

Interrupting the Impact of Trauma on the Workforce

a Resilience Building Workshop

Dr. Barb Pierce, PhD, LCSW, IUPUI
Dr. Nicole Bossard, PhD, ICF

Why is it deeply meaningful or important to be in this conversation about interrupting the impact of trauma on the workforce AND building resilience for...

- *YOU, personally*
- *Team you work with*
- *Organization you work in*
- *BONUS: Your community*

OFFICE OF FAMILY ASSISTANCE

An Office of the Administration for Children & Families



INDIANA UNIVERSITY

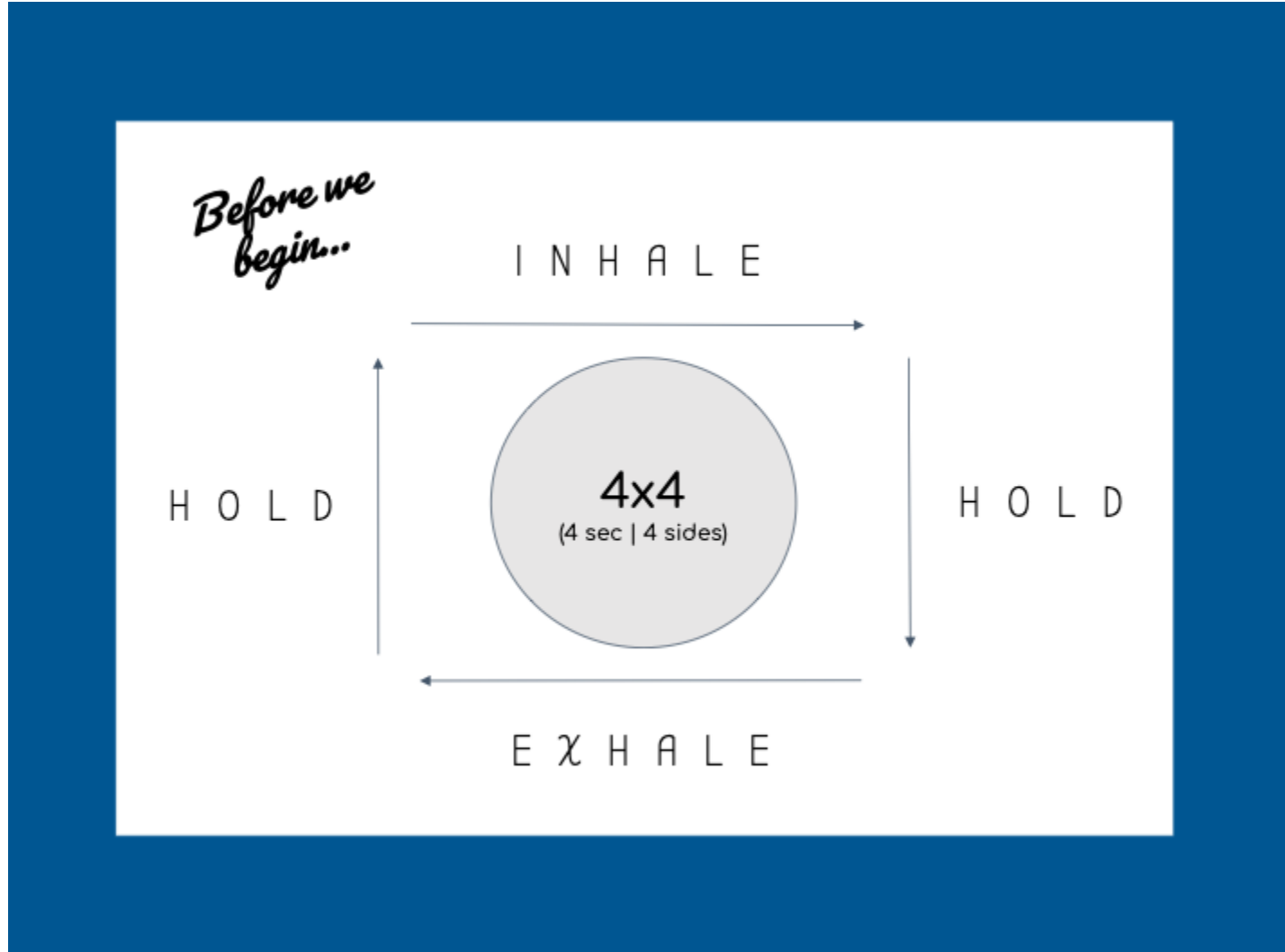
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

