

Webinar 10: Creating a Vicarious Trauma Informed Workplace

Thrive in your Workplace | 2019

Agenda

- I. Objectives
- II. Trauma Terminology
- III. Burnout vs. Vicarious Trauma
- IV. Organization Strategies to Address Vicarious Trauma
- V. Case studies: Recognizing and Responding to the Impact of Vicarious Trauma
- VI. Resources and Tools

Objectives

By the end of this webinar, participants will be able to:

- Gain or reinforce understanding of key terms: trauma, triggers, trauma-informed, vicarious trauma and post-traumatic growth;
- Know the difference between burnout and vicarious trauma;
- Be able to take a vicarious trauma-informed approach within your role and communication with staff;
- How to recognize and respond to the impact of vicarious trauma; and
- Access tools and resources for you and your team.

Terminology Overview

What do you think of when you hear the word...

TRAUMA

And what does it have to do with the workplace?

Working Definition: Trauma

“Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.”

- U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Association, 2014: SAMHSA’s Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma Informed Approach

Examples of Trauma

- Sexual abuse/assault
- Physical abuse/assault
- Child abuse/neglect
- Domestic violence
- Emotional abuse
- Community violence
- Domestic violence
- Neglect
- Serious accident, illness
- Historical trauma
- Disasters
- War
- Military trauma
- Forced displacement
- Traumatic grief and loss
- Bullying
- Institutional trauma

Considerations

One-time, repeated, or chronic?

Caused by a person?

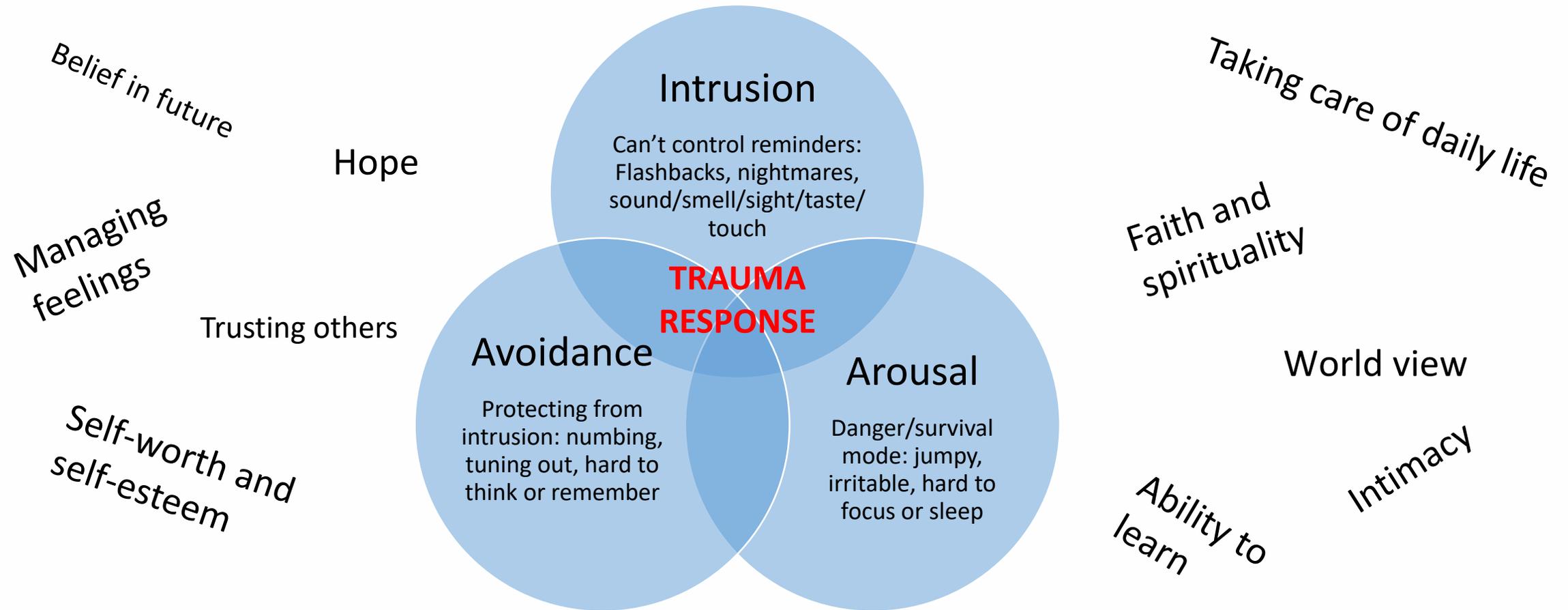
Caused by a trusted, known person?

Impact of Trauma

“A traumatic experience impacts the entire person – the way we think, the way we learn, the way we remember things, the way we feel about ourselves, the way we feel about other people, and the way we make sense of the world are all profoundly altered by traumatic experience.”

