

# Vicarious Trauma

Acknowledgement: Anne Reddie Principal Rivendell School

"I've come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. As a teacher I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In ALL situations it is my response that will decide whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or de-humanized."

Dr. Hiam Ginott in *Teacher and Child*

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The single most important factor in student performance?

✓ The relationship with the teacher/also

# What do young people need?

- ✓ One good parent
- ✓ One good teacher/s/so
- ✓ One good friend

# Meaningful Differences

Over the course of a year...

- Children from professional homes will hear 4 million words.
- Children from welfare homes will hear 250,000 words.

# School staff as health exemplars: where is the potential?

[Turner2011]

- Staff should model good interpersonal behaviours such as:
  - respect
  - rapport
  - calmness

# STUDENT WELFARE



**Student Discipline**

**Excursions**

**Child Protection**

**Serious Incidents**

**WH&S**





blah

blah

blah

blah

blah

blah

blah

blah

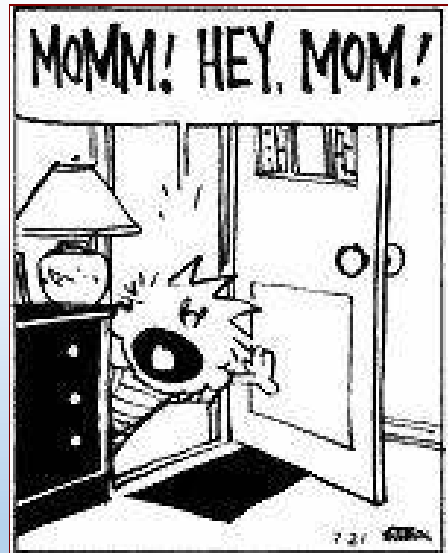
blah



# Difficult?



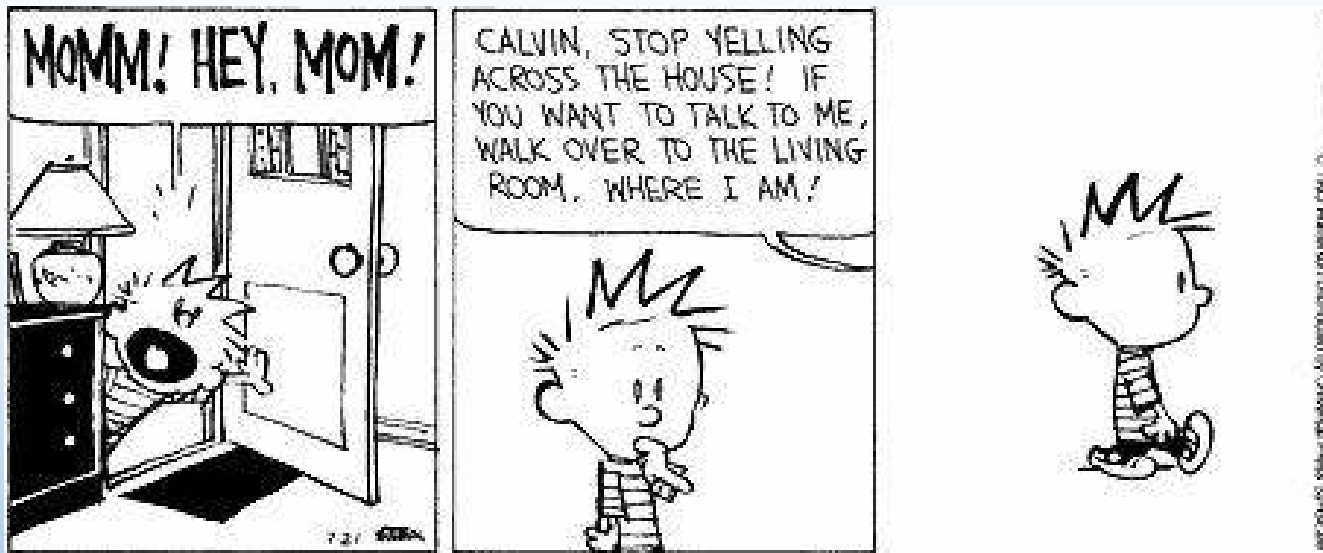
# Our contribution to difficult?



