

Bouncing Back From Vicarious Trauma



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What is Vicarious Trauma?

<http://vicarious-trauma-helping-hurts-youtube>

- "...the cumulative transformative effect **on the helper** of working with survivors of traumatic life events" (McCann & Perlman, 1990)



- Also Secondary Traumatic Stress, Burnout, Compassion Fatigue, Counter-transference

Areas of Psychological Impact

- Personal** : crisis of identity, self-esteem, self worth, long-held beliefs being questioned
- Relational** : intimacy and trust challenged- others seen as evil, untrustworthy, exploitative or alienating
- Worldview** : world becomes more dangerous, also more difficult to maintain a sense of hope and belief in the goodness of others (Rosenbloom et al, 1995)



Trauma's Impact on Body/Mind

• Body

Fight → Flight → Freeze response



• Mind

- Stress hormones released when hyperaroused
- Unable to think clearly- irrational reactions

Empathy Increases the Impact of Another's Trauma

? Did you know 14% of workers relating to victims of trauma report traumatic stress levels similar to people with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder? (Rothschild 2006)

- Conscious** empathy
- Unconscious** empathy
 - Automatic** process if we are unaware!
 - Caused by **mirror neurons**



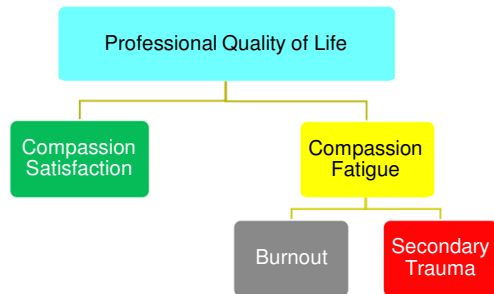
Who is Most at Risk?

- Those with **personal** experience of trauma
- People who **take on too much** or are "driven"
- People who don't express **emotion** readily
- Those who find it difficult to **name** their feelings
- People who are **unaware** of their bodily sensations
- Those **already** under stress in other areas of life
- People with **few** social networks/supports
- Those dealing with traumatised **children**
- Rookies vs experienced workers

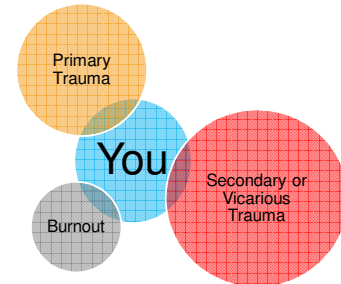
(Bloom, 2003)



CS-CF Model



Your Results



Strategies to Manage Vicarious Trauma

- **Body** awareness
 - Knowing your own warning signs
 - Intervening early
 - Tracking any changes over time
- Applying the **brakes**
 - Strategies that work for **you**
 - What brings most calm and clear thinking?
 - Personal **Safety Plan**



Braking Strategies

- ✓ **Muscle tension**
 - Back / legs / arms
- ✓ **Sensory anchors**
 - Visual imagery / physical activity
- ✓ **Boundaries**
 - Physical position & distance / "body armour" / bling
 - Ocular defence / skin boundary
- ✓ **Transition ritual**
 - From work to home



Personal Safety Plan

- A list of simple activities (maximum of 5) that work for **you** to restore calm
- Carry your Safety Plan with you
- **Use** when feeling overwhelmed
- My own Safety Plan:
 1. Stop!
 2. Breathe
 3. Cuppa/walk
 4. Ask for help



Reflection

- Reflect on your own work practice
- What new personal strategies will you experiment with?
- Discuss

Any comments, questions?



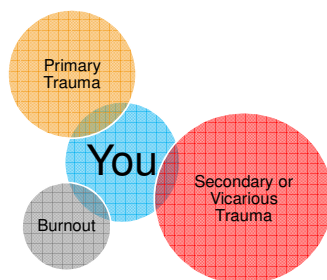
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