





VICARIOUS TRAUMA AND WELLNESS: EMBRACING YOUR AUTHENTIC SELF



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OBJECTIVES



- At the end of this Session the participant will be able to:
 - Differentiate Stress, Trauma, Secondary Trauma, Vicarious Trauma (VT) and burn-out.
 - Identify the areas of the brain that are affected by stress and trauma and how they vary in responsiveness.
 - Explore how stress and trauma affects behavior in youth and families and potentially in ourselves.
 - Identify who is at risk of VT.
 - Explore ways to mediate the effects of VT.
 - Identify the important components and values of your own life journey.
 - Implement an individualized VT emotional self-care plan.

OFFICIAL FILM TRAILER – PORTRAITS OF PROFESSIONAL CAREGIVERS: THEIR PASSION. THEIR PAIN.



LIVE WELL
SAN DIEGO

- <https://youtu.be/Zs9IHpcjVeI>



<https://thumbs.dreamstime.com/z/helping-hands-abstract-design-isolated-white-background-53157679.jpg>

SECONDARY/VICARIOUS TRAUMATIC STRESS



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Secondary Traumatic Stress and Related Conditions: Sorting One from Another

Secondary Traumatic Stress refers to the presence of PTSD symptoms caused by at least one indirect exposure to traumatic material. Several other terms capture elements of this definition but are not all interchangeable with it.

Compassion fatigue, a less stigmatizing way to describe secondary traumatic stress, has been used interchangeably with the term.


Compassion satisfaction refers to the positive feelings derived from competent performance as a trauma professionals. It is characterized by positive relationships with colleagues, and the conviction that one's work makes a meaningful contribution to clients and society.

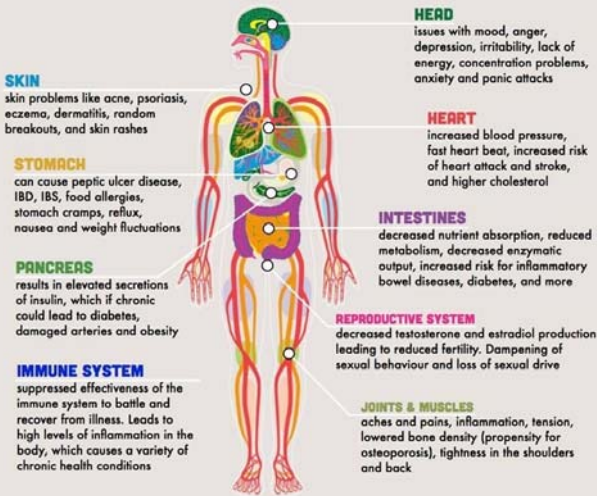
Vicarious trauma refers to changes in the inner experience of the therapist resulting from empathic engagement with a traumatized client. It is a theoretical term that focuses less on trauma symptoms and more on the covert cognitive changes that occur following cumulative exposure to another person's traumatic material.

Burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced feeling of personal accomplishment. While it is also work-related, burnout develops as a result of general occupational stress; the terms is not used to describe the effects of indirect trauma exposure specifically.

<http://www.nctsn.org/resources/topics/secondary-traumatic-stress>

How **STRESS** Affects The **BODY**

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SKIN
skin problems like acne, psoriasis, eczema, dermatitis, random breakouts, and skin rashes

STOMACH
can cause peptic ulcer disease, IBD, IBS, food allergies, stomach cramps, reflux, nausea and weight fluctuations

PANCREAS
results in elevated secretions of insulin, which if chronic could lead to diabetes, damaged arteries and obesity

IMMUNE SYSTEM
suppressed effectiveness of the immune system to battle and recover from illness. Leads to high levels of inflammation in the body, which causes a variety of chronic health conditions

HEAD
issues with mood, anger, depression, irritability, lack of energy, concentration problems, anxiety and panic attacks

HEART
increased blood pressure, fast heart beat, increased risk of heart attack and stroke, and higher cholesterol

