

# Self-Care Assessment

Please take a few minutes to settle in and complete the self-care assessment.

# **Combating the job hazards of vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue: The importance of self-care in the process of helping others heal**

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# Key Learning Points

- 1) Develop a clear understanding of key signs of compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue, which includes vicarious trauma, and burnout.
- 2) Increase self awareness and identify concrete strategies for self-care.



# Relaxation script

# Trauma

- An overwhelming, overstimulating, extremely painful and/or terrifying experience
- An inability to employ the fight or flight response (e.g., cannot escape)
- At the core of the traumatic stress is a breakdown in the capacity to regulate internal states

(Herman, 1997) (Van der Kolk, 2005)

# Insidious trauma: Intersection of Oppression and Trauma

- “posttrauma distress and dysfunction arising from doing battle every day against an army of small toxic agents.”
- “like drops of acid falling on stone”
  - “each drop by itself does little damage”
  - “just enough damage to render the next drop more damaging”
  - “person may appear to crack ... when the apparent stressor seems small and not threatening at all”

(Brown, 2008, citing Root, 1992, and Sue, 2003)

# Compassion Satisfaction

- Pleasure one derives from being able to do one's work well (Stamm, 2009)
  - Pleasure in helping others through work
  - Positive feelings about colleagues
  - Positive feelings about contributing to work setting and/or to greater good of society

# Compassion Fatigue

- Compassion Fatigue has two components (Stamm, 2009):
  - Burnout
  - Secondary Trauma



# Burnout

- “A state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion caused by long-term involvement in emotional demanding situations” (Pines & Aronson, 1988)
- Associated with feelings of hopelessness and difficulties in dealing with work or in doing one’s job effectively (Stamm, 2009)
- Gradual onset



# Burnout

- Physical symptoms:
  - Fatigue, sleep problems, gastrointestinal difficulties, illness
- Emotional symptoms:
  - Irritability, anxiety, depression, guilt
- Behavioral symptoms:
  - Aggression, callousness, pessimism, substance abuse
- Work-related symptoms:
  - Poor work performance, missing work, being late for work, misuse of work breaks, quitting job
- Interpersonal symptoms:
  - Inability to concentrate/focus on communication
  - Withdrawal from others (clients, coworkers)
  - Dehumanized, intellectualized interactions/excessive distancing



(Kahill, 1988)

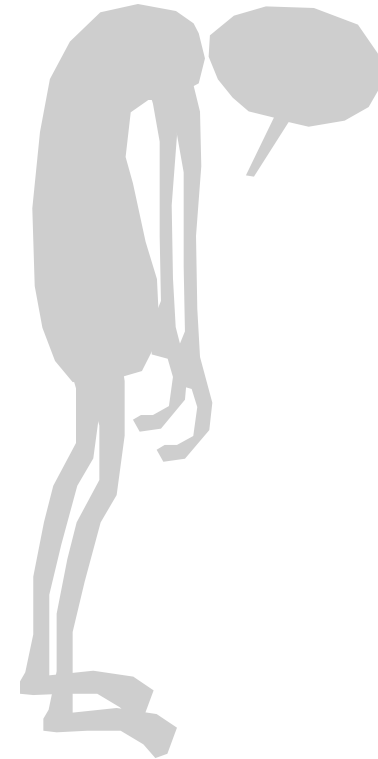
# Secondary Traumatic Stress/ Vicarious Trauma

- Work-related, secondary exposure to extremely or traumatically stressful events
- Secondary Traumatic Stress/Vicarious Trauma can be the result of “the exposure of helpers to experiences” of students, plus “the empathy that they experience for their” students (Collins & Long, 2003)
- Can be sudden and acute

# Signs and Symptoms of Vicarious Traumatization

Pearlman and Saakvitne (1995)

- General Symptoms
  - Numbing
  - Social withdrawal
  - Nightmares
  - Despair and hopelessness
  - No time or energy for yourself
  - Disconnection from loved ones
  - Increased sensitivity to violence



# Internal transformations

## 1. Frame of reference:

- World view (e.g., Question goodness of others, loss of hope or optimism); Identity; Spirituality

## 2. Diminished self capacities

- Capacity to tolerate strong affect, and maintain connection with self and others.

## 3. Alterations in sensory and memory experiences

- Student's memories become incorporated into helper's memory

#### 4. Disrupted psychological needs

- Safety, trust, esteem, intimacy, control

#### 5. Ego Resources (Internal Resources)

- Ability to establish and maintain boundaries
- Ability to take perspective
- Empathy and sense of humor
- Ability to strive for personal growth
- Awareness of psychological needs
- Clear cognitive processing
- Ability to be introspective

# Pair and Share

- Review case example.
- What symptoms of burnout were present for this person?
- What symptoms of secondary trauma did you notice?
- What are the strengths of this person that will be potential building blocks of self-care?

# Strategies for Self-Care Around Burnout and Vicarious Trauma



# Reflection on Self-Care Assessment and Vignette

- What strengths did you identify in case study?
- What are you already doing well?
- In which areas would you want to focus?



