

TRANSCRIPT

## Webinar: Self and Collective Care of Youth-Serving Adults

April 8, 2016

[Slide: *Agenda*]

JEFF POLIK

My colleague, Leora Wolf-Prusan, School Climate and Student Support Specialist, will be leading today's conversation. Leora's passion—that manifests in her research and teaching—is specifically on how educators are impacted by students' deaths and, more generally, on educator well-being and systemic support for the supporters. Most excitingly, we have two practitioners who will be spotlighting their work. We have Lucy Vezzuto from the Orange County Department of Education, and Candice Valenzuela from Oakland Unified School District. They'll briefly also discuss recommendations. With that, I'm going to hand the ball over to Leora.

LEORA WOLF-PRUSAN

Okay. Well, while Jeff is transitioning the presenter ball to me, I want to welcome everyone again and good morning or afternoon depending on where you are. We have an incredible array of both roles, but also state and local agencies represented here on the call today, which is incredibly exciting, especially as we think about really changing the way that we systemically support the culture and change the culture around supporting youth and youth-serving educators. So Jeff mentioned that I came into the work because of my dedication to re-enfranchising a conversation around how educators are impacted by student deaths, and I am starting there because that seems like a very extreme event, but it's actually one that's really un-discussed and, specifically, as we in this country have a really alarming phenomenon of student homicide, that part of what interested me was what happens to the teacher when his or her student is killed, and that was my research, which then led me to the larger conversation around supporting educators in events that perhaps weren't as extreme as a student homicide but still were potentially overwhelming, and that to me was what led me to this work. So that is my ground.

Before I begin my section I want to note that throughout this conversation I'm going to be using language of "adult" and "educator" and "teacher" and "student" and "youth" interchangeably. I know that many of us may not work with students but we work with young people outside the context of the school, or we work with other kinds of youth-serving adults that maybe aren't specifically educators or teachers, and so give us a little bit of forgiveness as we switch back and forth, but hopefully you can transfer and translate the ideas back to your context.

[Slide: *Realms of Trauma Informed Care*]

So as we move forward, many of you were on both the first webinar session as well as the second, and this was a slide that was introduced for both and I'm introducing it here again just to ground us specifically, and when we talk about trauma-informed care what we're actually talking about.

The beauty of trauma-informed care is that it is not prescriptive. So there are many different established frameworks or growing or frameworks under establishment, development—these are the principles that we particularly hold true in thinking about principles of trauma-informed care as they relate to positive human development. So you'll see I'm going to first talk about the principles on the right and then I'm going to talk about the realms of trauma-informed care on the left. So in terms of the principles of trauma-informed care we have consistency, choice, attachment, safety, competency, and then a celebration of historical resilience. All of these, the six that I mentioned, are in exact response to what one might feel when there is an inability to cope with adverse or overwhelming experiences either because of an event or because of the conditions in one's life. And so when we look at the right, we also want to talk about the realms of trauma-informed care because we can talk about how those six manifest in ourselves, how they manifest in the services that we either provide or we access or do not provide and don't access, the structures, and then the systems. And in terms of the realm of trauma-informed care, our conversation around creating collective and self-care for youth-serving educators really aligns with all four of them, and we want to think about not only what educators and adults can do for themselves but also how we, who are in the service-providing position or if we are system changers, what we can do to really alter the culture, as I said earlier, around those access points.

You'll see on the chat box that Rebeca has put some examples of what this looks like in practice. So, again, the reason I'm introducing this is because oftentimes the self and collective care conversation can land on us saying, "well, you need to take better care of yourself, you need to get more sleep," or "you need to potentially access mental health services," which is all true, but we want to expand the conversation beyond just the individual to really change the culture.

[Slide: *Educator self and collective care – So what?!*]

So, we're going to move forward and we're going to talk about self and collective care and the why. So we're having this conversation around educator self and collective care under the umbrella conversation of trauma and its relation to student learning. It might seem separate, and what we want to argue for today is that in any conversation that we're having around trauma-informed care in schools or in other contexts, that we explicitly include those who serve those young people's care in that conversation.

