

# Self-Compassion and Resilience for Healers Working with Trauma and Problem Gamblers

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# Eckhart Tolle

People don't realize that now is all there ever is; there is no past or future.....except as a memory or anticipation in your mind.

- Eckhart Tolle

*The Power of Now*



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# Living in the Present

Living in the present brings the one thing most people spend their lives trying to achieve: **PEACE**. Relaxing into the present moment puts you in the mental and physical state of calm, quiet, and tranquility and finally gets us off the here-but-gotta-get-there-treadmill. If you are in the moment doing whatever you are doing, then there is no time to examine the gap between your expectations and the reality of how things are, or between where you are and where you think you should be. You are too busy being in the moment to ***analyze*** it and find fault with it.

- Cherie Carter-Scott, PhD



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# Objectives

1. Define the term compassion fatigue and identify symptoms of the impact of caring/compassion fatigue with gamblers.
2. Identify the impact/effect that being a helping professional has on physical and emotional well-being.
3. Improve self-care skills by learning mindfulness techniques and methods of applying them in the therapeutic relationship with gamblers and trauma survivors.
4. Identify the number of reasons why it is essential for healers to remain resilient in response to the demands of our work.



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What do we seek for our clients and ourselves?

*AWARENESS*

*CONSCIOUSNESS*

# STRESS

- ▶ Is Your Job Stressful/Challenging?
- ▶ If so, what are the causes?
- ▶ What are some of the effects?



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# STRESS

- ▶ What's the difference between pain and suffering?
- ▶ Pain = Threat
- ▶ Suffering = Fight / Flight Over and over and over and over again and again and again and again



