

Additional Resources

What do TSN Peer Support Volunteers say about volunteering?

You need this! It's a form of therapy for you as well.

You may not have an amazing connection with every patient, and that is okay. However, you will have some connections so incredible they will leave you speechless.

Familiarize yourself with healthcare language/acronyms if you aren't already used to the "secret language".

For example, when I first heard "TBI" (traumatic brain injury), I mistakenly heard it as "TMI" (too much information) for quite some time - and no I am not kidding.

TSN Resources

- ☐ Next Steps - Take Control of Your Recovery
- ☐ Self-Care Activities - A Resource for Trauma Survivors and Families
- ☐ Anxiety - One Page Info
- ☐ PTSD - One Page Info

These resources can be found @
<https://www.traumasurvivorsnetwork.org/tsn-library/>

Books & Reading

- ☐ The Body Keeps the Score
- ☐ What Happened To You?
- ☐ Complex PTSD: From Surviving to Thriving
- ☐ The Grieving Brain
- ☐ The Grieving Body
- ☐ When Breath Becomes Air
- ☐ Trauma Stewardship

Build Your Own Self-Care Kit

Signs of Stress I Notice In Myself

- ☐ Replaying visits or conversations
- ☐ Feeling emotionally flat or detached
- ☐ Irritability
- ☐ Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- ☐ Avoiding certain situations
- ☐ Going through the motions
- ☐ Feeling drained after volunteering

How I Typically Respond to Stress

- ☐ Fight - I get tense, anxious, or reactive
- ☐ Flight - I avoid or stay busy
- ☐ Freeze - I shut down or go numb
- ☐ Fawn - I over-help & struggle to say no

Regulation Strategies That Work (For Me)

- ☐ Grounding Exercises
- ☐ Measured Breathing
- ☐ Mindfulness/Meditation/Yoga
- ☐ Journaling
- ☐ Talking with other volunteers/friends/family
- ☐ Body Movement/ Exercise
- ☐ Positive Self-Talk

Signs of Resilience & Growth I see in Myself

- ☐ I connect more deeply with others
- ☐ I have found new meaning in my life
- ☐ I am stronger than I knew I was
- ☐ I appreciate life differently
- ☐ I'm not afraid to ask for help
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

A capstone project by Stephanie MacPherson, MSW Candidate |
UNC Charlotte, School of Social Work, 2026 | Developed in
partnership with the Trauma Survivors Network |
Psychoeducational resource, not a clinical intervention



Grounded & Supported

A Self-Care Toolkit
for TSN Peer
Support Volunteers



What is Secondary Stress?

Stress is a normal response to meaningful work. Secondary stress develops when we absorb the emotional weight of others' experiences over time

Forms Stress Takes

- ☐ Secondary Trauma - stress from hearing or witnessing others' trauma. The stories that stay with you.
- ☐ Compassion Fatigue - The emotional and physical exhaustion from caregiving.
- ☐ Burnout - Ongoing exhaustion tied to the demands of work.

TSN Volunteers say:

"In the beginning, the biggest challenge was that I had to, in some ways, relive what I had experienced. Did it help me do a better job? I believe it probably did."

"When I leave the room, sometimes I'm sweating bullets and my entire back is wet. I'm carrying that with me. It's things that always bring up an image, so it's hard for me to drop it. But as long as I can get one positive out of at least one of the visits, all of it makes it easy and worth it."

What is Emotional Regulation?

What happens in our bodies and minds when we experience stress, and how can we regulate it?

The Window of Tolerance

We each have a zone where we can manage stress in a safe, grounded, calm way. We respond instead of react. That is our window of Tolerance.

When we are ABOVE our window, we might feel anxious, vigilant, or irritable.

When we are INSIDE our window we feel calm, grounded, and present.

When we are BELOW our window we might feel brain fog, numbness, or exhaustion.

When we're stressed, how can we regulate?

1. We can NOTICE what is happening in our mind and body.
2. We can NAME what is happening.
3. We can use a skill from our toolkit to REGULATE.

Stress responses are automatic, but when we notice and name what is happening we can move from reacting to responding.

Grounding Videos



5 Minute Mindfulness Exercise



Somatic "Butterfly Hug"



Growth & Resilience

What is resilience, how is it different from growth and how can you recognize both in your recovery?

- ☐ **Resilience** is like bouancy - the ability to come back to the surface after being pushed under by trauma.
- ☐ **Post Traumatic Growth** happens when a person's core beliefs are shaken enough to redefine a person's definition of life, identity and meaning.

Where does growth happen after trauma?

- Relating to Others** - deeper empathy, & connection to others
- New Possibilities** - feeling open to new paths and directions
- Personal Strength** - discovering a new level of strength
- Meaning and Perspective** - a deeper sense of purpose in life
- Appreciation of life** - a heightened awareness of being alive

TSN Volunteers say:

"Everybody has a certain level of resiliency. When you have an injury like what we all suffered, is your resiliency enough to handle that? I think that's where people, based on what their choice is going to be — if they're going to rise through this injury — they dig deep. And as you're moving forward, your resiliency is growing."

"The trauma has given you the opportunity now to redefine yourself. Before the trauma, you were redefined by circumstances, by people. Now you've been through this — it's your chance to decide what and who you're going to be."

"I think what they [patients] see [when they meet me] is some hope for some normalcy — even if it's something as small as going from horizontal to vertical."

