



Secondary Traumatic Stress





Brief Overview



Trauma experienced while working in the role of helper has been described as:

- ▶ Compassion fatigue
- ▶ Secondary traumatic stress (STS)
- ▶ Vicarious traumatization
- ▶ STS is the stress of helping or wanting to help a person who has been traumatized.
- ▶ Unlike other forms of “burnout,” STS is a result of exposure to clients’ trauma (acute or cumulative).
- ▶ STS can disrupt child welfare workers’ lives, feelings, personal relationships, and overall view of the world.



Sources of STS



- ▶ The death of a child or adult on the worker's caseload
- ▶ Investigating a vicious abuse or neglect report
- ▶ Frequent exposure to children's emotional accounts of traumatic events
- ▶ Photographic images of injuries or scenes of a serious injury or death
- ▶ Helping to support grieving family members following a child abuse death, including the siblings of the deceased child
- ▶ Concerns about agency funding and resources
- ▶ Concerns about being publicly scapegoated for a tragic outcome when lacking the means or authority to intervene effectively

Signs & Symptoms

- ▶ Avoidance (including of certain clients)
- ▶ Preoccupation with clients'/client stories
- ▶ Intrusive thoughts/nightmares/flashbacks
- ▶ Arousal symptoms
- ▶ Thoughts of violence/revenge
- ▶ Feeling estranged/isolated/having no one to talk to
- ▶ Feeling trapped, “infected” by trauma, hopeless, inadequate
- ▶ Having difficulty separating work from personal life
- ▶ Sound familiar? Co-Worker?

Self Care

- ▶ Methods to control negative thoughts, emotions
- ▶ Support from peers, colleagues, family, spiritual leaders
- ▶ Diet, exercise, mindfulness, other techniques





Final Exercise - de-stress

