

Mindfulness in Teaching Resilience to Mental Health Providers

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Vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue are widely recognized problems among mental health providers, often leading to therapist burnout. When sufficient attention is paid to the experience and self-care of the therapist, however, there can actually be positive outcomes for therapists working with trauma, which has been called vicarious resilience and posttraumatic growth, among other terms (Hernández, Engstrom, & Gangsei, 2010).

The importance of resilience training has also been demonstrated in the training of other healing practitioners, such as medical doctors and faculty (Sood et al, 2011), and massage therapists (La Plante, 2013). Much of the clinical literature on mindfulness and resilience focuses on its value in helping clients. More attention needs to be paid to the practices by which therapists themselves can foster resilience, as these tools can be similarly useful for therapists and hereby also beneficial the clients.

Resilience training should be integral to any clinical training or supervision program and should include a holistic approach to the therapist-in-training's experience. A holistic approach has been used for resilience training in the military, who have acknowledged the mental, physical, social, and spiritual "pillars" required for a balanced life (US Fed News Service). Indispensable to a holistic approach is the inclusion of mindfulness training, which has been brought into educational settings and may reduce trauma symptoms in students (Carbonell, 2012) as well as improve self-reported quality of life (Mapel, 2012).

Such a training approach for therapists also requires psychoeducation on the nature of vicarious, compassion fatigue, vicarious resilience, and posttraumatic growth, as well as the importance of self-care and an itemizing of the therapists' own resources (Hernández, Engstrom, & Gangsei, 2010). Mindfulness training in which the therapist learns to track the impact that the client's story is having on them in the moment can help the therapist to remain centered, present to the client, and self-aware of any pitfalls or triggers, so that appropriate self-care strategies can be employed (Hernández, Engstrom, & Gangsei, 2010; Baldini et al., 2014; La Plante, 2013).

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