

SECONDARY TRAUMA: RESILIENCE IN COURT: COPING WITH STRESS, CHANGE AND ROUTINE

Ed Spillane

Presiding Judge

College Station Municipal Court

Outline and Goals

- Examine what we know and what we don't know as to reasons for stress at our Courts
- Focus on all the players in Court and barriers to help seeking
- Solutions and Resilience
- Mindfulness as a useful tool for Courts
- Paying attention to the big picture and flexible with external and internal change
- Resources

Mental Health with lawyers

- 46% depression
- 61% anxiety
- 11.5% suicidal thoughts

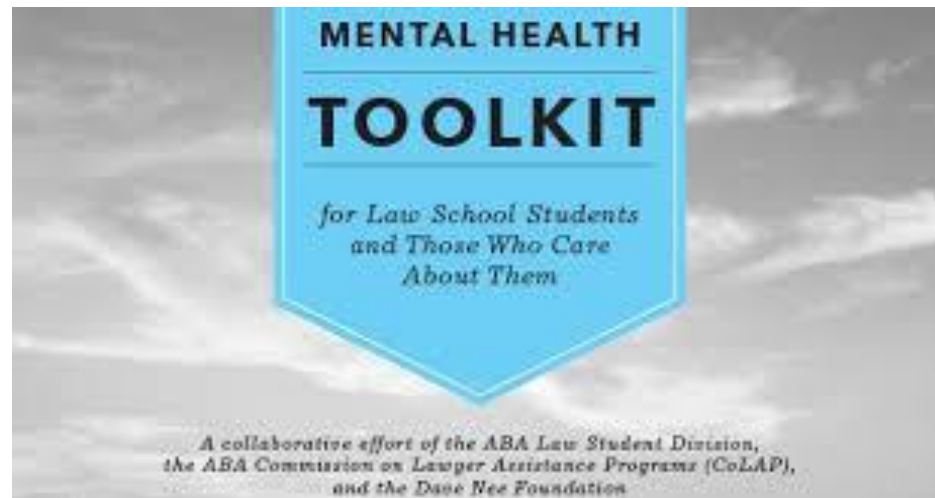


Young lawyers

- The younger the lawyer, the greater the likelihood of:
- Substance use disorder
- Depression
- Anxiety



Law School



Court

- Studies.....?
- What we all know: Secondary Trauma



Secondary Trauma

- Busy Courts
- Repeated Traumatic Accounts
- Safety Issue
- Immigration Courts, Specialty Courts
- Research



Secondary Trauma

Secondary Trauma

Trauma resulting from caring for, hearing about or witnessing the intense suffering of others. Over time, the cumulative effect can result in an internalization of trauma, leading to compassion fatigue or burnout.

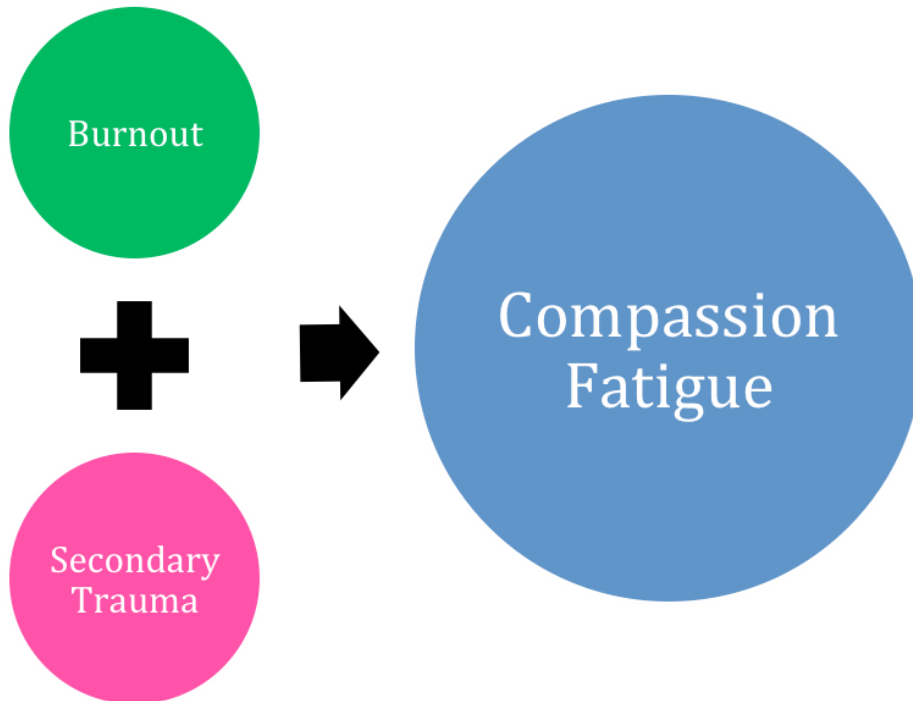
Viewers of 9-11 Media Coverage
Develop Secondary PTSD



Stress, Change, Routine

The Dangers of Routine

Resilience Training vs Other Suggested Solutions



Courts

Stress (often makes us less empathetic)

Anger: lose peripheral vision

Implicit Bias

Secondary Trauma: National Center for State
Courts; Assistance Programs

Mentors



Barriers to Help-Seeking

- Stigma as a barrier
- “Peer pressure”
- Privacy, vulnerability



Solutions

- Resiliency



Optimism

- Experiences
- How we view ourselves at the end of the day
- Positive emotions; gratitude



