

UNDERSTANDING & MANAGING VICARIOUS TRAUMA

To help reduce vicarious trauma, it is helpful for the person to:

1. Be aware of their own limits and needs, emotions and resources
2. Have balance among life activities
3. Have a connection to themselves, others and something larger

Once vicarious trauma is identified, one must undertake to restore their connections to themselves, family and friends and the wider community. It is important to include:

Self care

- Reconnect with your body through exercise, or massage
- Set limits, particularly on being helpful
- Practice healthy habits, especially sleep and nutrition
- Make connection to something beyond oneself a priority
- Live in the NOW, the moment

Self nurturance through

- Seeking gentleness
- Focusing on pleasure
- Relaxation and play

Escape by

- Getting away from work, especially mentally
- Engaging in fantasy and positive imagining or visualisation
- Maximising opportunities for pleasurable positive thoughts
- Looking at beautiful things e.g. the art gallery, flowers, etc
- Listen to music

It is also important to

- Challenge your negative beliefs
- Participate in community-building activities
- Infuse current activities with meaning – the power of simplicity
- Follow a passion

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Professionally

- Understand the nature and impact of your role
- Give supervision for oneself and others
- Manage your client load and expectations of yourself
- Establish a variety of tasks and clients
- Maintain and manage professional development – positive input
- Seek collegial support / external support e.g., EAP
- Ask for appropriate resources
- Watch boundaries and ensure your personal space is respected

MAKING A COMMITMENT TO YOURSELF

Vicarious trauma can affect us in a variety of ways – personal, professional and organisational.

Jot down three things you could do to address various trauma in each category – think both in terms of yourself and what is possible within your team.

Personal

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Professional

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Action steps

- Circle the above in each category that you plan to do this week.
- Asterisk the strategies that you could plan to implement this month.

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