



Trauma in Teaching: Reducing Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) in Professional Teachers

Bridget Glass, PhD, LMHC, ACS
Florida Atlantic University
November 10th, 2022

How I Hope to Help You -

**Define &
Differentiate**

Define Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) and be able to differentiate it from other work-related distress disorders.

**Identify &
Examine**

Identify the symptoms of STS & examine its impact on the professional and personal quality of life of teachers

Acquire

Acquire practical tools to manage and decrease the potential experience of STS

Why Should I Care About This?

“Because I **hurt**.

Because I **matter**....

Because the work I do **matters**.

Because the profession **matters**.

Because I **must**.”

(Saakvitne & Pearlman, 1996)



Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

“Ok, Bridget...
but, what do you know about being a teacher?”



Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

Teacher Mental Health: A Look At the Numbers

According to the CDC, in May of 2021, reports indicated that

- 27% of **teachers** met criteria for **depression**
- 37% of **teachers** met criteria for **anxiety**
- 19% of **teachers** started to use or increased their use of alcohol to cope with **stress & emotions**

(CDC, 2022)

Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

All **stress** is **NOT** created equal...

Healthy - Eustress

Focused
Cooperative
Decisive
Positive
Energetic
Motivated
Realistic

High Expectations
Humor
Conscientious
Dedicated
Detail Oriented
Compassionate

Unhealthy - Distress

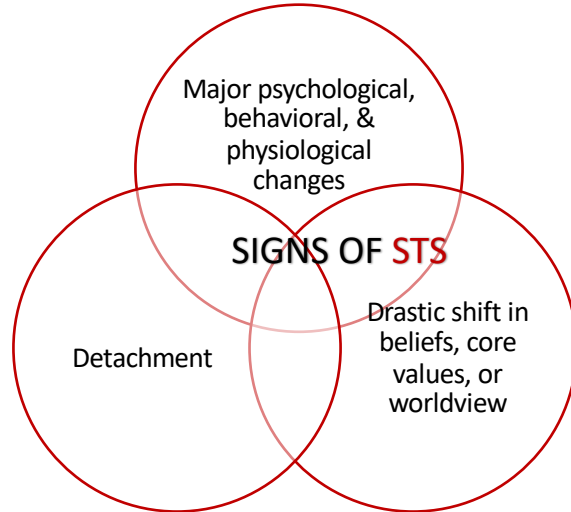
Emotional
Critical
Unpredictable
Impulsive
Depressed
Disgruntled
Inconsistent

Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)

“**Secondary traumatic stress (STS)** is the emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the firsthand trauma experiences of another.”
(NCTSN, n.d.)

STS is an occupational hazard for anyone who serves students impacted by trauma.



(Hoffman et al., 2007)

Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

The Impact of **STS**: Personal Considerations

STS effects the mind, body, spirit, behaviors, and relationships of those who are exposed to the injuries, stories, and life-changing impact of others' traumatic experiences.



Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

The Impact of STS: Professional Considerations

(Bell et al., 2003)

Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

Secondary Traumatic Stress: Prevention

- ✓ **A**wareness
 - Needs
 - Limits
 - Emotions
 - Resources
- ✓ **B**alance
 - Work
 - Life
- ✓ **C**onnections
 - Loved Ones
 - Colleagues
 - Self

(The American Institute of Stress, 2020)

Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

Protective Factors: Teacher Resilience & Compassion Satisfaction

Resilience is “the process of **adapting** well in the face of **adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats** or even significant sources of **stress**—such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stressors.”
(Manners & Tieszan, n.d.)



Compassion Satisfaction is the **pleasure** or **joy** one derives from helping or caring for another.
(Stamm, 2012)

Work Culture + Cognitive & Behavioral Changes + Healthy Relationships = Organizational & Personal Resilience

Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022



Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

Practical Tools for Building Teacher Resilience



"The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away."