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# Stress

# Perceived Threat

**Learned Response>>>>>>>>>>>>>**

# Cause & Effect

## *Biological Effect/* Sympathetic Dominance

## *Cognitive Effect* / Thoughts–Beliefs–World View

***Emotional Effect*** Fear/Anxiety/Helplessness

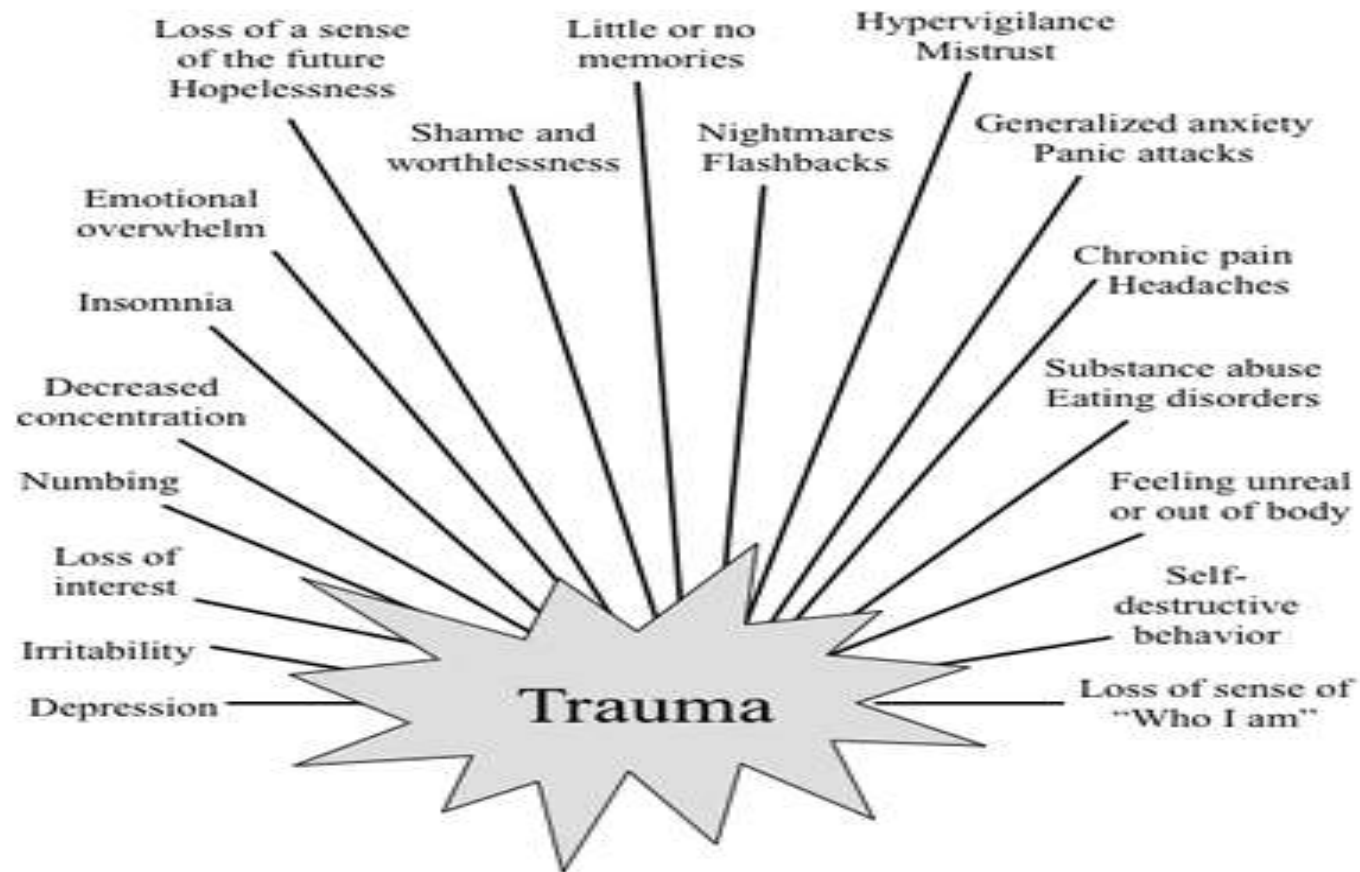


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*"Trauma survivors have symptoms instead of memories" [Harvey, 1990]*

Adapted from Bremner & Marner, 1998

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# The Cost of Caring

What do MHP do in order to be of assistance?

- ▶ Listen
- ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Care

Listening to life stories of fear, hopelessness and suffering may lead to those same feelings in the helper.

***All those who help are at risk. It's impossible to avoid the impact for one to be an effective professional.***



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# The Cost of Caring

How do we make a difference in the lives of others?

- ▶ Attention
- ▶ Care/Concern
- ▶ Providing Interventions
- ▶ Compassion

*“Tell Me Your Secrets”*



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# Compassion Fatigue

- ▶ **Compassion:** a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by suffering or misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate their pain and remove its cause” (*Webster, 1989 p.299*).
- ▶ **Compassion Fatigue:** "a state of tension and reoccupation with individual/cumulative trauma of clients as manifested in one or more ways"
  - Re-experiencing the traumatic event
  - Avoidance/numbing of reminders of the event
  - Persistent arousal

Figley, C. R. (2002).



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# Research

Compassion Satisfaction, Compassion Fatigue, and Burnout in a National Sample of Trauma Treatment Therapist (Craig & Sprang, 2010)

- ▶ This study investigates the impact of EBPs in a national sample (n=532) of self-identified trauma specialists
- ▶ “Continuous and prolonged exposure to the stress of working with the myriad of trauma related stressors experienced by clients can lead to various responses including burnout, compassion fatigue, and compassion satisfaction.”
- ▶ Younger therapists experience more burnout while more experienced therapists reported more compassion satisfaction
- ▶ Implementing EBPs generally reduced compassion fatigue and burnout
  - ▶ Clinician’s own maltreatment history
    - Previous research has suggested that personal history of trauma increases the likelihood of compassion fatigue (Craig & Sprang, 2010)

# Traumatic Event or CI Occurs

- ▶ Counselor Exposure through another person >>> over time>>>

*Secondary Traumatic Stress>>>*

*Vicarious  
Traumatization or  
Compassion  
Fatigue>>>>*

*Both can lead to  
BURNOUT*

- ▶ Counselor experiences>>> over time

*Compassion  
Satisfaction*

Result of working with traumatized clients over time.

