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Beyond Burnout: Finding Balance and Enhancing Resilience

Educators are today increasingly challenged by the grief and trauma their students and families endure. Whether a tragic event in the community, a student suicide, or death of a student's family member, all profoundly impact both students and staff. All school professionals--teachers, administrators, counselors, social workers, clergy, and nurses—are called to navigate these turbulent emotional waters, and to provide safety, support, and a shelter from the storms of life. Providing this support in a sustainable way is an essential task made more difficult by the pandemic, which has increased workloads, strained social support systems, and undermined self-care practices. This challenging task will remain if not grow in the years ahead as the psychological and social costs of the pandemic and its sequelae continue to transform how we live, die, grieve, and care for each other.

In this energizing and interactive program, we will first explore the nature of grief and trauma and review what we now know to be helpful responses to these distressing experiences. Then we will turn our attention to strategies for preventing burnout and promoting personal and professional growth as you engage in this profound aspect of your work. The session will be an opportunity to recharge as a caring professional and to find balance—balance between the demands you face and the resources you have to meet them, between giving to others and giving to yourself.

Learning Objectives:

At the completion of this program, participants will be able to:

- Distinguish core features of major models for grief and trauma, and supportive responses consistent with them.
- Identify strategies for strengthening resilience and stress-related personal and professional growth

Resources

- [*The Helper's Journey: Empathy, Compassion, and the Challenge of Caring*](#) (2020, Research Press)
- Hospice Foundation of America, "[Grief: What Helps When It Hurts](#)," with Ken Doka and Dale Larson
- [Worden & Larson, ADEC, 2019, Tasks of Mourning](#)
- [dalelarsonphd.com](#) (Resources, publications, research)

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Beyond Burnout: Finding Balance and Enhancing Resilience

The 2022 Annual Grief Conference
McAfee Funeral Homes

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A New Normal?

COVID STRESS SYNDROME

- Fear of contamination SCAReD!!!
- Worry about finances
- Xenophobic fear that foreigners are spreading the virus
- Traumatic stress symptoms associated with direct or vicarious traumatic exposure
- Compulsive checking and reassurance seeking (Taylor, S., et al. (2020). COVID stress syndrome: Concept, structure, and correlates. *Depression and Anxiety*, 37(8), 706-714)

Profound and pervasive experiences of grief, loss, and trauma reshaping who we are and how we live, die, and grieve now and in the future.

2

OUR STUDENTS

3

Student Grief, Trauma and Stress

- 20% high school students seriously consider suicide each year
- One in five children will lose a familiar relative or friend by the age of 18
- 73,000 children die every year and 83% have one or more surviving siblings
- One in 20 children will lose a parent; many others a grandparent or guardian

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Suicide and Suicidality in Youth

- Suicide is the second-leading cause of death among people age 15 to 24 in the U.S. Nearly 20% of high school students report serious thoughts of suicide and 9% have made an attempt to take their lives, according to the [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#).

24,000 college students attempted suicide each year; 1,100 die through suicide.

Ivey-Stephenson, A. Z. (2020). Suicidal ideation and behaviors among high school students — Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States. *MMWR Supplements*, vol 69. www.cdc.gov.

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Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Physical neglect
- Emotional neglect
- Mother treated violently
- Household substance abuse
- Household mental illness
- Parental separation or divorce
- Incarcerated household member

Felitti, V. J. (2019). Health Appraisal and the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study: National Implications for Health Care, Cost, and Utilization. *Perm J*, 23, 18-026.

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Trauma and Poor Academic Functioning

- 2/3 of adults have experienced one or more ACES during childhood, and these are linked to poor academic functioning:
 - Lower reading, math, and science achievement scores
 - Increased suspensions and expulsions
 - Increased odds of having an Individualized Education Program for learning or behavior problems.
- Leading to the development of school-based trauma-focused treatments, such as the Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools Program

• Simon, K., Compton, S. E., & Overstreet, S. (2020). The evolution of trauma-informed schools. In E. Rossen (Ed.), *Supporting and educating traumatized students: A guide for school-based professionals*, 2nd ed. (pp. 3-25). Oxford University Press.

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Trauma Symptoms

- Avoidance behavior—deliberate attempts to remove oneself from cues. Not just distracting oneself
- Hyperarousal and hypervigilance—startle responses, sleep problems
- Intrusions—flashbacks, reliving event, unwanted thoughts
- Negative alterations in cognitions and mood

Mnemonic: 🐟 biting an A-H-I tuna

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Principles of Childhood Grief

- Kids grieve in spurts
- Children's reactions can seem inappropriate to adults
- Effects may present as somatic symptoms
- Grief reactions may be delayed, sometimes for years
- Children react in unexpected ways to deaths of specific family members
- Children have difficult managing negative emotions

Lawrence, S. T. (2020). *The grieving child in the classroom: A guide for school-based professionals*. Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

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What They Might Say

- "I miss ___" "I am so lonely" (Sadness)
- "Life stinks" (Anger)
- "Can I come with you?" "I don't like nighttime" (Fear)
- "If I am older, why didn't I die first?" (Guilt)

Lawrence, S. T. (2020). *The grieving child in the classroom: A guide for school-based professionals*. Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

