



**Welcome to the 27th Annual
AB 1058 Child Support
Training Conference**

The Cost of Caring: Vicarious Traumatization and Self-Care

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Teaching Goals

- Increase understanding of vicarious trauma and why public servants are susceptible to it.
- Discuss the impact vicarious trauma has on mental health, physical health, work productivity, and overall functioning.
- Identify common signs and symptoms of vicarious trauma.
- Discuss evidence-based practices for preventing work experiences from becoming trauma through usage of self-care.



Group Discussion

Discuss an interaction with a client or litigant who shared a traumatic story with you and how it impacted you.



What is Trauma?

The DSM-5 definition of trauma requires “actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence” [10] (p. 271). Stressful events not involving an immediate threat to life or physical injury such as psychosocial stressors [4] (e.g., divorce or job loss) are not considered trauma in this definition.



What causes PTSD?

- Exposure to
 - actual or threatened death,
 - serious injury, or
 - sexual violence

(American Psychiatric Association. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. 5th ed. Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association; 2013)



PTSD Symptoms in DSM-5

- Presence of one or more of the following intrusion symptoms associated with the traumatic event(s), beginning after the traumatic event(s) occurred:
 - Recurring, involuntary, intrusive distressing memories of the traumatic event(s)
 - Recurrent distressing dreams in which the content and or affect of the dream are related to the traumatic event(s)
 - Dissociative reactions (e.g., flashbacks) in which the individual feels or acts as if the traumatic event(s) were recurring.
 - Intense or prolonged psychological distress at exposure to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event(s)
 - Marked physiological reactions to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event(s)



PTSD Symptoms in DSM-5

- Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the traumatic event(s)
- Negative alterations in cognitions and mood associated with the traumatic event(s), beginning or worsening after the traumatic event(s) occurred
- Marked alterations in arousal and reactivity associated with the traumatic event(s), beginning or worsening after the traumatic event(s) occurred



Affect of Trauma on Others

- Intergenerational Trauma
 - First recognized in the children of Holocaust survivors.
 - In 1966, psychologists began to observe large numbers of children of Holocaust survivors seeking mental help in clinics in Canada. (Dejek 2008)
 - The grandchildren of Holocaust survivors were overrepresented by 300% among the referrals to a psychiatry clinic in comparison with their representation in the general population (Dekel 2008) (Fossion, Servais, Pelc 2003)

Transgenerational trauma:

Grandmother → Mother → Daughter



Affect of Trauma on Others

- Vicarious Trauma
 - Noticeable in helping professions
 - There was a noticeable trend of supporters of trauma victims becoming upset or traumatized themselves
 - Understanding how this happens will help prevent additional, subsequent traumatic stress among supporters and increase the quality of care for victims. (Figley, 1995)



Development of Vicarious Trauma and its Various Names

- No routinely used term to designate exposure to another's traumatic material. (Stamm 1997).
- Four most common terms are:
 - Compassion Fatigue
 - Countertransference
 - Secondary Traumatic Stress
 - Vicarious Traumatization
- Sometimes labeled burnout, but etiology generally shows increased workload and institutional stress are precipitating factors, not trauma.



What is Vicarious Trauma?

- A state of tension or preoccupation with the stories/trauma experiences described by others. The emotional residue of exposure from working with people whos hare traumatic stories and sitnessing fear, pain, and terror others have experienced. (ACA, Fact Sheet #9)
- The natural consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other—the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person. (Figley 1993a).



Signs of Vicarious Trauma in the Workplace

■ Behavioral

- Frequent job changes
- Tardiness
- Free floating anger/irritability
- Absenteeism
- Irresponsibility
- Exhaustion
- Talking to oneself
- Going out to avoid being alone
- Dropping out of community engagements
- Rejecting closeness

■ Interpersonal

- Staff conflict
- Blaming others
- Conflictual engagement
- Poor relationships
- Poor communication
- Avoidance of working with clients with trauma histories
- Lack of collaboration
- Withdrawal and isolation from colleagues
- Difficulty having rewarding relationships

(PRA Fact Sheet)



Signs of Vicarious Trauma in the Workplace

■ Personal Values

- Dissatisfaction
- Negative perception
- Loss of interest
- Apathy
- Blaming others
- Lack of appreciation
- Lack of interest and caring
- Detachment
- Hopelessness
- Low self-image
- Worried about not doing enough

