



TEXAS CENTER
FOR THE JUDICIARY

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How Judges Can Respond to Secondary Trauma
and Compassion Fatigue

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Disclaimer

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Stresses That Affect Judges in Child Welfare Cases



Common Stresses in Child Welfare Cases

- Hearing traumatic stories of domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, sexual abuse, kidnapping, suicides, and deaths
- Seeing pictures of abused and neglected children
- Exposure to the worst impulses, behaviors, and beliefs in people
- Seeing the effects on the most vulnerable among us



How Does Repeated Traumatic Exposure Affect Judges?

- It hurts.
- It can consume their thoughts.
- It creates images they can't forget.
- It wears away at their resilience.
- It can make them pull away from friends and family.
- It can make them question their faith.
- It may result in secondary traumatization.



What Is Secondary Traumatic Stress?

Secondary traumatic stress is the emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the firsthand trauma experiences of another. Its symptoms mimic those of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

NCTSN, 2017



What Is Secondary Traumatic Stress?

Unfortunately, we are not able to unhear or unsee the things we see and hear in the courtroom. There is no button to turn off the effects of this when you go to bed at night.

I will be out running, and suddenly I see the burned-off face of a 5-year-old child in my head, and it won't go away.

Anonymous judges, quoted in *Judicial Edge*, October 20, 2017



Secondary Traumatic Stress and Related Conditions: Sorting One from Another

Secondary Traumatic Stress refers to the presence of PTSD symptoms caused by at least one indirect exposure to traumatic material. Several other terms capture elements of this definition but are not all interchangeable with it.

Compassion fatigue, a less stigmatizing way to describe secondary traumatic stress, has been used interchangeably with the term.

Vicarious trauma refers to changes in the inner experience of the therapist resulting from empathic engagement with a traumatized client. It is a theoretical term that focuses less on trauma symptoms and more on the covert cognitive changes that occur following cumulative exposure to another person's traumatic material.

Compassion satisfaction refers to the positive feelings derived from competent performance as a trauma professional. It is characterized by positive relationships with colleagues, and the conviction that one's work makes a meaningful contribution to clients and society.

Burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced feeling of personal accomplishment. While it is also work-related, burnout develops as a result of general occupational stress; the term is not used to describe the effects of indirect trauma exposure specifically.

NCTSN, 2017



DSM 5 Criteria for PTSD

Criterion A:

The person was exposed to: death, threatened death, actual or threatened serious injury, or actual or threatened sexual violence, as follows: (one required)

- Direct exposure.
- Witnessing the trauma, in person.
- Indirectly, by learning that a close relative or close friend was exposed to trauma.
- Indirect exposure to aversive details of the event(s), usually in the course of professional duties (e.g., first responders, collecting body parts; professionals repeatedly exposed to details of child abuse).



Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in DSM 5

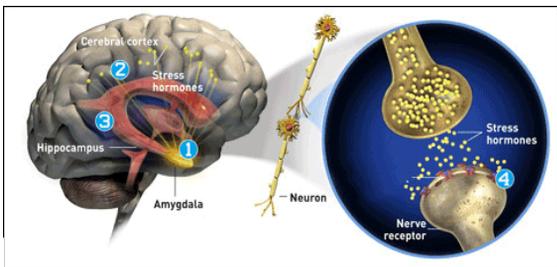


PTSD is characterized by:

- Exposure to a severe life-threatening event
- Repetitive re-experiencing of the event
- Avoidance of stimuli associated with trauma
- Negative moods and cognitions
- Increased arousal



Traumatic Stress and the Brain



Skill Break: The Firehose Technique



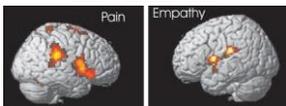


The Effects of Repeated Traumatic Exposure



Mirror Neurons

- Mirror neurons allow us to imitate each other
- They make up 10-20% of the neurons in certain areas of the brain (Keysers et al., 2011)
- They are responsible for empathy (Rizzolatti and Craighero, 2005)



Symptoms of Secondary Traumatic Stress

Re-experiencing

- Intrusive images
- Nightmares
- Flashbacks
- Being triggered by reminders

Avoidance

- Trying not to talk about it
- Withdrawal and isolation
- Being late
- Missing work
- Not going out in public
- Increased alcohol and drug use



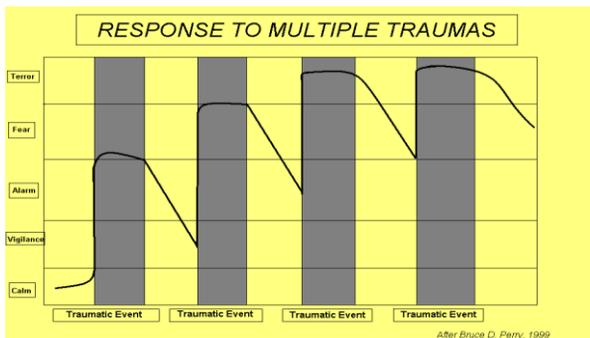
Symptoms of STS

Negative Thoughts and Moods

- Numbness
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Guilt
- Helplessness
- Hopelessness
- Cessation of previously enjoyed activities