# The Cost of Caring

What are the Risks?

- Negative Energy
- Pessimism
- Depression
  - Hopelessness/Helplessness
- Incompetence
- Exhaustion

***THE RISKS ARE INEVITABLE***



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# Gambling Disorder and Trauma Related Experiences

## PTSD and Gambling Disorder (Ledgerwood and Petry, 2006):

- ▶ They hypothesized that participants who reported more PTSD symptoms would also have more severe gambling related difficulties, greater impulsivity, and more dissociation than those who had less PTSD symptoms
- ▶ 149 participants in treatment for their gambling disorders were used and given several self-report measures to answer
- ▶ 34.2% of participants scored high on the PTSD symptoms
- ▶ Those with high PTSD symptoms scores reported greater lifetimes gambling severity
- ▶ 88.6% of the sample had experienced some traumatic event at least once in their lifetime that included intense fear, shock helplessness, and horror



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# Gambling Disorder and Trauma Related Experiences

- ▶ Those with high scores for PTSD symptoms were more likely than those who scored low to experience severe fear reactions to traumatic events like:
  - Being or witnessing a serious accident or fire
  - Receiving traumatic medical treatment
  - Being threatened or attacked by others
  - Seeming family or others attack each other
  - Experiencing sexual assault
- ▶ Those with high PTSD scores also scored high on impulsivity, dissociation, general psychiatric symptoms, and lifetime gambling disorder severity compared to those with lower scores
- ▶ Their hypothesis was proved to be significant because they found that gamblers who had higher PTSD scores also had higher scores on a lifetime measure of pathological gambling symptoms



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# Gambling Disorder and Trauma Related Experiences

## Trauma History and Severity of Gambling Involvement (Peltzer et al., 2006):

- ▶ Previous research found the interactive effects of childhood trauma significantly predicted gambling severity scores. Two researchers found that severity of childhood maltreatment was significantly and independently associated with lower age of onset of gambling problems
- ▶ 266 participants were randomly chosen by a venue-based survey at a horse race betting club in South Africa. They were asked about their gambling habits, socioeconomic statuses, and previous traumatic events using different measures
- ▶ 31.2% of the sample were classified as probable pathological gamblers while 19.9% were classified as having a potential gambling problem
- ▶ Participants reported on average **3.4** traumatic events experienced during their lifetimes
- ▶ Their analyses found a significant association between traumatic events experienced and gambling severity