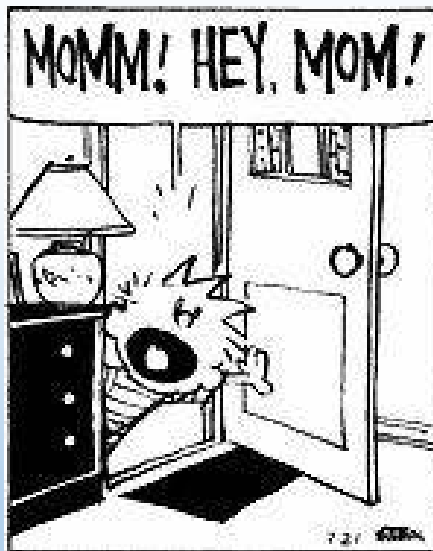
# Our contribution to difficult?



# Our contribution to difficult?



# Our contribution to difficult?



# Mainstream Schools

	<b>Well</b>	<b>Unwell</b>
<b>350</b>		
<b>300</b>		
<b>250</b>		
<b>200</b>		
<b>150</b>		
<b>100</b>		
<b>50</b>		

- The “unwell” population compel attention
- The “psychiatrically well” carry the culture of the school and contribute positively to growth



# Support Classes & SSPs

	<b>Well</b>	<b>Unwell</b>
<b>35</b>		
<b>30</b>		
<b>25</b>		
<b>20</b>		
<b>15</b>		
<b>10</b>		
<b>5</b>		

- The “unwell” population makes up the majority of students
- Few “psychiatrically well” students to carry the load

# Support Classes & SSPs

	<b>Well</b>	<b>Unwell</b>
<b>35</b>		
<b>30</b>		
<b>25</b>		
<b>20</b>		
<b>15</b>		
<b>10</b>		
<b>5</b>		

- Very little, if any positive growth
- The biggest concern is becoming a psychiatric casualty

# VICARIOUS TRAUMA

WHAT IS IT?

*Vicarious Trauma* is the term  
used to describe the:

thoughts

feelings, and

behaviours

that can result from the  
repeated *exposure* to the  
*trauma of others*

# UNDERSTANDING VICARIOUS TRAUMA

*“Experiencing disrupted beliefs and intrusive imagery as a result (of our work) is both **inevitable** and **normal**”*

Pearlman & Saakvitne, 2005

# Does it really exist?

*“In ten years of conflict 56,000 young Americans were to die in the jungles, river deltas and rice paddies of Southeast Asia. Between 60,000 and 100,000 were subsequently to take their own lives.*

*The conflict in Vietnam was the first war in recorded history whose **combat deaths** were later to be **exceeded** by the **suicide of its veterans**”*

*(Baigent & Leigh, 2008)*

# Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders

[DSM 111 onwards]

Post-traumatic  
Stress Disorder  
[1980]

Vicarious Trauma

# What types of traumas are experienced by some of our students?

✓ Sexual

✓ Violence [family history]

✓ Physical

✓ Poverty / Failure

✓ Emotional

✓ Trauma against the self:  
bullying, teasing

✓ Neglect



# How is the content of these traumas communicated?

- ✓ Verbally
- ✓ Emotionally
- ✓ Behaviourally
- ✓ Systemically

What are their emotional reactions to these traumas?

?Empathy

?Anger

?Aloofness

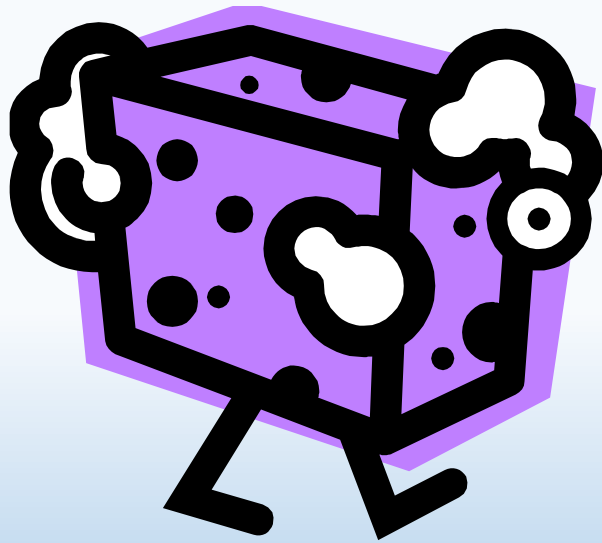
?Disassociation

# EMPATHY



Our ability and willingness to be  
empathic puts us at risk of  
Vicarious Trauma

# HOW DO YOU GET IT?



- ❖ Listening
- ❖ Caring
- ❖ Feeling
- ❖ Noticing
- ❖ Being aware
- ❖ Thinking about issues

What do you get?