So there are five main arguments to why self and collective care for youth-serving adults is fundamentally trauma-informed and a resilience-oriented practice. So I'm going to start with the bottom left—the educators are often frontline leaders but not given the societal acknowledgment for their role. So when we think about first responders we think about

firefighters, we think about folks who are nurses or EMTs; we rarely actually think about educators or teachers in that role and, yet, at the same time, teachers and educators are often the first ones to navigate and negotiate conversations that are coming up from students and then referring them or figuring out what the next steps for students are. And so as that frontline, teachers are often asked to navigate conversations with the class or a student that are really out of bounds of their pre-service training, but I also want to note that they are the ones that are the go-to—and should—because they're the ones who are most often the experts on their students' developmental needs.

So we have this lack of clarity around who should be responsible for caring for students who are experiencing trauma, or loss, or toxic stress, and that that constant care provider typically defaults to the teacher without a lot of training around how to do so. So the other piece is that unlike other first responders, like I mentioned, educators are also rarely given the systemic aftermath support to recover. So when...in any other first responder context, when he or she experiences an overwhelming event, most often there are practices and policies to respond to that. So we want to make sure that educators potentially could get the same type of response.

On the bottom right you'll see the next point around grappling with ambiguous loss. So Skovholt and Trotter-Matheson note that many youth-serving adults can constantly deal with ambiguous loss. And what I mean by that is that students are transferred out, or they don't come consistently, or they graduate, and so trauma-informed care, if we are saying one of the foundational principles is attachment, then we also have to hold space that educators are consistently dealing with reattachment, dis-attachment, and what that experience can be like to negotiate. So educators who are serving youth frequently have to adapt to that inconsistent relationship, which can be really trying.

Right above the grappling with ambiguous loss you'll see that our third point is that there is a danger of pathologizing violence, community violence, trauma in environments that are characterized by distress and damage. And so our argument is that if we don't provide youth-serving adults the space and place to promote their own positive development and healing, that there is risk that the adults may not have clarity to see and experience student behavior as a reflection of student need. So it can somehow translate into adults either over-identifying with their students' issues or under-identifying and de-investing in students, and so this blurred boundary can really impact student efficacy and learning outcomes.

At the very top is that it is a fundamental teacher retention and student outcome issue. So teacher burnout is the main cause of teacher attrition, and it actually takes the same amount of time teaching, around three to five years, to begin one's teaching expertise. So just at the same time where teachers could grow professionally, they actually leave that profession because of the emotional wear and tear. So we really want to make sure that we create those systemic supports so that the teachers who are building their fluency and efficacy around those relationships with our students stay in the system.

The last point is that while we know that student-teacher relationships are critical for young people in their development and in their navigation of their own lived experience—that are oftentimes uncharacterized by experiences of trauma and resilience—that teachers aren't

trained and educators aren't trained to prepare and interact with secondary trauma, or aren't really prepared to experience or unpack what it means when their students come to their classrooms with a lot of lived experiences that are outside the bounds of what a teacher might have expected to have to navigate. So there are very few pre-service teacher programs and pre-service school counselor programs that explicitly train teachers to become trauma-informed and resilience-oriented for the outcome of positive youth development for their students. So we're often making up for the lack of pre-training in in-service trainings, and if they do exist, most often they concentrate on early childhood or on special education, so not universal. I do want to call out that San Jose State University, for example, does a lot of work around mindfulness and socio-emotional learning in their pre-service training.

So those are the five key points around why we think this conversation is not only important, but is really fundamental to the conversation around trauma-informed care. So there is an article that just came out around this idea that teachers are really underprepared to really serve and understand the complexities of their students' lives.

[Slide: *Resourceful relationships (student-teacher)*]

So let's tap into that last piece around the student-teacher relationship. So the youth-adult or student-educator relationship—which we know is a pivotal factor in young people's wellness and essential protective and promotional factor—we also know that that is a huge responsibility. And we also know that most high schools right now don't have enough school counselors, and so a lot of those responsibilities, like we said, get shifted on to the administration or on to teachers. And so there was one study in 2007, Donnelly and Rowling, and they explored the impact of critical incidents on counselors by three dimensions. So they looked at the impact on the workplace—the school or system; the work—reporting or managing critical incidents; and the worker—the personal and professional stress on the counselor. And respondents described the stress of having to manage their own personal response to the incident conflicted with being open and able to provide for students.

