



# Replenish: Understanding Secondary Traumatic Stress and Developing Structures for Prevention and Maintenance

The Bonner Community Engagement Curriculum

## Overview:

In this workshop, participants will gain an understanding and Secondary Traumatic Stress and its potential impact on themselves and others. This workshop was developed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in combination with major historical events in 2020-2021. Participants will learn tools for empathizing with others through metaphor. Lastly, participants will be able to develop a personal wellness plan.

## Category:

Diversity, wellness, reflection, balance/ boundaries, public education/advocacy



All Levels

## Level:

All levels

## Recommended

**Bonner Sequence:** This workshop could be used at any time during the Bonner experience.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

- Participants will learn how to think more critically about personal and communal stressors
- Participants will learn to define Secondary Traumatic Stress and other associated terminology
- Participants will learn how to develop a personal wellness plan as a preventative and reactive/maintenance measure

### **Materials:**

- Slideshow presentation
- Printed out handouts for all participants. Each will need one copy of the following - Wellness Assessment, Personal Wellness Plan, and Wellness Reflection & Discussion
- Writing utensils

### **How to Prepare:**

To prepare for this workshop familiarize yourself with the presentation, associated information, and speaking notes. Leaders of this workshop should be comfortable with discussions that could bring up uneasy feelings with participants. Make sure to have campus and community resources available for those who may need them. Part three of the workshop includes a reflection discussion to be done in small groups. Make sure to create a plan for either predetermined groups or easy-to-transition groups at the moment.

### **Brief Outline:**

The outline has the following five parts:

1. Introduction: Suggested time 5 minutes
2. Presentation Slides: Suggested time 40 minutes
3. Wellness Assessment & Wellness Plan: 25 minutes

4. Discussion & Reflection: 15 minutes
5. Closing: 5 minutes

Total time: 1 hour 30 minutes

## Your Plan

### Part 1) Introduction

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Begin with the presentation on slide one.

As the facilitator, begin by informing participants that this workshop is about gaining and understanding of Secondary Traumatic Stress and developing structures for prevention and maintenance. This session must begin with a content warning as a courtesy to participants.

Content warning example: say *"Due to the nature of the topic I would like to provide a content warning for the discussion of Secondary Traumatic Stress. If at any time during this workshop you have feelings arise due to the nature of the discussion, please do what you need to best care for yourself. There is no judgment should you need to step out and you are welcome to approach me to speak privately afterwards. Any and all feelings are welcome in this space."*

This workshop was developed by Kisha Burton, Bonner Program Coordinator, Lindsey Wilson College, in May 2021. Kisha Burton obtained her Master of Education in School Counseling from Western Kentucky University in December 2017. Since then she has worked with populations of students with a background of adverse childhood experiences. She is trained in Trauma Informed Care and Crisis Intervention.

### Part 2) Presentation

Suggested time: 40 minutes

#### Slide One

Begin by asking your audience: *"What comes to mind when you hear the word replenish?"* Allow time for responses before transitioning to the next slide.

#### Slide Two

*In essence, to replenish means to fill back up. The purpose of this workshop is to examine reasons one might feel depleted and create structures to replenish ourselves.*

Next, review the session's learning objectives.

- *Participants will learn how to think more critically about personal and communal stressors*
- *Participants will learn what makes up Secondary Traumatic Stress and other terminology associated with*
- *Participants will learn how to develop a personal wellness plan as a preventative and reactive/maintenance measure*

*In order to replenish one must be able to identify what might prompt Secondary Traumatic Stress. Next, one needs the vocabulary to express their experience as it relates to Secondary Traumatic Stress. Lastly, take all this information to create plans for prevention and maintenance.*

### Slide Three

For interaction you may choose to ask if anyone is familiar with STS and if they can define it before moving further. Based on their answer, tie it into the experiences you're about to discuss.

*Secondary Traumatic Stress is having to hear or witness the trauma of another person. Trauma comes from the things we experience. A few things that you might have experienced or witnessed other people experience are...*

(From slide)

- *Endured a global pandemic*
- *Experienced an economic crisis*
- *Witnessed a politically polarized election*
- *Engaged in a racial justice movement*
- *Encountered chronic uncertainty, anxiety, and depression*

This slide is to provide examples of major experiences that Americans either experienced or witnessed first-hand during 2020. This is an opportunity to tailor the content to include other situations that are relevant to the intended audience.