— Pablo Picasso

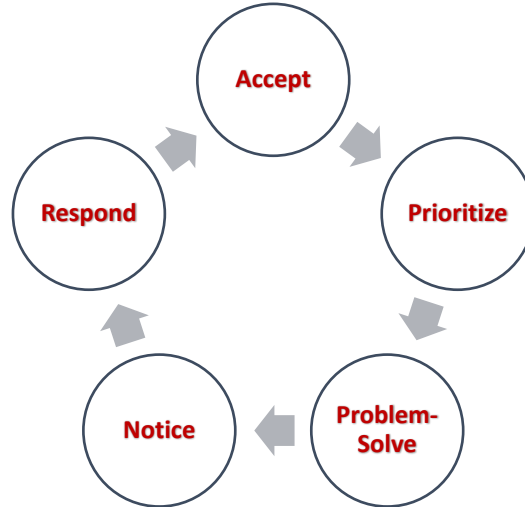
Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

U N D E R P R E S S U R E	<p>All or nothing thinking</p> <p>Sometimes called 'black and white thinking' If I'm not perfect I have failed Either I do it right or not at all</p>	<p>Over-generalizing</p> <p>Seeing a pattern based upon a single event, or being overly broad in the conclusions we draw</p>	T H I N K I N G
	<p>Mental filter</p> <p>Only paying attention to certain types of evidence. Noticing our failures but not seeing our successes</p>	<p>Disqualifying the positive</p> <p>Discounting the good things that have happened or that you have done for some reason or another That doesn't count</p>	
	<p>Jumping to conclusions</p> <p>There are two key types of jumping to conclusions: • Mind reading (imagining we know what others are thinking) • Fortune telling (predicting the future)</p>	<p>Magnification (catastrophizing) & minimization</p> <p>Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophizing), or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important</p>	
	<p>Emotional reasoning</p> <p>Assuming that because we feel a certain way what we think must be true. I feel embarrassed so I must be an idiot</p>	<p>should must</p> <p>Using critical words like 'should', 'must', or 'ought' can make us feel guilty, or like we have already failed If we apply 'shoulds' to other people the result is often frustration</p>	
	<p>Labelling</p> <p>Assigning labels to ourselves or other people I'm a loser I'm completely useless They're such an idiot</p>	<p>Personalization</p> <p>"this is my fault"</p> <p>Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for something that wasn't completely your fault. Conversely, blaming other people for something that was your fault.</p>	
	(Psychology Tools, 2021)		

Retrain Your Brain: Shifting Perspective



CAN PREVENT A PERSONAL MELTDOWN



(Manners & Tieszen, n.d.)

Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

Retrain Your Brain: Black or White Thinking

BLACK

OR

WHITE



Things that can be equally true:

You are resilient	and	need a break
You gave your all	and	need to back out
You are independent	and	still need others
You were sure	and	things changed
You are kind	and	have boundaries
Others have it worse	and	your pain is valid
You did your best	and	now you know more

Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

Retrain Your Brain: Boundaries

“Nemo dat quod non habet” – “You cannot give what you do not have.”

- Is saying “no” ever an option?
- Do you feel sick or uncomfortable with saying “no”?
- Do you feel guilty, worried, or afraid when you consider saying “no”?
- Do you believe you do not have a right to say “no”?

(Loudon, 1992)

How can I practice this skill?

- Change your self-talk
- Be kind to yourself
- Be clear & firm with your boundaries
- Give yourself space & grace to not always do it “right”

Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

Retrain Your Brain: Self-Esteem & Self-Efficacy

Research suggests that **self-esteem** is positively correlated to a decrease in the potential for long-term occupational distress. (Manomenidis et al., 2017)



Developing Professional Self-Efficacy

- Think about a professional strength you possess & a growth area you would like to improve upon.
- Identify a barrier you have overcome & a challenge you hope to rise above.

