



Series: Keep Doing It

Module 6: Vicarious Trauma

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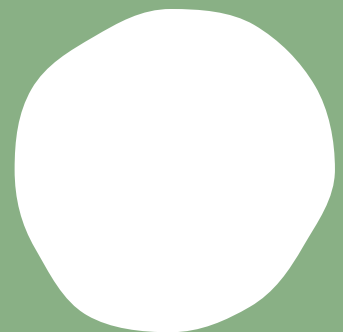
Learning Objectives



Objective 1: Examine what vicarious trauma is.



Objective 2: Demonstrate the warning signs of vicarious trauma.

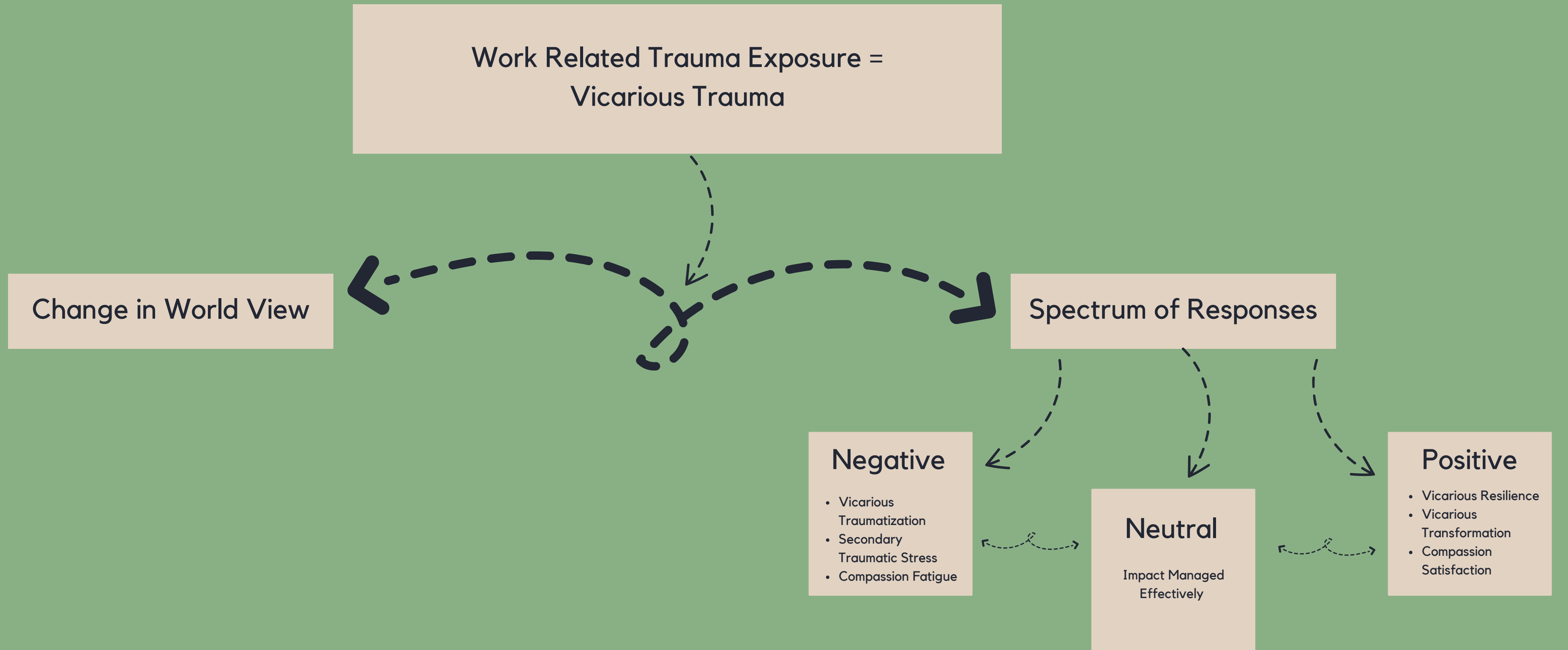


Objective 3: Illustrate a model for self-care in the workplace that is specific to addressing vicarious trauma.