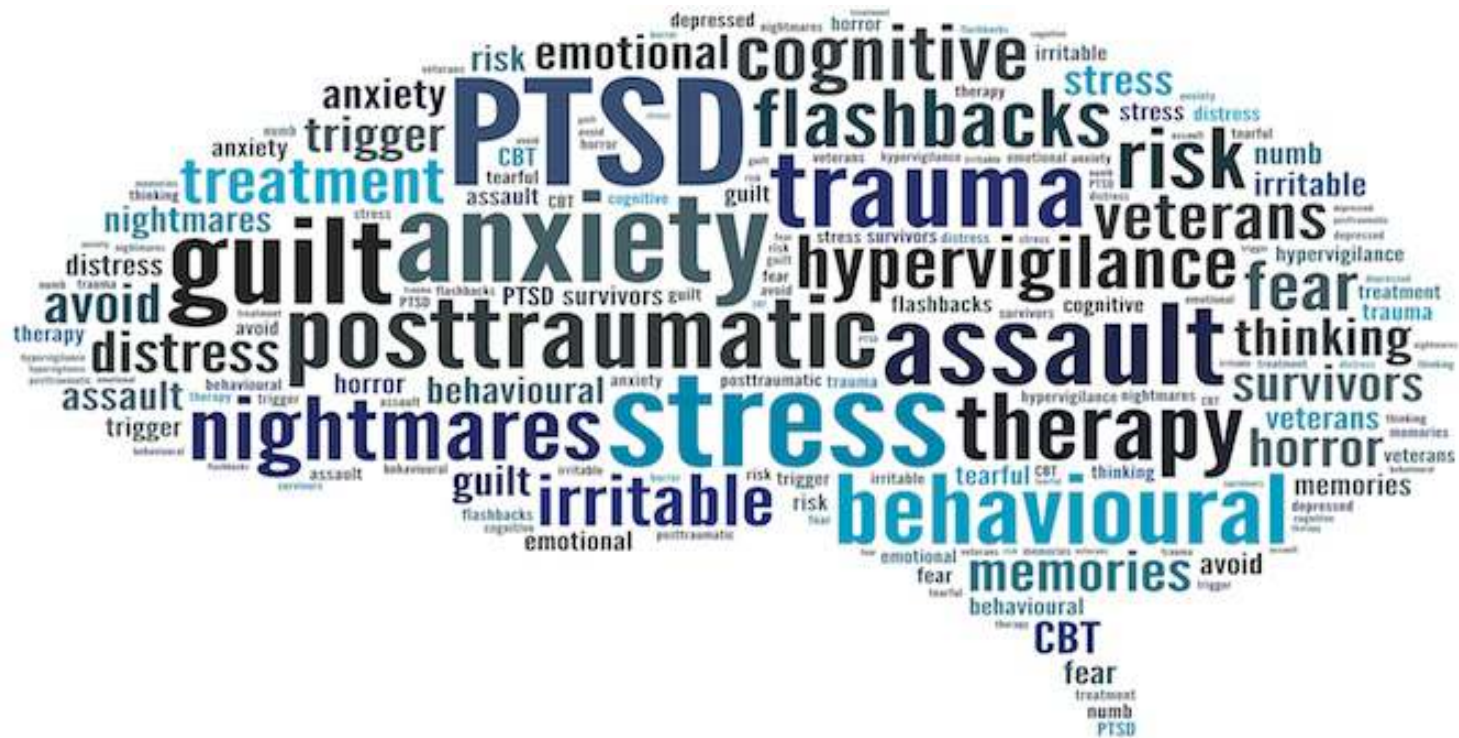


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# How Trauma Changes Everything



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# Gambling Disorder and Trauma Related Experiences

## Lifetime Histories of Trauma among Pathological Gamblers (Kausch, Rugle, & Rowland, 2006)

- ▶ In their previous research looking at the autobiographies of treatment seeking pathological gamblers, they found that 23% had experienced severe trauma, 16% had experiences moderate trauma, 30% had experienced less severe trauma, and 32% had experienced no serious life traumas
  - From there they determined that the “high trauma” patients were more likely to be depressed, anxious, abuse alcohol or drugs, and also have avoidant personality styles
- ▶ Another study from their previous research also found that 73% of pathological gamblers from Oregon reported trauma stemming from abuse or neglect prior to the onset of their pathological gambling
- ▶ 111 participants were used for this study once they were admitted to a gambling treatment program in Virginia



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# Gambling Disorder and Trauma Related Experiences

- ▶ 64% of the sample reported some history of abuse
  - 56.8% reported a history of emotional abuse
  - 40.5% reported a history of physical abuse
  - 24.3% reported a history of sexual abuse
  - 42.3% reported multiple abuses
    - 16.2% reported both physical and sexual abuse histories
- ▶ In the sample, women were significantly more likely to report histories of abuse than the men, mostly for emotional abuse and sexual abuse
  - **100%** of the women gamblers reported having experienced some form of abuse
  - **91.5%** of patients/participants reported that abuse occurred in childhood and the most common experiences were:
    - Physical and emotional abuse perpetrated by wives, who were frequently alcoholics
    - Being raised in very unstable and disruptive homes, with many fathers and step-fathers having substance use disorders
    - Domestic violence



