



A WAY OF BEING WITH CHILDREN

Trauma Stories and the Impact on Teachers

Tips to Promote Child Well-Being and Resilience



What are Trauma Stories?

- Not a clinical term
- Accounts of abuse, neglect, household dysfunction
- Direct verbal reports, expressed through play, appearance or engaging with others
- Bear witness to physical/emotional pain
- You have an emotional/ physical response as a result

Impact of Trauma Stories

- Trauma stories impact us, the listeners.
- In a situation where you have a strong emotional response to someone else's experience, your body may respond as though you are experiencing some of that trauma.
- Impacts the brain and requires coping skills and social supports to buffer the response.

Trauma Stories and Teaching

Your role as a teacher is so multi-faceted. Amongst daily demands and expectations of teaching itself, some of which can seem overwhelming, there's also the need to ensure your own wellbeing and sustainability. So why is there the need to consider trauma on top of the daily tasks and challenges you're already facing?

Perhaps take a moment to think about your experience as a teacher thus far. Whether that's been for a short period of time, or for decades. Take a moment to pause and observe all you've experienced in that time. Have you heard trauma stories from the children you teach? How did it impact you? How did you respond?

We tend to neglect OURSELVES when hearing about someone else's traumatic experience. After all, it wasn't us experiencing the event, right? However, what we're overlooking is the fact that we do have a biological and emotional response to that story, and that it could impact us on a much more significant level we give a credit for.



Secondary Trauma

Hearing trauma stories puts us at risk of developing secondary trauma - even though we didn't directly experience the event, hearing about it and having a resulting emotional and physiological response can create a trauma response.



There are two different components, both of which fall under the umbrella term "secondary trauma": compassion fatigue and vicarious traumatization.

Compassion Fatigue

- Known as the "cost of caring"
- Emotional exhaustion
- Providing compassion/empathy makes you good at your job... and vulnerable to compassion fatigue!
- Results in inability to refuel and refresh emotional/mental wellbeing.
- Can cause reduced ability to be empathetic - "emotionally numb".

Vicarious Traumatization

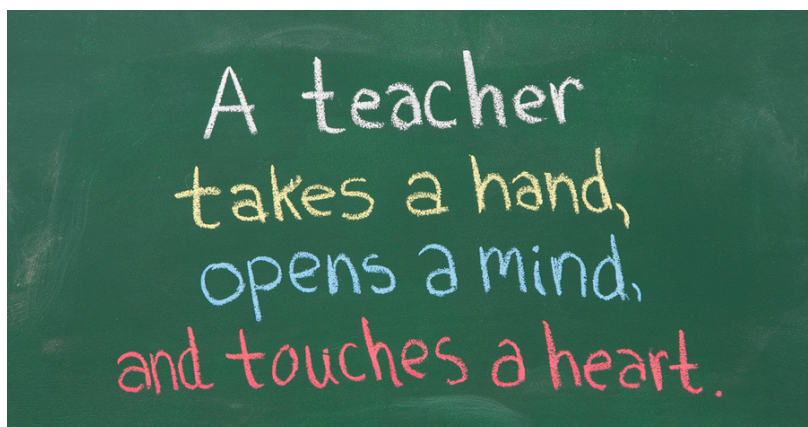
- Occurs in response to exposure to pain and suffering of others
- Shift of view of world, self and others
- Cynical/fearful
- Builds up over time as exposure to trauma stories increases or is prolonged
- Risk of becoming overly-involved emotionally with situation/ experiencing bystander guilt
- Risk of PTSD-like symptoms developing

Addressing the Trauma Impact



Let's review some ways to address the trauma impact you might experience in response to compassion fatigue or vicarious trauma:

- Trauma-informed environment/trainings
- Supervision from colleagues and support from family/therapist
- Increase self-observation: document signs of stress/fatigue/vicarious trauma
- Explore self-beliefs and impact of experience
- Maintain healthy work-life balance
- Practice own self-care consistently
- Practice self-compassion
- Prioritize sleep, nutrition, activity and relaxation
- Seek additional mental health services such as individual therapy for support



Mandated Reporting



- A mandated reporter is a person who, because of his or her profession, is legally required to report any suspicion of child abuse or neglect.
- Teachers are mandated reporters.
- In Florida - everyone is a mandated reporter.
- 1-(800) 96-ABUSE (1-800-962-2873).
- This toll-free number is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Scan for Resources



www.centerforchildcounseling.org/awayofbeing

Telephone: 561-244-9499
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