Arousal

- Irritability
- Anger
- Hypervigilance
- Startle responses
- Insomnia



Other Common Symptoms of STS



- Ruminative thinking
- Thoughts of retribution
- Problems with attention and concentration
- Memory problems
- Fears for own safety and that of loved ones
- Feeling cut off from or distrustful of others
- Intolerance of others



Other Common STS Behaviors

- Worsening eating habits (overeating or loss of appetite)
- Preoccupation with work/working longer hours
- Engaging in excessive screen time (phones, tablets, computers, televisions)



Secondary Traumatization is a normal response to an abnormal level of exposure to traumatic events.



Risk Factors for STS



- Personal history of trauma or something related to the case
- Overidentification with court participants
- Empathic style
- Insufficient recovery time between trauma exposures
- Reactive to children's vulnerability
- Isolation at work
- Lack of systemic resources



Important Note

It is not unusual to experience one or more of these symptoms from time to time. Normally, these periods do not last more than four weeks.



Skill Break: Drop Three





When Secondary Traumatic Stress Becomes a Problem



Q: How do you know when secondary traumatic stress becomes a problem?

A: When symptoms become constant and/or pervasive.



Signs of Deepening Problems

- Drinking more than two standard drinks/day
- Misusing prescription medication
- Using illicit drugs



Signs of Deepening Problems



- Becoming a couch potato
- Insomnia lasting more than four weeks
- Panic attacks
- Isolation from family and friends
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Despair about the world
- Loss of faith in humanity
- Loss of faith
- Thoughts of suicide



Deepening Problems in Court

- Inability to balance compassion and impartiality
- Numbness
- Unstable moods
- Emotional acting out towards participants
- Spacing out/dissociation



Deepening Problems in Court

- Decreased motivation
- Decreased productivity
- Decline in quality of work
- Avoiding or becoming less responsive to others
- Impaired judicial functioning





Signs of Burnout

- Chronic exhaustion
- Dread of work
- Headaches, stomachaches, high blood pressure, chest tightening, dizziness, etc.
- Increased illness
- Cynicism and detachment
- Feeling trapped for economic reasons
- Feeling ineffective
- Brownouts



Skill Break: Mindfulness of the Breath



Research on Secondary Traumatic Stress in Judges



In October, 2017, nearly 800 judges participated in a National Judicial College survey.

They were asked "Have you suffered secondary traumatic stress from being a judge?"

45% answered yes.

Judicial Edge, October, 2017



The Main Study: Jaffe et al., 2003

- 105 judges, 54% M and 46% F
- 81% had criminal court duties, 54% had domestic court duties, and 30% had juvenile court duties
- 63% reported one or more symptoms of STS
- Female judges reported more internalizing symptoms
- Judges with more than six years of experience were more likely to report more externalizing/hostile symptoms



The fact that 46-63% of judges experience some symptoms of secondary traumatization suggests that 37-54% do not.





Preventing and Managing Secondary Traumatic Stress





Assess for STS

- Conduct periodic self-assessments
- Use evidence-based assessment instruments:
 - Professional Quality of Life Scale
 - Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale





Assess for STS

- Judges tend to underestimate their secondary traumatic stress
- The best evaluators tend to be their spouses/partners (Jaffe et al., 2003)
 - Also close family members and close friends
- Ask them if you've changed/if you show signs of STS



A judge was asked, "How do you cope with all the stress associated with being a judge?"

He answered, "With ~~Golf and Alcohol~~."



Preventing Secondary Traumatization

1. Know the signs and symptoms of STS
2. Assess yourself annually
3. Take breaks at work
4. Ensure 6.5-7.5 hours of sleep/night
5. Eat healthy foods in healthy amounts
6. Exercise regularly





Preventing Secondary Traumatization

7. Engage in a spiritual life
8. Engage in a hobby that has nothing to do with work
9. Set boundaries between work and home
10. Schedule and accumulate pleasant activities
11. Deal with your personal history
12. Obtain regular training on trauma and its effects

Intervening When You Experience STS

1. Engage or re-engage your support network
2. Re-balance work and life
3. Reduce exposure to work-related and trauma-related books, movies, internet content, and news



Intervening When You Experience STS



4. Practice self-soothing: baths, music, massages, etc.
5. Take vacations
6. Start a journal, including what you are grateful for
7. Be creative: sing, dance, write, draw, sculpt
8. Spend time with healthy children