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# Gambling Disorder and Trauma Related Experiences

- ▶ Gamblers with histories of abuse not only had higher severity rates of gambling problems, but also higher rates of alcohol or drug dependence, higher rates of attempted suicide, and greater rates of psychiatric distress
- ▶ Based off this research, they recommend that gamblers with histories of trauma may benefit the most from intensive treatment that would allow to develop a trusting therapeutic alliance
- ▶ This research also suggests that screening, prevention, and early intervention programs may be greatly beneficial for this population



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# Secondary Traumatic Stress

- It is a natural consequence resulting from knowledge about a traumatizing event experienced by another.
- Comes on suddenly
- Includes feelings of helplessness and isolation
- View the world as more dangerous
- People do not need to experience trauma directly to be traumatized



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# The Cost of Caring

- ▶ When we enter the world of another there are hazards.
- ▶ Helpers need to reframe self-care not as a selfish act but rather as a valuable and necessary step in providing proper care to others.
- ▶ Impossible to always be self-aware
- ▶ Wellness as a Lifestyle



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# The Cost of Caring



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# Consequences of Compassion Fatigue

- Decreased Objectivity
- Listening Skills are compromised
- Emotional Reactivity
- Decreased Effectiveness as a helper



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# Mindfulness

Definition:

Paying attention, nonjudgmentally, to what we are experiencing in the moment. Paying attention on purpose to what we are attending to.

## MINDFULNESS

- CHANGES the BRAIN
- INCREASES ATTENTION
- Improves the EXPERIENCE of the SELF



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# Mindfulness

## ► *Mindfulness attitudes and practices*

- Mindfulness has been defined as moment-to-moment nonjudgmental awareness, characterized by an open and receptive approach to living in the present moment
- It has shown promise in reducing stress outcomes (Thompson, Amatea & Thompson, 2014)
- Brown and Ryan (2003) defined mindfulness as an attribute of consciousness that encompasses both awareness and attention.
- When used correctly, mindfulness results in heightened awareness or inner and outer experiences through open, non-judgmental, focused attention in the present moment
- *To be mindful in the context of daily activity, one usually needs to learn and teach themselves how to be “awake” and fully present in the “now”*
- Meditation has been used as a way to practice mindfulness



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# Mindfulness

- ▶ Research shows that mindfulness supports emotional resilience (affect tolerance + cognitive flexibility).
- ▶ Compassion meditation supports optimism and social attunement.
- ▶ These practices can focus on suffering to create healing or can focus on positive experiences to strengthen those traits.
- ▶ Neuroscientist believe mental training can change personality.



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# Self Care/Self Compassion

- Promotes Well Being
- Develop Your own Mantra
- Attitude of Gratitude
- Establish & Respect Personal Boundaries



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# Self Care/Self Compassion

- Create Balance by Engaging in a Variety of Professional Activities
- Take Time for Yourself/Slow Down

## Recharge Daily

- Use Professional/Social Supports
- Promote Activities for Life Balance
- Live in the Moment
- Be Positive/Optimistic
- Seek Growth Experiences



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# Meditation

Jack Kornfield

Meditation on Compassion



[www.jackkornfield.com/2010/02/meditation-on-compassion](http://www.jackkornfield.com/2010/02/meditation-on-compassion)



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# Refuel/Reenergize/Revitalize

- ▶ Set Goals & Develop a Plan:

What activities can be done to enhance the quality of your life and those you serve?

Professional  
Aerobic  
Spiritual

Physical  
Emotional  
Psychological



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Be in the Present **>>**

Take the time to take in the moments...

# PEACE

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