

Compassion Fatigue in International Education: Reinforcing Resilience in the Face of Uncertainty



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Learning Objectives

- 1) Understand specific, empirically supported skill sets known to improve long-term recovery for individuals and communities.
- 2) Learn how to apply these elements in the school environment, and to utilize innovative ways to promote these skills among school community members.
- 3) Possess an increased awareness and understanding of the impact of compassion fatigue and stress brought about by COVID-19 and future uncertainty in their international school's academic environment.
- 4) Discuss topics presented with other participants in attendance.

Compassion Fatigue

“The weariness that
comes from caring.”

(Johnson, 1997)

Basic Caregiver Resilience Assumptions

- Caring and compassion are required when working with stress, loss & trauma
- Caring & compassion require interest, empathy and interaction
- Exposure to others' distress can be challenging to educators and other school personnel, particularly if it is associated with their own experiences

Impact of Compassion Fatigue on School Personnel

Listening to “stories” from students, families, staff, and others takes a toll on emotions

- Problems with concentration
- Problems with sleep and appetite
- Difficulties managing intense emotions
- Challenges maintaining high-level of teaching excellence
- Irritability with students and co-workers (and family)
- Shame or guilt about “not doing enough”



GRIT

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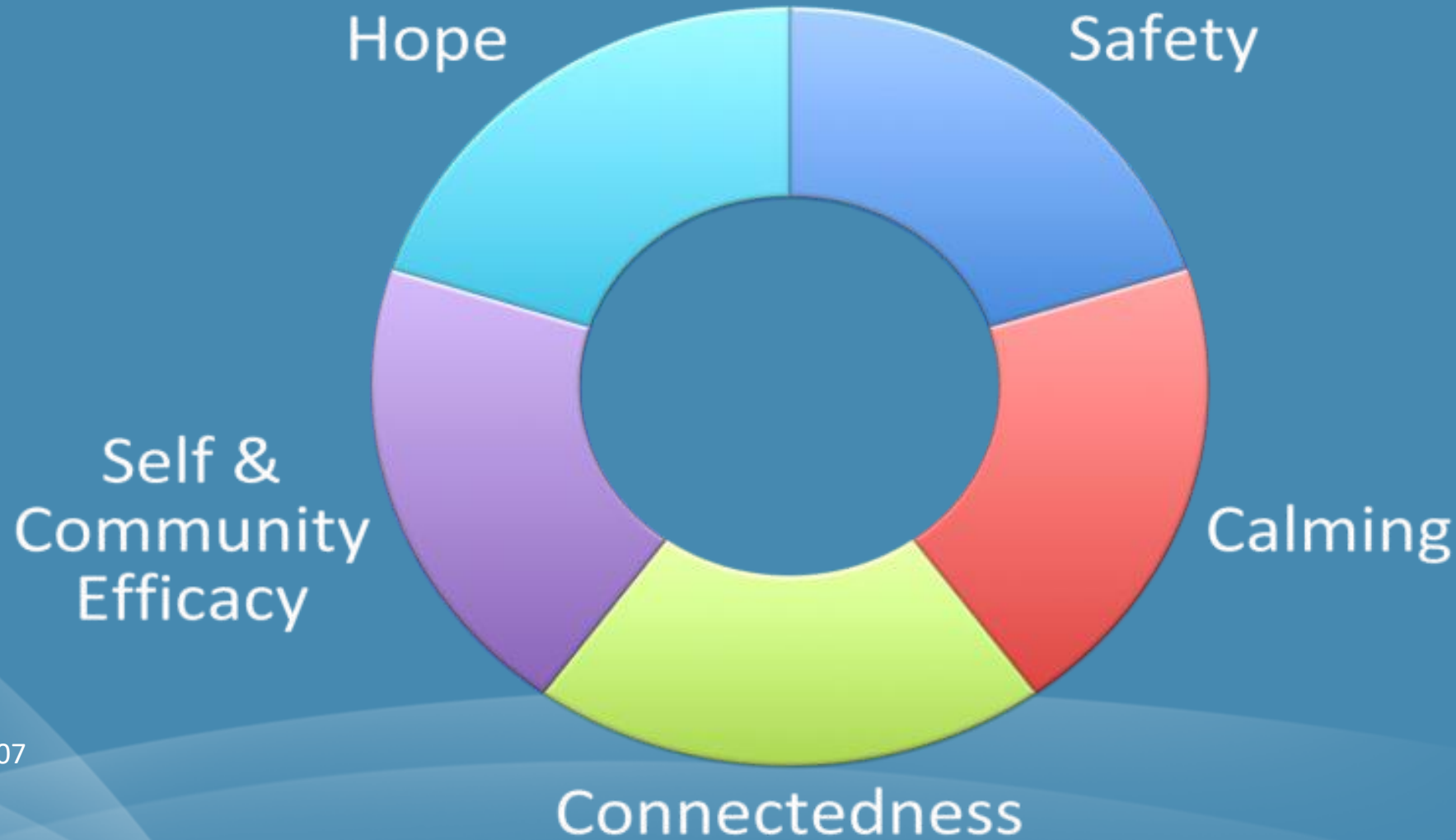
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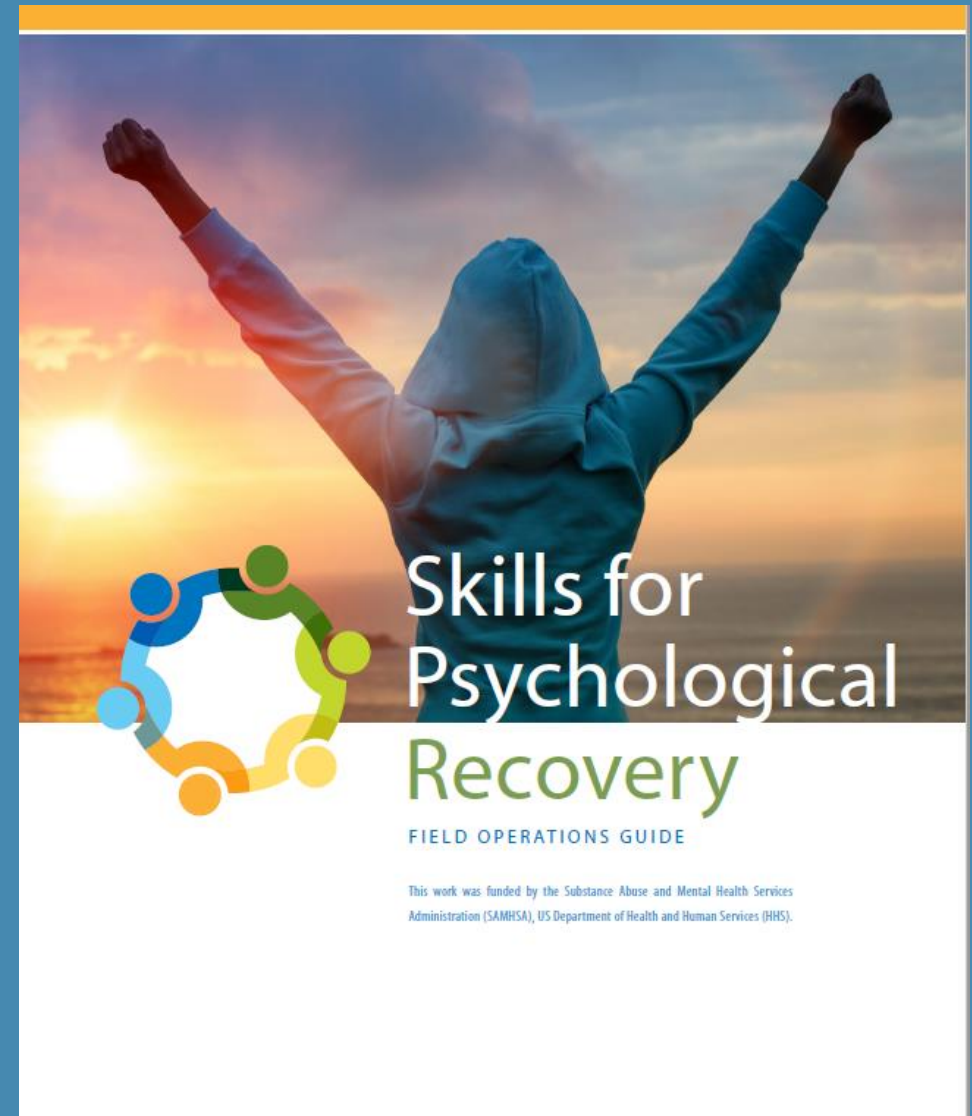
Skills

reinforcing basic
“resilience” skills in your
self and others will
improve long-term
mental health and
wellness

