



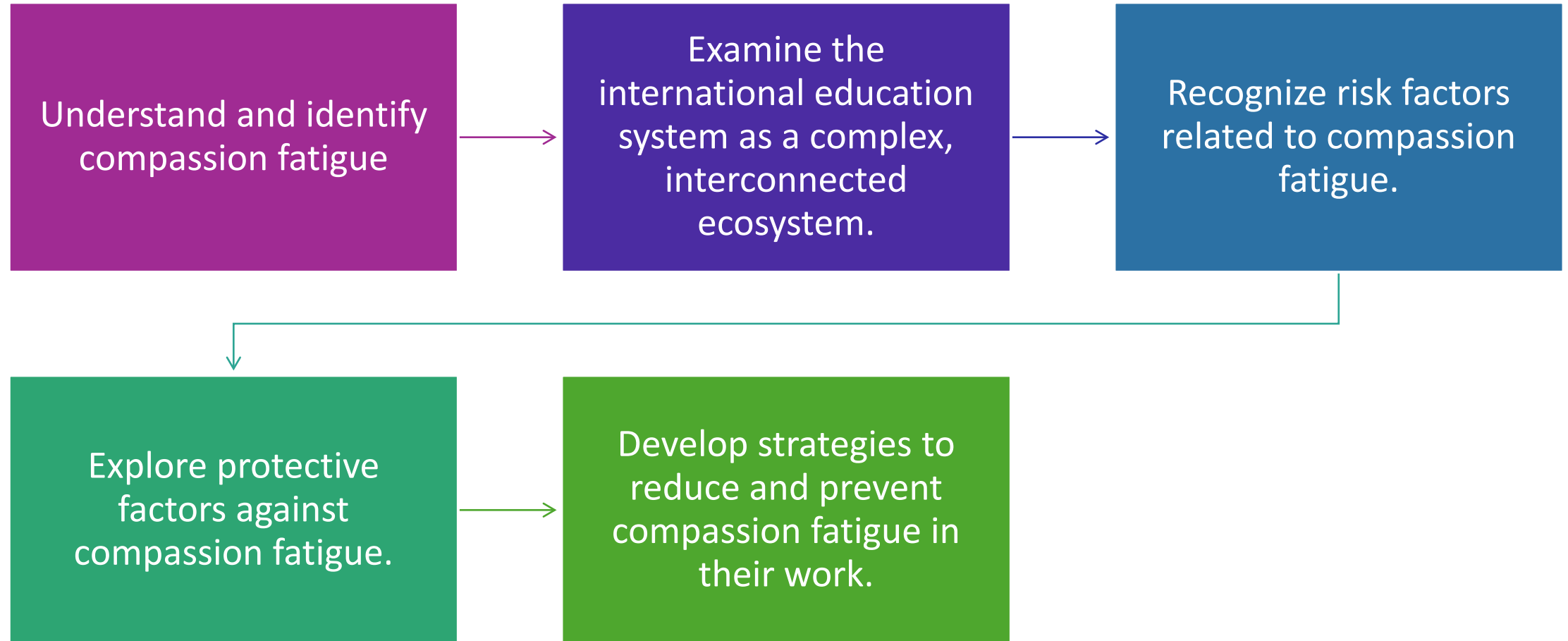
# Beyond Self-Care

**A Holistic Approach  
to Compassion Fatigue in  
International Education  
Professionals**





# Objectives





# What is compassion?



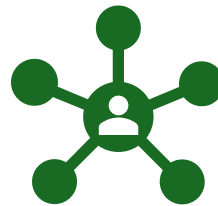


# Compassion Fatigue

Compassion fatigue is the **emotional and physical exhaustion** that can occur when **providing ongoing support to others.**



Borrowed language from  
Traumatology and connected  
to burnout



Extending yourself beyond  
one's emotional resources or  
coping skills to meet others'  
needs.