IUPUI

Indiana University Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Indiana University School of Social Work is located on the ancestral lands of Indigenous Peoples from time immemorial. Indiana is the traditional lands of Potawatomi, Illini, Miami, Kickapoo, Lenape/Delaware, Wea, Piankashaw, Shawnee, Nanticoke, and Wyandot. We are dedicated to amplifying Indigenous voices and perspectives, improving community relationships, correcting the narratives, and making the Indiana University School of Social Work a supportive and inclusive place for Native and Indigenous students, faculty, and staff. With humility and respect, we at the Indiana University School of Social Work recognize and honor all Indigenous Peoples, their histories, their political rights and sovereignty, and their sacred ties to the land and waters.

Exercise



Trigger Warning

A graphic featuring a white background with a red ECG line. The word "TRIGGER" is written in large, black, uppercase letters, and "Warning" is written in smaller, red, lowercase letters below it. The ECG line starts at a high level, drops sharply, and then levels off. The graphic is set against a background of concentric, light gray circles and lines.

TRIGGER
Warning

Do what you need to do to
take care of yourself!

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the difference between chronic work stress, secondary traumatic stress (STS), compassion fatigue, and burnout.
2. Understand the term emotional labor.
3. Understand secondary resilience.
4. State the mechanisms at work in the brain post trauma.
5. Understand the individual, team, and organizational symptoms of trauma.
6. Identify strategies to intervene at each level of impact (individual, team, organization).

Not for redistribution. All rights reserved.



Stress and Chronic Stress

When Stress Helps...

Positive stress produces the release of adrenalin at just the right moment to help us react quickly or concentrate more acutely when needed.

Ex. Situations can include

- Being cut off on the freeway or
- Butterflies when speaking in public or test taking.

Stress and Trauma can be historic, primary, or secondary!

When Stress Hurts...