Five Empirically-Supported Intervention Principles After Large-Scale Disasters



National Center for PTSD
National Child Traumatic
Stress Network



Skills for Psychological Recovery - SPR

Problem Solving



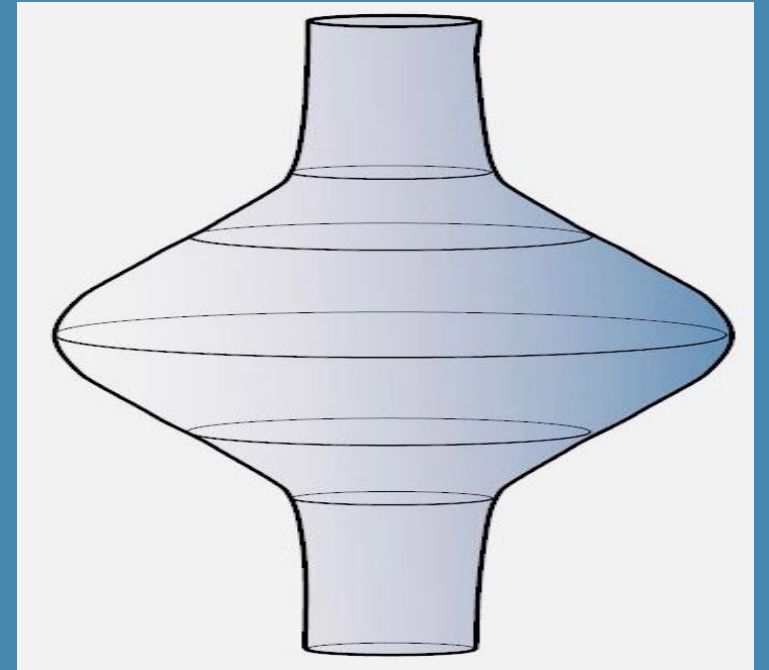
Building Problem-Solving Skills

Help the individual tackle a problem situation actively, so they can:

- Generate better ideas
- Have a more thoughtful selection of action
- Make a plan to follow through into action
- Use the skill in many situations

Guide for Building Problem-Solving Skills

1. Define the problem/decide ownership
2. Set the goal
3. Brainstorm
4. Evaluate and choose the best solution



Key to Problem Solving: Brainstorming

Identify different solutions and write them down

- Avoid evaluation, judgments, or assessment at this stage

Keep brainstorming until:

- At least 10 ideas have been listed
- There are several practical ideas on the list
- You're running out of ideas

Managing Reactions



Rationale for Managing Reactions

- During a stressful time, many people have distressing reactions. These can affect:
 - Mood
 - Decision-making
 - Relationships
 - Daily functioning
 - Health

Guide for Managing Reactions

Know your triggers

Address them with what works: meditation, breathing, progressive relaxation, mantra, prayer, counting to 10.....