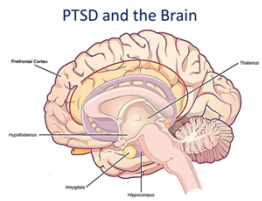

INTESTINES
decreased nutrient absorption, reduced metabolism, decreased enzymatic output, increased risk for inflammatory bowel diseases, diabetes, and more

REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM
decreased testosterone and estradiol production leading to reduced fertility. Dampening of sexual behaviour and loss of sexual drive

JOINTS & MUSCLES
aches and pains, inflammation, tension, lowered bone density (propensity for osteoporosis), tightness in the shoulders and back

<http://allthingsnaturalorganic.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/image5.jpg>

The 3-Part Brain



PTSD and the Brain

- The Triune Brain model, introduced by physician and neuroscientist Paul D. MacLean, explains the brain in three parts:
 - **Reptilian (brain stem):** This innermost part of the brain is responsible for survival instincts and autonomic body processes.
 - **Mammalian (limbic, midbrain):** The midlevel of the brain, this part processes emotions and conveys sensory relays.
 - **Neomammalian (cortex, forebrain):** The most highly evolved part of the brain, this area outer controls cognitive processing, decision-making, learning, [memory](#) and inhibitory functions.
- <https://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2015/09/16/the-science-behind-ptsd-symptoms-how-trauma-changes-the-brain/>

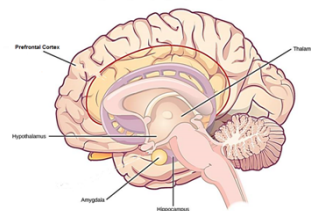
PTSD and the Brain



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- During a traumatic experience, the reptilian brain takes control, shifting the body into reactive mode. Shutting down all non-essential body and mind processes, the brain stem orchestrates survival mode. During this time the sympathetic nervous system increases stress hormones and prepares the body to fight, flee or freeze.

PTSD and the Brain



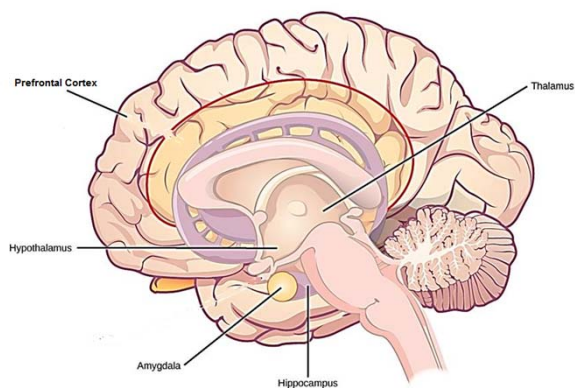
What Happens in the PTSD Brain?



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- Fight or Flight Response stays activated
- Amygdala is overstimulated
- Hippocampus/memories functioning lessened
- Frontal lobe/executive Functioning lessened
- These functions are said to have become dysregulated

PTSD and the Brain



http://vaveteran.org/33-5/33-5_reidlyon.html

Emotional Dysregulation



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- Exaggerated emotional response to stimuli
- Easier to become aroused/vigilant
- Trade-off between evaluation of potential threats vs. ability to utilize higher-level brain functions
- Decreased ability to voluntarily shift attention
- Mood and anxiety symptoms and behavioral symptoms surface

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE



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- Trauma-Informed Care
 - Our goals are to:
 - provide support and understanding,
 - while helping trauma survivors regain a sense of control and empowerment,
 - and to avoid unwittingly re-traumatizing survivors

<http://traumainformedcareproject.org/>

<https://blogs.psychcentral.com/caregivers/2015/06/7-ways-to-avoid-re-traumatizing-a-trauma-victim/>

WHO IS AT RISK FOR SECONDARY OR VICARIOUS TRAUMATIC STRESS?