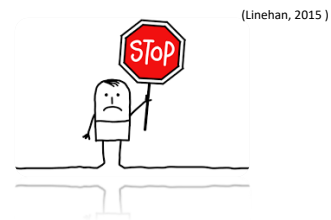
Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

Retrain Your Brain: Sitting in the "Ick"

- I**magery
- M**eaning
- P**rayer
- R**elax
- O**ne Thing in the Moment
- V**acation
- E**ncouragement (Linehan, 2015)

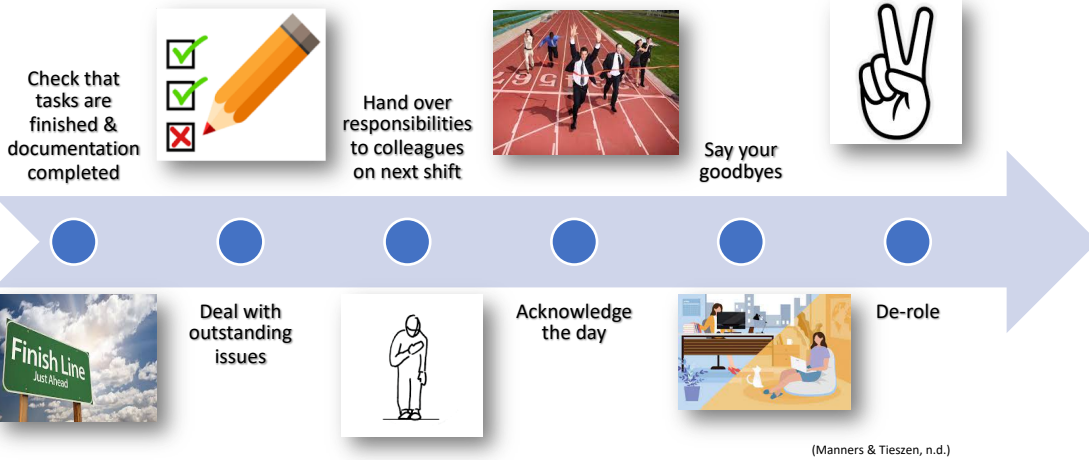


- S**top what you are doing
- T**ake some deep breaths
- O**bserve the situation
- P**roceed effectively



Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

Retrain Your Brain: End of Day Ritual



(Manners & Tieszen, n.d.)

Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

Relationship Building: Communication

You CAN Use Your Voice

- Schedule tough talks with time limits
- Use “I” statements
- Do something fun afterwards

Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

Relationship Building: Healthy Support Systems



Family



Friends



Colleagues



Supervisors



Counselors

Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

Mindfulness & Relaxation Techniques



Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

Mindfulness: What Does It Mean?

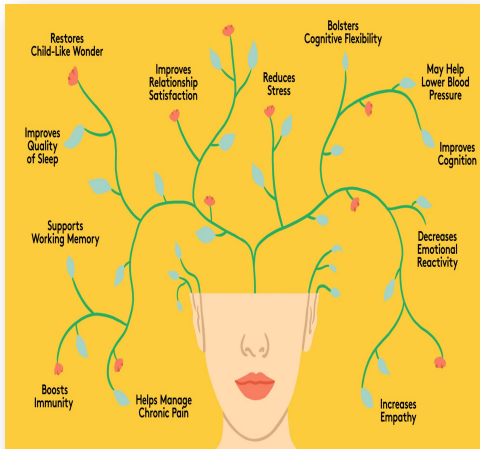
Maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our **thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment** without **judgment** and noticing what we're sensing in the **present** moment rather than returning to the **past** or anticipating the **future**. **You DO NOT have to be calm by nature or practice for hours to learn mindfulness strategies, such as meditation.**

(UB, 2021)



Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

Mindfulness: How Does It Help?



CREDIT: YEJI KIM

Research suggests that mindfulness:

- ❖ boosts immune system after just 8 weeks of practice.
- ❖ increases positive emotions while reducing negative emotions and *stress*.
- ❖ increases density of gray matter in brain regions linked to learning, memory, emotion regulation, and empathy.