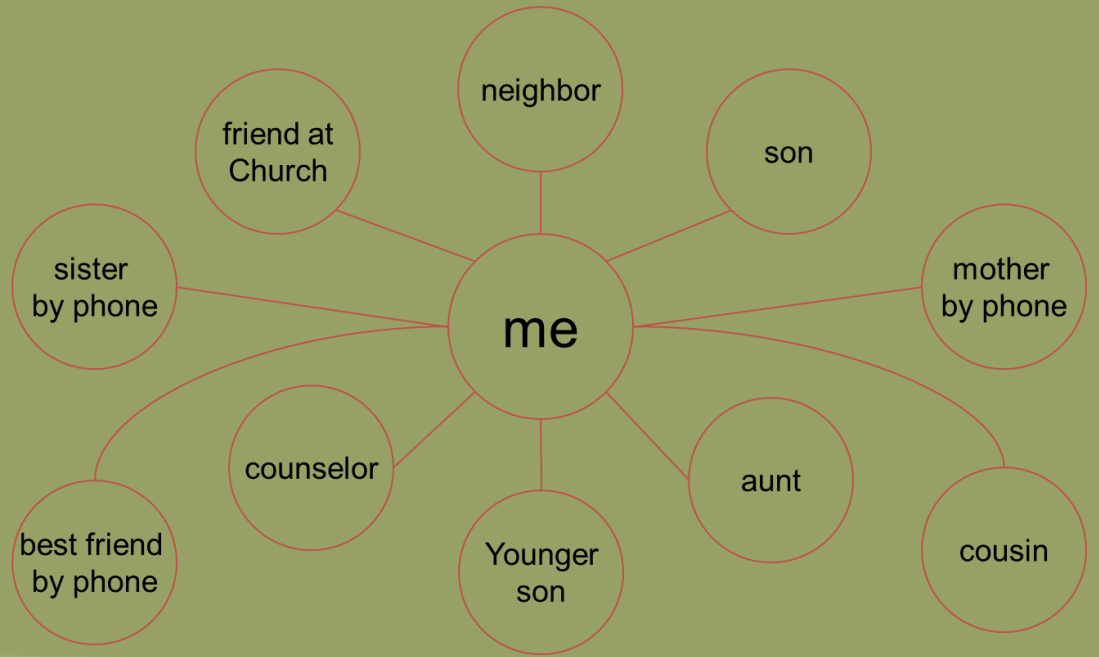
Guide for Managing Reactions

1. Go with what you know
2. Set time aside
3. Don't beat yourself up for not always using

Key to Managing Reactions: Finding space

Knowing what to do is not the challenge;
making the time is

Rebuilding Social Connections



Rationale for Rebuilding Social Connections

Increase connections to positive relationships and community supports

Individuals may feel isolated due to:

- Moving from their community

- Loss of friends and family

- Sadness, fear, and lack of motivation

Guide for Rebuilding Social Connections

Be creative

Include food when possible

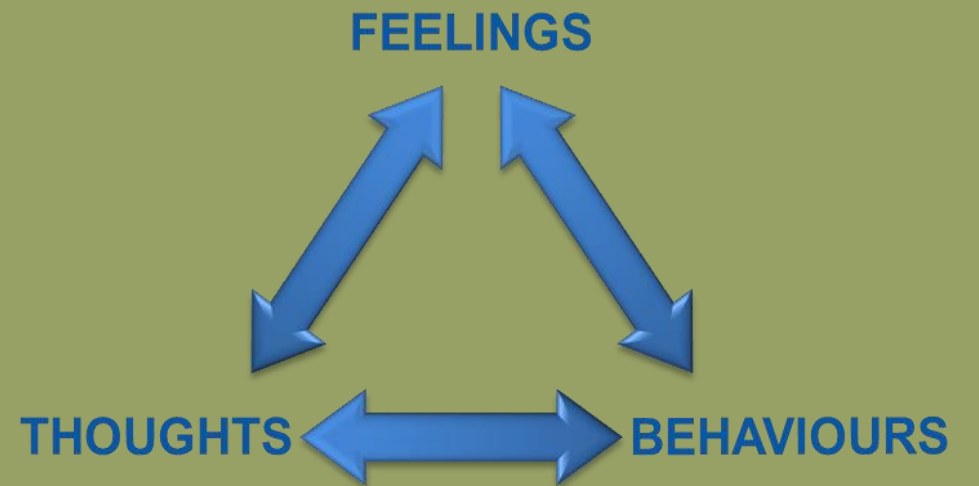
Include large and small gatherings

Look for the lost, find and engage

Key to Rebuilding Social Connections:

Give it priority when reopening schools

Helpful Thinking



Rationale for Helpful Thinking

Disasters and adverse events often change people's thoughts about the world and themselves

- World is stressful, unpredictable, or dangerous place

- Trouble trusting other people

- See personal situation as hopeless

People under stress can have thoughts that make their situation even worse by increasing feelings of distress

Guide for Helpful Thinking

Look for the negatives which can be found when the words “never”, “always”, “all the time” are used

1. Identify unhelpful thoughts
2. Create helpful thoughts
3. Rehearse helpful thoughts

Key to Helpful Thinking:

Use “however”, “yet”, or even “but”

State the situation, then add “however”

Positive Activities



Rationale for Positive Activities

Make the person feel more in control and that life is more “normal”

Help them feel less sad, hopeless, fearful, or low in energy

Remind individuals who feel overwhelmed to make time to do things that improve their health and well-being

Guide for Positive Activities

1. Go with what you know
2. Set time aside
3. Don't beat yourself up for not always engaging

Key to Positive Activities:

It promotes brainstorming

COVID-19 and uncertainty



Doing the best with what
you have

Well-Being in a Chaotic Context

Wellbeing is both a learning and leadership challenge;

It requires us to make sense of, and respond to, the ever-changing contexts in which we find ourselves.

Well-Being in a Chaotic Context

Well-Being builds our capacity to stay present, centered and grounded in fluid conditions where some things are guaranteed and others are not.

It demands our willingness to continuously re-assess, experiment, and remain creative in our vulnerability.

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