

Indicators and Healthy Coping Strategies for Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma

District of Columbia Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants

August 16, 2021

11:00 a.m.- 12:30 p.m.



WebEx Orientation

- Mute
- Chat Features
- Raising Hand
- Question Follow-Up
- Technical Assistance/Help





Learning Objectives

Recognize

Recognize the symptoms of personal vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue.

Identify

Identify individualized adaptive coping strategies that contribute to health and well-being.

Learn

Learn ways to model self-care practices that contribute to a supportive work environment.

Getting to Know You Polls!



Please type
your
response in
chat:

Why do you
stay in your
field?



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Definitions

- **Compassion fatigue:** Reduced capacity or interest in being empathic; adverse reactions of helpers who seek to help trauma survivors.
- **Vicarious trauma:** The negative effects of caring about and caring for others.



“The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet.”

—R. N. Remen, M.D., 1996



ABCs
of
CF/VT
Strategies

Awareness

Balance and Boundaries

Coping Strategies

How It Can Happen

“The capacity for compassion and empathy seem to be at the core of our ability to do the work and at the core of our ability to be wounded by the work.”
~Charles Figley

Prevalence Poll



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Risk Factors- Personal

young age

prior traumatic
experiences

pre-existing mental
health issues

highly empathetic

social isolation,
inadequate support
system

a tendency to avoid
feelings, withdraw, or
assign blame to
others in stressful
situations

difficulty expressing
feelings

difficulty being
assertive or setting
boundaries

loss in last 12
months (death of a
loved one, divorce,
layoff)

Risk Factors- Professional

early in career,
newer employees,
less experience

inadequate
preparation,
orientation, and
training

lack of quality
supervision

constant and intense
exposure to trauma
with little or no
variation in work
tasks

lack of an effective
and supportive
process for
discussing traumatic
content of the work

employee/ role or
organization
mismatch

conflict in the
workplace

Exposure to the Story and Its Results

- Witnessing reactions of the victim, family, friends, and community
- Exposure to the victim's revictimization
- Confronting the worse of humanity
- Seeing the aftermath of the criminal justice process



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Additional Layers of Stress



Pandemic-related stress

”The psychological distress, in particular **fear** and **sadness**, is a function of the pandemic’s negative impact upon people’s ability to meet their most basic needs (e.g., physical safety, financial security, social connection, participation in meaningful activities).”

Sanderson, W., et al; The Nature & Treatment of Pandemic-Related Psychological Distress, Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy, June 2020



