



Vicarious Trauma

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Vicarious Trauma

- ▶ What is Vicarious Trauma
- ▶ Understand the process of vicarious trauma
- ▶ Recognise signs of vicarious trauma
- ▶ Learn strategies to help



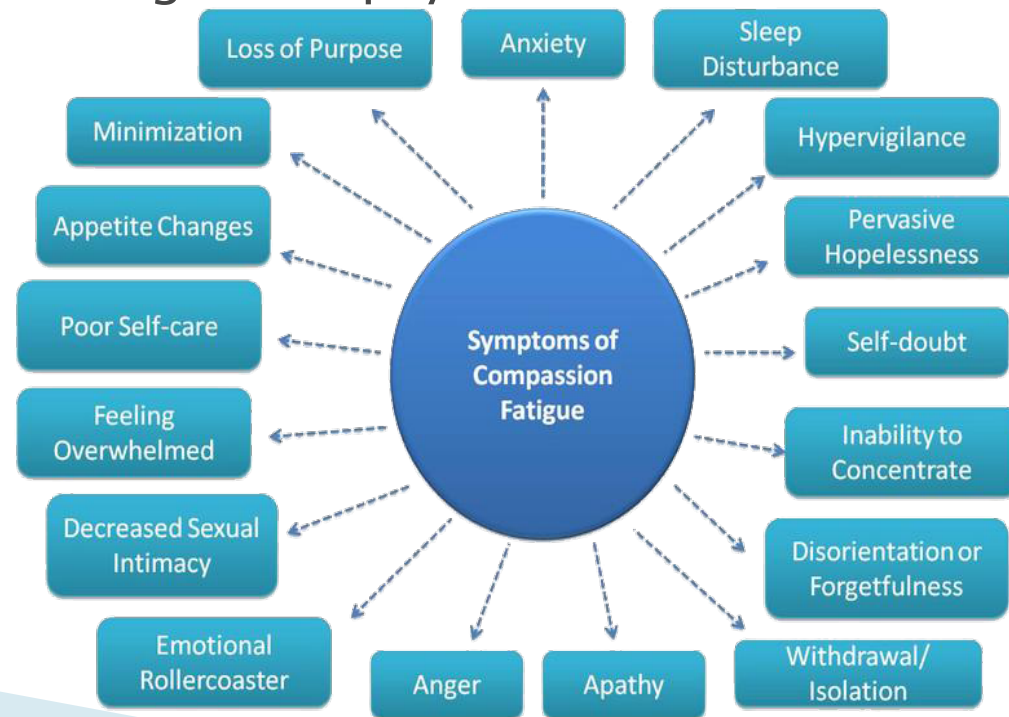
What is Vicarious Trauma

- ▶ Process of change resulting from empathetic engagement
- ▶ The emotional residue of exposure from working with people after hearing their trauma stories
- ▶ Indirect exposure to a traumatic event through first-hand account or narrative of that event
- ▶ Being traumatised by being exposed to the pain, fear, and terror which trauma survivors have endured
- ▶ Negative changes occurring over time from witnessing and engaging with other people's suffering and need
- ▶ Result of opening up your heart and mind to the worst in human experience
- ▶ Sometimes called 'Secondary Trauma'
- ▶ Leading to 'Compassion Fatigue' and 'Burn-out'

Understanding

Anyone who engages empathetically with survivors of traumatic incidents, torture, or material relating to their trauma, is potentially affected

This includes interpreters, judiciary, lawyers, police, doctors, nurses and other allied health professionals such as psychotherapists, clinical psychologists or psychiatrists



Recognise the signs 1

- ▶ Experiencing lingering feelings of anger, rage and sadness
- ▶ Becoming overly involved emotionally
- ▶ Experiencing bystander guilt, shame, feelings of self-doubt
- ▶ Being preoccupied with thoughts about the individual outside of the work situation
- ▶ Over identification with the individual (having rescue fantasies)
- ▶ Loss of hope, pessimism, cynicism
- ▶ Distancing, numbing, detachment, staying busy
- ▶ Avoiding listening to the story of traumatic experiences
- ▶ Difficulty in maintaining professional boundaries
- ▶ Overextending self (trying to do more than is in the role)

Recognise the signs 2

Five categories of symptoms:

- ▶ Emotional
- ▶ Behavioural
- ▶ Physiological
- ▶ Cognitive
- ▶ Spiritual

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

By Rachel Naomi Remen

Helping Strategies 1

- ▶ Increase your self-observation
- ▶ Recognise and chart your signs of stress
- ▶ Take care of yourself emotionally
- ▶ Engage in relaxing and self-soothing activities
- ▶ Nurture self-care
- ▶ Look after your physical and mental wellbeing
- ▶ Maintain a healthy work/life balance – have outside interests
- ▶ Be realistic about what you can accomplish
- ▶ Avoid wishful thinking
- ▶ Take up more training (CPD)

Helping Strategies 2

- ▶ Don't take on responsibility for your clients' wellbeing
- ▶ Balance your caseload
- ▶ Where possible, mix of more and less traumatised clients
- ▶ Take regular breaks, take time off
- ▶ Seek social support from colleagues, family and friends
- ▶ Use a buddy system – particularly important for less experienced interpreters
- ▶ Use peer support
- ▶ Find opportunities to debrief
- ▶ Where feasible, take up supervision/therapy

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