So this caring for students requires an emotional understanding and emotional management, or what some call emotional labor, and we sit then with the challenge of providing students with guidance and structure to navigate their own mental health, at the same time while preserving our own mental health. So Susan Craig, who is a national author and leading author on trauma-informed classroom practices and school practices, she calls this “the double struggle.” So let's talk about what can contribute to that double struggle.

[Slide: *Definitions: What are we actually experiencing?*]

So in terms of what we are actually experiencing or what we can actually experience, there are four terms that many of us have heard and used frequently, and we want to unpack what they mean. So in terms of burnout, I want to just note that the historical arrival of this word “burnout”—which talks about kind of this dislocation between who we are and what they have to do—that this arrival of burnout, the term “burnout,” came at the exact same time as the arrival of the term “trauma.” So both came at a historical moment in our country post-Vietnam War where we were understanding that post-traumatic stress disorder and trauma in

veterans...we were understanding that phenomenon, and parallel, we were then understanding burnout in terms of social workers that were providing care for those veterans. So “burnout” is a term that we frequently use.

In terms of “compassion fatigue,” compassion fatigue is Charles Figley’s term for what the experience is when professionals experience burnout from over-empathizing with their clients, or in this case, our young people that we serve. But I do want to mention that there is a lot of conflicting ideas around this idea, that actually compassion can never really be fatigued, that our empathy is endless, that it is the conditions in which we can enact compassion and empathy that might be the fatigue itself.

The other term is “secondary trauma.” It’s on the bottom left. And secondary trauma is experiencing a traumatic event through the relationship with the individual who experienced it in first person. So, for example, a teacher experiences secondary trauma through interactions with students who experience it firsthand. And I do want to note that Figley—who talks about burnout, compassion fatigue, and secondary trauma—that he really notes for us that they are processes and not fixed conditions, but we do need to be aware of them and support them if they are experienced.

So the last term is at the bottom right, and it’s the one that we most often don’t talk about, which is this term called “disenfranchised grief or trauma.” Disenfranchised grief comes from the idea that there are certain types of grief that society doesn’t necessarily honor or validate, and actually it came from the study of people experiencing miscarriages. And this idea is actually translated when we talk about professions or roles like educators when they experience a trauma or grief and we don’t have both the national conversation, dialogue, training, resources, or supports that can validate that that experience was real. So a lot of educators, when they’re experiencing secondary trauma, they don’t note it as that because we don’t necessarily allow educators to feel like it’s okay to experience secondary trauma.

I want to note before we move that everyone on the line, we can all agree that actually teachers and educators, anyone who serve youth, they are extremely resilient and have enormous internal resources. So actually what we’re talking about today are the external supports to nourish those internal resources. So educators are coping all the time and are extremely resilient all the time, but what we’re actually talking about is, again, those external resources to nourish the internal resources.

[Slide: *What’s the frame?*]

So in terms of the frame around...the frame around this conversation, we talk about three theories: Transactional Theory, Meaning Making, and Constructivist Self-Determination Theory. So I’m going to just go through them very quickly, but we have a lot of resources for you if you’re interested in any more. And the Transactional Model for stress and coping says that actually the way that we understand coping—which is really inherent to how we would then understand how we can care for those who aren’t coping—says that we have three types of responses: we have primary appraisal—so if, for example, educators perceive an event or a condition to cause harm or threat; secondary appraisal, if they believe they have the internal-

external support; and then that then relates to how they cope, if they believe that they have the ability to regulate and create positive outcomes. So again, it's that concentration on the secondary appraisal—"Do I have the resources to address the situation?"—which is really important for this conversation.

The second term is called Meaning Making, and it's how we make sense of what's going on around us, and especially in terms of trauma, that it's a natural human tendency to look to reestablish control and reorder priorities when we're experiencing something that's overwhelming. So, in terms of caring for youth, that youth-serving educators can really support a distinction between how we are making meaning of an experience versus how a student is, in order to prevent that pathologizing of the students' experience that we previously discussed. The last piece is called Constructivist Self-Determination Development Theory. It is one of my favorites. It really says that...self-determination theory says that humans have three basic needs: to feel competent, autonomous, and have significant relationships. Let me say that again: that humans have three basic needs in order to build resilience—to feel competent, autonomous, and have significant relationships; and you'll note that there is a lot of parallel with trauma-informed principles. So when we're thinking about responding and creating self and collective care for youth-serving adults, that's kind of the mantra that I keep in my head: competency, autonomy, and significant relationships.