The Ongoing Struggle for Racial Justice

Resilience Works 2021



Indicators of Compassion Fatigue/ Vicarious Trauma



Emotional



Physical



Behavioral

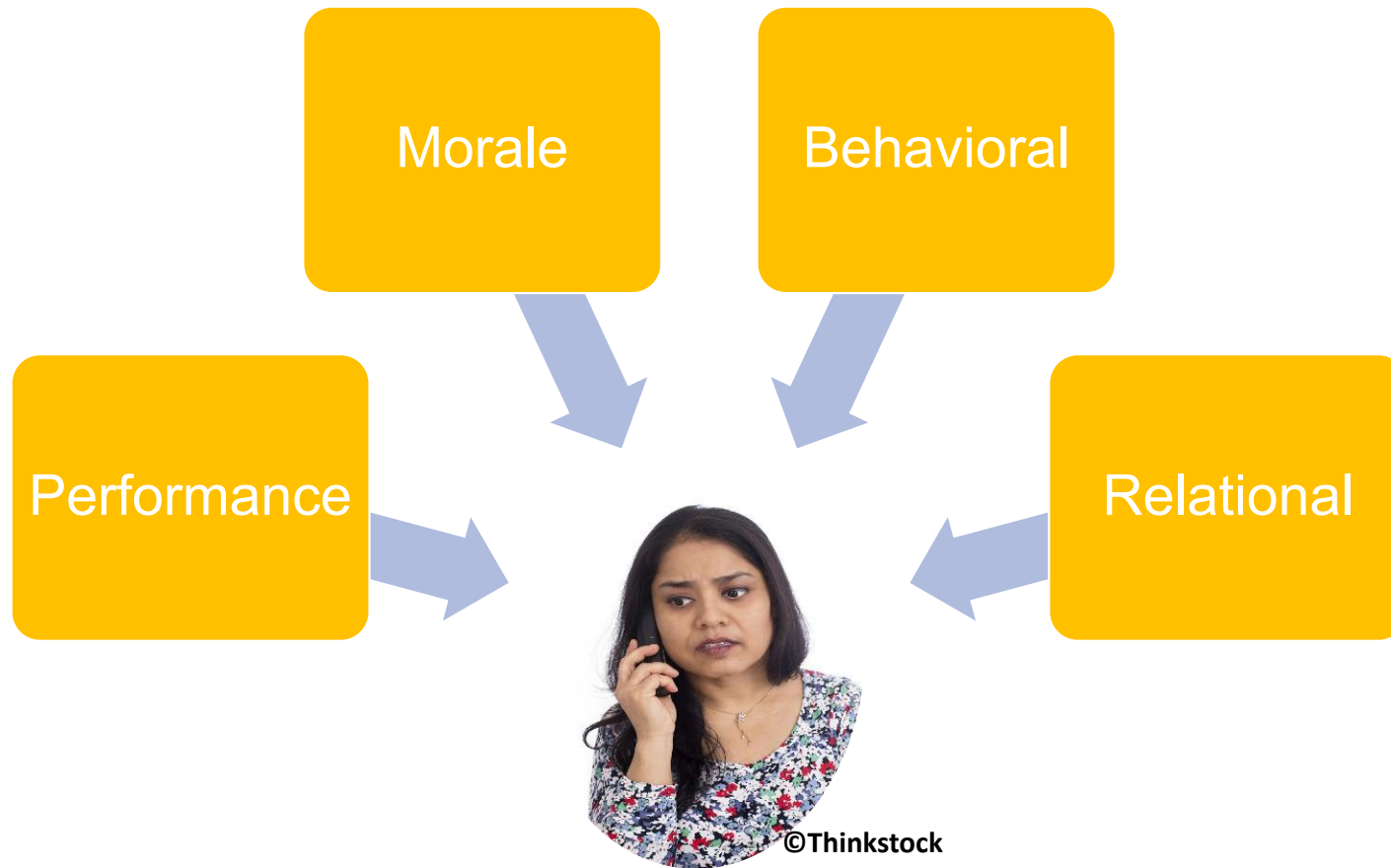


Cognitive



Spiritual

Professional Effects of Vicarious Trauma



Organizational Effects of Vicarious Trauma



- Know where you end, and a victim begins.
- Know how personal history affects your ability to work with victims.
- Know your biases and values.
- Know the difference between enmeshment and empowerment.
- Balance your personal and professional life.



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Healthy Boundaries

Assist victims only with what they cannot do for themselves. This gives victims a sense of empowerment and a return of control.

Support victims in doing what they can and need to do for themselves. This avoids creating dependence and helplessness.

Resiliency Is...

“...the power to cope with adversity and adapt to challenges or change. Resiliency helps us return to healthy functioning after being in a stressful situation.”