Common in caring/helping  
professions

# The Cognitive Cost of Compassion

Compassion is not a finite resource (Gainsburg & Cunningham, 2023)!

However:

- Compassion requires cognitive effort :
  - Imagining another's reality/taking perspective
  - Regulation of one's emotions
  - Problem-solving
- Compassion is an emotional effort:
  - Being present for another's trauma or listening to another's trauma can be traumatizing (secondary trauma)
  - Can activate one's own fight/flight/freeze/fawn response, especially if one has pre-existing trauma.





# Indicators

Feeling emotionally drained or numb (reduced empathy)

Feeling isolated or withdrawing from work or personal relationships

Increased irritability or frustration with students and colleagues

Heightened sensitivity to stress

Difficulty concentrating or making decisions

Loss of motivation

A sense of helplessness or increased cynicism

Decreased job satisfaction

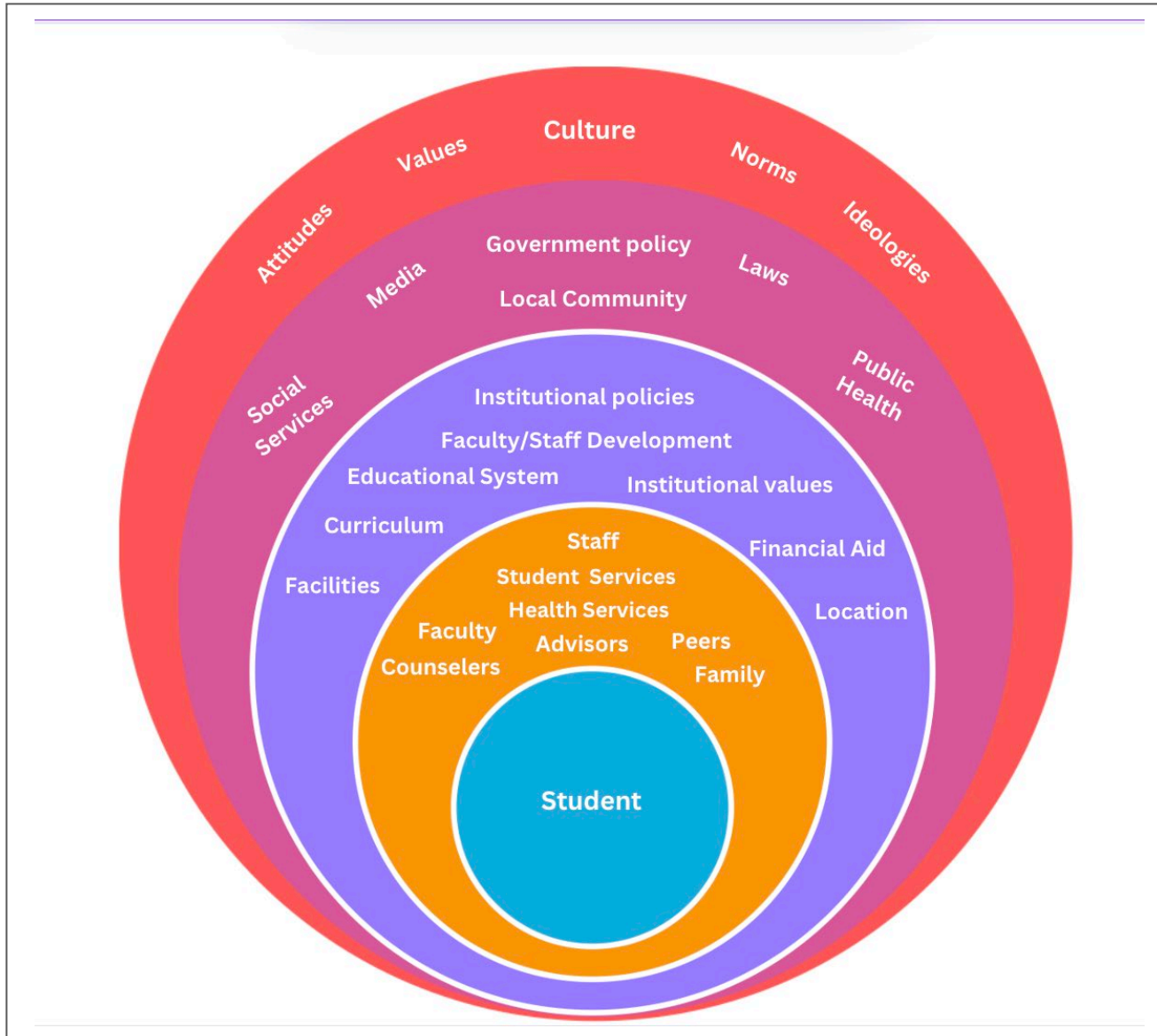
Physical symptoms (headaches, fatigue, digestion problems, generalized pain, trouble sleeping)

