

Vicarious Trauma

Compassion Fatigue

The Cost of Caring

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COURSE OBJECTIVES

- TO BRIEFLY DEFINE AND IDENTIFY COMMON TYPES OF TRAUMA
- TO DEFINE VICARIOUS TRAUMA AND ACCOMPANYING FACTORS
- TO ADDRESS SURVIVORS GUILT; A COMMON FORM OF TRAUMA IDENTIFIED DURING THE PANDEMIC
- TO EDUCATE PARTICIPANTS ON VICARIOUS TRAUMA SIGNS AND SYMPTOM MANAGEMENT

TRAUMA DEFINED

According to SAMHSA (Substance Abuse Mental Health Service Administration), individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening with lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

TRAUMA DEFINED

Trauma occurs in layers over time, with each layer affecting every other layer. Current trauma is the outer layer. Former trauma in one's life are more fundamental inner layers.



COMMON TYPES OF TRAUMA

COMPLEX TRAUMA



Result of traumatic experiences that are interpersonal, intentional, prolonged and repeated. Often leads to immediate and long-term difficulties in many areas of functioning.

COMMON TYPES OF TRAUMA

PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA



Violence in the home, personal relationships, workplace, school, systems/institutions, or community.



Maltreatment or abuse: emotional, verbal, physical, sexual, or spiritual.



Exploitation: sexual, financial or psychological.



Change in living situation such as eviction or move to nursing home.



Neglect and deprivation.



War or armed conflict.

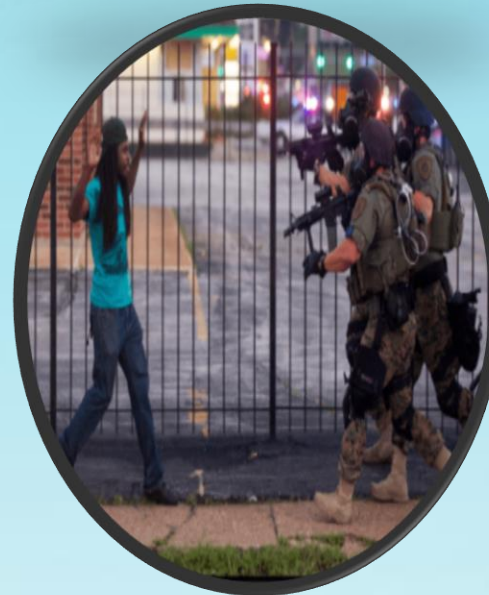


Natural or human caused disaster.

COMMON TYPES OF TRAUMA

HISTORICAL TRAUMA

Historical trauma is the cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the life span and across generations, resulting from trauma experienced by the individual's social group.



COMMON TYPES OF TRAUMA

VICARIOUS TRAUMA

According to the American Counseling Association. The term vicarious trauma (Perlman & Saakvitne, 1995), sometimes also called compassion fatigue, is the latest term that describes the phenomenon generally associated with the “cost of caring” for others (Figley, 1982). Other terms used for compassion fatigue are:

- secondary traumatic stress (Stemm, 1995, 1997)
- secondary victimization (Figley, 1982)

VICARIOUS TRAUMA

It is believed that counselors working with trauma survivors experience vicarious trauma because of the work they do. Vicarious trauma is the emotional residue of exposure that counselors have from working with people as they are hearing their trauma stories and become witnesses to the pain, fear, and terror that trauma survivors have endured.

VICARIOUS TRAUMA



It is important not to confuse vicarious trauma with “burnout”. Burnout is generally something that happens over time, and as it builds up a change, such as time off or a “new and sometimes different job”, can take care of burnout or improve it. Vicarious trauma, however, is a state of tension and preoccupation of the stories/trauma experiences described by clients.

VICARIOUS TRAUMA

This tension and preoccupation might be experienced by counselors in several ways. They might:

- avoid talking or thinking about what the trauma effected client(s) have been talking about, almost being numb to it or
- be in a persistent arousal state (i.e. paranoia, fear or develop phobias)

Counselors should be aware of the signs and symptoms of vicarious trauma and the potential emotional effects of working with trauma survivors.