# Gratitude as a Wellness Strategy



# Gratitude Increases Well-Being

- **Physical**
    - Stronger immune systems
    - Lower blood pressure
    - Sleep longer and feel more refreshed upon waking
  - **Psychological**
    - Reduces depression
    - Blocks toxic, negative emotions
    - Magnifies positive emotions
    - More alert, alive, and awake
  - **Social**
    - More helpful, generous, and compassionate
    - More forgiving
    - Feel less lonely and isolated
- (Emmons, 2010, Wood, 2008)

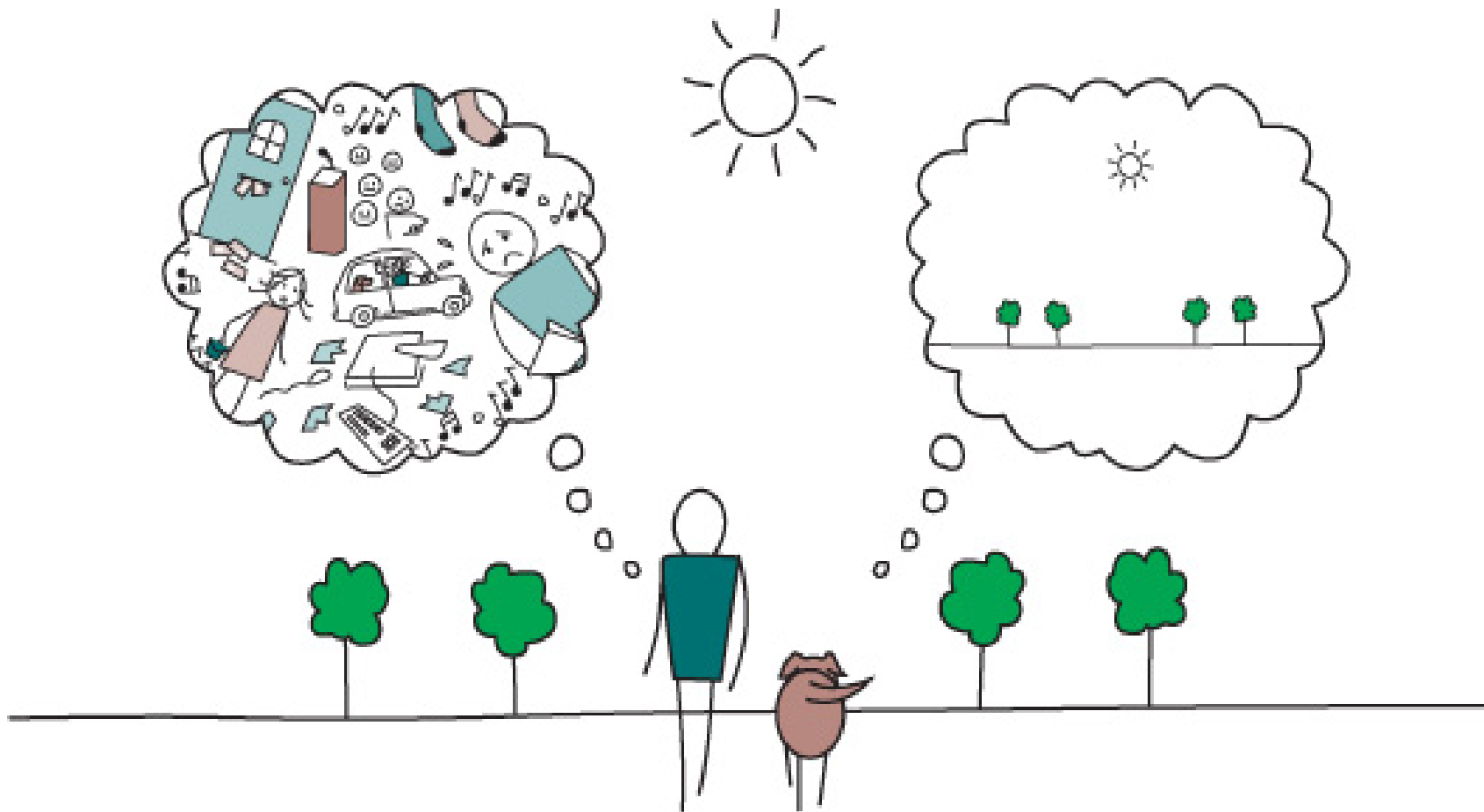
# Gratitude Activity

- List 5 things you are grateful for.
- For more ideas, look at your handout on “10 ways to become more grateful.”

# Mindfulness

Awareness  
of present experience  
with acceptance

Paying attention  
here and now  
with kindness and curiosity



Mind Full, or Mindful?

# Benefits of Cultivating Mindfulness

- Recognition and conscious response vs. reacting
- Decreased stress & anxiety
- Better focus and concentration
- Increased calm
- Enhanced health
- Improved impulse control
- Increased self-awareness
- Skillful ways to respond to difficult emotions
- Increased empathy and understanding of others
- Improved conflict resolution skills



# Mindfulness Strategy



# Discuss and Share

- As you leave, what practice do you think you can add to your life?
- What challenges do you anticipate in implementing self-care strategies? What supports can you seek out?

# Resources

<http://www.NCTSN.org>

<http://psychology.ucdavis.edu/labs/emmons/>

<http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/>

<http://mindfulschools.org/>

<http://508.center4si.com/SelfCareforCareGivers.pdf>

<http://www.coe.ucsf.edu/linc/index.html>