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What To Do/Say What Not to Say

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Active listening | • "I know how you feel." |
| • Few or no questions | • "Just think happy thoughts" |
| • Create a sense of safety and support | • "Are you still sad?" |
| • "How are you?" | • "You loved one is in a better place" |
| • "That must make you feel ____." | • "Time heals all wounds" |

Lawrence, S. T. (2020). *The grieving child in the classroom: A guide for school-based professionals*. Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

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EDUCATORS

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Stressors for Educators During the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Self-care practices and support undermined
- Work overload, exposure to COVID, lockdown drills
- Isolation from one's own family members
- Disruption of team members' support
- The strain of online teaching, prep time, assessing learning
- Highly-stressed students and family members
- Direct and vicarious exposure to trauma

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"I Could Hardly Breathe": Teachers' Lived Experiences of Bereavement After the Violent Death of a Student.

- Arksey, A., & Greidanus, E. (2022). *Canadian Journal of Counselling & Psychotherapy*, 56 (1), 47-69

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Stressed Teachers

- 46% report feeling under great stress several days a week.. Tied with nurses for that, and grouped with ambulance workers, social service workers, prison officers, and police as the most stressful professions regarding physical and psychological well-being. (Herman et al., 2021)

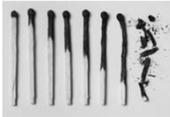
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Experiences of Graduate Education Student Teachers in Silicon Valley

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Burnout



Secondary Traumatic Stress

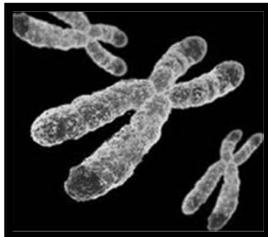


Moral Distress



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Stress and Your Telomeres



Jacobs, T. L., et al. (2011). "Intensive meditation training, immune cell telomerase activity, and psychological mediators." *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 36(5), 664-681.

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Burnout Not a Personal Failing

“Burnout does not result from a genetic predisposition to grumpiness, a depressive personality, or general weakness. It is not caused by a failure of character or a lack of ambition. It is not a personality defect or a clinical syndrome. It is an occupational problem.” (p. 34)

Maslach & Leiter (1997) *The Truth About Burnout*

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Being Mindful



“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; On purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.”

Jon Kabat-Zinn

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Self-Compassion

- Self-Kindness: *I'm kind to myself when I'm experiencing suffering.*
- Self-Judgment: *When I see aspects of myself that I don't like, I get down on myself.*
- Common Humanity: *I try to see my failings as part of the human condition*
- Isolation: *When I fail at something that's important to me I tend to feel alone in my failure.*
- Over-Identification: *When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.*

Neff (2003)

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Self-Concealment



“the active concealment from others of personal information that one perceives as negative or distressing”

Larson, D. G., et al. (2015). Self-concealment: Integrative review and working model. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 34(8): 705-729.

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Crumple?

Fold?



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Experimental Disclosure Research

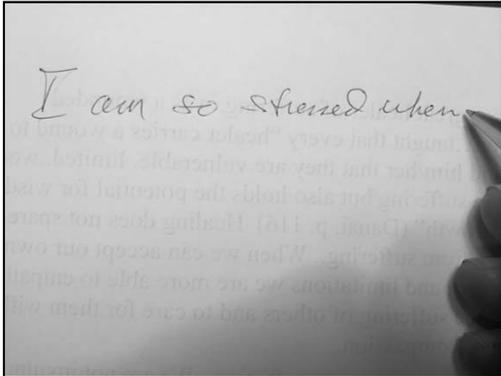


The act of not discussing or confiding the event with another may be more damaging than having experienced the event per se.

Pennebaker, J. W. (1985). "Traumatic experience and psychosomatic disease: Exploring the roles of behavioural inhibition, obsession, and confiding." *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne* 26(2): 82-95.

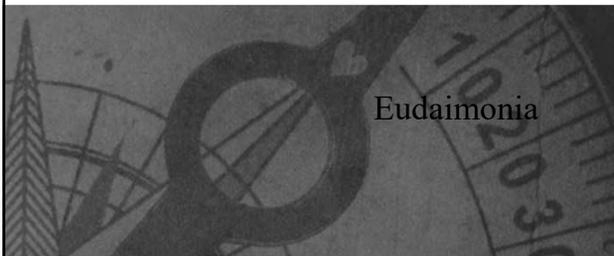
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The Writing Cure



25

Find Meaning and Purpose



26

Do Good--Feel Good and Be Well

“... a high sense of purpose in life is associated with a reduced risk for all-cause mortality and cardiovascular events” Cohen, R., Bavishi, C., & Rozanski, A. (2016). Purpose in life and its relationship to all-cause mortality and cardiovascular events: A meta-analysis. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 78(2), 122-133.

“A strong correlation exists between the well-being, happiness, health, and longevity of people who are emotionally and behaviorally compassionate, **so long as they are not overwhelmed by helping tasks**” Post, S. G. (2005). Altruism, happiness, and health: It's good to be good. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 12(2), 66-77.

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There is joy in transcending self to serve others.

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I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know: the only ones among you who will be truly happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve.

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Mission Moments



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