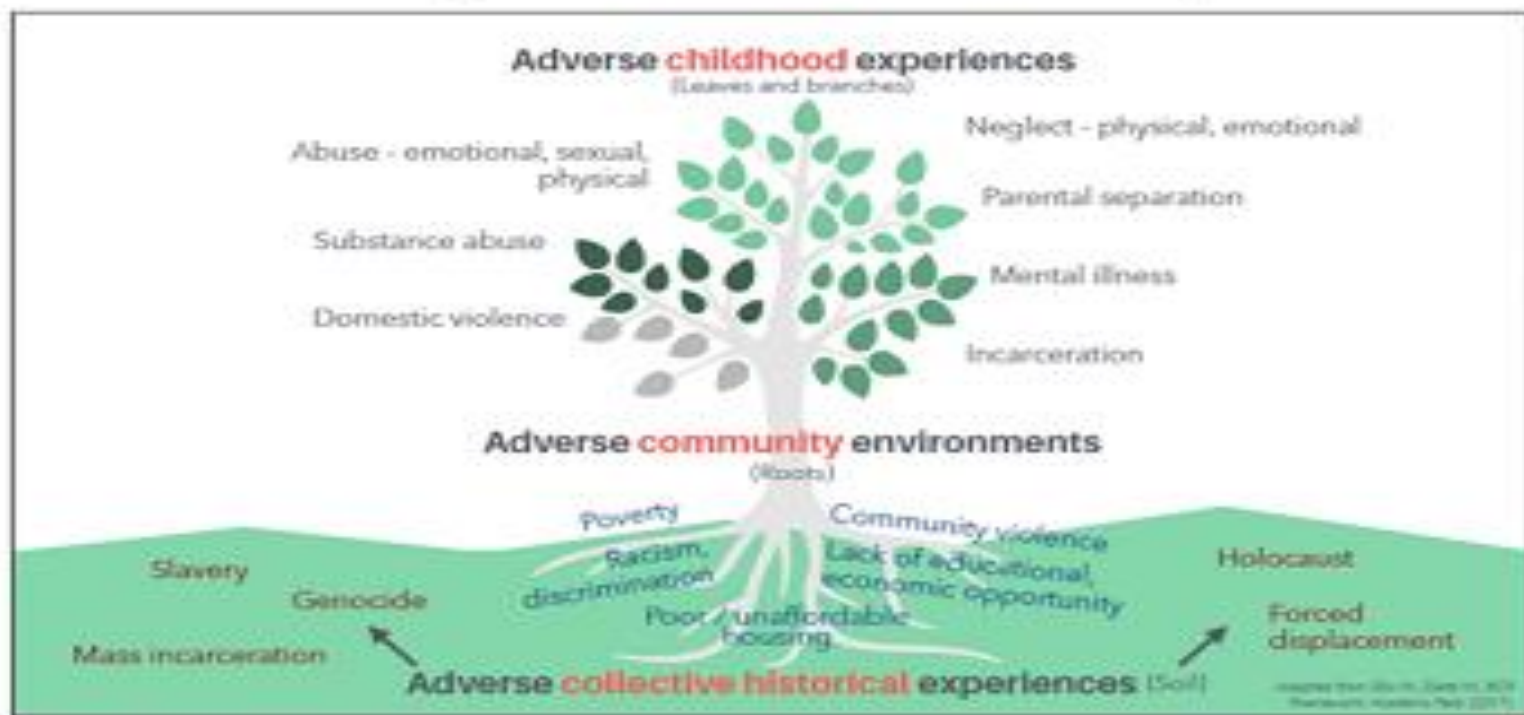
Repeated or chronic stress that piles up. Chronic stress means your body's adrenalin system doesn't return to normal, and you feel it. Any person can become the victim of chronic stress, especially now.

Ex. Symptoms can look like

- Insomnia,
- Anxiety,
- Feeling keyed-up,
- Lack of concentration,
- Feeling depressed,
- Body aches, and even
- High blood pressure.

Historic Trauma: When an entire group of people are affected by trauma resulting in structural oppression and behavior changes over generations (ex. Indigenous People, Japanese Americans, African Americans, Holocaust Survivors)

Layers of Adversity



Adapted by Stan Sonu, MD

Health & Medicine
POLICY RESEARCH GROUP

What is “Secondary Traumatic Stress” (STS)*?

When people work with others who have been hurt, the “helpers” may experience emotional stress or stress as a result of seeing or hearing about the trauma of others.

Other terms you may have seen:

Compassion fatigue

Vicarious trauma

* we settle on STS to be inclusive of varying definitions as we continue to develop more exact measures of each of these experiences.

Not for redistribution. All rights reserved.