Increased substance use (alcohol, nicotine, cannabis, etc.)



**Why we are vulnerable to compassion fatigue?**

# International Education as an Ecosystem



- Risk Factors: Variables that increase the likelihood of negative outcomes.
- Protective Factors: Variables that mitigate and reduce the likelihood of negative outcomes.
- Promoting Factors: Variables that encourage positive outcomes.



# RISK FACTORS OF GLOBAL MOBILITY



# Student Factors



RISING GLOBAL RATES OF MENTAL  
HEALTH CONCERNS



MORE LIKELY TO HAVE A PRE-EXISTING  
MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION

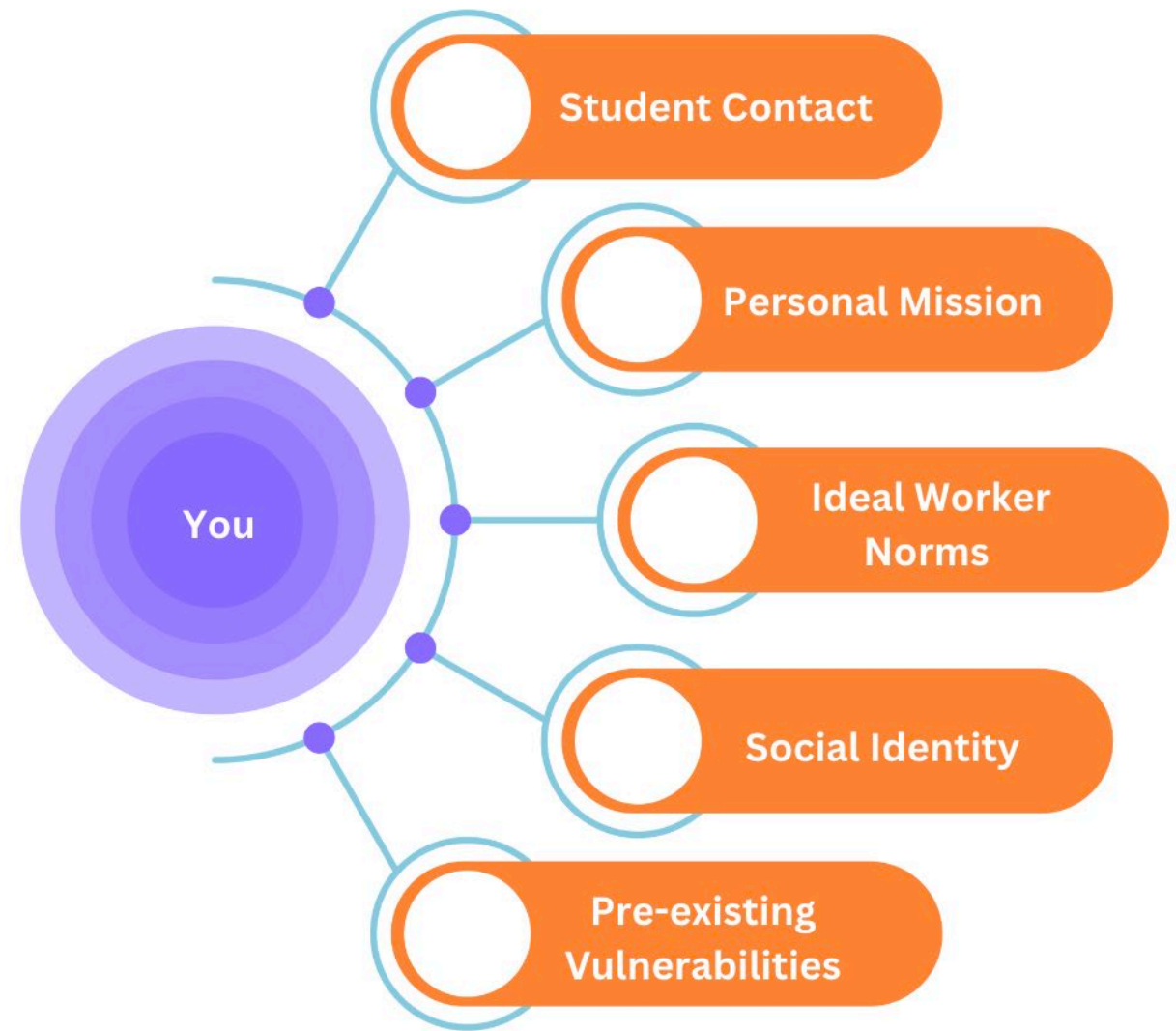


GREATER EXPOSURE TO RISK FACTORS



# Professional Factors

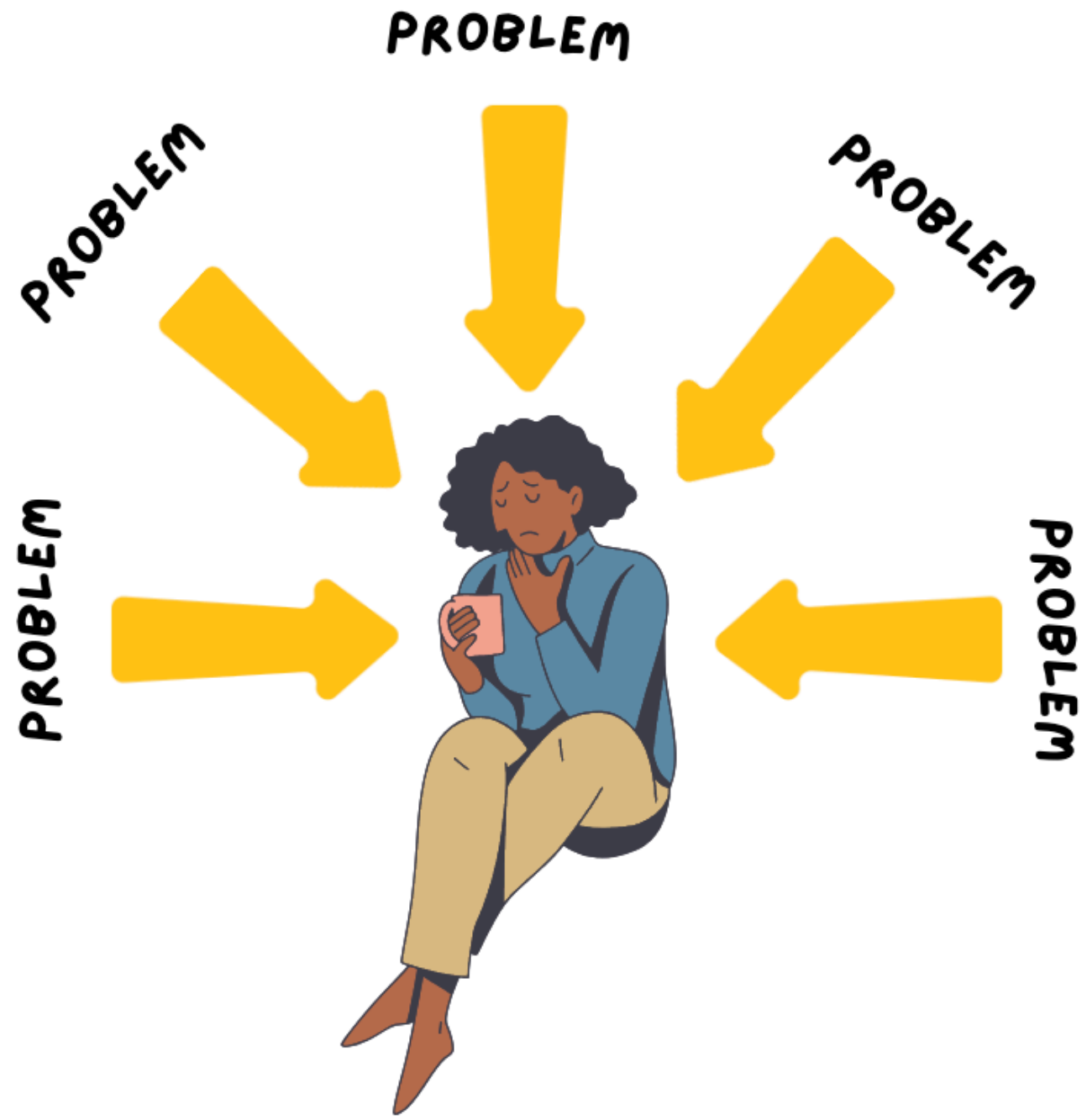
## Risk Factors in Student Services Professionals