[Slide: *Self & Collective Care—Healing in Practice*]

So the name of the game is self and collective care today, and let's take a moment to unpack what we even mean by "caring" and what it looks like for us as individuals, and then from another, and from a systems perspective.

[Slide: *Actions of Care Wheel*]

So one of the authors who created the Constructivist Self-Determination Theory also developed this wheel—and many of you may have seen this before—to help us think about all the modalities of care. So, first of all, let's note that they are all interconnected. So one deeply influences the other, and, of course, they aren't realistically balanced like this graph; some get more attention than others, but I do want to note that they all mirror the elements of Maslow's hierarchies. So in the chat box, this reflection question: Which elements are you most committed to and which ones need more attention and why? What would be the outcome if you decided to devote more attention to your professional care, maybe perhaps devoting a little bit more attention to personal care? So I know for me, I do a really good job of taking care of my psychological, emotional, and spiritual care, but my professional and physical care are kind of the ones that I'm like, "Oh, when I get time I can, I can work on those," and I am curious about which ones usually get more attention from those of us on the line.

Okay. So we can come back to this as we move forward when we talk about practices later on, and you do have this slide in your deck.

[Slide: *Why Collective Care?*]

I want to talk about why collective care. So when we usually hear “self-care,” it lands on the individual, and today we’re saying that self-care is actually not enough and it’s not a reality. So none of us actually heal or sustain wellness on our own, and it can actually sometimes exacerbate stress when the onus of our recovery is on us as individuals. So you’ll recall that in the first webinar we used Ungar’s theory of resilience, and Ungar expands resilience from beyond the bounce-back of the individual but to also the environment to create opportunities to develop, apply, and explore one’s resilience; so, too, with care for us youth-serving adults.

I want to point out two pieces from the literature that you’ll see on the screen today. The first is that their scholarship highlights that teacher self-efficacy is primarily affected by the relationship within the organization and the extent of support that they receive from their colleagues. So schools that provided a low level of support for their teaching staff were actually associated with low levels of teacher self-efficacy, and those teachers were less willing to cope with their students’ problems. It make sense, right? We’re less able to show up for others who need us to show up for them if we don’t have the resources to navigate. The second point is that a primary mediating factor for ongoing stress for students is the social cohesion of adults in their environment. So the interdependent relationships aren’t just between teacher and student, but also between teacher and fellow teacher. So school leadership has a huge role in fostering that culture, as do teachers. And I’m using the word “teacher,” but again, this can be transferred to all of our work environments, so even with myself and my organization, the outcomes of our clients’ success are directly impacted by our sense of social cohesion in our organization.

So because teachers aren’t the only part of a transactional relationship with their students, but they’re also implicated in helping students navigate their lived experience, educators really must unite and really together create this culture of interdependent care. And you’ll see that I’m using the word “interdependency.” We really want to create the sense that our care and our students’ care...that we both benefit when our students are well and our students benefit from when we are well.

[Slide: *Spotlight in the Field: Lucy Vezzuto*]

With that said, I’m going to pass it to Lucy Vezzuto, and I am so excited to shift the webinar to our practitioners in the field. So, Lucy, I’m going to hand you the ball.

LUCY VEZZUTO

Thank you, Leora. It’s my pleasure to be here. And Leora created a solid foundation as to the rationale for focusing in on this issue. I coordinate Student Mental Health and School Climate Initiatives at the Orange County Department of Education in Costa Mesa, California. We service 27 school districts as well as our private and charter schools. And so today, I’m going to briefly talk about and introduce a project that we began under the California Student Mental Health Services Authority Initiative called the K-12 Student Mental Health Initiative. We were able to develop demonstration projects, and so we prototyped a project called Resilient Mindful

Learner. And the term “learner” not only relates to our youth but also our educators and specifically our teachers.

[Slide: *Resilient Mindful Learner Project Aims*]

The purpose was to explore the interest among educators and district leaders of supporting resilience and well-being of teachers as well as youth, and the feasibility of bringing in these practices by empowering and training teachers to learn and embody these practices, first for themselves and then for their students. Our demographics were five Orange County schools in the district that were represented; they were all Title I schools. We had a small but mighty group of 15 teachers that impacted over 360 students, grades 2 through 8. They represented general education, Special Ed, resource, and gifted and talented education. And so, basically, our aim—as it says on the screen here—was to develop the capacity of Orange County classroom teachers to integrate stress management, self-management, and self-awareness strategies within their classroom day to support their students’ well-being, academic performance, and social-emotional growth. We were especially keen to support and provide resources for teachers to be the positive role models of emotional regulation for their students as well as promoting their own health and well-being.