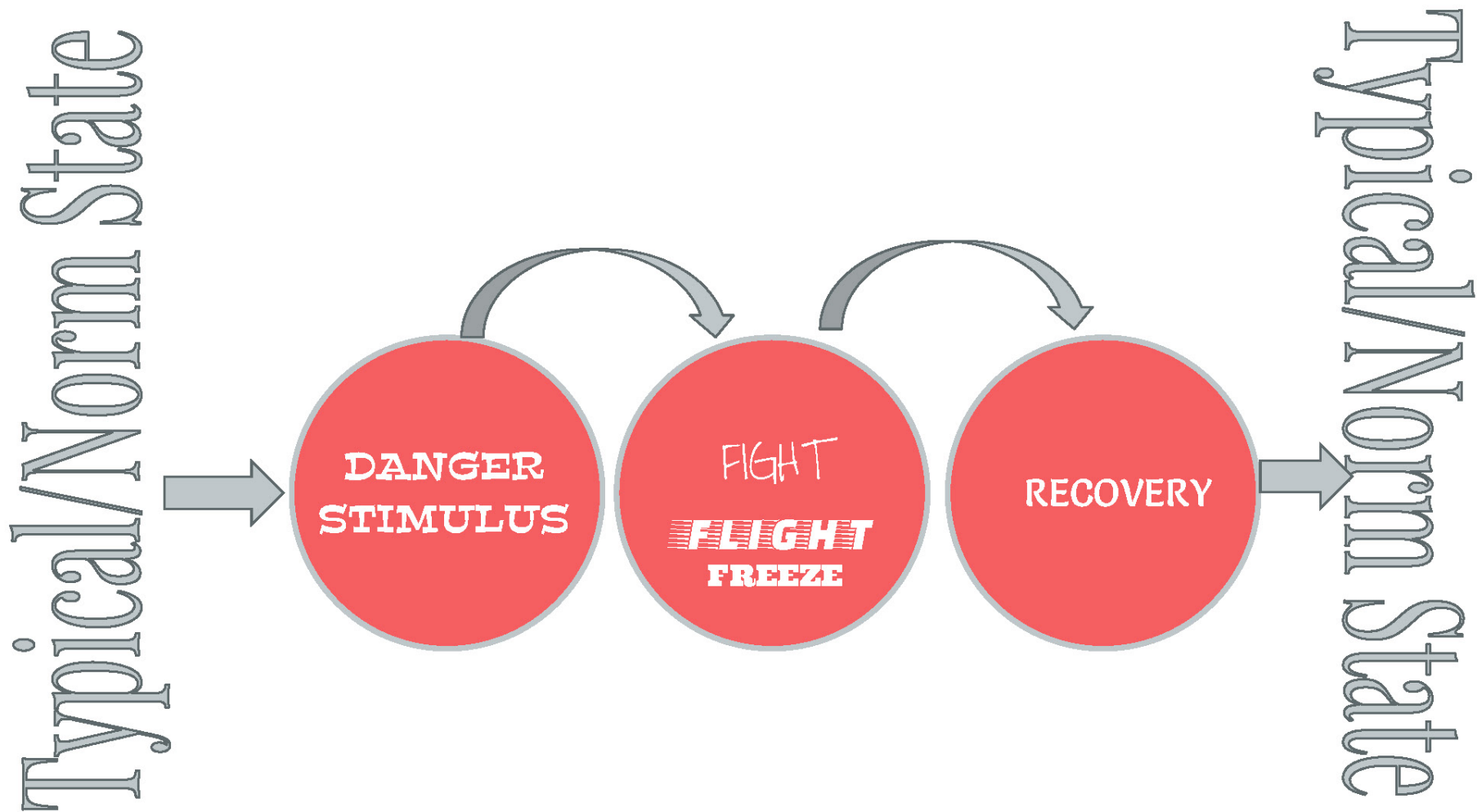


The Brain and STS

How the Brain Responds to
Trauma

- Fight, Flight, Freeze
- Autonomic Nervous System
- Stress-Brain Loop
- “Allostatic Load”

