



Vicarious Trauma Mitigation: Self-Care – Every Contact Leaves A Trace

Working with victims and families who have undergone significant trauma WILL affect every person who works with high stress and trauma in a significantly traumatic and profoundly personal way – no matter who you are.

There is a principle in the field of forensic science called Lokar’s Principle which states a person will always bring something into a crime scene with them, leave something in the scene, and take something with them when they leave. The theory or emotional transfer works the same way.

Each trauma victim brings something with them into the interview/intervention, leaves something behind – with us, and also takes something with them.

Each traumatic response involves the exchange process- all parties taking something and all parties leaving something (resources, help, network, traumatic pain, traumatic exposure and/or residue). Helping professionals receive vicarious trauma (or compassion fatigue) on a regular basis – often times without understanding the impact of cumulative vicarious trauma and without institutionalized support.

Helping professionals often mistake “Self- Comfort” (behaviors that immediately feel good, but have long term negative consequences, i.e. smoking, drinking, discharging against co-workers...) for “Self-Care (behaviors that have long term positive consequences like yoga, exercise and time off- but don’t immediately feel good). One lady told us that she drinks a bottle of wine each and every day.

This session will explore the many ways in which vicarious trauma is received and processed by most human beings and how trauma impacts all of us and the ones we care about. Participants will be given practical information and guidance on how to recognize cumulative trauma and avoid the devastating effects on personal health and happiness. We will also look at Vicarious Trauma mitigation as it fits within the trauma informed paradigm and how agencies can institutionalize vicarious trauma mitigation as a ethical way to prevent secondary victimization. Finally, this presentation will also draw out the ethical responsibility of maintaining a healthy self. It is essential that people who work with vulnerable populations are able to draw boundaries, be healthy, be grounded, and to practice mindfulness.

Learning Objectives:

- Recognize the personal impact of vicarious or secondary trauma
- Understand the principles of self-care
- Looking at Vicarious Trauma from the perspective of Neuroscience
- Develop strategies to mitigate the impact of cumulative personal trauma
- Exploring the role plays in Vicarious Trauma Mitigation