# Self-Care As Prevention & Treatment

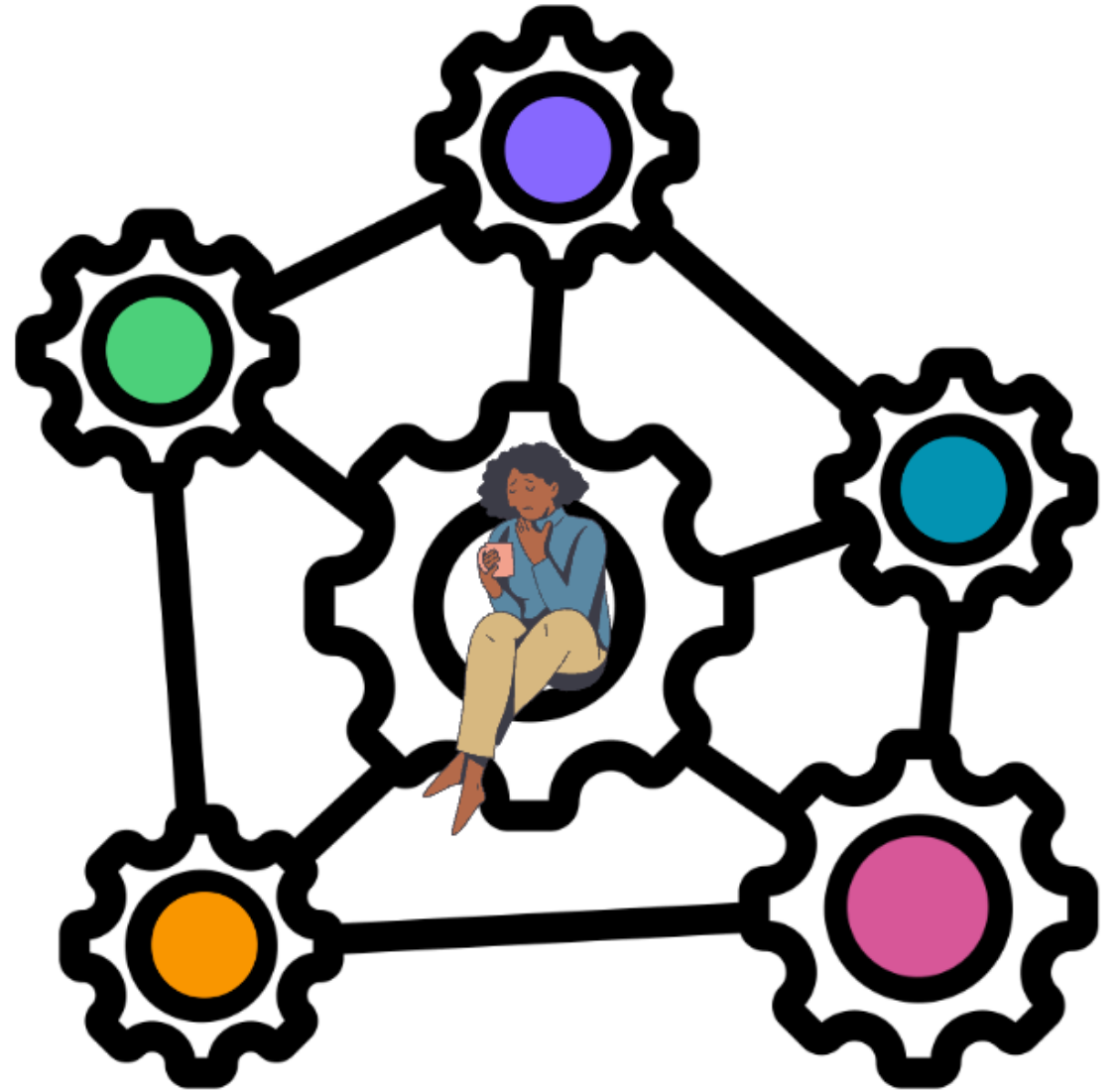




- Self-Care puts the responsibility on the individual.
- De-emphasizes or ignores the influence of organizational and social factors.
- Often does not get at the root of the problem.

# Organizational Risk Factors

- Inadequate time/resources
- Understaffing/"many hats"
- Limited training or professional development
- Limited career mobility
- Unstable/precarious employment
- Poor/unsupportive relationships with supervisors
- Over-emphasis on marginalized groups to provide pastoral labor
- Mismatched/unclear expectations
- Inflexible institutional practices/policies
- Low compensation





# Macro Level Risk Factors



Political and Economic instability



Lack of labor protections



Social Inequality



Poor infrastructure



Inaccessible health services



High mental health stigma



Is it  
Compassion  
Fatigue or are  
you responding  
to  
manufactured  
stress?