(UB, 2021)

Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

Mindfulness: What Do I Do?

Focus	Notice	Recognize	Tune
<p>on your breathing - especially when you're feeling intense emotions.</p>	<p>details such as sights, sounds, & smells in the moment that we most often overlook.</p>	<p>thoughts & emotions are not permanent. They are not who you are as a person.</p>	<p>into your body's physical sensations.</p>

(UB, 2021)

Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

Relaxation: Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive Muscle Relaxation is a technique used to help release body tension by tightening muscles for a 5-7 seconds & then releasing them.

PMRT helps decrease the somatic symptoms of anxiety. Individuals who experience vicarious trauma may have difficulty determining how to feel relaxed because the norm by which they operate is one of heightened distress.
(UOM, n.d.)

Be Aware of Your:

- Physical injuries
- Surroundings
- Physical comfort

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

FOR LESS TENSION & MORE COMFORT

13. EYES AND CHEEKS
Squeeze your eyes tight shut.

12. MOUTH
Purse the lips as if whistling.

11. JAW AREA
Without damaging the teeth, bite down until tension can be felt in the jaw area.

10. NECK
Be careful as you tense these muscles. Face forward and then push your head gently into the floor.

9. CHEST
Beginning with the abdominal area, fill the lungs with air while feeling the tension in the chest area. Breathe out from the top of the lungs (upper chest) down through a contracted abdomen.

14. FOREHEAD
Wrinkle the brow.

8. LEFT HAND & FOREARM, UPPER ARM AND SHOULDER

7. RIGHT SHOULDER
Shrug the shoulder toward the ear and roll the head toward the shoulder so that shoulder & ear are touching.

6. RIGHT UPPER ARM
Tense the bicep and tricep.

5. RIGHT HAND & FOREARM
With the palm down, lift the hand until tension can be felt in the top of the hand, the wrist and the forearm.

4. HIPS AND BUTTOCKS
Squeeze your buttock muscles

3. LEFT FOOT, LOWER LEG AND UPPER LEG

2. RIGHT UPPER LEG
Tense the top of the upper leg (quadriceps) and the bottom of the upper leg (hamstring).

1. RIGHT FOOT & LOWER LEG
Keeping the heel down, curl the toes back until tension can be felt in the ankle and calf muscle.

(Owens, 2020)

Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

Relaxation: Grounding Techniques & Tools



Grounding techniques/tools help to safeguard against overwhelming emotions in the moment.

Items for the Workplace to Help Stay Grounded:

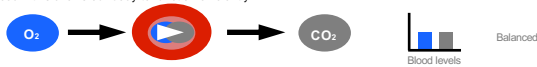
- Meaningful items/photographs of special events or times of happiness
- Quotes or posters that remind of self-care or encouragement despite challenges
- Hot/Cold Beverages
- Gum
- Music
- Eye Spy
- Tactile Items – Fluffy pillows, sensory balls, playdoh, stress balls, sand, paper clips
- Essential Oils if permitted in your work space

Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

Relaxation: Belly Breathing

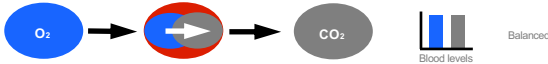
Normal breathing

When we breathe we take in oxygen (O₂) that is used by the body. This process creates carbon dioxide (CO₂), a waste product that we breathe out. When our breathing is relaxed the levels of oxygen and carbon dioxide are balanced – this allows our body to function efficiently.



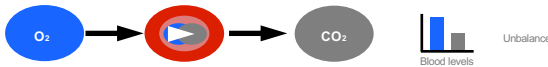
Exercise breathing

Our breathing rate increases during exercise to take in more oxygen. The body uses the extra oxygen to fuel the muscles and so produces more carbon dioxide. The increase breathing rate leads to more carbon dioxide being expelled. This means that the balance between oxygen and carbon dioxide levels is maintained.



