What is vicarious trauma?

Vicarious Trauma: A profound shift in world view that occurs when helping professionals work with individuals who have experienced trauma. Fundamental beliefs about the world are altered and possibly damaged by being repeatedly exposed to traumatic material, and symptoms that manifest may resemble those with PTSD.

Population of Interest History/Context:
A mid Vancouver Island elementary school hosts a culturally diverse student body. Many of the children attending this school come from lower socio-economic backgrounds and have been exposed to various forms of trauma. In working with these children, the adult staff at this school have potential to suffer from Vicarious Trauma. Evidence is shown through high turnover rates, tearful pleads for assistance, and voiced concerns towards being mentally exhausted; Staff at this school need more support!

Ongoing exposure to the re-telling of traumatic events in their student’s lives can result in Vicarious Trauma for teachers. Can developing a personal practice for educators through mindfulness trainings help reduce teacher stress and increase teacher resiliency, reducing burnout and attrition?

Literature Review:
Teachers who open their hearts to students and experience constant exposure to traumatic stories have an increased risk for experiencing vicarious trauma. Efforts need to be made to improve emotional health and enhance coping skills in order to increase longevity of teachers. Practicing daily mindfulness or guided meditation for one week has shown vast improvements in emotional regulation, attentional control, symptoms of acute depression and ability to disconnect oneself from negative intrusive thoughts (Lucas 2007, Costa & Barnhofer 2016).

SWOT:

Strengths
Weaknesses
Opportunities
Threats

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