# TASK ONE

1. Often loses temper
2. Often argues
3. Often actively defies or refuses to comply with requests
4. Often deliberately annoys people
5. Often blames others for his or her mistakes or behaviour
6. Is touchy or easily annoyed by others
7. Is often angry or resentful
8. Is often spiteful or vindictive

# TASK TWO

1. Often fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes
2. Often has difficulty sustaining attention to tasks
3. Often does not seem to listen
4. Often does not follow through on instructions or fails to finish chores
5. Often has difficulty organising tasks or activities
6. Avoids/dislikes tasks that require sustained mental efforts
7. Often loses things necessary for tasks
8. Is often easily distracted by external stimuli
9. Is often forgetful in daily activities

# TASK THREE

**Anxiety, worry or apprehension about a number of events or activities such as work or performance etc**

1. Restlessness or feeling keyed up or on edge
2. Being easily fatigued
3. Difficulty concentrating or mind going blank
4. Irritability
5. Muscle tension
6. Sleep disturbance [difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, or restless unsatisfying sleep]



# RESULTS OF TASKS

Task One: - 4 or more ticks

**Oppositional Defiant Disorder**

Task Two: - 4 or more ticks

**Attention Deficit Disorder**

Task Three: - 3 or more ticks

**Generalized Anxiety Disorder**

# What do you get?

The same **symptoms**  
and **disorders** that  
your students have!

## Preventative Tool No. 1

**Acknowledge** the existence  
of  
Vicarious Trauma

- ✓ Name it, discuss it, confront it
- ✓ Normalize the experience of vicarious trauma and describe it as:

*“a normal response of people who care very deeply about the people they help”*

## Preventative Tool No. 2

Maximize the experience of  
supervision.  
Talk to colleagues

DIPLOMA  
OF  
EMOTIONAL  
BAGGAGE  
HANDLING



Leunig

# Supervision

- **Partners** in learning not leaders and followers
- **Contributing** to and **directing** our supervision sessions
- Accessing **more than one** source of supervision