-Dr. Bessel Vanderkolk, 1999, A Coordinated Response to Family Violence

Effects of Trauma



Triggers

- Can be a reminder, conscious or unconscious, of past trauma OR can be an automatic brain reaction to perceived danger.
- A traumatized brain can't always tell the difference between a life-or-death threat and a mild stress. That's why trauma survivors often have big reactions that might seem out of proportion to the situation— a change in routine, a joke, a missed bus...
- Survivors can be particularly sensitive to feeling lack of control or choice.
- Going into “fight, flight, or freeze” mode is not a choice.
- Workplaces are often unintentionally full of triggers.

Post-Traumatic Growth

“Positive change experienced as a result of the struggle with a major life crisis or traumatic event”

-The Posttraumatic Growth Research Group
at University of North Carolina Charlotte

Key Assumptions in a Trauma-Informed Approach

A program, organization, or system that is trauma-informed:

- *Realizes* the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery;
- *Recognizes* the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system;
- *Responds* by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices; and
- *Seeks to actively resist re-traumatization.*

-SAMHSA

Trauma Changes You



Trauma in adulthood
changes your world view.

Trauma in childhood
changes what might have
been.

Through a trauma lens, we see that change is pain and loss, strength and resilience, and growth. (*which doesn't mean that that violence and abuse is ever okay*)

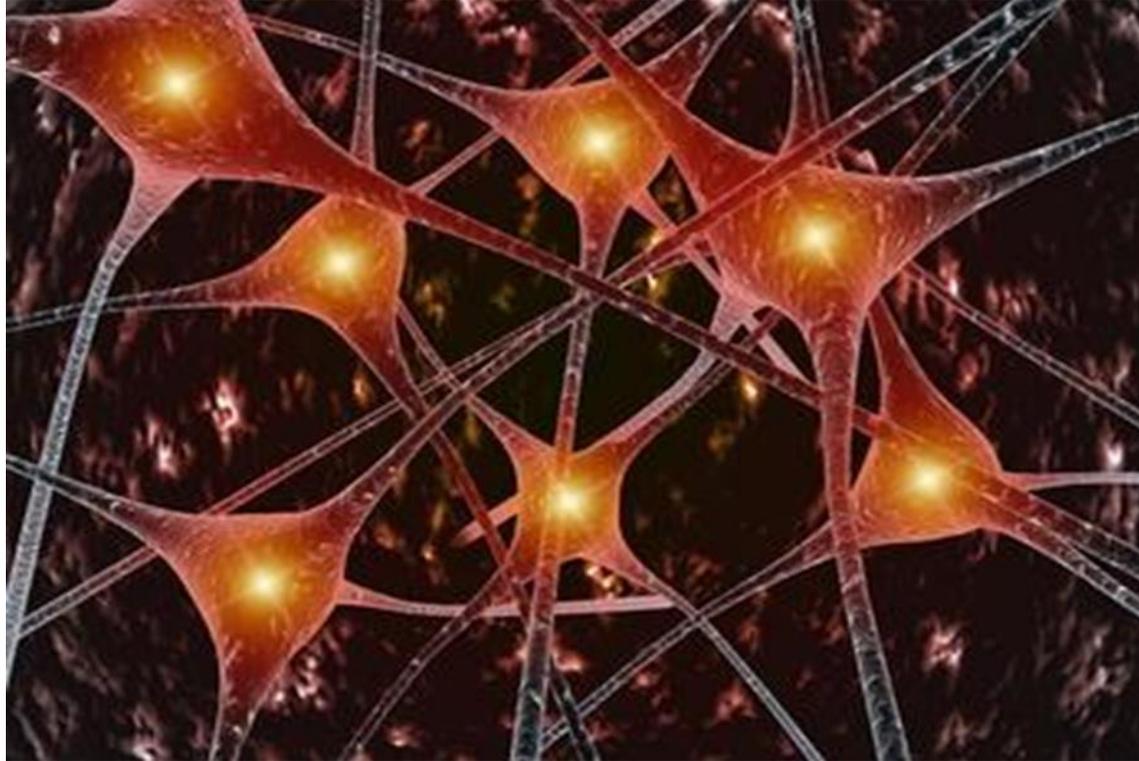
Understanding Vicarious Trauma

“Vicarious trauma happens when we accumulate and carry the stories of trauma—including images, sounds, resonant details—we have heard, which then come to inform our worldview.” –Joyful Heart Foundation

- Comes from our human, empathic connection with others
- Can be managed, not prevented
- Awareness is empowerment



A Message from Our Sponsor: The Brain



Mirror Neurons

Is it Burnout...Vicarious Trauma...or Both?