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- The development of secondary traumatic stress is recognized as a common occupational hazard for **professionals working with traumatized children**.
- Studies show that from 6% to 26% of **therapists** working with traumatized populations, and
- Up to 50% of **child welfare workers**, are at high risk of secondary traumatic stress or the related conditions of PTSD and vicarious trauma.
- Any professional who works directly with traumatized children, and is in a position to hear the recounting of traumatic experiences, is at risk of traumatic stress.
- Risk appears to be **greater** among individuals who are highly empathetic by nature or have unresolved personal trauma.
- Risk is also higher for professionals who carry a **heavy caseload of traumatized children**; are **socially or organizationally isolated**; or feel professionally compromised due to **inadequate training**.
- **First Responders: Police Officers, Emergency Medical Technicians, Emergency Room Personnel, Nurses, Fire Fighters**

OCCUPATIONAL SOURCES OF TRAUMATIC EXPOSURE



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- Interviews
- Reading Reports
- Visiting crime scene
- Death of a Client
- Hearing a Child describe the Trauma
- Hostility toward you
- Viewing photographs
- Writing Reports
- Testifying in Court
- Paperwork – Other
- High-stakes Decision-Making
 - Etc.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF VICARIOUS TRAUMA



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- Emotional numbing
- Social withdrawal
- Work-related nightmares
- Feelings of despair and hopelessness
- Loss of sense of spirituality
- More negative view of the world
- Reduced sense of respect for your clients
- Loss of enjoyment of sexual activity
- No time or energy for yourself
- Finding that you talk about work all the time (can't escape)
- Sense of disconnection from your loved ones
- Increased sense of danger (reduced sense of safety)
- Increased illness or fatigue
- Increased absenteeism
- Greater problems with boundaries
- Difficulties making decisions
- Reduced productivity
- Reduced motivation for your work
- Loss of sense of control over your work and your life
- Lowered self esteem, lowered sense of competence in your work
- Difficulties trusting others
- Lessened interest in spending time alone
- Less time spent reflecting on your experiences
- Increased fear for safety of children or loved ones
- Sense of cynicism or pessimism

<https://www.blueknot.org.au/Workers-Practitioners/For-Health-Professionals/Resources-for-Health-Professionals/Vicarious-Traumatisation>

HOW CAN WE INTERVENE?



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- Anticipate: Accept as potential occupational hazard
- Address: Live an authentic life:
 - Know yourself
 - Determine what brings you Joy
 - Actively seek out coping strategies that work for you
 - Practice wellness
 - Develop an emotional support plan
- Transform (negative impact into connection with some positive aspects of meaning and community)

HOW CAN YOU INTERVENE?



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KNOW YOURSELF

- Understanding Yourself:
 - Who are you?
 - What are your Values?
 - What is important to you?
 - Who/What do you hope to become?

- Activity: Vertical Line
 - Solo Activity

HOW CAN YOU INTERVENE?



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RESPECT YOURSELF

- Respecting yourself:
 - All of who you are.
 - You have the last word on how you wish to proceed with your life.

- Activity – Balance
 - Partner Activity
 - Use your strengths
 - From the last activity –strategize how could you reorder your time to be more in sync with your values?
 - Explore your ambivalence about change.

HOW CAN YOU INTERVENE?



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WHAT BRINGS YOU JOY 😊



HOW CAN YOU INTERVENE?



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CONCEPTUALIZE WELLNESS

- Embrace wellness:
 - Want Lifestyle patterns that represent health that are beyond a problem focus.
 - Embrace a personal and professional commitment to your own wellness and self-care.

- Activity – Wellness inventory – Large group
 - What do you do to take care of yourself? Nurture yourself?
 - Mental
 - Physical
 - Social
 - Emotional
 - Spiritual

HOW CAN YOU INTERVENE?



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EMBRACE RESILIENCE

- Embrace Resilience:
 - Resilience is the ability to restore balance following a difficult experience and integrate it into the backdrop of one's total life experience.
 - Can difficult events give us strength, wisdom, teach us patience, perseverance, empathy?

- Find Meaning:
 - Create meaning – what do you believe in?
 - Infuse meaning in current activities
 - Challenge negative beliefs (cognitions hand-out)
 - Participate in community building

HOW CAN YOU INTERVENE?