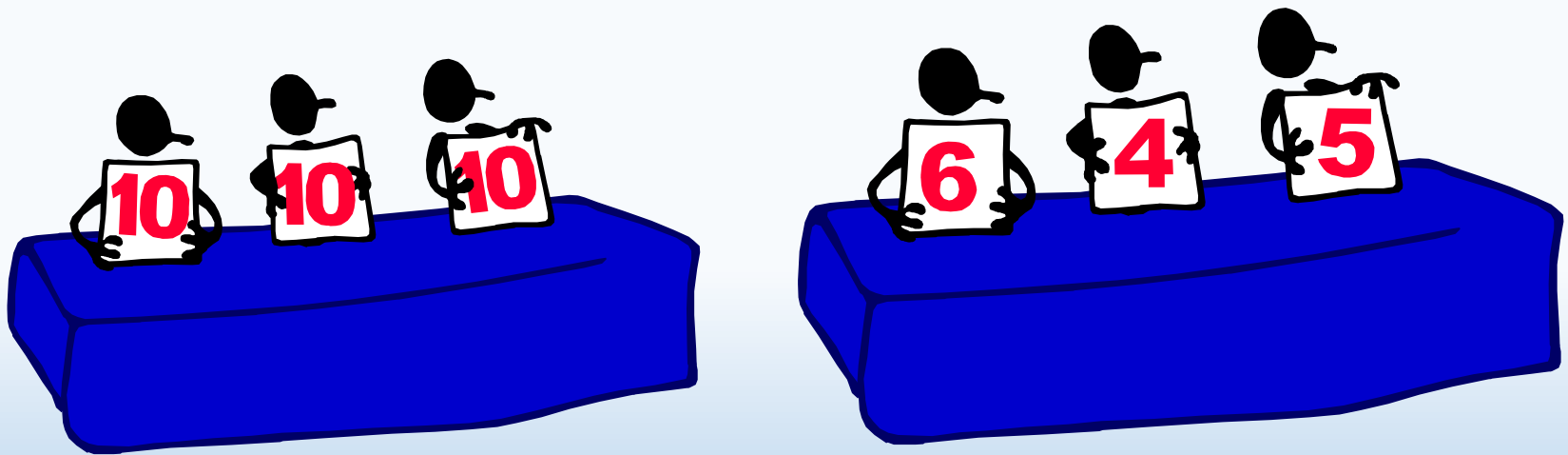


# Preventative Tool No. 3

## Maximize Professional **Success**

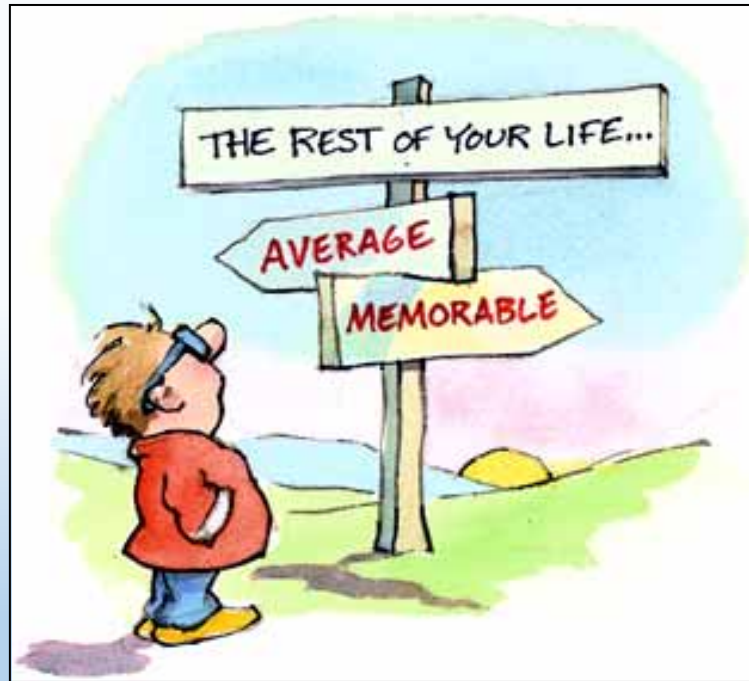


# SUCCESS?



34%

# SUCCESS?



# How to: Maximize Professional Success

- 😊 Savour the moments
- 😊 Relish small “**I made a difference**” victories
- 😊 Reduce expectations
- 😊 Focus on small changes
- 😊 Think long term

Don't expect this.....



There are not too many  
people in the world right now  
Gladys, who can go home at the  
end of the day, happy in the  
knowledge that everything is  
completely stuffed.