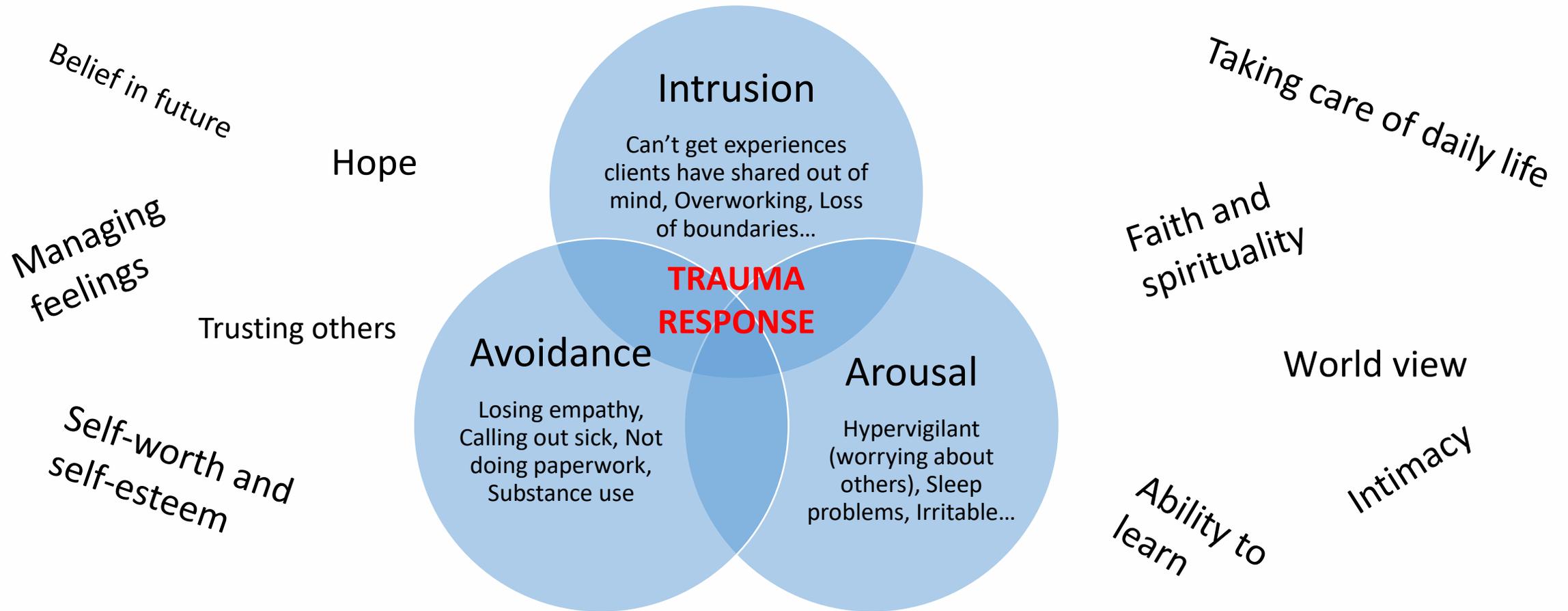
Burnout

Burnout can occur in any kind of workplace, when resources are limited, workloads feel unmanageable, expectations feel unrealistic, etc.

Vicarious Trauma

Vicarious trauma, on the other hand, is a unique, and is an inevitable effect of working with trauma survivors.

How does Vicarious Trauma impact professionals...at work and at home?



A Vicarious Trauma-Informed Organization

Management and Supervision

- **Open Discussion of Vicarious Trauma**
- **Clear Communication**
- **Feedback: Positive and Constructive**
- **Explain and Clarify Roles, Responsibilities, and Performance Expectations**

**-Guidelines for a Vicarious Trauma-Informed Organization,
Office for Victims of Crime**

A Vicarious Trauma-Informed Organization

Hiring Procedures and Practices

- **Discuss potential risks of working with victims of trauma**
- **Assess knowledge of vicarious trauma**
- **Awareness and use of coping strategies**
- **Level of preparation for the role**

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Employee Health and Wellness

- **Self-Care Strategies**
- **Mental Health Services**
- **Confidential Support and Referrals**

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Assessment and Evaluation

- **Assess Impact of Vicarious Trauma**
 - Professional Quality of Life Measure
- **Evaluate interventions**
- **Performance Evaluations**
- **Feedback from Employees**

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Job Responsibilities

- **Vary Duties**
- **Alleviate Heavy Caseloads**
- **Promote Collaboration**
- **Build Vicarious Resilience**

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Empowerment and Environment

- **Safe and Comfortable**
- **Culture of Caring and Support**
- **Foster Connections**
- **Diverse Workforce**

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Training and Professional Development

- **New Staff Orientation**
- **Ongoing Education**
- **Connections with Other Organizations**

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Tools & Resources

- [Move to End Violence](#) created a 21-Day Self-Care Challenge to help build a community of activists engaged in the practice of self-care
- [The Professional Quality of Life Scale \(ProQol\)](#) is a tool to measure compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress
- [American Heart Association Resilience in the Workplace](#) provides an overview of current research around resilience in the workplace and actionable tips to implement programs
- [Center for Workplace Mental Health](#) provides tips for employers to build a resilient workforce
- The [Office for Victims of Crime Vicarious Trauma Toolkit](#) includes tools and resources to support organizations to address the vicarious trauma needs of their staff
- [Staying in Balance](#) is a free toolkit developed by Vibrant Emotional Health provides solutions for managing workplace stress
- Subsidize digital apps for employees such as: Calm, Headspace, Insight Timer, Happify

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Webinar 7: Supportive Management Practices

Webinar 8: Addressing Burnout in the Workplace

Webinar 9: Building a Peer Support Program

Webinar 10: Creating a Vicarious Trauma Informed
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References

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