Intervening When You Experience STS

9. Practice self-compassion
10. Practice mindfulness meditation
11. Engage in regular yoga



THE BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS

- | Physical | Mental |
|---|--|
|  Boost energy levels |  Relieves stress |
|  Improves sleep |  Reduces anxiety |
|  Reduces chronic pain |  Improves mood and happiness |
|  Improves heart function |  Boosts concentration and focus |
|  Helps with digestive problems |  Improves self-esteem |



When STS Becomes a Serious Problem

- Seek consultation from a mentor or senior judge
- Use state lawyer's assistance programs
- Use the EAP or engage in psychotherapy
- Take a sabbatical
- Change caseload composition
- Change in judicial assignments (Osofsky et al., 2008)



Obstacles to Judicial Self-Care



- Neither secondary traumatization nor self-care are taught in many law schools (Perry, 2014)
- Judges are reluctant to admit to their own suffering (Chamberlain & Miller, 2009)
- Judges may feel they need to be perfect role models (Chamberlain & Miller, 2009)
- Judges are reluctant to engage in lawyer assistance programs, because they may know other participants (Chamberlain & Miller, 2009)
- Judicial isolation (Jaffe et al., 2003)



SAMHSA's Four R's of Trauma-Informed Courts

<p>01</p> <p>Realize the widespread impact of trauma and understand potential paths for recovery</p>	<p>02</p> <p>Recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma in participants, families, and staff</p>	<p>03</p> <p>Respond by integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices</p>	<p>04</p> <p>Actively resist re-traumatization</p>
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Develop a Self-Care Action Plan

- Use the ideas above, and include your own
- Make a plan how you will leave work at work
- Identify your triggers and how you will handle them
- Set aside at least one hour daily for self-care
- What gives you joy?
- What gives you meaning?

's Self Care Plan

<p>Mental</p>	<p>Physical</p>
<p>Emotional</p>	<p>Spiritual</p>

*Start a plan
within the next week*

Skill Break: Envision a Calm Place



We have an obligation to our clients, as well as to ourselves, our colleagues, and our loved ones, not to be damaged by the work we do.

P.S. Please keep an eye out for your colleagues, too.

Karen Saakvitne and Laurie Pearlman, 1996



Resources



Self-Screening Tools

- Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale:
https://www.naadac.org/assets/2416/sharon_foley_ac15_military_cultureho2.pdf
- Professional Quality of Life Scale
http://proqol.org/uploads/ProQOL_5_English_Self-Score_7_2011.pdf



Dealing with Secondary Traumatization

- *Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others* by Laura van Dernoot Lipsky
- Secondary Traumatic Stress in child-serving systems:
http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/secondary_traumatic_tress.pdf



Self-Care Workbooks

- Free Self-Care Workbook:
http://www.figleyinstitute.com/documents/Workbook_AMEDD_SanAntonio_2012July20_RevAugust2013.pdf
- When Compassion Hurts:
https://www.beststart.org/resources/howto/pdf/Compassion_14MY01_Final.pdf
- *Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization* by Karen Saakvitne and Laurie Pearlman



Mindfulness Books

- *Mindfulness for Beginners: Reclaiming the Present Moment - and Your Life* (2011), Jon Kabat-Zinn
- *The Miracle of Mindfulness* (1999), Thich Nhat Hanh
- *Meditation for Beginners* (2008), Jack Kornfield
- *Radical Acceptance* (2012), Tara Brach
- *How to Meditate* (2013), Pema Chodron



Mindfulness Meditation CDs

- *Guided Mindfulness Meditation Series 1, 2 & 3*, Jon Kabat-Zinn
- *Mindfulness Meditation*, Tara Brach
- *Natural Awareness*, Pema Chodron
- *Guided Meditation*, Jack Kornfield
- *Plum Village Meditations*, Thich Nhat Hanh



Online Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Courses

- Online video course:
<http://www.soundstrue.com/store/the-mbsr-online-course-3226.html>
- Free online MBSR course:
<http://palousemindfulness.com/selfguidedMBSR.html>



Guided Mindfulness Meditations

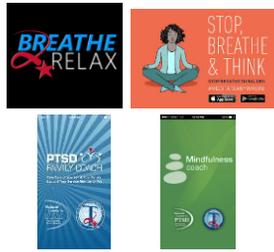
- <http://www.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/resources/multimedia/index.asp>
- <http://www.fammed.wisc.edu/mindfulness-meditation-podcast-series/>
- <http://health.ucsd.edu/specialties/mindfulness/programs/mbsr/Pages/audio.aspx>
- <http://marc.ucla.edu/body.cfm?id=22>



Self-Help Mobile Applications

<http://www.t2health.org/mobile-apps>

- Breathe 2 Relax
- PTSD Family Coach
- Stop, Breathe, and Think
- Mindfulness Coach



Self-Help Mobile Applications

<http://www.militarymentalhealth.org/articles/media>

- Positive Activity Jackpot
- Virtual Hope Box
- Provider Resilience



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