Connections

- Meaningfulness
- Seeing the forest from the trees
- Perceiving routine
- Showing vulnerability



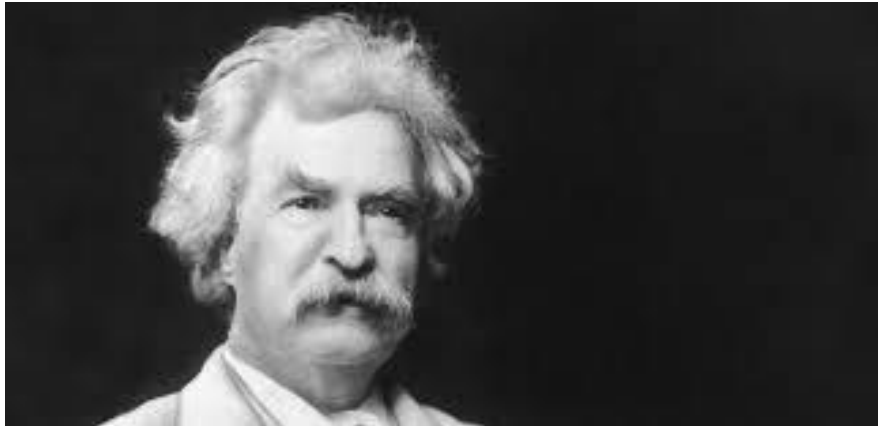
Mindfulness

- What exactly is this?
- M word
- Not problem solving mode
- Out of past , future. Present as it is happening
- Health and Wellness
- Breath
- Opposite of burnout?



Mark Twain

- “I’ve been through some terrible things in life; some of them happened”



Present Moment

- Going to and from the Airport
- Sports talk radio: yoga class, walking
- Non judgmental awareness
- Dropping the screen



Time and the M word

- Practice: Harvard Business School:
Mindfulness works but only if you work at it:
resilience, collaboration, ability to lead in
complex conditions
- Increased space between stimulus and
response
- Distinctions



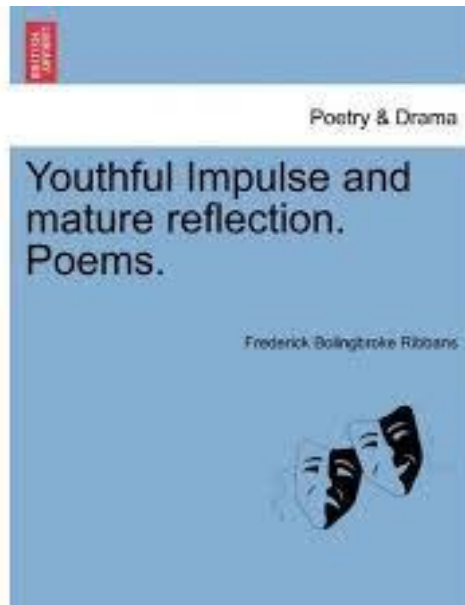
Other Factors

- Statutes, Demeanor, Appearance, Bias, Procedural Fairness
- A. The more we limit our thinking by original facts; B. use limited signals in the world; C. see rules as inflexible
- Moving directly from problem to solution
- Illusion of control
- “could”; rubber band



Impulse vs Reflection

- Thoughtful approach to current tasks
- Not rushing headlong into the process
- Not mindless
- Commission Judicial conduct



Other Judges



Judges and Courts

- Mindful Speaking and Listening: 1. awareness that is 2. openhearted, 3. centered in the present moment, and 4 nonjudgmental



Mindful Listening

To do:

1. Actively attempt to understand the Other's point of view
2. Take in info without passing judgment
3. Acknowledge the speaker
4. Model empathic practices
5. Create a trusting environment



Mindful Listening

Not to do:

1. Change the subject
2. Discount the speakers' feelings
3. Let the speaker “hook” you into emotional exchange
4. Interrupt
5. Give advice
6. Interrogate



Expanding the Choices

- Car key doesn't work: the more uncertainty, the more we will look for viable alternatives
- Degree of choice increases when car doesn't start
- Think of factors you didn't consider; everything isn't great?
- Look under the hood
- Increasing distinctions about our awareness
- Other uses of drugs



Benefits

- More Insight every day
- Positive emotions, empathy, cognitive flexibility: **working with most difficult defendants**
- Best interests for everyone in Court
- Lexis/Nexis search
- Not the only solution



Texas Lawyers Assistance Programs

- Attorney or Non-Attorney Judges
- Confidential and Anonymous
- Referrals
- Peer Support
- Education and Public Awareness
- <https://www.tlaphelps.org/judges> (dedicated to judges)



TEXAS LAWYERS'
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Confidential. Respectful. Voluntary.

Paradox

- Seems trivial to explain and difficult to accomplish
- More you need; harder to achieve
- Amazon review



Resources

- Jon Kabat-Zin: “Wherever you go, there you are”
- Headspace, Insight Timer Apps
- Other mindful practices
- ABA National Helpline for Judges Helping Judges:
1-800-219-6474
- <https://www.tlaphelps.org/>;
<https://www.facebook.com/TLAPhelps>; 1-800-343-8527
- <https://www.tlaphelps.org/judges> (page dedicated to judges)



The End

