



Preventing and Treating Compassion Fatigue with Self-Care

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Where Compassion Meets Action

Preventing and Treating Compassion Fatigue with Self-Care

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Librarianship in 2019

This is what people think I do...

- read all day
- have a quiet workplace
- research interesting questions
- shush people
- meander around the internet and social media
- read to kids

This is what I really do...

- advocate
- manage
- translate
- balance
- strategize
- design
- serve

Question: What is your main source of workplace stress?

Mindfulness Practice

Awareness of Sound



What is Trauma?

A threat to the system in a state of helplessness.

Trauma is not an event in and of itself, but rather a response to a stressful situation in which a person's ability to cope is dramatically undermined.



Types of Traumatic Experiences



- Abuse
- Natural disasters
- Toxic stress (poverty, instability, fear)
- Refugee experience
- Domestic violence
- Community violence
- Medical trauma
- Traumatic grief

Neuroscience of Trauma

The amygdala “remembers” all trauma and is always scanning for sensory indicators of danger

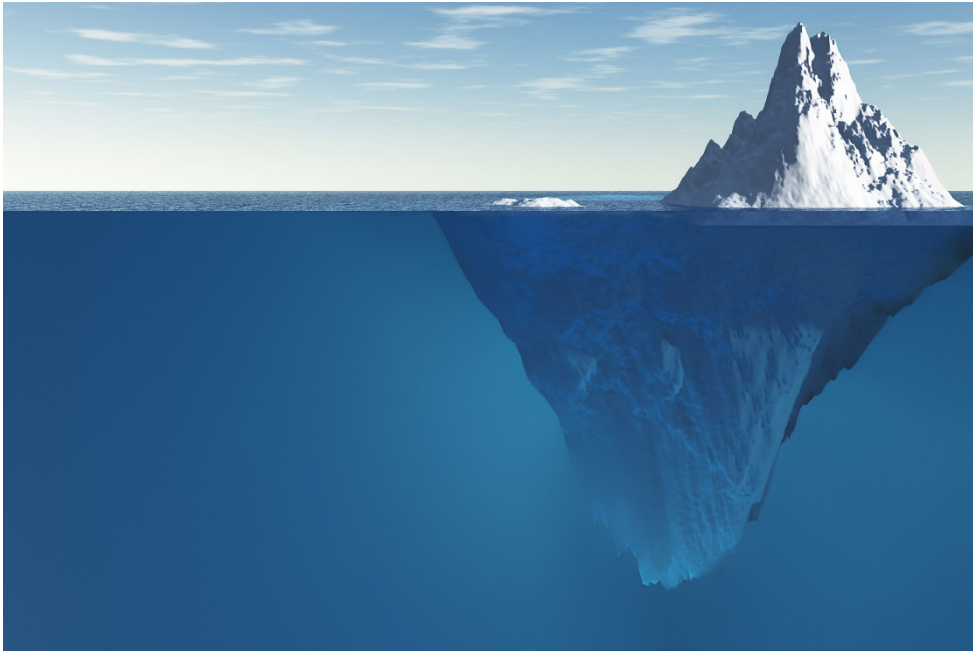
Trauma is triggered at an unconscious level, before conscious awareness

When the amygdala is triggered by past trauma, the limbic system takes over in the present moment

At this time, the brain is locked into survival mode; the person will do what has kept them safe in the past (fight, flight, or flee)



Trauma Can Look Like...



- Aggressive behaviors
- Shutting down or withdrawing
- Crying
- Throwing things
- Hiding
- Lack of concentration or interest
- Wariness or distrust

Mindfulness Practice

Body Scan



Compassion Fatigue

“The emotional residue or strain of exposure to working with those suffering from the consequences of traumatic events. Compassion Fatigue can occur due to exposure on one case or can be due to a ‘cumulative’ level of trauma. Also known as “secondary trauma.” – American Institute of Stress

Signs of Compassion Fatigue

- Feeling physically, mentally, or emotionally worn out
- Feeling overwhelmed by the needs and difficulties faced by the people you serve
- Increased irritability and impatience
- Feeling numb or detached
- Intense dreams, feelings, or intrusive thoughts
- Difficulty sleeping
- Those with unresolved trauma are more susceptible to compassion fatigue

Self-Care

Intentionally caring for one's own physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing.

We cannot care for others without first caring for ourselves.

Self-care is not “selfish;” it is a critical leadership skill to cultivate



Mindfulness Practice

5-4-3-2-1



Question: How do you currently practice self-care?

