

Next Steps

Please complete the following Next Steps, to integrate your experiences within your own schools and communities with the information presented in this chapter.

1. Have you noticed any indications that members of your school staff may be experiencing secondary traumatic stress (for example, outbursts of anger or emotion, or extensive absences)? Have you and your colleagues discussed the issue of secondary stress among the school staff? Have you had professional development relating to this issue? Consider discussing these questions and how you may respond to them during a group staff discussion or professional training day.
2. Do you and your colleagues on the school staff have scheduled experiences designed to alleviate stress? Do you have a before-school workout team at a local recreation center? A before- or after-school yoga session? Do you have a group of runners who regularly meet and exercise together? These are all effective antidotes to stress.
3. Do you feel like a strong team member of your school staff? Sometimes secondary stress causes teachers to pull away and isolate themselves. Are there ways you can think of to develop a strong team spirit of support among your school colleagues? If you have not done so, your school staff might consider organizing as a professional learning community (PLC) as a way to strengthen the team morale of the instructional staff (see DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many, & Mattos, 2016).
4. Use local mental health providers to provide professional development around the issue of stress and secondary traumatic stress, or organize a book group to read and discuss a publication on the topic.
5. Consider staff get-togethers, weekend parties, or other school celebrations as a way to have fun and alleviate pressure.

6. Education has become more and more politicized over the years, with issues such as working conditions, class size, and availability of adequate mental-health professionals for staff and students among several hot-button issues. Sometimes the only effective way to deal with school stress is to mobilize politically to help the school boards, legislators, and the larger community better understand the nature and the needs of public education today. Consider organizing such an effort in your school or district. Data can be unusually powerful when presented in arguments for better funding for schools, and teacher and administrative organizations can work together to present their ideas and lay out a pathway to better education. The Oregon Education Association's (n.d.) disrupted learning report can be a catalyst for such presentations.