VICARIOUS TRAUMA

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Having difficulty talking about their feelings
- Free floating anger and/or irritation
- Startle effect/being jumpy
- Over-eating or under-eating
- Difficulty falling asleep and/or staying asleep
- Losing sleep over patients
- Worried that they are not doing enough for their clients
- Dreaming about their clients/their clients' trauma experiences

VICARIOUS TRAUMA

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Diminished joy toward things they once enjoyed
- Feeling trapped by their work as a counselor (crisis counselor)
- Diminished feelings of satisfaction and personal accomplishment
- Dealing with intrusive thoughts of clients with especially severe trauma histories
- Feelings of hopelessness associated with their work/clients
- Blaming others

VICARIOUS TRAUMA

BEHAVIOR

Vicarious trauma can impact a counselor's professional performance and function, as well as result in errors in judgment and mistakes. Counselors may experience:

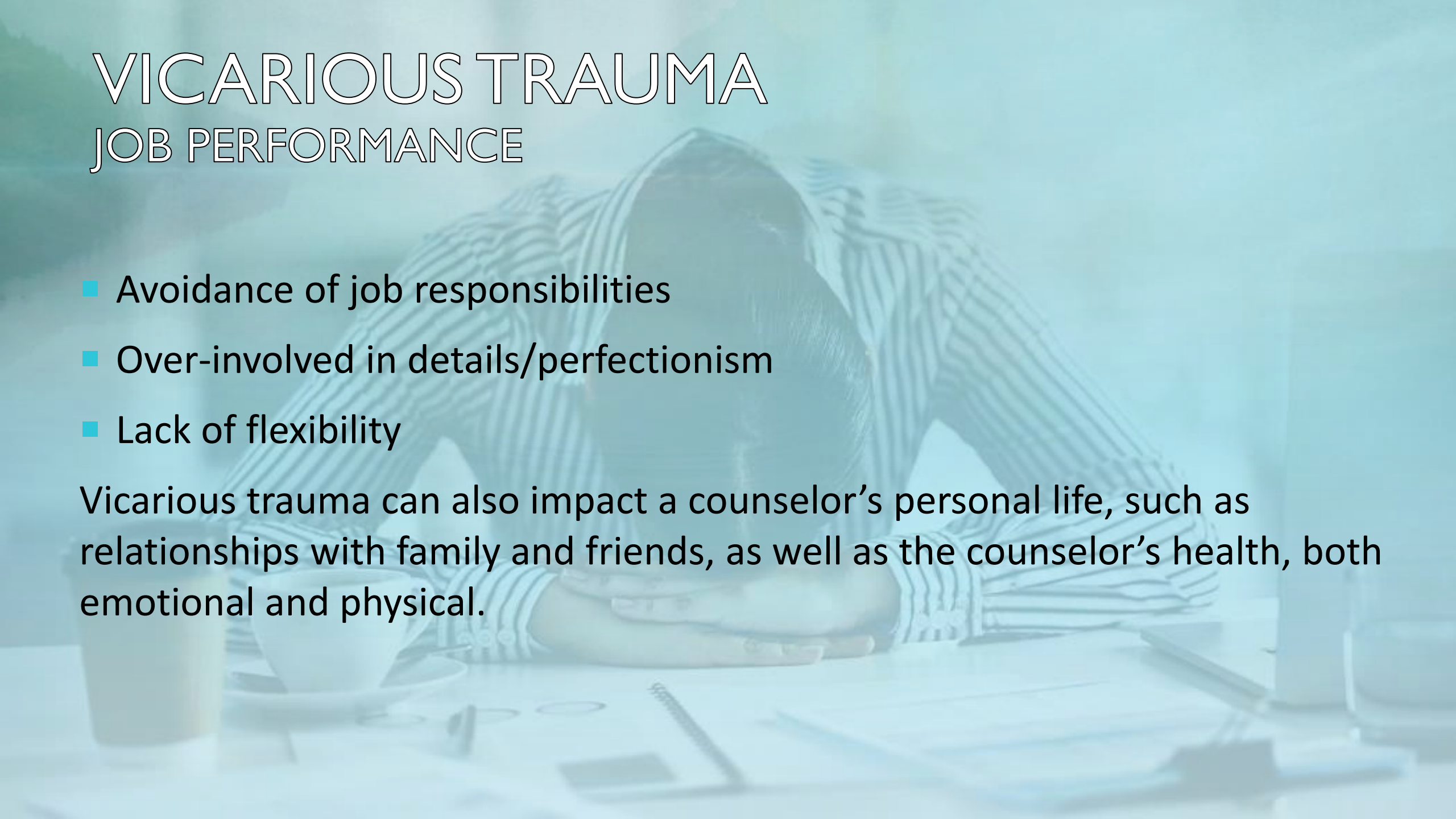
- Frequent job changes
- Tardiness
- Free floating anger/irritability
- Absenteeism
- Irresponsibility
- Overwork
- Irritability
- Exhaustion
- Talking to oneself (a critical symptom)
- Going out to avoid being alone
- Dropping out of community affairs
- Rejecting physical and emotional closeness

