

Vicarious Trauma

*Angela Hillman, PLMHP, PCMSW
Supervisor: Kate McDougall, LIMHP, LCSW*

Learning Objectives:

- Define vicarious trauma
- Understand precipitating factors
- Signs and symptoms to watch for
- Protective factors
- Self-care techniques
- Resources / where to find help

Definition:

- Vicarious trauma

- Emotional residue that can occur from empathetic engagement and exposure to client trauma stories
- Generally a cumulative effect
- Can result in a perceptual shift of the worker, where views and beliefs about the world are changed and can be damaged

Other related terms:

- Secondary trauma

- Can be experienced after a single exposure
- Term often used interchangeably with vicarious trauma

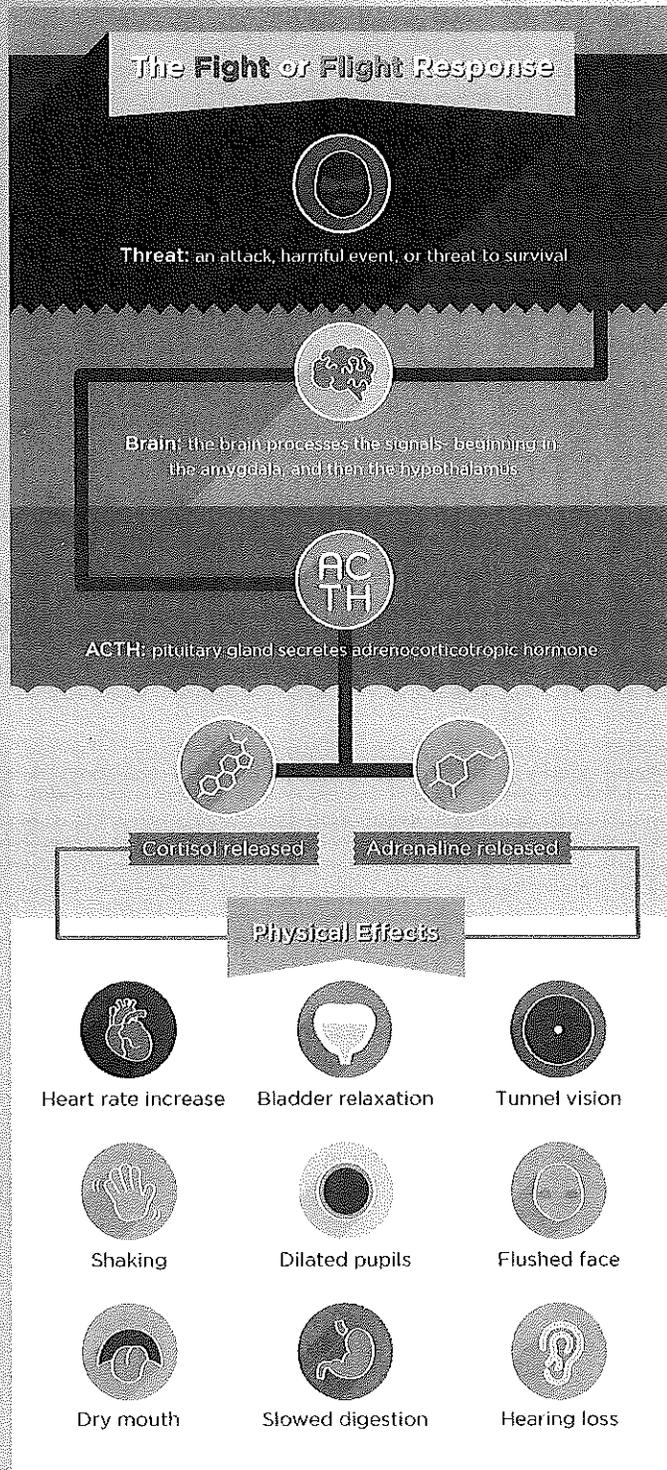
Other related terms:

- Compassion fatigue
 - Loss of empathy or desire to care
 - Emotional and physical exhaustion
 - Feeling as though you have nothing left to give
 - Can lead to burnout if left unattended
 - Different than vicarious trauma in severity of symptomology

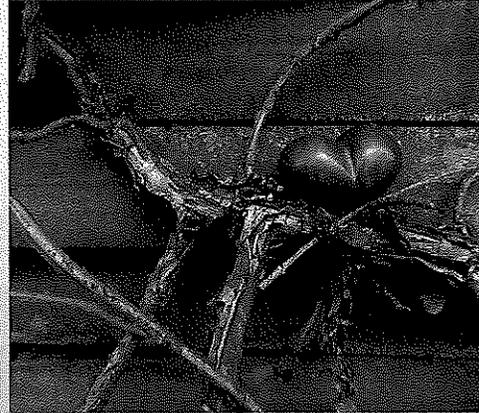
Risk factors

- Personal trauma history
- Current life circumstances
- Limited or impaired coping skills
- Inadequate social supports
- Client reactions to trauma
- Cultural and political climate
- Unresponsive work environment

Physiological response



Symptoms of vicarious trauma can manifest in physical and cognitive states, and may affect behavior and social interaction.



PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS:

- Sweating
- Increased heart rate and shortness of breath
- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Frequent illness, aches and pains
- Difficulty sleeping
- Sexual dysfunction
- Digestive issues

COGNITIVE/EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS:

- Reduced ability to concentrate
- Feelings of powerlessness
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Increased irritability
- Intrusive thoughts and/or imagery
- Hyperarousal to stimuli
- Change in emotional responsiveness
- Guilt
- Feelings of emptiness, feeling depressed
- Spiritual questioning

BEHAVIORAL SYMPTOMS:

- Increased anger reactivity
- Change in eating and sleeping habits
- Self-medicating
- Avoidance
- Impulsiveness
- Reduced attention to the daily tasks of living
- Missing work and/or inattention to job duties
- Self-harm
- Decreased participation in activities which you previously enjoyed

SOCIAL SYMPTOMS:

- Boundary confusion
- Feelings of disconnection
- Social isolation
- Relationship conflict or dissolution
- Reduced participation in group activities (church, sports, lunches, support groups, etc.)

The lists of symptoms presented in these slides are not all-inclusive. People experience and express trauma in varying ways, thus it is important to know yourself and your baseline in order to understand when you might benefit from additional help, such as from a licensed therapist.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- Education
- Self-awareness
- Boundary setting
- Ability to express feelings
- Supportive organization
- Good social supports
- Self-care strategies

SELF CARE

reminder:

**take care
of yourself!**

SELF CARE

Write down some ways that you engage in self-care:

Write down new techniques you'd like to try:

Potential RESOURCES for support:

- Your CASA Supervisor
- Your Peer Coordinator, if applicable
- In-Service trainings
- Your employer's Employee Assistance Program
- A Trained and Licensed Therapist

References

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