Self-Care Strategies

- Mindfulness
- Physical activity (exercise, dance, yoga, sports, etc.)
- Time with supportive friends
- Creative pursuits
- Time in nature
- Massage and other therapeutic relaxation techniques (aromatherapy, reiki, floatation/sensory deprivation, etc.)
- Therapy

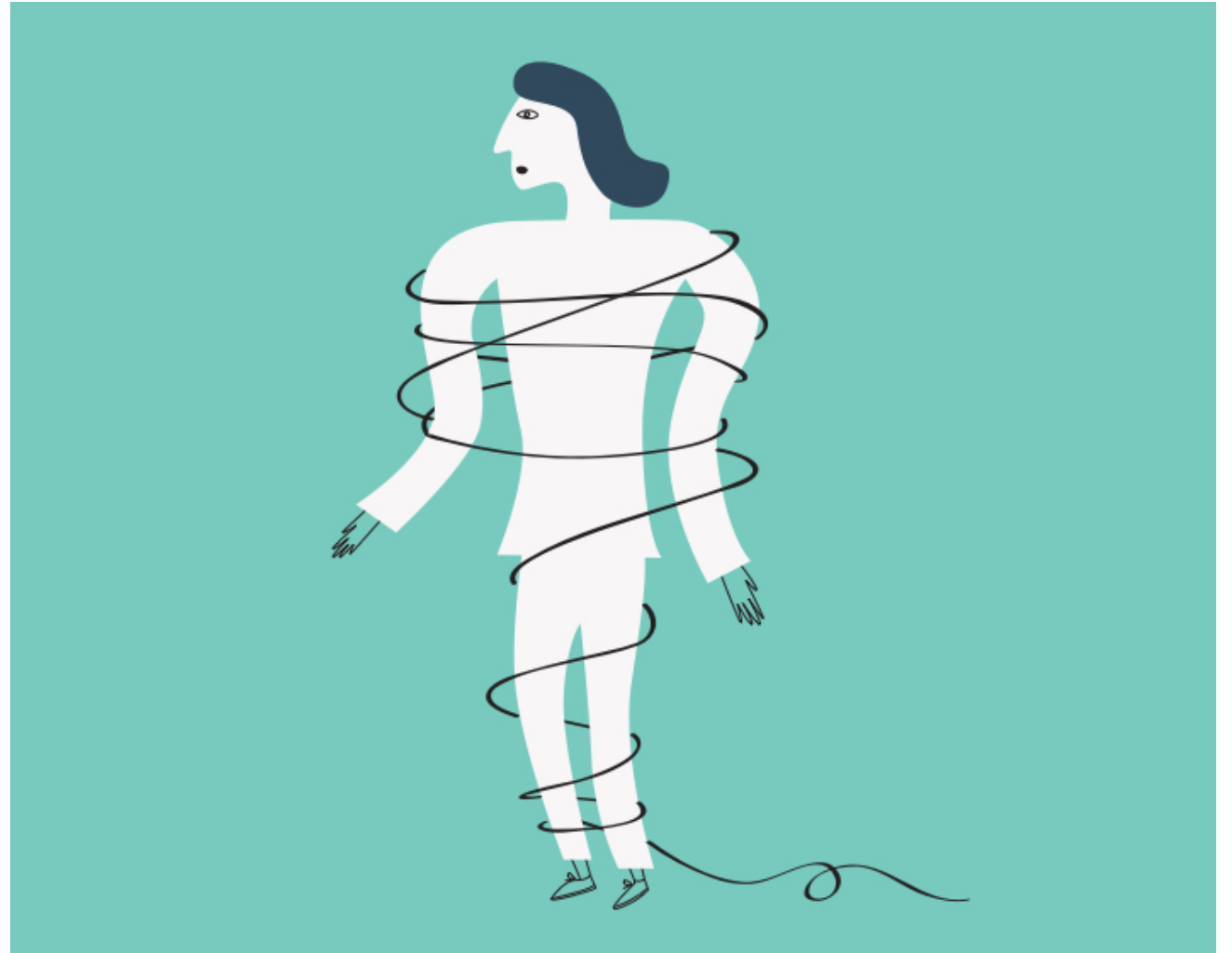
Barriers to Self-Care

Money

Time

Lack of support

Geography / Physical Access



Supporting Self-Care in the Workplace

- Lead by example
- Name compassion fatigue and speak about it openly
- Encourage breaks, vacations, etc.
- No parity between physical health and mental health
- Mentorship
- Know the real demands of the job and check on staff regularly
- Job swaps
- Financial assistance, training, or on-site self-care opportunities
- Be aware of what behaviors you reward

Self-Care in the Workplace

What can I let go?



Question:

What is one commitment you can make to your self-care?

Compassion Practice

Lovingkindness



Make a self-care plan and use it!

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