## Preventative Tool No. 4

Sustain your Professional Self

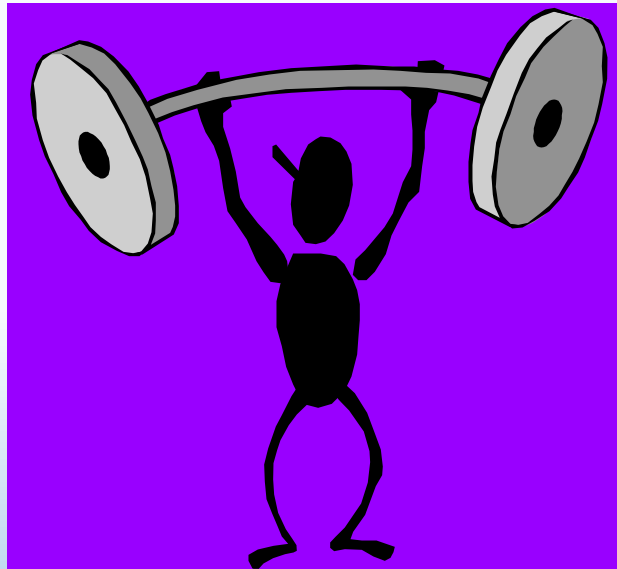




# How to: Sustain your **Professional Self**

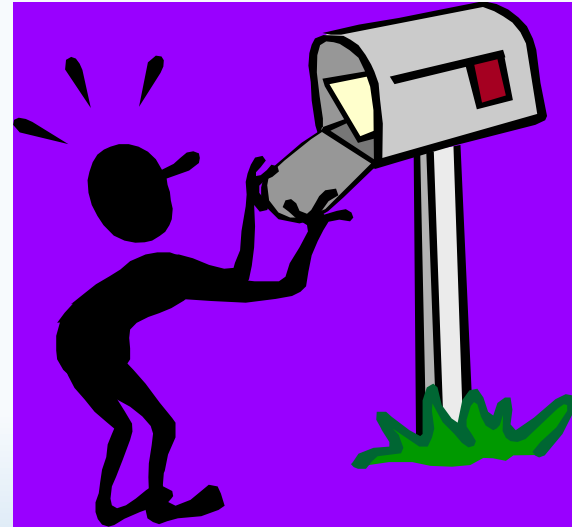
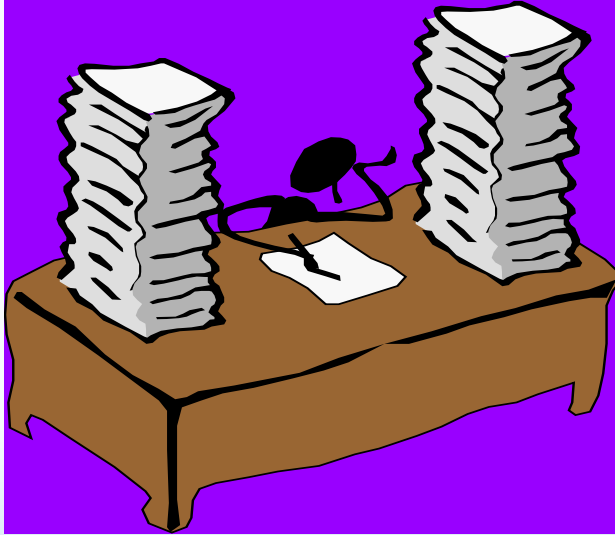
- Know your professional field and keep up to date
- Create and sustain a professional learning plan
- Seek professional social support
- Engage in professional reflection

## Preventative Tool No. 5



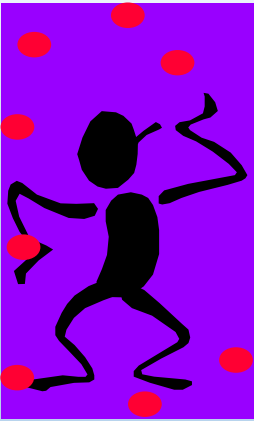
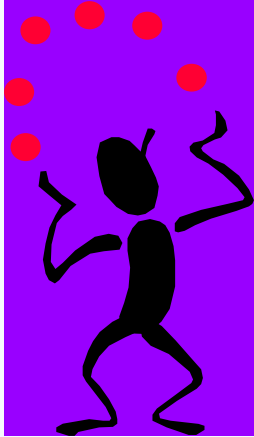
Focus on your student's strengths

## Preventative Tool No. 6



- ✓ Separate work from home
- ✓ Engage in rituals to signal you have left work behind

# Preventative Tool No. 7



- Know your limitations
- Make these clear to the those who need to know

# Preventative Tool No. 8

## ✓ **Expand your coping strategies**

- Engage in non-work related talk
- Exercise and eat healthy foods
- Be creative: write, draw, paint, sculpt, garden
- Nurture yourself: seek gentleness, focus on pleasure and comfort, relax, laugh, love
- Connect with friends and family
- Seek professional support
- Engage in some **positive psychology**

# Positive Psychology



# Positive Psychology

- 😊 The more **positive** than **negative** emotions we have, the better we are at:
- 😊 connecting with people
- 😊 being action oriented
- 😊 being helpful
- 😊 being better leaders

# Negative effects are stronger than positive effects

Negatively valenced events e.g.

- 😞 losing money
- 😞 being abandoned by friends
- 😞 receiving criticism

GREATER impact than similar

Positively valenced events e.g.