[Slide: *Mindfulness: Emerging Research in Teachers*]

To kick off the pilot project, we reviewed the literature on stress management and the area of mindfulness for educators; we looked at this new emerging area of research on mindfulness for students as well. And as you see on the screen, some of the impacts of mindful awareness practices from a whole variety of studies overlap and have some confirmatory results: reductions in teachers’ psychological symptoms and burnout, improvement in classroom organization, self-compassion, the creation and sustenance of supportive relationships in the classroom. That area that Leora mentioned, the significant relationships...and we know are motivational and critical for learning and to create a positive school climate. We saw improvements in the literature regarding teacher performance, and that emotional balance that was discussed earlier of educators of children, especially with special needs. So this literature guided our selection of program development as well as evaluation measures as well.

[Slide: *Embodiment*]

The project used an embodiment approach, and it’s clear in the literature that you can’t give what you don’t have or don’t model yourself. And so in order to provide resources for resilience and stress management, we began with the teachers. As an aside, I have done this work with after-school providers, nurses, and counselors as well, but this specific pilot project was focused on classroom teachers. And so we realized that classroom teachers needed support and resources to enhance their resiliency and their ability to be well regulated in the moment. Teaching, as you know, serving youth, is an emotionally demanding profession, and in education the demands are increasing and take their toll on even the most resilient and effective of adults. And so we also wanted to bring into the project Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction, the work of Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn at University of Massachusetts, and provide training in helping educators to be mindfully present with curiosity and in a non-judgmental way. And

then we felt strongly that we didn't want to present this as a program, specifically, but as an integration of stress reduction and mindful awareness practices into the daily classroom routine.

*[Slide: Resilient Mindful Learner: Initial Pilot Program Elements]*

And so the project elements initially were 30 hours of after-school training; the prototype took place over a year period; teachers met monthly after school here at the Department of Education. We included a day-long mindfulness retreat that was on a weekend by our certified mindfulness-based stress reduction teachers. Teachers were asked to come in partners. There is that relationship again and that ability to be supported by other teachers. So we had a minimum of two teachers from each school because we asked them to support one another and to coach one another not only in developing their own...implementing their own resilience plan, but also in practicing and teaching the strategies to their students. It was a toolkit approach of stress reduction and mindful awareness practices that really promoted the ability of the teacher who knows their students well to make the decisions about when and what kind of practices to be shared and taught with their students. They're professionals; we wanted to honor...honor that. It was difficult for tracking implementation, but in the long run I thought that it did strengthen their buy-in and their ownership of a whole variety of practices that I'll talk about in a moment. We did classroom visits and coaching, reflective conversations by the program facilitators and trainers, the colleagues—it was the school psychologist and I—and we asked the teachers to invite their colleagues into their classroom to demonstrate these practices and begin to share the practices and kind of create interest within the school setting.

*[Slide: Resilient Mindful Learner: Curriculum Overview]*

Briefly, here is an overview of some of the curriculum that we used. We looked into stress, risk, and protective factors regarding stress. We looked at the neuroscience of both adults and youth stress. A variety of relaxation practices were used and trained and prac...everything from diaphragmatic breathing, to progressive muscle relaxation, to imagery, to gratitude, and then focused especially on mindful awareness practices. We did some self-compassion work as well. So, you know, the overall was, "How could we support teachers first?" and then, "What is the pedagogy?" and "How to do the training in these practices?" There's not a lot of research around the developmentally appropriateness of certain practices, so we were experimenting in many ways.

*[Slide: Teacher Survey Results]*

Some of the results that we had here...a caveat—this is just a small sample, no control—we were looking at feasibility and impact. We conducted surveys and focus groups and over that period of time we did see some statistically significant results: measures in the area of personal accomplishment; measures of competence and successful achievement in one's work, especially at mid-mean, which was about five months through; less depersonalization. The intensity of emotional exhaustion also went down from pre-survey to post and the decrease was statistically significant from pre-survey to mid-survey. Perceived stress was reduced, especially at mid-survey, and then you see some of the discipline and motivation frequency and

intensity items in a stress inventory. So teachers felt they had to monitor students less and motivate the students less. And then, finally, we did use a depression scale; this was not a highly depressive group, but we did see some significant impact mid-program.