Luthar, Cicchetti, and Bronwyn
2007



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Core Elements of Resiliency

Self-Knowledge and Insight

A Sense of Hope

Healthy Coping

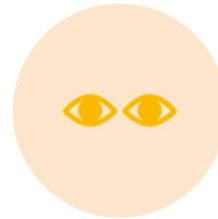
Strong Relationships

Personal Perspective and Meaning

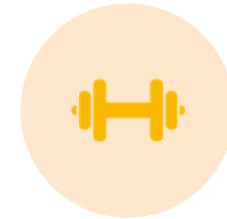
1. Self- Knowledge and Insight



KNOWING
WHO YOU
ARE



HAVING A
CLEAR
SENSE OF
WHAT YOU
BELIEVE
AND HOW
YOU FEEL



IDENTIFYING
YOUR
STRENGTHS
AND
WEAKNESSES

Components of Self-Knowledge and Insight

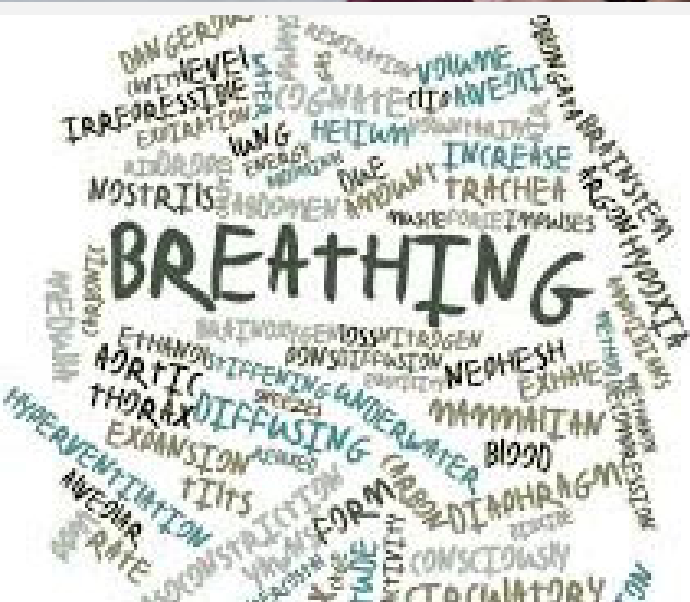
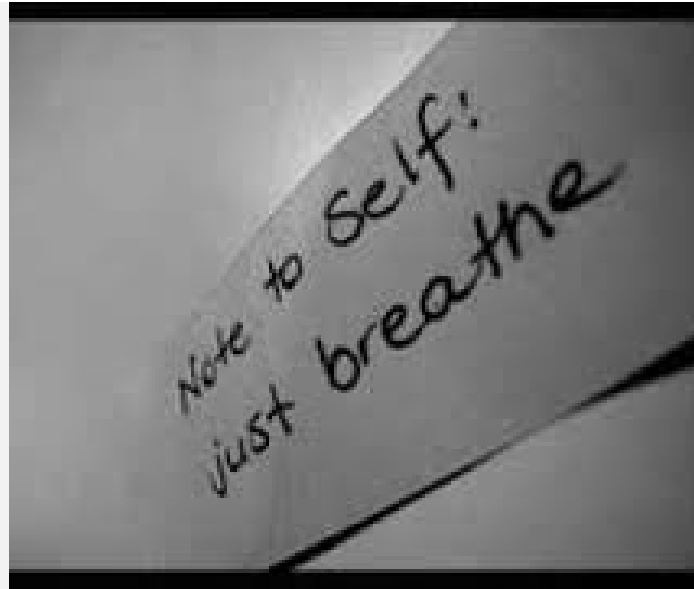
Positive self-
esteem

Strong inner
locus of
control

Independence

Strategies To Develop Self-Knowledge and Insight

- Explore your motivation for working with victims of crime.
- Identify your own strengths and challenges.
- Identify themes associated with discomfort.
- Clarify goals, mission, and boundaries of your organization.



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2. A Sense of Hope

- Belief that situations can get better
- Belief that the future will be better than the present or past
- Recognizing the difficulty of the experiences of the victims you serve yet maintaining a positive view of the challenges of life



Components of a Sense of Hope

Optimism

A sense of
humor and the
ability to have
fun

Strategies To Develop a Sense of Hope



Humor and Stress



There are therapeutic consequences to using humor as a stress management tool.



Finding humor in a situation and laughing freely with others can be a powerful antidote to stress.



Laughter can temporarily banish feelings of anger or fear, replacing them with more lighthearted and hopeful feelings.

3. Healthy Coping

- Balancing the negative aspects of work with positive activities
- Paying attention to physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual needs
- Building on skills and planning for and addressing negative feelings proactively

The background is a blue-tinted photograph of a document. It features a line graph with a jagged, fluctuating line. A silver pen is positioned in the upper right corner, pointing towards the graph. The graph has some numerical values visible, such as '2,5' and '2,47'. The overall scene suggests a focus on data analysis or financial trends.