Emergency phone as 24/7  
customer service lines



Crisis-level responses to non-  
crisis situations



Putting out fires more than  
preventing fires





# Organizational Protective and Wellbeing Promoting Factors



Strong sense of community



Adequate structured support and resource distribution



Staff have allowed agency and healthy boundaries



Proactive organization and management



Open and clear communication



Professional development and proper training

---

# Bibliography:

- American Psychological Association. (2023, March 8). *Stress effects on the body*. <https://www.apa.org/topics/stress/body>
- Barneche, M. & Dupont-Jarrett, L. & Nichol-Peters, V. (2025). The Weight of the World: An Overview of Current Trends in Student and Program Staff Mental Health and Well-Being Abroad. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*. 37. 270-293. 10.36366/frontiers.v37i1.998.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.
- Cordaro, Millie. (2020). Pouring from An Empty Cup: The Case for Compassion Fatigue in Higher Education. *Building Healthy Academic Communities Journal*. 4. 17-28. 10.18061/bhac.v4i2.7618.
- Ficarra, J. (2025). 'I'm Here As a Guest in Your System': Exploring the Complexities of Local Faculty Teaching Visiting U.S. Students in Study Abroad Contexts. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, vol. 37,(1), 96-116, doi:10.36366/frontiers.v37i1.996.
- Figley, C. (1995). Compassion fatigue as secondary traumatic stress disorder: An overview. *Compassion Fatigue*.
- Fleming, K. & Mazzatta, G. & Matarese, K. & Eberle, J. (2020). Compassion fatigue and the ART model. *Nursing*. 50. 58-61. 10.1097/01.NURSE.0000654168.38494.dd.
- Gainsburg, I., & Lee Cunningham, J. (2023). Compassion Fatigue as a Self-Fulfilling Prophecy: Believing Compassion Is Limited Increases Fatigue and Decreases Compassion. *Psychological science*, 34(11), 1206–1219. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09567976231194537>
- Hishida, K., Yanase, M., & Sakagami, Y. (2024). Why do students who have mental health issues decide to study abroad ? Qualitative research on mental health issues as a push factor for international students in Japan. *International Journal Of Intercultural Relations*, 103, 102069. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2024.102069>
- Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. Penguin UK.
- Li, J., Xue, E., Liu, B. et al. (2024). Impact of COVID-19 on the psychological and behavioral health of college students worldwide: a knowledge mapping approach. *Humanit Soc Sci Commun* 11, 1353. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-03781-0>
- Linder, C&., Winston Simmons, C. (2015). Career and Program Choice of Students of Color in Student Affairs Programs. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 52(4), 414–426. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2015.1081601>