[Slide: *Resilient Mindful Learner: Professional Impact (1 of 2)*]

So I kind of want to close up by sharing some personal observations from our focus group about the professional impact: “I have a few students that have untreated ADHD and emotional disturbances...the mindfulness has just kept my relationship with this particular student positive and productive and it allowed me to breathe instead of react to him and his needs and his behaviors.”

[Slide: *Resilient Mindful Learner: Professional Impact (2 of 2)*]

“I feel like I am way more mindful in my choice of words in correcting or discipline. I definitely will hesitate and think about what mood is this going to create, and I’m more mindful with my words.”

[Slide: *Resilient Mindful Learner: Personal Impact*]

And then some of the personal impact: “And another thing it has helped me with is just sleep” and “I had a particularly stressful school year and I can’t tell you how many times I got into my car and started breathing, and it made a huge difference for me to be able to do that.” Finally, I’m excited to continue the work. It looks like we will be getting funding for the next three years for Orange County teachers to work together in cohorts, learn the skills, build their resilience and well-being as well as of their students...will continue on our evaluation research. And if you’re interested, in the handout packet they...we’re having our first Annual Resilient Mindful Learner Summer Institute, which would give you a flavor of all of the curriculum and experiences in this training project. Now I’d like to pass the ball to Candice Valenzuela to speak about her program.

[Slide: *Spotlight in the Field: Candice Valenzuela, Oakland Unified Public Schools*]

CANDICE VALENZUELA

Good day, everyone. My name is Candice Valenzuela, and I’m going to be talking today about my work with teachers. And a little bit of background about me is that I’m a former teacher myself: I worked for over nine years in Oakland Unified School District as a high school teacher and I also taught pretty much everything under the sun related to language. And I taught a realm of students between six to twelfth grade, but they were all deeply impacted by trauma in their communities. And as Leora said, the average teacher in this type of environment only lasts about three to five years, so the fact that I was able to teach for nine is rather significant. And what I found was that my own self-care practices was what allowed me to do that for so long, but towards the end of my teaching I really began to realize that it just wasn’t enough. And so this inspired me to take my work and my own experience and see how I could support other teachers by going back to school, where I focused on spiritual and cultural modes of healing, and that motivated me to start the Teacher HEALTH Project.

[Slide: *Teacher HEALTH Project*]

And so I'm going to talk a little bit about that and give a little bit of background on this. This is an independent project, so I'm not affiliated with the district for this project; it's donation based, and that's what makes this a little bit different with...than Lucy's work, although there is a lot of overlap. And what's significant about this is that we really focus on the holistic healing of educators—meaning mind, body, and spirit—and we try to center the experiences and wisdom of marginalized indigenous people. And we believe that trauma is a political and social as well as cultural experience, and as Leora said, it's really not individual. And for our young people that we serve who are mostly youth of color and usually in low income and marginalized communities in the Bay Area, a lot of what they experience really is as a direct result of historical and institutional oppression.

[Slide: *"Framing ourselves..."*]

And the reason why this is important to our work and to teachers is because how we speak about trauma really shapes how we treat it, and it allows us to reframe trauma as something that's really not personal, but that's something that requires social, political, cultural, and systemic solutions. And so the reason why I'm saying this now is because in working with my teachers as a teacher coach, we found that reframing trauma for ourselves is a huge part of the healing process, and just depersonalizing it and releasing personal guilt and blame is healing in and of itself, as well as finding the language to advocate for ourselves and advocate for institutions to do exactly what Leora and Lucy are talking about: advocating for institutions to take this seriously and to really prioritize the care of the caregivers is actually really healing, just partaking in that political process.

