

Helping Educators Cope with Secondary Trauma

Working with students who have experienced trauma can affect individuals working with them (educators, educational assistants, and administrators). Secondary trauma happens when you're repeatedly exposed to students' traumatic stories or behaviours. You might feel overwhelmed, emotionally drained, or start avoiding certain students. This is normal and shows you care. Here are some tips to help:

Recognize the Signs in Yourself

- Feeling emotionally exhausted, anxious, or numb after work
- Having trouble sleeping or concentrating
- Getting sick more often or having headaches
- Feeling cynical about students or families

Set Healthy Boundaries

- Leave work at work, avoid taking student problems home mentally
- Take your lunch breaks for yourself whenever possible
- It's okay to say "I need a moment" (micro break) when feeling overwhelmed
- Know your limits: you're not a therapist, focus on what you can control in your classroom

Practice Self-Care Daily

- Do something you enjoy outside of work every day
- Stay connected with friends and family who aren't in education
- Get enough sleep, eat well, and move your body
- Try deep breathing or mindfulness when stressed

Build Support at Work

- Talk with trusted colleagues about difficult cases
- Ask for help from administrators when you need it
- Celebrate small wins and student progress with your team
- Share strategies that work with other staff

Seek Professional Help When Needed

- Consider counselling if symptoms persist or worsen (employee assistance program)
- Talk to your doctor about physical symptoms
- Remember that getting help makes you a better educator

For more information and resources, please check out the Google Site:

<https://sites.google.com/tdsb.on.ca/psychologicalservices/home>

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