Anxious breathing

When we are anxious our breathing rate increases: we take in more oxygen and breathe out more carbon dioxide than usual. However, because the body is not working any harder than normal it is not using up any extra oxygen, and so it is not producing any extra carbon dioxide. Because carbon dioxide is being expelled faster than it is being produced its concentration in the blood goes down (leading to a temporary change in the pH of the blood called respiratory alkalosis). This change in CO₂ blood concentration can lead us to feeling unpleasantly light-headed, tingly in our fingers and toes, clammy, and sweaty.



(Psychology Tools, 2021)

Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

4-4-8 Belly Breathing Exercise

Choose Your Own Adventure!

Sit comfortably in a chair, on the floor, or lie down with legs extended or propped up.

Get In Touch With Yourself!

Fold hand together on top of your belly button.

Stop & Smell The Roses

Breathe in slowly through your nostrils on the count of 4.

Hold It Right There!

Hold your breathe on the count of 4.

Let it Go...

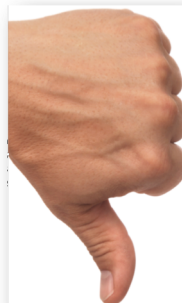
Release your breathe through your mouth on the count of 8.

Relaxation: When & When Not To Use



Relaxation strategies should be:

- ✓ integrated into daily life as a consistent practice
- ✓ used as a means to regulate emotions in the midst of crisis
- ✓ thought of as an assertive approach to gaining self-control



Relaxation strategies should not be:

- ✗ used as an avoidance tactic to check out from uncomfortable thoughts, feelings, & interactions
- ✗ the only tool in the tool box

(UOM, n.d.)

Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

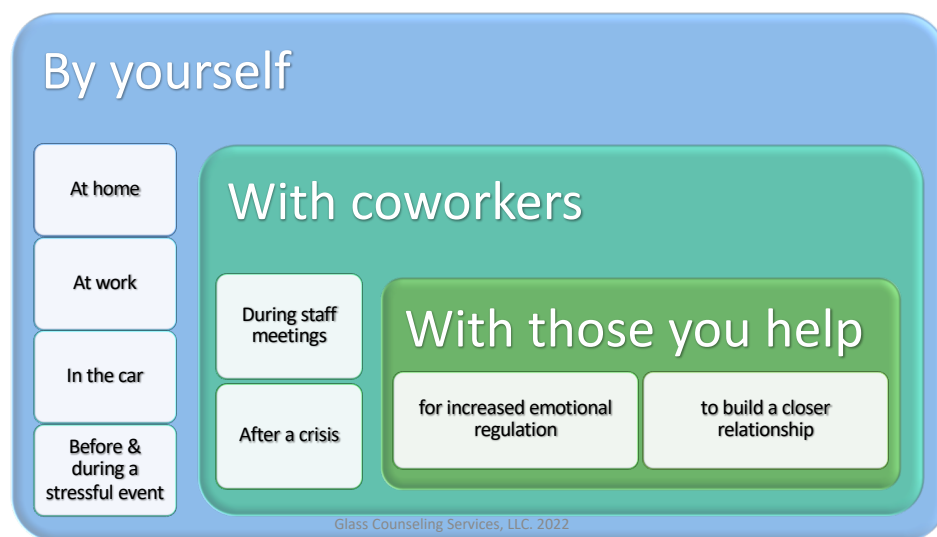
How Can All These Tools Help Me?

HOPE

Acting with:
humor, optimism, possibility, & empathy

Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

Where Can I Break Out My Tools?



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ENERGY, ATTENTION & TIME



Any Questions?????