[Slide: *"Healing is our Birthright"*]

And so the thing that I'll focus on today is ritual. And so a ritual is simply an act that we do that is something we can repeat, it has meaning for us, it's intentional, and it happens at significant moments. The reason why I focus on ritual is that in my study I found that rituals are an ancient and pretty much culturally universal and effective tool of healing. So, for example, if any of the participants practice meditation, this can actually be defined as a ritual. You do it usually around the same time of the day, it involves some repetitive practices. And by doing this over and over, we really are able to trigger our nervous system that it's okay to turn off, it's okay to trust again, it establishes that sense of order and consistency. And so what I have done is worked with teachers to help them understand and develop rituals...healing rituals that they can take on for themselves both at home and in school. Some important moments that we ritualize are the beginnings and endings of things, so, for example, beginnings of classes, beginnings of a significant unit, the beginning of a moment in one's life or in a student's life, endings, openings, closings, and really anything that's emotionally significant or intense. The ritual can be created to honor that moment and help a person, especially a teacher or youth, really cope with their own trauma and overwhelming sensations.

And even more importantly, rituals can really help us to connect to one another in a community and not isolate ourselves when we experience something that is very intense and we remember to be vulnerable.

[Slide: *Teacher Healing Circles*]

So one very specific ritual that I have done together with my teachers are what we call the Teacher Healing Circles. Some of you may be familiar with the Restorative Justice Circles. And what we did was we expanded the idea of the Restorative Justice Circle to be a very general listening circle space that was open to all teachers. And what I did was I put out a wide call just to see who was interested and I got a really great response, and we ended up having a close group of about 10-12 teachers who met monthly in last year—2015—for about two to three hours at a time. And the space was teacher led, was a safe space, we shared our intentions together. We shared experiences, stories, wounds. This was space in which teachers were able to affirm one another.

And what is significant about this is that while I really stand behind the need for institutions to support this work, it was also really powerful for the teachers to take healing into their own hands. So I simply held the space and the teachers gathered and were empowered to share and to begin this healing work and share tools with one another on their own, and that was very motivating and inspiring to...to see that happen.

[Slide: *Sample “agenda”*]

And so I’m going to share with you what a sample agenda would look like. We didn’t have agendas per se, but just to give you an idea of what a role might look like. So we often started with meditation, some type of mindful breathing just so that everyone could arrive in the space. Every month is so different and the teaching environment is so dynamic, we always set intentions so that people could be present with what was happening for them now, and they could say “actually I need this type of support today, I just need to share, I need to cry, or maybe I need to share this funny story and I need to laugh with you all.” It could really change each month and each moment what teachers needed. Then we would follow with the listening circle and we used the talking stick just like in Restorative Justice, and we would pass that around and everyone had a chance to share. Or sometimes our participants found it really healing just to do art. We break out a lot of poster paper and markers and paint and just express ourselves through the arts, and that was really healing. And then we always closed in some type of way that felt good to us. If we were comfortable with prayer we would do that at times, and just created our own rituals to close out the space.

And so I wanted to share that for those of you who work with teachers and youth-serving adults that this is something you...might benefit your community, just to see how simple this is and all you really need is the intention to do it and to set some clear boundaries around it, and that was what we did. And so, since starting these Teacher Healing Circles, there have been...I had to go on maternity leave and so I’m not currently doing them, but they have actually continued without me, which makes me very proud. There have also been circles started in Los Angeles

and there are some local community organizations here in the Bay Area that are also taking up this work.

[Slide: “As a 2nd year teacher...”]

So here is a testimony of one of the teachers who was pictured in the previous photo. What she really gained from this space was that it was one of the only areas in which she felt affirmed as a young teacher of color. So she was in her credential program and she also participated in other ways for healing, but there were no spaces in which she really felt reflected. And coming to this circle, that really centered the work of not just teachers but teachers of color and teachers who serve traumatized populations; she felt very affirmed and supported and could talk about things that were her gendered experiences that she wasn’t able to talk about anywhere else. This was really powerful for her and she ended up leaving the school where she was at, but has continued to teach in another country, and so that was a victory on my part. I felt that we were really able to lengthen her teaching career, whereas, I think, without this space she might have quit after her second year.