■ Job Performance

- Low motivation
- Increased errors
- Decreased quality
- Avoidance of job responsibilities
- Over-involvement in details/perfectionism
- Lack of flexibility



Signs of Vicarious Trauma in your Personal Life

■ Behavioral

- Sleep disturbances
- Nightmares
- Appetite changes
- Hypervigilance
- Exaggerated startle response
- Losing things
- Clumsiness
- Self-harm behaviors
- Negative coping

■ Physical

- Panic symptoms—sweating, rapid heartrate, difficulty breathing, dizziness
- Aches and pains
- Weakened immune system



Signs of Vicarious Trauma in your Personal Life

■ Cognitive

- Minimization of vicarious trauma
- Lowered self-esteem, increased self-doubt
- Trouble concentrating
- Confusion/disorientation
- Perfectionism
- Racing thoughts
- Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities
- Lack of meaning in life
- Thoughts of harming yourself or others

■ Emotional

- Helplessness and powerlessness
- Survivor guilt
- Numbness
- Oversensitivity
- Emotional unpredictability
- Fear, Anxiety, sadness and/or depression

■ Social

- withdrawal and isolation
- Loneliness
- Irritability and intolerance
- Distrust
- Projection of blame and rage
- Decreased interest in intimacy
- Change in parenting style (overprotective)



Management of Symptoms

- Individual Level
 - Monitor yourself—eat well, rest, exercise
 - Self-care– seek balance, engage in outside activities
 - Set professional and personal boundaries
 - Take advantage of professional development opportunities
 - Utilize viable evidence-based treatments for vicarious trauma that focus on changes in cognitive process



Management of Symptoms

- Organizational Level
 - Reduce system causes of vicarious trauma and burnout such as workload and exposure to challenging cases
 - Provide critical incidents debrief
 - Work with area EAP to identify areas of improvement such as in-service trainings on self-care or counseling
 - Provide sabbaticals, professional education, community service, and public speaking opportunities
 - Provide a psychologist peer advocate—a specially trained therapist to assist with cognitive changes resulting from vicarious trauma



Clinical Interventions

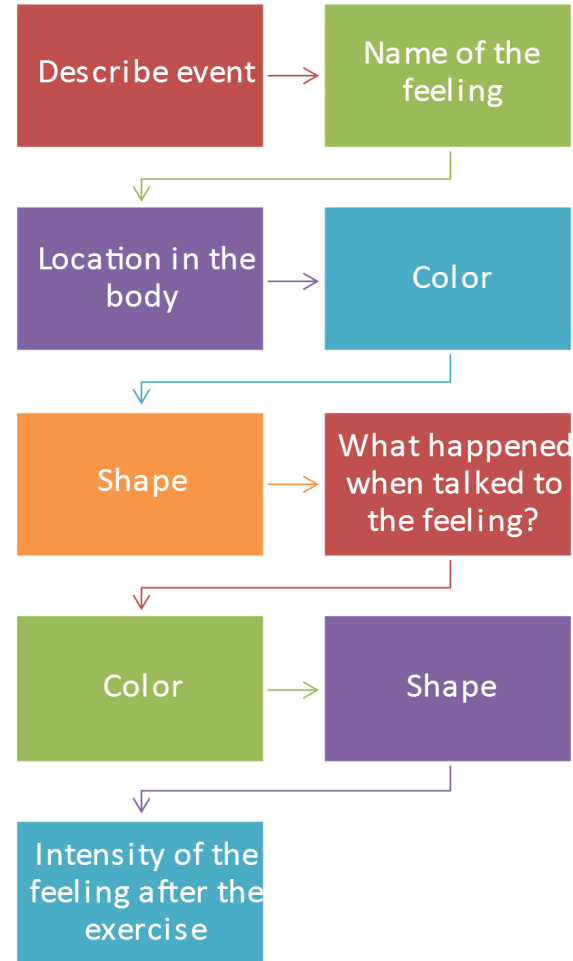
Challenging Negative Thoughts

Name		Date
Negative Thought:		
Questions to Challenge the Negative Thought:		
Questions	Answer	
Is this thought based on facts?		
What evidence do I have to support it?		
What evidence do I have against it?		
Am I jumping to conclusions?		
What's the worst that could happen?		
Is there a more positive or realistic perspective?		
What advice would I give a friend in the same situation?		



Managing Difficult Feelings

Managing Difficult Feelings



Clinical Interventions

ACT



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Thank you!

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