*We've been through a lot, so if you have an empty gas tank, you're not alone. 2020 was a whirlwind year and a marker of many historical events with a ripple effect that will linger on the years to come.*

#### Slide Four

The following metaphors provide multiple ways for a person to begin to understand what it means to experience secondary traumatic stress. Emphasize that in these metaphors, participants are to visualize themselves as the one *not* experiencing the trauma. These metaphors are meant to get participants thinking about situations in which they were witnesses to other people's trauma.

*Underneath all of these experiences (from the previous slide) are unseen things that subconsciously impact our inner world.*

*The following metaphors are to help you visualize what it means to be a witness to the experiences of other people and your ability to empathize with them. The metaphors can be places to pull in participants for interaction.*

- *Storm: We're all in the same storm, but a different boat.*
  - *This represents the shared experience of [insert event here]. While everyone was weathering the same storm, not everyone had the same ship. Individual experiences of the storm are different because of this.*
  - *Provide a personal example here if possible.*
  - *Could be an opportunity to ask participants to give different types of "boats" for the facilitator to elaborate on the metaphor with. Examples: yacht, canoe, fishing boat, kayak, Rose's door from Titanic, or no boat at all*
  - *"If student one is in a pirate ship and student two is in a canoe how does that change their experience of the storm?"*

- *Fire: Imagine standing next to a bonfire. You're warm and feel the heat radiating off of it, but you're not the thing on fire.*
  - *Close proximity to a situation can mean that you are feeling some of the after-effects of it even though you were not the one personally experiencing the situation.*
  - *Provide a personal example here if possible.*
  - *Kisha's personal example: During June and July of 2020 the Bonner Network began having weekly meetings to check in with each other and see how programs were planning for the upcoming school year. It wasn't uncommon to join a call and hear that one of my colleagues had been furloughed or lost their job. I'm grateful that President Luckey was committed to LWC employees keeping their jobs, but that wasn't the case everywhere. At times I would begin to struggle with thoughts of "what if I lose my job" or "do people not see their work is important" or "what if my work is no longer seen as valuable?" I wasn't the one burning, but I was still feeling the heat from the flame.*
  
- *The Invisible Backpack: (If a participant has a backpack or tote you could borrow will be a helpful tool for the metaphor.) Can anyone tell me how much this backpack weighs? Can they tell me what's inside it?...*
  - *This final metaphor represents how we empathize with one another.*
  - *Imagine this backpack is empty and that with each adverse experience the owner has, a rock is added inside. Eventually these rocks add up and the backpack becomes heavier and heavier. We never know how heavy someone's backpack is and that's why it's important to give one another grace when they are struggling.*

### Slide Five

This slide unpacks what Secondary Traumatic Stress is and provides vocabulary around the term.

- *Secondary Traumatic Stress*

- *The emotional distress that results when an individual hears about the traumatic experiences of another individual.*
- *Burnout*
  - *A term under the umbrella of STS characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a sense of reduced personal accomplishment.*
  - *This is likely to be a familiar term to the participants.*
- *Compassion Fatigue*
  - *Essentially another, more commonly used term for STS. It's the emotional distress associated with empathizing with another person's trauma.*

### Slide Six

Common symptoms of STS are listed on this slide. Highlight a few with examples related to the target audience.

- *Hypervigilance - always on edge; hyper aware of surroundings*
- *Poor Boundaries - saying yes or no to too many things*
- *Avoidance - "Let me pretend this massive pile of homework doesn't exist"*
- *Inability to Empathize/Numbing - feeling "meh"*
- *Addictions - think out of the box; social media, netflix*
- *Chronic Exhaustion - wanting to sleep all the time*
- *Physical Ailments - headaches, insomnia, stomach pains*
- *Minimizing - "I don't have it as bad as they do"*
- *Anger and Cynicism - "Why can't people get over it"*

- *Feelings of Professional Inadequacy - imposter syndrome; "I'm not where I should be"*

### Slide Seven

The purpose of this slide is to discuss the role culture of a program plays in creating an environment that supports individuals/groups and fosters resilience.