From Stress to Relaxation: Fight, Flight, Freeze



Autonomic Nervous System: The Tug of War

Parasympathetic Nervous System

Sympathetic Nervous System

Adrenaline/Cortisol

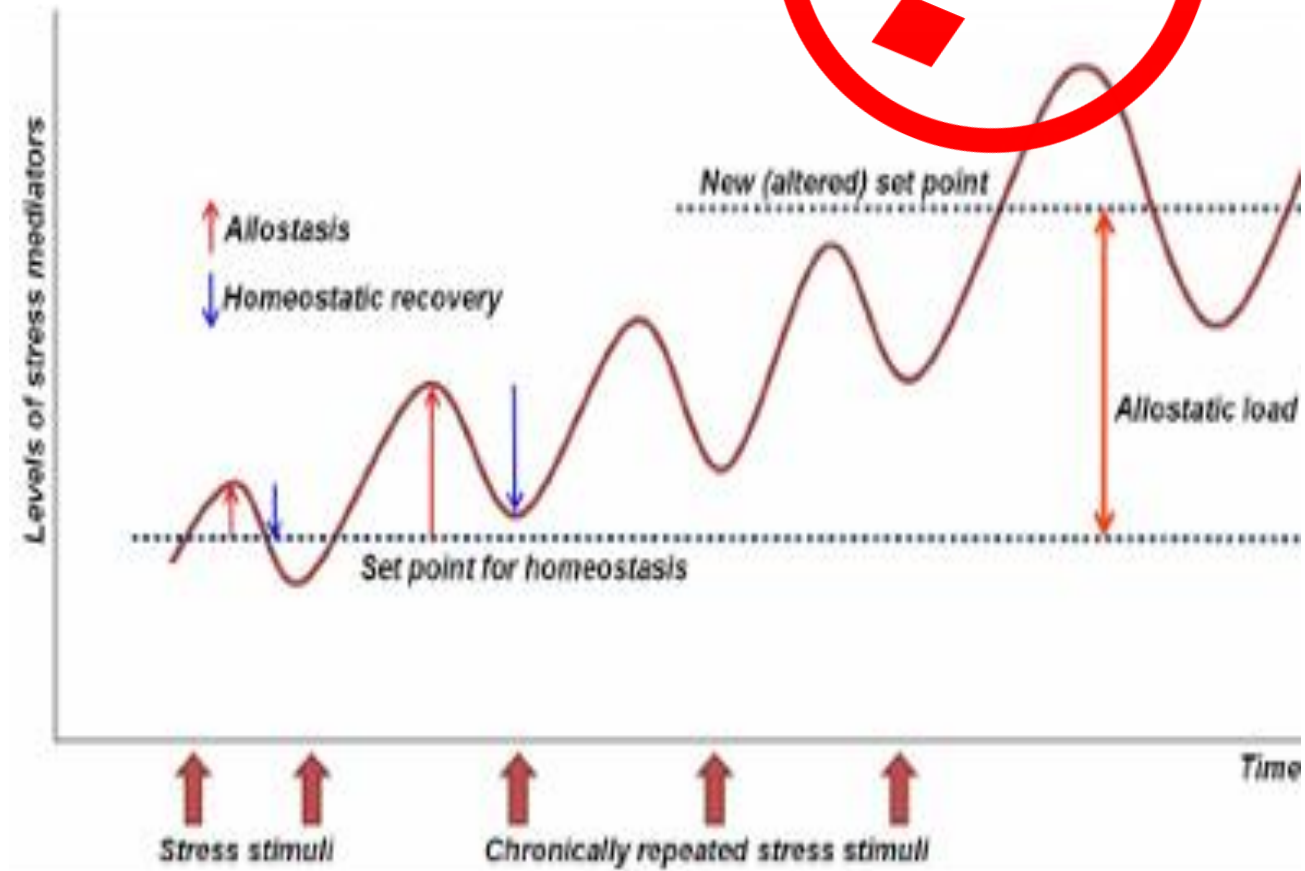
“Return to Calm”

“Fight, Flight, Freeze”



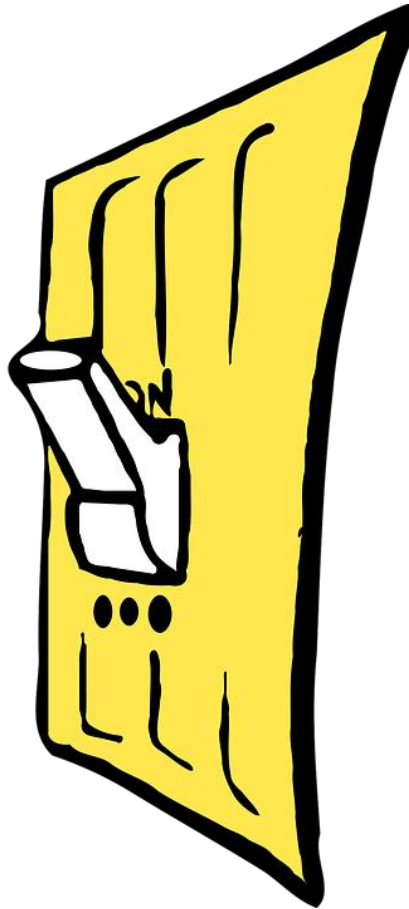
Allostatic Load: Why It Matters

- Repeated stress stimuli **decreases** the brain's ability to return to "set point homeostasis"
- Repeated stress **increases ALLOSTATIC LOAD**
- Heightened allostatic load **increases wear and tear on the body** over time