Negativity Bias

Components of Healthy Coping

“ALMOST
EVERYTHING
WILL WORK
AGAIN IF YOU
UNPLUG IT
FOR A FEW
MINUTES,
INCLUDING
YOU.”

- ANNE LAMOTT

- Using your skills and abilities
- Creativity and flexibility
- Effective planning
- Addressing negativity proactively

Strategies To Develop Healthy Coping



Learn to identify physical stress reactions.



Balance your life.



Get adequate sleep.



Develop calming and modulation techniques.



Change the pace of your work and personal life.

4. Strong Relationships

- Sense of belonging
- Positive connections with other
- Personal networks of support



Components of Strong Relationships

- Attachments to others
- Seeking and giving support



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Strategies To
Develop
Strong
Relationships

Enhance communication skills.

Learn boundaries of confidentiality.

Collaborate.

Seek inclusiveness and diversity.

Foster a team approach.

5. Personal Perspective and Meaning

- Personal points of view – weighing the costs, losses, and benefits associated with victim services work
- Individual morality, integrity, spirituality
- Coherent meaning for life



“Meaning is the sense that, no matter what is going on in your life, you can hang onto the things that really matter to you. It is the belief that there are elements and people and views that cannot – no matter what – be taken from you.”

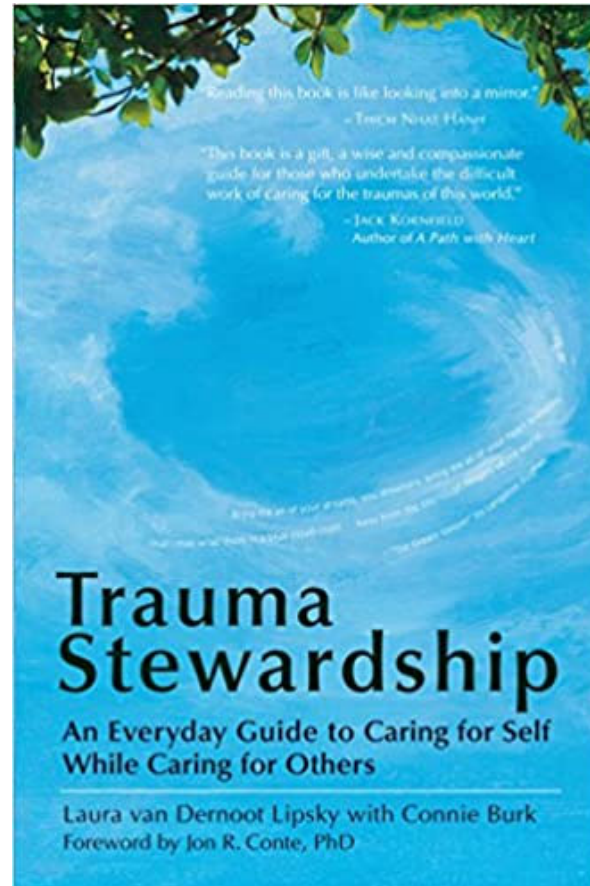
~Viktor Frankl



Strategies To Develop Personal Perspective and Meaning

Assess	your personal values.
Integrate	new understandings in your work.
Assess	your perspective of suffering.
Question	old beliefs.

Trauma Stewardship



Trauma Stewardship

The Five Directions

Creating Space for Inquiry

- Why am I doing what I'm doing?
- Is trauma mastery a factor for me?
- Is this working for me?

Choosing Our Focus

- Where am I putting my focus?
- What is my Plan B?

Building Compassion and Community

- Creating a microculture
- Practicing compassion for myself and others
- What can I do for large-scale systemic change?

Finding Balance

- Engaging with our lives outside of work
- Moving energy through
- Gratitude

A Daily Practice of Centering Myself

Questions?



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The OVC Vicarious Trauma Toolkit



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Evaluation QR Code

**DC Office of Victim Services and Justice
Grants: Vicarious Trauma Trainings -
Indicators and Healthy Coping
Strategies for Compassion Fatigue and
Vicarious Trauma**

Scan the QR code with your phone to open
the survey.



Thanks for participating!