- Marshall, S. & Gardner, M. & Hughes, C. & Lowery, U. (2016). Attrition from Student Affairs: Perspectives from Those Who Exited the Profession. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*. 53. 146-159. [10.1080/19496591.2016.1147359](https://doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2016.1147359).
- McCabe, L. (2005). Mental Health and Study Abroad: Responding to the Concern. *International Educator*.
- Meyer, I. H. (2003). Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: Conceptual issues and research evidence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129(5), 674–697. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.129.5.674>
- Mullen, P., Malone, A., Denney, A. & Dietz, S. (2018). Job Stress, Burnout, Job Satisfaction, and Turnover Intention Among Student Affairs Professionals. *College Student Affairs Journal*, 36. 94-108. [10.1353/csaj.2018.0006](https://doi.org/10.1353/csaj.2018.0006).
- Perez, R. J., & Bettencourt, G. M. (2023). Exploring Compassion Fatigue and Community Care in Student Affairs. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 61(2), 266–278. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2023.2176774>
- Poyrazli, S. & Mitchell, M. (2020). Mental Health Problems of U.S. Students Studying Abroad. *Journal of International Students*, 10. 17-27. [10.32674/jis.v10i1.1014](https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v10i1.1014).
- Raimondi, T. P. (2019). Compassion Fatigue in Higher Education: Lessons From Other Helping Fields. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 51(3), 52–58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00091383.2019.1606609>
- Robinson, S., Bohan, K., Carnine, J., & Ferro, A. (2025). U.S. Study Abroad: The View from Europe. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 37(1), i-xxvii. <https://doi.org/10.36366/frontiers.v37i1.1100>
- Sallee, M.W. (2021). Introduction: Problematizing the Ideal Worker in Student Affairs. In M.W. Sallee (Ed.), *Creating sustainable careers in student affairs: what ideal worker norms get wrong and how to make it right*, pp 1-12/ Stylus.
- Salloum, A., Kondrat, D. C., Johnco, C., & Olson, K. R. (2015). The role of self-care on compassion satisfaction, burnout and secondary trauma among child welfare workers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 49, 54–61. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2014.12.023>
- Squire, D.D. & McEwen, M.K. (2019). Love my naps but stay woke: The case against self-care. *About Campus*, 24(2), 4-11.
- Ulukok, O. & Ufuk, D. (2023). A review indicating how studying abroad affects the mental health. *Archives of Clinical Psychiatry*, 50(6), 252-358.