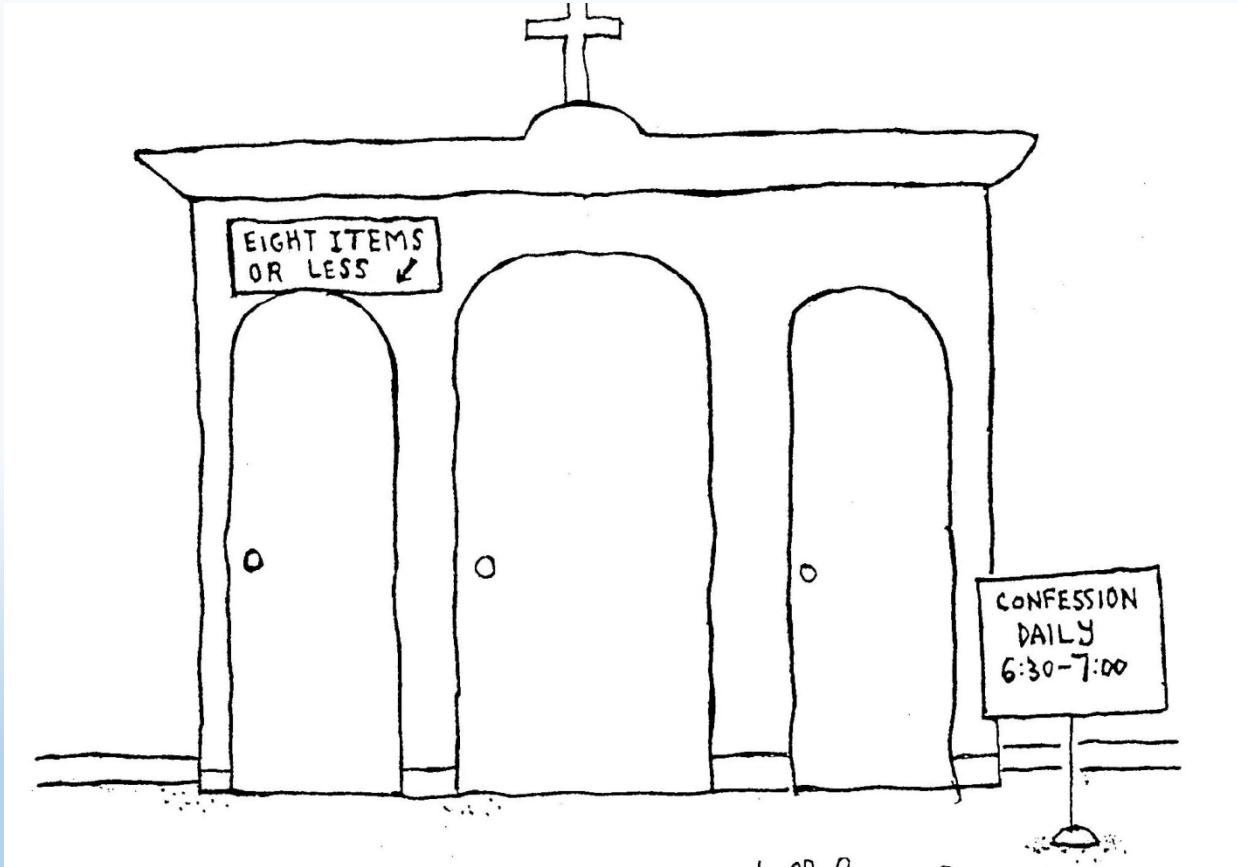
- 😊 winning money
- 😊 gaining friends
- 😊 receiving praise



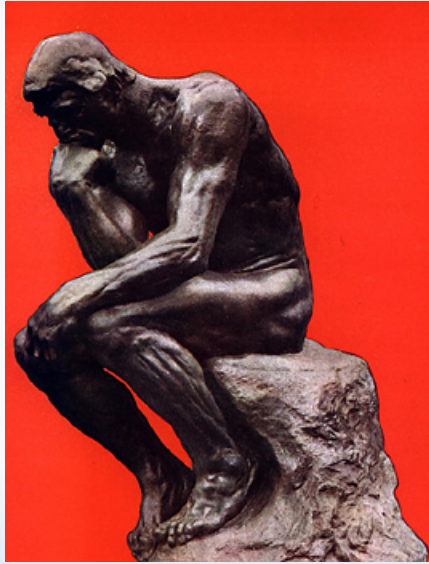
## Sin/Indulgence Balance Sheet

Although we are taught that indulgences—certain prayers, ejaculations and actions—will help take away some of the punishment for our sins, they do not really make a dent in your time in Purgatory. One week's indulgences do not, as you can see, mark a significant change in the punishment accrued for one day's sins.

