUT ...

• Educators, administrators, and school staff should maintain their expectations for behavior and performance and should maintain discipline.
• At the same time, however, they can be prepared to provide extra support, encouragement, and crisis counseling, if needed, to help other educators return to the school and help students succeed in school.
MODULE 5 REVIEW

Why PFA: LPC — Model and Teach?

Steps of PFA: LPC — Model and Teach
- Listen
- Protect
- Connect
- Model
- Teach

Scenario practice

Value of implementing PFA: LPC — Model and Teach

MODULE 6

LEARNING SUMMARY

Review of Learning

Purpose of training

Introduction to self-care

Increased awareness and understanding of the impact of stress, burnout, and compassion fatigue on the comprehensive education/academic environment

Comparison of compassion fatigue with other similar terms and different concepts
Review of Learning (continued)

Identified signs and symptoms of compassion fatigue, both professionally and personally.

Created a professional self-care plan to support and improve effectiveness of current and future work with students impacted by stress, loss, and trauma.

Identified and understand the five steps to PFA: LPC — Model and Teach in daily classroom situations and emergency management plans.

Final Training Thoughts

Conclusions from trainers

Resources

Review of local mental health resources

Conclusions from school administrator

What Is the REMS TA Center?

A hub of information and services supporting the development of high-quality emergency operations plans (EOPs) and comprehensive emergency management planning efforts!

Phone: (855) 781-REMS [7367]
Email: info@remstacenter.org
Web: https://rems.ed.gov
Twitter: @remstacenter
https://rems.ed.gov

Online Courses

Specialized Training Packages

- Overview of the Six-Step Planning Process
- Large Event Planning
- Infectious Disease Planning
- Continuity of Operations Planning
- Developing a Food Contamination Annex
- Responding to Bereavement and Loss
- Integrating the Needs of Students and Staff With Disabilities and Other Access and Functional Needs
And Much More...!

REQUEST TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

For additional information, resources, training, and technical assistance, please contact the REMS TA Center.

Phone: (855) 781-7367 (REMS)  
Email: info@remstacenter.org

Get the new Guides

Access Virtual Trainings

Request an On-Site Training

Get Connected

Phone: (855) 781-7367 (REMS)
Email: info@remstacenter.org

Thank You!

For all you do each day to assist your students and your peers!
Acknowledgements

The Resilience Strategies for Educators curriculum was developed in 2012 by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Safe and Healthy Students in partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. This presentation was updated in 2016.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the following persons for their role as lead authors of this presentation:

– Robin Gurwitch, Ph.D., Program Coordinator, Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center, National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement
– Mona Johnson, M.A., CPP, CDP, School Behavioral Health Chief, U.S. Army Medical Command Office of Child, Adolescent and Family Behavioral Health (WA)
– Marleen Wong, Ph.D., Assistant Dean and Clinical Professor, University of Southern California

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the following people for reviewing and providing comments to these materials:

– Michael Coburn, Division Director, Louisiana Department of Education, Division of Student and School Learning Support
– Stephen Hydon, Associate Clinical Professor, University of Southern California
– Denise Riemer, Social Worker, Mobile County Public (AL) School System
– Sara Strizzi, Communications and School Crisis Recovery Expert
– Matt Taylor, Director, University of Montana, Montana Safe Schools Center
About the REMS TA Center

- The REMS TA Center (formerly the EREM TA Center) was established in 2004 by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students (OSHS).
- The TA Center supports schools and school districts in developing and implementing comprehensive emergency management plans by providing technical assistance via trainings, publications, and individualized responses to requests.
- For additional information about school emergency management topics, visit the REMS TA Center at https://rems.ed.gov or call 1-855-781-REMS (7367).
- This publication was funded by OSHS under contract number GS-0F-0022X with Synergy Enterprises, Inc. The contracting officer’s representative was Madeline Sullivan. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. government. This publication also contains hyperlinks and URLs for information created and maintained by private organizations. This information is provided for the reader’s convenience. The U.S. Department of Education is not responsible for controlling or guaranteeing the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of this information. The inclusion of a hyperlink or URL does not reflect the importance of the organization, nor is it intended to endorse any views expressed, or products or services offered.
- Last update: March 2014.