

Secondary Trauma

Coping with the effects of others' trauma can be draining and can have lasting negative effects. It is not uncommon for educators who deal with traumatized children to develop their own symptoms of traumatic stress. This is known as secondary traumatic stress.

In order to best serve their students and and maintain their own health, educators must be alert to the signs of secondary traumatic stress in themselves and their coworkers. In a trauma-informed school, staff should be encouraged to practice self-care along with other strategies to guard against or heal from the effects of secondary traumatic stress.

Individuals can protect against and manage secondary traumatic stress by practicing self-care through regular exercise, a healthy diet, and sufficient sleep. Activities such as yoga or meditation can be helpful in reducing general stress. It is important for staff to take time away from the stress-inducing situation. Spending time with family or friends, or focusing on a project or hobby can help.

Signs of Secondary Traumatic Stress

Secondary traumatic stress can impact all areas of your life. The effects can range from mild to debilitating. If you think you might be at risk, be alert for any of the following symptoms:

- **Emotional** — feeling numb or detached; feeling overwhelmed or maybe even hopeless.
- **Physical** — having low energy or feeling fatigued.
- **Behavioral** — changing your routine or engaging in self-destructive coping mechanisms.
- **Professional** — experiencing low performance of job tasks and responsibilities; feeling low job morale.
- **Cognitive** — experiencing confusion, diminished concentration, and difficulty with decision making; experiencing trauma imagery, which is seeing events over and over again.
- **Spiritual** — questioning the meaning of life or lacking self-satisfaction.

- **Interpersonal** — physically withdrawing or becoming emotionally
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<https://traumaawareschools.org/secondaryStress> - Quoted from and unrevised.