



Compassion-Based Practices for Secondary Traumatic Stress

Ruth Gottfried

Framed within the conference theme of *Repetition and Return*, this poster presentation explores how repeated indirect exposure to others' trauma — and the potential for subsequent secondary traumatic stress (STS) — can be addressed through an intentional return to compassion, transforming these cycles into pathways toward vicarious posttraumatic growth (VPTG). Just as the returning traveler in Cavafy's *Ithaca* gains wisdom, creative arts therapists can engage in practices that bring them back to their inner sources of compassion, renewing their capacity to care for individuals impacted by trauma.

To ground these concepts in practice, this poster presents a comprehensive resource guide titled: *Compassion-Based Practices for Secondary Traumatic Stress*. Tailored for caregiving professionals working with survivors of trauma, the resource guide illuminates a path toward addressing STS and promoting VPTG through a compassionate lens. Distinguished by its in-depth creative approach, inclusion of Buddhist philosophical principles, and harmonization of self- and other-oriented compassion, the resource guide provides empowering tools for creative arts therapists and their host organizations.

The first part of the resource guide includes an extensive literature review highlighting selected topics encompassing trauma, STS, VPTG, self- and other-oriented compassion, and compassion within and beyond organizational contexts. Building on that foundation, the second part presents a wide range of skilfully crafted individual and group trauma-informed compassion-based practices. These practices include activities such as guided meditations, reflection and journaling prompts as well as practices that incorporate artistic expression and expressive movement.

Well-grounded in theoretical knowledge and practical expertise, *Compassion-Based Practices for Secondary Traumatic Stress* is a timely and empowering guide for creative arts therapists, providing them with creative, trauma-informed, and compassion-based practices for addressing STS and promoting VPTG successfully. Notably, this resource guide holds



potential to benefit not only creative arts therapists themselves, but also those in their care, their colleagues, and the organizations they serve.

Biography

Ruth Gottfried, PhD, is a dance movement therapist and senior lecturer at the David Yellin Academic College, where she heads the Master's Degree Program in Dance Movement Therapy (DMT). Having completed her graduate studies in DMT at the University of Haifa, Ruth carried out two postdoctoral appointments focusing on secondary traumatic stress at Tel Aviv and Georgia State Universities. As an Ambassador of Applied Compassion, certified through Stanford University's Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education (CCARE), Ruth facilitates the *Compassion for Secondary Traumatic Stress (CSTS)* training program for organizational leaders and caregiving professionals across diverse fields of practice.

Recent Publications

Sprang, G., Gusler, S., Eslinger, J., & Gottfried, R. (2025). **Development and testing of the secondary traumatic stress policy analysis tool.** *Advances in Mental Health*, 1–11.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/18387357.2025.2517318>

Gottfried, R., (2024). *Compassion-based practices for secondary traumatic stress: A resource guide for helping professionals.* Routledge.

Sprang, G., Gusler, S., Eslinger, J. G., & Gottfried, R. (2023). **The relationship between secondary traumatic stress and compassion satisfaction: A systematic literature review.** *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 1–15. <http://doi:10.1177/15248380231209438>