*Culture matters when it comes to having an environment that supports resilience. If the culture of our program is one that values open communication and vulnerability, then the members of the program are more likely to leave on the program for support.*

*It's important to remember that support isn't always reciprocal. Sometimes you're the one providing support to someone and they aren't able to do that for you. The important part is that your spirit is receiving support from somewhere.*

*Support is dependent upon and came come from:*

- *People*
- *Structures or Systems*
- *Locus of Control*
- *Skills and Strengths*

### Slide Eight

This slide highlights some of the support systems in place by the Lindsey Wilson College Bonner Program. It is highly recommended that you made edits to this slide to accurately reflect your program and target audience.

Another option would be to use this time to brainstorm together what the different supports within the program look like to create the culture the group would like to have.

#### *Considerations*

- *Access to educational materials on Compassion Fatigue/STS and Self-Care*



- *Built-in Support Systems: BLT, families, Bonner buds, cohorts, class representatives*
- *Flexibility/Remote Training & Enrichment*
- *One-on-Ones*
- *Informal Check-Ins*
- *Other specific accountability measures*
- *Contact information for Staff*

### **Part 3) Activities and Materials**

Suggested time: 40 minutes

#### Slide Nine

This slide contains the list of activities for the third part of the session. Each participant will need one copy of the following - Wellness Assessment, Personal Wellness Plan, and Wellness Reflection & Discussion. The Wellness Reflection and Discussion has a group work component and is where your plan for identifying groups from preparation will be used.

**Wellness Assessment & Plan** (suggested time 25 minutes; 10 minutes and 15 minutes)

Using the page title "Wellness Assessment" allow participants around 10 minutes to complete the Wellness Assessment. Instructions are provided on the handout.

Once everyone has completed the assessment they will then use it to determine the things they are already doing (as indicated with a higher number) and the things they would like to do more of (as indicated with a lower number). The Wellness Plan is broken down into the same categories as the assessment, with the exception of the social category. Questions that apply to the social category are marked with an asterisk. Allow 15 minutes for participants to create their plan and pledge following the instructions provided on the handout.

**Wellness Reflection & Discussion** (suggested time 15 minutes; 10 minutes and 5 minutes)

Have participants break off into small groups. Allow 10 minutes for groups to discuss the reflection questions. Ask for groups to share some of what they discussed.

#### **Part 4) Closing**

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Reinforce the importance of participants making commitments to themselves and how it has a direct correlation to the work that they do. Depending on the audience, the facilitator could establish a follow-up accountability date to check in with all participants on their progress with their Wellness Plan Pledge.

*Closing question: What is one thing you're taking away for your personal self, and how does it relate to your work? (as a bonner, staff, professional, etc)*

#### **Credits**

Developed in May 2021 by Kisha Burton, Bonner Program Coordinator, Lindsey Wilson College. Kisha Burton obtained her Master of Education in School Counseling from Western Kentucky University in December 2017. Since then she has worked with populations of students with a background of adverse childhood experiences. She is trained in Trauma Informed Care and Crisis Intervention.

#### **Works Cited**

American Institutes for Research. (n.d.). *Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools: Safe Supportive Learning*. National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments. <https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/building-trauma-sensitive-schools>.

Wolf, C. P. (2017, March 5). Personal Strategy for Self-Care Assignment. Chi Sigma Iota Counseling Academic & Professional Honor Society International. <https://www.csi-net.org/blogpost/1566602/269859/Personal-Strategy-for-Self-Care-Assignment>.

## Wellness Assessment

This assessment tool provides an overview of effective strategies to maintain self-care and overall wellness. After completing the full assessment, you can move on to developing a full wellness plan.

Questions with an asterisk (\*) next to them qualify as aspects of social wellness, which will be addressed on the Wellness Plan.