VICARIOUS TRAUMA

JOB PERFORMANCE

- Avoidance of job responsibilities
- Over-involved in details/perfectionism
- Lack of flexibility

Vicarious trauma can also impact a counselor's personal life, such as relationships with family and friends, as well as the counselor's health, both emotional and physical.



VICARIOUS TRAUMA

SYMPTOM MANAGEMENT

Just like any other form of trauma, it is suggested that the individual experiencing vicarious trauma seek out professional help and just like we offer evidenced based practices for our clients, we must be willing to “practice what we preach”.

VICARIOUS TRAUMA

SYMPTOM MANAGEMENT

Self-care is part of your job. It is our responsibility to take care of ourselves. It is every person's job to make sure that they are sleeping, exercising, meditating, hanging out with friends and/or doing whatever it is they need to do to recharge and manage work and nonwork life.

One person's ability or inability to deal with their exposure to trauma will affect the entire team. So model behaviors for the rest of your team. Your brain, family and colleagues will thank you.

VICARIOUS TRAUMA

SYMPTOM MANAGEMENT



VICARIOUS TRAUMA

SYMPTOM MANAGEMENT

“...Place the oxygen mask on yourself first before helping small children or others who may need your assistance.”



VICARIOUS TRAUMA

SYMPTOM MANAGEMENT

- Physical Safety
- Emotional Safety
- Peer Support and Relationship
- Trust and Transparency
- Voice, Choice and Empowerment
- Cultural Responsivity

VICARIOUS TRAUMA

SURVIVOR'S GUILT

Survivor's guilt also called survivor syndrome, is a mental condition that occurs when a person believes they have done something wrong by surviving a traumatic event when others did not, often feeling self-guilt.



VICARIOUS TRAUMA

SURVIVOR'S GUILT

Symptoms

When people survive a traumatic event, they may experience feelings of guilt about:

- Surviving when others did not.
- What they did during the traumatic event.
- What they did not do during the traumatic experience.



VICARIOUS TRAUMA

SURVIVOR'S GUILT – SYMPTOM MANAGEMENT

- Accept and allow the feelings
- Connect with others
- Use mindfulness techniques
- Practice self-care
- Do something good for others

PANDEMIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR A TRAUMA INFORMED RESPONSE FOR WORK SETTINGS

- Support Regulations
- Prioritize Relationships
- Explain the “Why”
- Help Staff and Know What to Expect.
- Reframe Behaviors

VICARIOUS TRAUMA

SUMMARY

Vicarious trauma is not a sign of weakness. It is the cost of working with people who have experienced trauma and abuse – of bearing witness and of empathic engagement with those affected.

It is important to differentiate vicarious trauma from compassion fatigue and burnout, with which it is often confused, and yet commonly co-exists. While the phenomenon of vicarious trauma is widely acknowledged, it can be challenging to recognize and deal with it. It's dynamics and ripple effects are complex, pervasive and damaging.

As any type of trauma, vicarious trauma is treatable with professional help and self care.

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