TRIGGERING

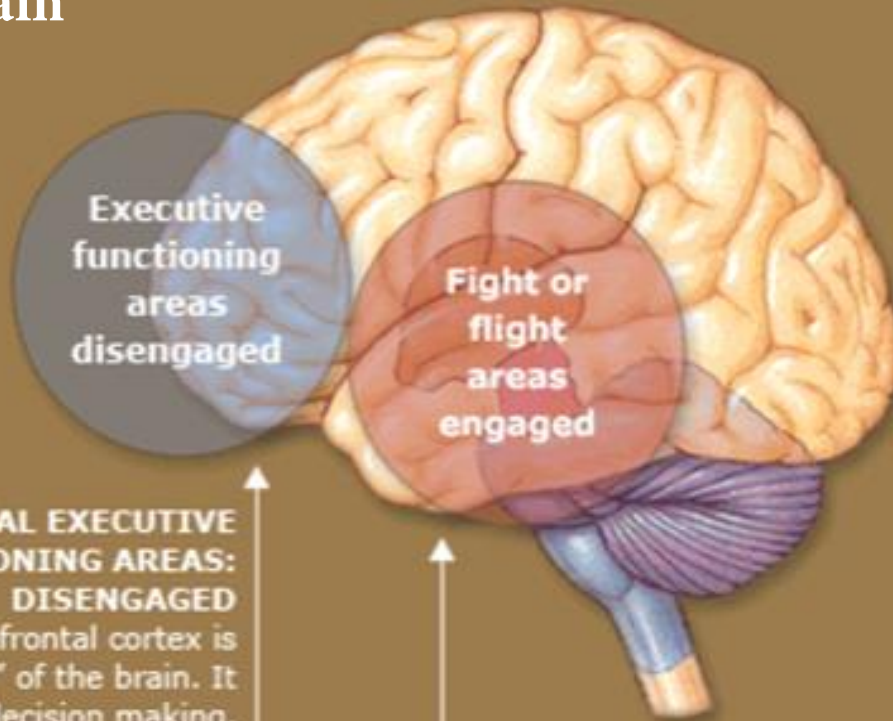
- The split-second decision the amygdala part of your brain makes to keep you safe....even when you may not need it!!!
- A learned behavior
- Can happen at any time unexpectedly



Signs of emotional dysregulation

- Anger
- **Loss of focus**
- **Increased heart rate**
- Muscle tension
- **Feel overwhelmed, vulnerable**, out of control
- **May become physically** out of control or violent

Brain



When the amygdala is engaged the executive functioning of the frontal lobe is less engaged leading to poor choices

FRONTAL EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING AREAS: DISENGAGED

The prefrontal cortex is the "CEO" of the brain. It regulates decision making, judgment, planning, moral reasoning, and sense of self. Stressful experiences (academic pressure, sleep deprivation, substance abuse, etc.) disengage the frontal lobes. Over time, this can lead to impulsive, short-sighted, even violent behavior; increased anxiety; depression; alcohol and drug abuse; learning disorders; and increased stress-related diseases.

SUBCORTICAL FIGHT OR FLIGHT AREAS: ENGAGED

The subcortical arousal system—thalamus, hippocampus, brainstem, and hypothalamus—mobilizes the body for action, increasing heart rate, respiratory rate, and muscle tone. The nature of this system is to bypass the frontal executive functioning and trigger the fight or flight mode.