Using the scale below, rate the following areas in terms of frequency:

5 = Frequently 4 = Occasionally 3 = Rarely 2 = Never 1 = It never occurred to me

### Physical Wellness

- Eat regularly (e.g. breakfast, lunch and dinner)
- Eat healthy
- Exercise
- Get regular medical care for prevention
- Get medical care when needed
- Take time off when needed
- Get massages
- Dance, swim, walk, run, play sports, sing, or do some other fun physical activity
- \*  Take time to be sexual—with yourself, with a partner
- Get enough sleep
- Wear clothes you like
- Take day trips or mini-vacations
- Other:

### Spiritual Wellness

- Make time for reflection
- Spend time with nature
- \*  Find a spiritual connection or community
- Be open to inspiration
- Cherish your optimism and hope
- Be aware of nonmaterial aspects of life
- Try at times not to be in charge or the expert
- Be open to not knowing
- Identify what is meaningful to you and notice its place in your life
- Have experiences of awe
- Read inspirational literature (talks, music, etc.)
- Other:

## **Psychological & Emotional Wellness**

- Make time for self-reflection
- Go see a psychotherapist or counselor for yourself
- Write in a journal
- Read literature that is unrelated to school
- \*  Let others know different aspects of you
- Notice your inner experience—listen to your thoughts, judgments, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings
- Engage your intelligence in a new area, e.g. go to an art museum, history exhibit, sports event, theater performance
- \*  Practice receiving from others
- Be curious
- Say “no” to extra responsibilities sometimes
- \*  Spend time with others whose company you enjoy
- \*  Stay in contact with important people in your life
- Give yourself affirmations, praise yourself
- Love yourself
- Re-read favorite books, re-view favorite movies
- \*  Identify comforting activities, objects, people, relationships, places and seek them out
- Allow yourself to cry
- Find things that make you laugh
- \*  Express your outrage in social action, letters and donations, marches, protests
- \*  Play with children
- Other:

## **Professional (Work/School) Wellness**

- Take time to eat lunch
- \*  Take time to chat with coworkers
- Make time to complete tasks
- Identify projects or tasks that are exciting, growth promoting, and rewarding to you
- Pursue regular learning and professional development
- \*  Get support from colleagues
- Negotiate for your needs
- \*  Have a peer support group
- Other:

*This assessment was adapted from the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments.*

## Personal Wellness Plan

Based on your responses to the wellness self-assessment, list 1-2 things in each area that you already do and 1-2 things that you would like to do to take care of yourself as well as potential barriers that could be keeping you from doing things you would like to do. Once complete, move to the Wellness Plan Pledge.

Area	Already Do	Would Like to Do	Obstacles/Barriers
<b>Physical</b> (physical activities, exercise, stretching, balanced diet, limiting sugar, salt & alcohol, vitamins/ supplements, etc.)			
<b>Social</b> (social or intimate relationships, networking, mentors, study groups, memberships to clubs and organizations) **Found with asterisks			
<b>Spiritual</b> (values, virtue, gender identity, cultural identity, prayer, meditation, etc.)			

<p><b>Psychological &amp; Emotional</b>  (expressing emotions through activities and hobbies, art, creativity, reading, attitude shifts, competence, self-talk, inner experience, etc.)</p>			
<p><b>Professional (Work &amp; School)</b>  (professional development, peer support, balance and boundaries, culture and atmosphere.)</p>			

Adapted from the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments:  
<https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/building-trauma-sensitive-schools>

## Wellness Plan Pledge

Choose 3-5 things from your list that you can make a commitment to doing in the next month and complete the following sentences and pledge.

**Today I commit to:**

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

**I want to do this because:**

**I will accomplish this by doing the following:**

### **Pledge to Self**

I make this commitment to implement these wellness goals to the best of my ability.

Your Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Wellness Reflection & Discussion

Using the Personal Wellness Plan you created and the information from today's session to reflect on these questions together. Be prepared to share with the whole group.

- 1. Warning signs.** What signs and symptoms help you realize that you may be experiencing burnout or too much stress?
- 2. Current wellness strategies.** What current strategies have been beneficial to you in successfully managing stress, maintaining health, and creating a sense of balance/wellness in your life?
- 3. Future wellness strategies.** What new ideas or activities would you like to implement this year to address your warning signs or prevent them? How will you continue to practice effective self-care to avoid burnout and compassion fatigue in the future?
- 4. Social support.** Who in your life promotes wellness or takes care of you and how do you let them do that?
- 5. Wellness resources.** List at least 5 resources available to you on campus to which you have access that help promote all of wellness and prevent stress.

Adapted from *Personal Strategy for Self-Care Assignment* by Dr. Cheryl Pence Wolf  
<https://www.csi-net.org/blogpost/1566602/269859/Personal-Strategy-for-Self-Care-Assignment>