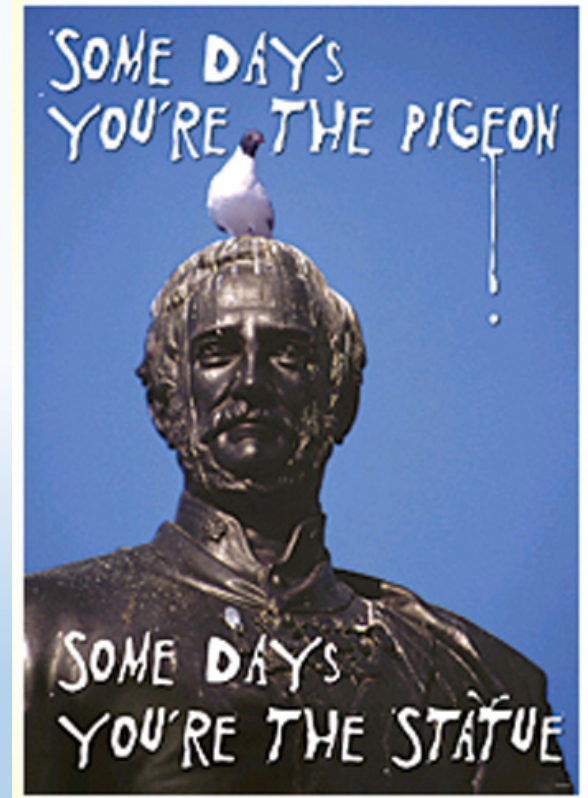
<b>SINS (1 day)</b>	<b>INDULGENCES (1 week)</b>																								
<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding-bottom: 5px;"><i>Lied to your mother</i></td> <td style="text-align: right; padding-bottom: 5px;">650,000 years</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-bottom: 5px;"><i>Cheated on test</i></td> <td style="text-align: right; padding-bottom: 5px;">825,000 years</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-bottom: 5px;"><i>Stole Mars bar</i></td> <td style="text-align: right; padding-bottom: 5px;">257,890 years</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-bottom: 5px;"><i>Stuck tongue out at Sister</i></td> <td style="text-align: right; padding-bottom: 5px;">1,160,000 years</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-bottom: 5px;"><i>Spilled milk on uniform</i></td> <td style="text-align: right; padding-bottom: 5px;">456,000 years</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right; border-top: 1px solid black; padding-top: 5px;">3,348,890 years</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right; padding-top: 5px;">- 286 years</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right; border-top: 1px solid black; padding-top: 5px;">3,348,604 years</td> </tr> </table>	<i>Lied to your mother</i>	650,000 years	<i>Cheated on test</i>	825,000 years	<i>Stole Mars bar</i>	257,890 years	<i>Stuck tongue out at Sister</i>	1,160,000 years	<i>Spilled milk on uniform</i>	456,000 years		3,348,890 years		- 286 years		3,348,604 years	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding-bottom: 5px;"><i>Said Grace before dinner every day</i></td> <td style="text-align: right; padding-bottom: 5px;">21 years</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-bottom: 5px;"><i>Said Mother of Mercy, Pray for Us 315 times on the way in to class on Thursday</i></td> <td style="text-align: right; padding-bottom: 5px;">259 years</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-bottom: 5px;"><i>Served Mass on Tuesday and Sunday</i></td> <td style="text-align: right; padding-bottom: 5px;">6 years</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right; border-top: 1px solid black; padding-top: 5px;">286 years</td> </tr> </table>	<i>Said Grace before dinner every day</i>	21 years	<i>Said Mother of Mercy, Pray for Us 315 times on the way in to class on Thursday</i>	259 years	<i>Served Mass on Tuesday and Sunday</i>	6 years		286 years
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# Preventative Tool No. 9



- Step back
  - Reflect
- Debrief – express thoughts



# **AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN FIVE SHORT CHAPTERS**

by Portia Nelson

# Chapter One

I walk down the street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.

I fall in.....

I am lost ... I am helpless.

It isn't my fault.

It takes me forever to find a way out.

## Chapter Two

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.

I pretend I don't see it.

I fall in again.....

I can't believe I am in the same place  
but, it isn't my fault.

It still takes a long time to get out.

## Chapter Three

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I **see** it is there.

I still fall in ... it's a habit.  
my eyes are open  
I know where I am.  
It is my fault.

I get out immediately.

## Chapter Four

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.....

I walk around it.



## Chapter Five

I walk down another street.

# Preventative Tool No. 10

Have fun!

