

# **Vicarious Trauma and Compassion Fatigue: Taking Care of Oneself in the Face of Pain**

By Taquelia Washington, LCSW

# Agenda Overview

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- Introduction and Opening Exercises
- What is self care?
- What is Compassion Fatigue?
- What is Vicarious Trauma?
- Boundaries and Limit Setting
- Culture and Self Care
- Experiential Exercises
  - Mindfulness Based Exercises
  - Yoga Based Exercises

***Welcome Every Body***

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# **What is Self Care?**

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# What are components of Self Care?

## 1. Personal

Examples:

1. Physical
2. Spiritual
3. Nutritional

## 2. Professionally

Examples:

1. Creating space in your day
2. Boundaries and limit setting
3. Processing with supervisors, consultation groups, etc.

# Self Care

- Ideally will include space to focus on multiple layers of healing and regulating your nervous system (ie: somatically, emotionally/psychologically, cognitively, and spiritually)
- How to take care of oneself in the face of pain?
  - Looking at as energy
  - Releasing energy

# Examples of Self Care that can be done during Work day

- Consciously Breathing
- Make time throughout the work day for intermittent self-care breaks
- Create a healthy work space for yourself
- Minimize procrastination
- Using stress balls
- Art activities (ie: coloring, mandalas)
- Movement (ie: taking a walk outside, gentle stretching)
- Intentional planning and re-planning of your day
- 5 minute phone call
- Using affirmations to increase positive outlook
- 5 minute read of an inspiring article that re-builds your passion for the work
- Listening to music
- YouTube videos

# **Community Care and Structural Care**

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# COMMUNITY CARE

Workarounds for systems that don't inherently support care (ie, capitalism!)

CHILDCARE



EDUCATION COLLECTIVES



DIGNIFIED,  
SUPPORTIVE  
HEALTHCARE  
ORGS



WORKER-  
OWNED  
COOPS

INTIMATE  
RELATIONSHIPS

OUTSIDE OF TRADITIONAL,  
ROMANTIC COUPLEHOOD NORMS



CREDIT  
UNIONS



FREecycle &  
BUY NOTHING  
GROUPS



CO-HOUSING



SKILL  
SHARING &  
MUTUAL  
AID

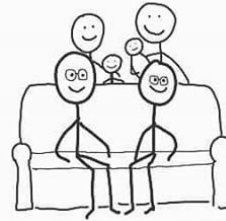
# STRUCTURAL CARE

Systems that support community care, self-care AND self-soothing



COMPREHENSIVE  
UNIVERSAL  
HEALTHCARE

ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION

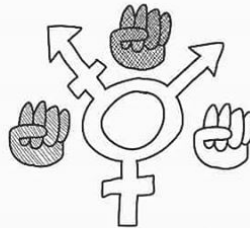
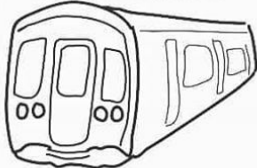


CHILD- & ELDERCARE  
FOR ALL

LIVING  
WAGE



EFFICIENT PUBLIC  
TRANSPORTATION



IDENTITY  
FREEDOM



PAID  
FAMILY  
LEAVE



@deannazandt

## **Individual Exercise: Self Care Inventory**

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# Self Care Inventory

- On your own:
  - Create a pie chart of your day.
  - Reflect on where and how self care fits into your day as well as on the concepts of community care and structural care
- Guiding Questions for small group discussions:
  1. How do you feel that you are currently doing in your self care practices?
  2. Share thoughts and feelings come up for you around the concepts of community care and structural care?
  3. What are tangible things that you are currently doing and/or can add to your day to create more care for yourself?

# Giving when the glass is half full

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- Risk factors : health ailments, impact on personal and professional lives

# *What is Compassion Fatigue?*

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# What is Compassion Fatigue?