STS Symptoms

Individuals



Anxiety



Fear and Worry



Isolation



Sadness



Changes in sleeping and eating patterns



Illness flares



Trouble focusing or intrusive thoughts



Relational conflicts

STS

Symptoms

Teams

- Increased pressure on the team due to worker absenteeism
- Increased work conflicts/**short tempers** flare
- **Withdrawal** from colleagues on the team
- **Avoidance** of stressful or traumatic tasks
- **Stress, negativity, and fear** in workers can spread like poison ivy
- Inability to hear or respond to supervision or support
- **Low morale**

STS Symptoms

Organizations

- Constant change in work relationships
- **Diminished inter-team relations**
- Staff break work rules due to **apathy**
- **Lack of vision** for the future
- Lack of flexibility
- **Decrease in work output**
- Negative attitude toward clients
- Decreased progress toward outcome indicators
- **Increased turnover**
- **Increased costs** to agency
- Increased mental health and other costs to clients
- **Lack of respect for deadlines**
- Negativity toward management
- Reluctance to change
- Belief that improvement is not possible

Resilience

Resilience Is Bouncing Back!

Symptoms

Interventions

Strategies

Individuals

Teams

Organizations

Resilience Symptoms

- Optimism
- Hopefulness
- Gratitude
- Able to use support around you
- Understand that this too shall pass (time bound)

Secondary Resilience

- A sense you can learn from the struggles around you and/or see the positive in those around you.

Ex: Firefighters/EMTS respond to severe accidents yet see the humanity that those incidents can bring out in others, like Hurricane Katrina.

Dimensions of Resilience



Southwick & Charney's 10 Essential Resilience Capabilities, (Mark Trezona, 2014)

Not for redistribution. All rights reserved.

Interventions: A Multidimensional and Multi-level Responsibility Approach

Not for redistribution. All rights reserved.

TAKE NOTE...
REFLECTION, SELF-
AWARENESS, OPTIMISM,
SEEKING AND USING
SUPPORT ARE THE MOST
IMPORTANT TOOLS FOR
RESILIENCY ON THE JOB.

TAKING CARE OF ALL
OF YOU-MIND, BODY,
AND SOUL-IS
ESSENTIAL!

Stress Thermometer



© Terence T. Gorski & Stephen F. Grinstead

Personal Responsibility Interventions: Self-care is the fuel that allows your light to shine and allows you to be a better leader



Physical

- Exercise
- Eat well
- Drink more water
- Get adequate sleep
- Midday walks

Mental

- Healthy work-life balance including learning to set limits in both worlds
- Mindfulness training
- Be proactive rather than reactive- plan for what you will cope with during the day
- Take time off when needed (mental health day)
- Time management

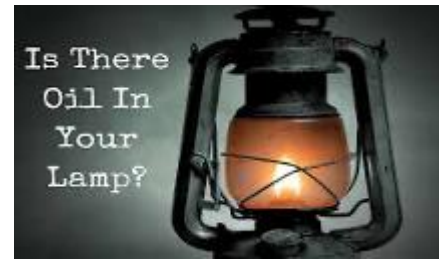
Emotional

- Learn to reach out to others, particularly supervisor and co-workers
- Recognize the signs of STS and take responsibility for your own self care
- Realization and guided and imagery
- Vacations
- Spend time with friends/family to recharge

Spiritual

- Meditate or pray
- Take time for reflection
- Connect to a larger purpose beyond yourself

Supervisory Responsibility (Team): Put oil in the team's lamp, too!



- **Assess workers' STS** and discuss what you see
- **Encourage self care and use of EAP** or professional assistance if available
- Flexible scheduling
- Encourage breaks and vacations
- Encourage **weekly check-in or self-care sessions** with the entire team
- Encourage a **team approach to the job**
 - Pair workers in difficult situations
 - Don't allow a worker to go it alone
 - Institute the "Self-care Buddy System"
- Reflective supervision!
 - The number one intervention that helps workers is reflective supervision. The supervisor can help to identify and ameliorate STS in workers during supervision. There **MUST** be a focus on the reflective aspects of the job.
- Supervisory support **helps with STS and retention!**
- Supervisors get STS, too!
 - Take care of yourself and discuss with your manager.