You can reach me at:

Bridget Glass Ph.D., LMHC, ACS

drbridgetglass@gmail.com

561-316-8630

Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022

References

- American Institute of Stress (2020). The stages of burnout and apathy. Retrieved September, 2020. <https://www.stress.org/military/practitionersleaders/compassionfatigue#:~:text=The%20Stages%20of%20Burnout%20have,apathy.>
- Bell, H., Kulkarni, S., & Dalton, L. (2003). Organizational prevention of vicarious trauma. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services*, 84(4), 463-70.
- Berkley University. (2021). Mindfulness. *Greater Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life*. Accessed on July 15th, 2021. <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/mindfulness>.
- Dimitriadou, A., Manomenidis, G., Kafkia, T., Minasidou, E., Tasoulis, C., Koutra, & Kospantsidou, A. (2017). Is self-esteem actually the protective factor of nursing burnout? *International Journal of Caring Sciences*, 10, 1348 – 59.
- Figley, Charles R. (1995). *Compassion Fatigue: Coping with Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder In Those Who Treat The Traumatized*. 1st edition. New York: Routledge.
- Linehan, M. M. (2015). *DBT® skills training manual* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Loudon, I. (1992). The transformation Of maternal mortality. *BMJ: British Medical Journal*, 305(6868), 1557-60. Retrieved August 1, 2021, from <http://www.istat.org/stable/29218012>.
- Manners, K., Tieszen, & L. (n.d.) Bringing team care strategies and resilience to your agency staff. Accessed July 20th, 2021. https://ovc.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh226/files/media/document/sup_promoting_staff_resilience-508.pdf
- Mindfit Resiliency Project. (n.d.). Bringing mindfulness practices to first responders. Accessed on July 15th, 2021. <http://www.mindfitproject.com/resources/stress-firstresponders>
- Owens, B. (2020). Progressive muscle relaxation to relieve stress and reduce muscular tension. Accessed on July 21st, 2021. <https://www.consciousmovements.com/body-mind-blog/progressive-muscle-relaxation-stress-pain/>
- Pittman, D. M., Cho Kim, S., Hunter, C. D., & Obasi, E. M. (2017). The role of minority stress in second-generation Black emerging adult college students' high-risk drinking behaviors. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 23(3), 445-455. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000135>
- Psychology Tools. (2021). Relaxed Breathing. Accessed on July 31st, 2021. <https://www.psychologytools.com/resource/relaxed-breathing/>
- Psychology Tools. (2021). Unhelpful thinking styles. Accessed on July 31st, 2021. <https://www.psychologytools.com/resource/unhelpful-thinking-styles>
- Saakvitne, K. W., Pearlmán, L. A., & Traumatic Stress Institute & Center for Adult & Adolescent Psychotherapy, LLC. (1996). *Transforming the pain: A workbook on vicarious traumatization*. W W Norton & Co.
- Simpson, L. R., & Starkey, D. S. (2006). *Secondary traumatic stress, compassion fatigue, and counselor spirituality: Implications for counselors working with trauma*. Retrieved September, 2020. from <http://www.counselingoutfitters.com/Simpson.htm>
- Smith, K. & Hills, J. (2012). Mindfulness exercises. Accessed on July 27th, 2021. <http://www.livingwell.org.au/mindfulness-exercises-3/>
- University of Michigan. (N.D.). Relaxation. Accessed on July 20th 2021. <https://medicine.umich.edu/sites/default/files/content/downloads/Relaxation-Skills-for-Anxiety.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Justice (n.d). Guidelines for a vicarious trauma-informed organization: Peer support. Accessed July 20th, 2021. https://ovc.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh226/files/media/document/ps_peer_support_for_a_vt_informed_organization-508.pdf
- U.S. Department of Justice (n.d). Guidelines for a vicarious trauma-informed organization: Supervision. Accessed July 20th, 2021. https://ovc.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh226/files/media/document/sup_in_a_vt_informed_organization-508.pdf
- WebMd. (2020). Black and white thinking. Accessed on July 25th, 2021. <https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/black-and-white-thinking>
- Yassen, J. (1995). Preventing secondary traumatic stress disorder. In C. R. Figley (Ed.), *Compassion fatigue: Coping with secondary traumatic stress disorder in those who treat the traumatized* (pp. 178-208). Brunner/Mazel.

Glass Counseling Services, LLC. 2022