- Characterized by deep physical and emotional exhaustion and a pronounced change in the helper's ability to feel empathy for those they work with, their loved ones and their co-workers  
(taken from [www.compassionfatigue.org](http://www.compassionfatigue.org))
- Compassion Fatigue symptoms are normal displays of chronic stress resulting from the care giving work we choose to do
- Described as the “cost of caring”

# ***What is Vicarious Traumatization?***

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# Trauma

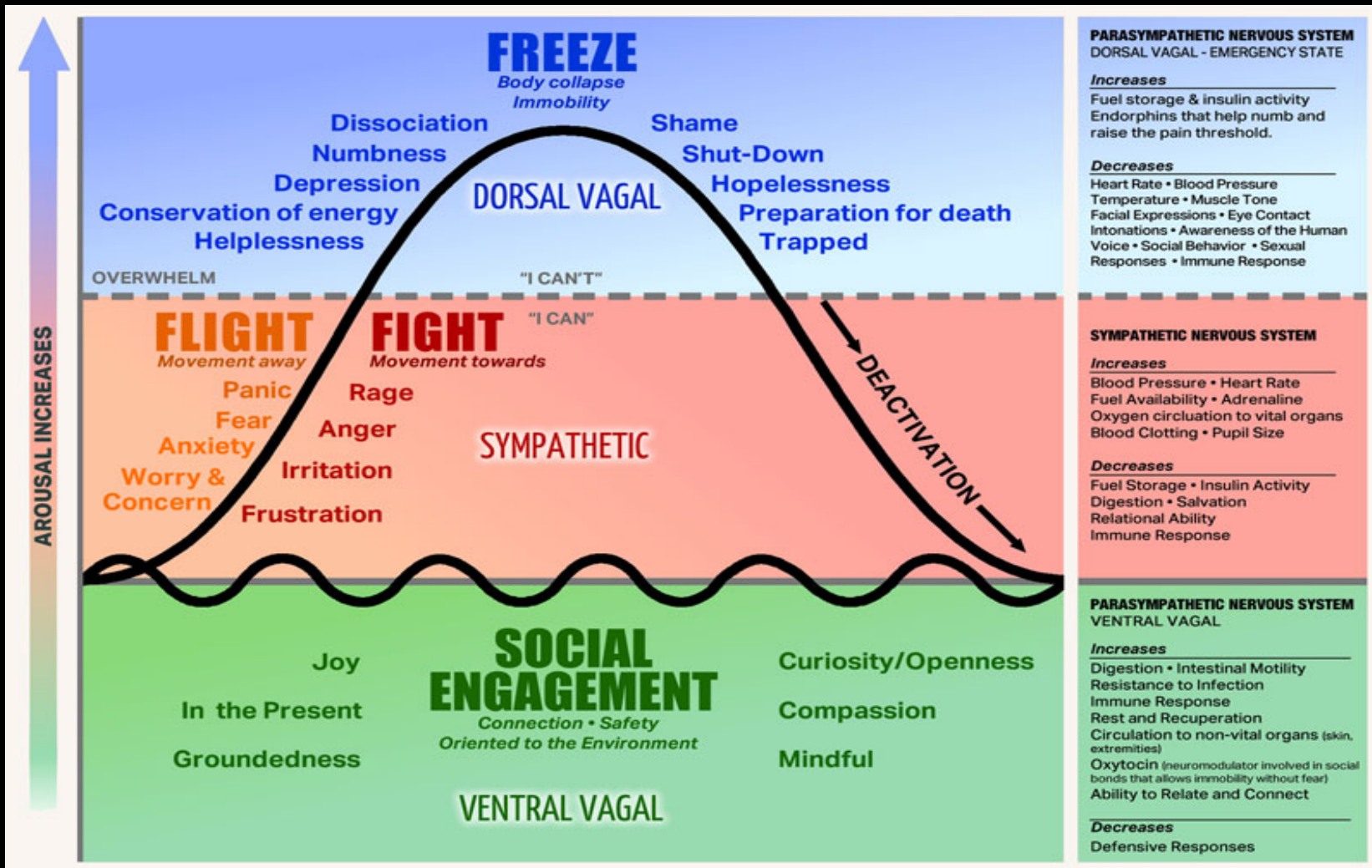
- The word “trauma” is used to describe experiences or situations that are emotionally painful and distressing, and that overwhelm people’s ability to cope, leaving them powerless (Center for Nonviolence and Social Justice)
- Occurs not only through first hand experience

# What is Vicarious Traumatization?

- A transformation of the helper's inner experience, resulting from empathetic engagement with clients' trauma material
- An energy exchange

# Coping with Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Traumatization

While the effects of Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Traumatization can cause pain and suffering, learning to recognize and manage their symptoms are the first step toward healing.