Staying Connected thru the Pandemic:

Be Intentional

- Provide positive social support since social support actually helps to release oxytocin which decreases stress
- Foster acts of kindness
- Celebrate special events on the team such as birthdays, work anniversaries, etc.
- Start Zoom early so people can have a chance to chat before a meeting as they would do in person
- Create some online fun such as lunch Bingo, trivia time, book group, or craft time
- Express appreciation in an email with nice graphics or a personal phone call to an employee
- Virtual coffee/tea hour or breaks or lunch!
- Invite expressions of gratitude during meetings

What Can I Say To My Staff?

Acknowledge Pain and Trauma

"I hear your pain and acknowledge that this has been so hard and even traumatic. I see you doing the very best job for the families we serve. If you ever need to talk, I am here. If you feel you need other help, we can help you get it."

Not for redistribution. All rights reserved.

Empathize

"I hear your fears about COVID-19, and I see what it can do. We are doing everything we possibly can do to mitigate the spread and to keep you and all of our employees healthy."

Organizational Responsibility: Leaders Set The Climate!



- Be the person you want them to be!
- Be open and available
- Be **supportive**
- Be **proactive rather than reactive**
- Be a model
 - Positive emotional labor
 - Open communication
 - Culture of hope, meaning, purpose
 - Use humor and whimsy
 - Model appropriate supervision at each level
- Institute shared governance
- Bottom up -- include workers in decision-making
- **Be open** to suggestions and to change
- Always remember to **be sensitive to a climate of trauma** in which workers are and can be again traumatized by any given client interaction.
- Do not contribute to the trauma
- Advocate for mindfulness training
- Get to know everyone and take an interest in their work and their lives (**FORM A SENSE OF COMMUNITY**)

From idea to practice....

If you could wave a magic wand, what would you put in your resilience self care kit?



Resilience Review

Take a moment...
gather your thoughts
review your notes

- What can I build with or build on from today's workshop?
- What energized, inspired me? Or, soothed/solved a problem for me?
- Where can I make the biggest difference for myself, team, and organization?

Map It Out: *My* Resilience Kit



Journal responses to following prompt:

Of what I heard today...

- ...how can I support my OWN resilience?
- ...how can I enable my team's resilience?
- ...how can I create more safety, support, and resilience in my organization?

Grateful



GRATEFUL

THANKFUL

BLESSED

Today I am grateful for:

I saw beauty in:

*“An empty lantern
provides no light.
Self-care is the fuel
that allows your
light to shine
brightly.”*

UNKNOWN

When you are emotionally healthy and in control, you can sit with others who need time and space to heal. So, fill your lantern first so your light can shine and be a help to others!

“May all that you do now be for love, and may you always be fiercely kind.”

- Adapted from Bis



Let's stay in touch...

Barbara Pierce, PhD, LCSW
Associate Professor of Social Work
Indiana University School of Social Work
Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholar Fellow

barjpie@iupui.edu

Resources & References

- ACS-NYU Children's Trauma Institute (2011). Promoting resilience and reducing secondary trauma among child welfare staff. New York, NY. Retrieved from: http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/resilience_alliance_training_manual.pdf.
- Caringi, J.C., Lawson, H. A., & Devlin, M. (2012). Planning for emotional labor and secondary traumatic stress in child welfare organizations. *Journal of Family Strengths*, 12: 1.
- Figley, C. R. (2004). Compassion fatigue therapist course workbook. A weekend training course. Green Cross Foundation. Black Mountain, NC. Retrieved from: http://www.gbgm.umc.org/shdis/CFEWorkbook_V2.pdf.
- Kansas Workforce Initiative Evidence Review (2010). Secondary Traumatic Stress. Retrieved from www.kwi.ku.edu.
- National Child Traumatic Network (N.D.). Secondary Traumatic Stress. Retrieved from <http://www.nctsn.org>.

Resilience Builder's Toolkit

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Vgpx6TK3rEzTtm16IhzGIHwSYd0vso9DGB0TMNGhh0o/edit?usp=sharing>