[Slide: Take-Aways]

And so what I would like to leave you all with today is that the Teacher Healing Circle is a way for us as youth-serving adults to really model healing and self-empowerment by taking healing into our own hands. We really need to continue to advocate and really demand that institutions support this kind of work and actually continue to work to end institutional harm and stop trauma at the root. I think that’s an important part of healing is taking action. Within this, though, we...we need to continue to survive and maintain ourselves through daily rituals where we create intentional space for healing to occur at home and in school. And this can be just as simple as making sure to spend time in nature a few times each week—and that can even only be five minutes to watch the sun rise or the sun set—taking time to breathe, doing gratitude, affirmations, practice that sustain us, and then also inviting our youth to do them with us and especially inviting other teachers to do it with us. And this really makes teacher circles really an example of community care in action, where the people most affected by trauma are the ones responsible and able to create the most effective solutions, and we’re not waiting for institutions to catch up to it but we’re modeling it and then using that momentum to push the institutions and the systems to change around us. So I thank you for the time and I’m going to pass it back to Leora now.

LEORA WOLF-PRUSAN

Great, thank you. I was just trying to write down that really incredible quote from Candice around that “the ones who are affected by trauma are really the ones who are the biggest sources of interrupting the source of that trauma”; and I think that that’s really powerful.

[Slide: *Strategies for Renewal*]

So a collective breath. That was both a lot of information from me at the beginning, then from Lucy and then from Candice. The reason that we invited Lucy and Candice to be our spotlights is that they are two incredible examples of both ways in which institutional support can shift

attention to...to youth-serving educators, such as Lucy's work in Department of Education at Orange County, and then also again as Candice said, the way that teachers can be their own determinants of their healing and of their wellness. So there are two examples that were really profound.

We want to end today thinking about Strategies for Renewal. This is one of my favorite quotes: "Exhausted when saying yes, and then guilty when saying no," because it speaks to this issue of boundary, which is one of the biggest ways in which we talk about preventing that burnout to sourcing the flame.

[Slide: *Burning Out to Sourcing the Flame*]

So this is from Skovholt and Trotter-Matheson at the bottom, and you'll see that there is this idea that we want to identify the ways that we sometimes feel burned out and then shift them toward thinking about "what are the preventative or promotional factors that can actually interrupt that burnout from a preventative standpoint?" right, so a sustainable workload, which, of course, is all of our...is the enigma in the field of education; what that looks like. But feelings of choice and agency is less of an enigma because we have lots of models and samples— both that Lucy and Candice provided and that a lot of you on the line do daily around creating pathways to autonomy for youth-serving educators. Recognition, affirmation, equity, respect, and justice, that sense of community and social cohesion that I spoke about earlier as a primary factor that impacts not only staff retention but also student learning outcomes. In the next couple of minutes as we close, if you can include other ways in which you...what your strategies are for renewal.

[Slide: *Boundaries: emotional, physical, spiritual...*]

Specifically, ones you do for yourself, ones that you do for others in your position, or programs that you also might be pioneering. So we think about, again, those boundaries—the emotional, physical, spiritual—and that speaks to the self-care that we talked about earlier, that those elements of personal, professional, spiritual self-care. That identification of practitioner joy, so where do we source that moment where we go "Okay, like this was, this was worth it, all of that was worth it." How can we start to see intentionally our colleagues and students as our primary teachers? And realignment of thinking of the self as hero, the client as hero. And what that means is, we want to make sure that we also don't flip—in any of the work around trauma, especially when talking about students—that we don't flip into the savior complex and we really empower who we are serving as their own agents of change so that we can take off our kind of proverbial cape and serve them.

[Slide: *What support do educators report...*]

When I close, I mentioned at the onset of this conversation that my personal professional research is directly on what educators need after a student homicide, but you'll see...and when I researched this I looked at what educators said they wanted from themselves, what they wanted from their school leadership, and what they wanted from their school districts and systems. So you'll see that there are many different factors that can contribute to support, and

all of these are actually beyond—again, just that extreme event—but go to all elements of trauma. So we’re going to close with this idea.

[Slide: *IF we want students...*]

Before I...before I end there, there is an executive summary of my study in your handouts. So if any of you do have community context for students where there is high instance of student deaths or of student harm, my study is there for you to look at in terms of what the findings and recommendations were.

We want to end with this: that if we want students to arrive to school ready to learn—which is our universal assumption—we then want teachers to arrive to school ready to teach, and, most importantly, we also want school leaders to arrive to school ready to lead; and we could extend those concentric circles of care that we want the district leaders to arrive to their work places ready to lead, etc., etc. So that when we are talking about trauma-informed care, we’re not just speaking about students but we’re speaking about all the concentric circles of care that go into it, and we think around what a trauma-informed care and resilience-orientated approach would look like for all stakeholders.