# Signs and Symptoms for the Individual

- Exhaustion
- Reduced ability to feel sympathy and empathy
- Anger and irritability
- Increased use of alcohol and drugs
- Dread of working with certain clients/patients
- Diminished sense of enjoyment of career
- Disruption to world view, Heightened anxiety or irrational fears

# Signs and Symptoms for the Individual (cont.)

- Intrusive imagery or dissociation
- Hypersensitivity or Insensitivity to emotional material
- Difficulty separating work life from personal life
- Absenteeism – missing work, taking many sick days
- Impaired ability to make decisions and care for clients/patients
- Problems with intimacy and in personal relationships

# Signs and Symptoms for the Organization

- High absenteeism
- Constant changes in co-workers relationships
- Inability for teams to work well together
- Desire among staff members to break company rules
- Outbreaks of aggressive behaviors among staff
- Inability of staff to complete assignments and tasks

# Signs and Symptoms for the Organization

## (cont)

- Inability of staff to respect and meet deadlines
- Lack of flexibility among staff members
- Negativism towards management
- Strong reluctance toward change
- Inability of staff to believe improvement is possible
- Lack of a vision for the future



**Self Care, Compassion Fatigue, and**  
**Vicarious Trauma**

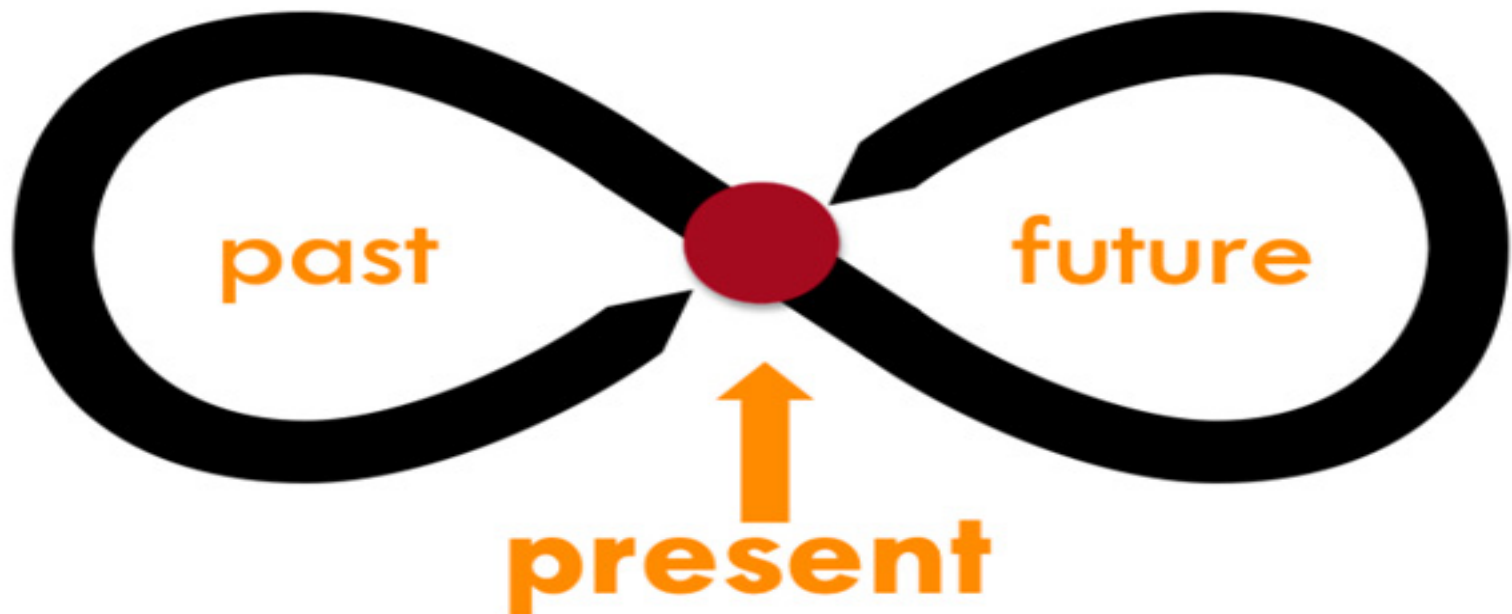
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# **Yoga and Mindfulness as Self Care** **Practices**

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# What is Mindfulness?

**Mindfulness is**



# What is Yoga?

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Yoga is about connecting the mind, the body, and the spirit

Is a way of being

Can be done anywhere and everyone

# ***Mindfulness and Yoga Exercises***

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## **Conclusion and Final Affirmation**

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*I commit to do (or continue to do) \_\_\_\_\_ to  
take care of myself.*

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Thank you for attending!

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Taquelia Washington, LCSW, PPS

Website: [www.empowermeservices.com](http://www.empowermeservices.com)

Email: [tw@empowermeservices.com](mailto:tw@empowermeservices.com)

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