What is Vicarious Trauma?

Vicarious trauma, happens when people accumulate and carry stories of trauma, including images, sounds and details, that they hear and witness.

OVC Vicarious Trauma Toolkit



Who Is at Risk of Being Affected by Vicarious Trauma?

Anyone working with survivors of trauma and violence is at risk of being negatively impacted by the varied effects of vicarious trauma. Factors that may make employees or volunteers more vulnerable to this occupational risk include.





Symptoms May Include:

- Difficulty managing emotions
- Relationship problems
- Feeling emotionally numb or shut down
- Feeling vulnerable or worrying excessively about potential dangers in the world and loved ones' safety
- Fatigue, sleepiness, or difficulty falling asleep
- Increased irritability; aggressive, explosive, or violent outbursts and behavior
- Physical problems or complaints, such as aches, pains, and decreased resistance to illness
- Destructive coping or addictive behaviors
- Being easily distracted, which can increase one's risk of accidents
- Lack of or decreased participation in activities that used to be enjoyable
- Loss of a sense of meaning in life and/or feeling hopeless about the future.
- Avoiding work and interactions with clients or constituents

How Coworkers Can Help



- Reach out and talk to them individually about the impact of the work
- Help them establish a consistent work-to-home transition that creates an important boundary and safe place outside the workplace
- Encourage them to attend to the basics—sleep, healthy eating, hygiene, and exercise
- Support connections with family, friends, and coworkers
- Refer them to organizational supports such as a peer support team, employee assistance program, or chaplain
- Encourage them to discuss their experience with their supervisor

How Supervisors Can Help



Discuss vicarious trauma as part of supervision



Allow flexible work schedules, recognizing the need for and protect down time, while staying attuned to the possibility of withdrawal or isolation



Create time and a physical space at work for reflection through reading, writing, prayer, and meditation, among other activities



Provide them with information about organizational supports.



What is Self-Care?

Self-care refers to activities and practices that we can engage in on a regular basis to reduce stress and maintain and enhance our short- and longer-term health and well-being. Self-care is necessary for your effectiveness and success in honoring your professional and personal commitments.

Examples of Self-Care

Physical



- Eat a healthy meal
- Engage in exercise
- Go for a walk
- Drink water
- Practice good sleep)
- Have a cup of tea
- Sit in the sunlight
- Take a shower or bath

Mental



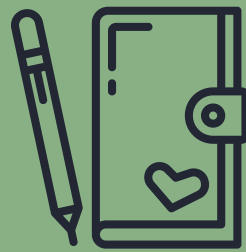
- Practice mindfulness
- Take a break
- Play video games
- Listen to music
- Read a book
- Listen to a podcast
- Reflect on things you are grateful for

Spiritual



- Pray
- Call/text a friend
- Connect with nature
- Meditate
- Engage in self-reflection

Self-Care at Work



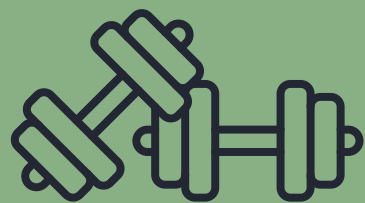
60-Second Desk Cleanup



Stay Comfortable



Keep Healthy Snack in the Office



Set a Timer for a 5 Minute Stretch



Practice Good Eye Screen Health



Keep a List of Inspiring Words and Images



Stay Hydrated



Set Boundaries for Productivity



Set a Time Schedule to Respond to Emails

References:

- https://freedomnetworkusa.org/app/uploads/2021/05/Appendix-C-SAMPLE-Trauma-Responsive-Policy_-_Supporting-Staff_508c.pdf
- <https://ovc.ojp.gov/program/vtt/what-is-vicarious-trauma#what-happens-to-those-exposed-to-vicarious-trauma>
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- <https://www.utoledo.edu/studentaffairs/counseling/selfhelp/copingskills/selfcare.html>
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