Professionals working with individuals who have experienced trauma are themselves at an increased risk for secondary traumatic stress (STS). Our trauma-informed group model, called the Stress-Less Initiative, strives to reduce STS and address unresolved trauma reactions in an effort to maintain professionals’ physical and mental health.

**WHAT IS STS?**
Secondary traumatic stress (STS) is defined as the emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the first-hand traumatic experiences of another. Its symptoms mimic those of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

“How work can be so intense at times, and sometimes it’s hard to process all that goes on with patients … It helps to process with my coworkers who really understand the work and have been there before.”

**GOALS OF STRESS-LESS**
- Encourage early identification of STS and burnout
- Increase awareness of thoughts, feelings, behaviors and physical manifestations of stress
- Increase trust and safety among team members
- Encourage proactive organizational support
- Normalize and validate STS symptoms and remove stigma of disclosure
- Instill approaches to decrease staff turnover and reduce stress associated with providing trauma-focused services
- Identify opportunities for individual growth

**SESSION COMPONENTS**
Each session has four segments:

1. **Assessment** — Involves routine assessment of individual stress levels and response to stressors
2. **Learning** — Teaches strategies for approaching trauma-focused work that enhance protective capacity
3. **Process** — Participants share the challenges and benefits of trauma-focused work and provide validation and encouragement to peers
4. **Skill** — Participants build skills in mind/body self-care strategies

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