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DEVELOP AN EMOTIONAL SAFETY PLAN

- Be specific
 - Movie, book, TV show, blanket, old loved sweatshirt
 - Food/Cooking
 - Socializing – list of go to friends
 - Actions that are tried and true
 - Walk, dance, sing, beach, bath, journal

LIVE AN AUTHENTIC LIFE



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BE AUTHENTIC

- **Authenticity:**
 - Be Genuine.
 - Know who you are and what's important to you as a human being.
 - Attain balance to honor yourself and your beliefs
 - Know what brings you joy!
 - Embrace resiliency. What brings you hope? What keeps you going?
 - Embrace wellness
 - Find meaning for yourself
 - Develop an emotional safety plan

- We are all unique and wonderful human beings with so much to offer.
And with a life to enjoy!

RESOURCES FOR TAKING CARE OF YOU



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- Self help and support groups
- Books and other publications
- Online resources
- Licensed mental health professional
- Spiritual Counselor
- Social Support



Thank you for all that you do!
Remember to take care of you too 😊

REFERENCES



- <https://www.blueknot.org.au/Workers-Practitioners/For-Health-Professionals/Resources-for-Health-Professionals/Vicarious-Traumatisation>
- http://www.who.int/occupational_health/publications/pwh3rev.pdf
- https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources//secondary_traumatic_stress_child_serving_professionals.pdf
- <http://www.nctsn.org/resources/topics/secondary-traumatic-stress>
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- <https://blogs.psychcentral.com/caregivers/2015/06/7-ways-to-avoid-re-traumatizing-a-trauma-victim/>
- <http://traumainformedcareproject.org/>

RESOURCES



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- Stamm, B.H. (Ed.). (1995). *Secondary Traumatic Stress: Self-care Issues for Clinicians, Researchers, and Educators*. Baltimore, MD: The Sidran Press.
- *The Compassion Fatigue Workbook: Creative Tools for Transforming Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Traumatization (Psychosocial Stress Series)*
 - https://www.amazon.com/Compassion-Fatigue-Workbook-Transforming-Traumatization/dp/0415897904/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1536083933&sr=8-1&keywords=compassion+fatigue
- *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*
 - https://www.amazon.com/Body-Keeps-Score-Healing-Trauma/dp/0143127748/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1536084059&sr=8-2&keywords=vicarious+trauma
- *The Complex PTSD Workbook*
 - https://www.amazon.com/Complex-PTSD-Workbook-Mind-Body-Regaining/dp/1623158249/ref=sr_1_9_sspa?ie=UTF8&qid=1536084146&sr=8-9-spons&keywords=vicarious+trauma&psc=1
- *The Resilient Practitioner: Burnout and Compassion Fatigue Prevention and Self-Care Strategies for the Helpful Professions*
 - https://www.amazon.com/Resilient-Practitioner-Compassion-Prevention-Professions/dp/1138830070/ref=sr_1_8?ie=UTF8&qid=1536084431&sr=8-8&keywords=secondary+trauma
- *The Kindness Cure: How the Science of Compassion Can Heal Your Heart and Your World*
 - https://www.amazon.com/Kindness-Cure-Science-Compassion-Heart/dp/1626259690/ref=sr_1_19?ie=UTF8&qid=1536084549&sr=8-19&keywords=secondary+trauma

RESOURCES, CONT.



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- Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale
 - <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254364576> The Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale STS
- Secondary Traumatic Stress-Informed Organizational Assessment (STSI-OA)
 - <http://www.uky.edu/CTAC/STSI-OA>
- Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL)
 - <https://proqol.org/>
- Secondary Traumatic Stress, Compassion Fatigue, and Vicarious Trauma, Special Issue of Traumatology
 - <http://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/special/6232302.aspx>
- Canadian Mental Health Commission, National Standard of Canada for psychological health and safety in the workplace
 - <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/what-we-do/workplace/national-standard>
- Compassion Fatigue: A review of the research to date and relevance to cancer-care providers
 - <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1359105308100211>