Objectives

Define vicarious trauma and its symptoms

Understand how we are transformed and impacted by the work we do.

Identify effects of vicarious trauma

Examine ways to cope with vicarious trauma
Trauma Work:

- Demanding and requires the use of one’s self and a relationship with the client
- Necessitates both containment and often re-visiting of painful issues
- Requires vulnerability & empathy
Trauma Exposure Response

- The transformation that takes place within us as a result of exposure to the suffering of other living beings or the planet.

- The ways in which the world looks and feels like a different place as a result of the work we do.

Laura Vandernoot Lipsky, Trauma Stewardship
“I'm afraid you have humans.”

Lewis
Trauma Exposure Response

- Sense of self/identity
- Worldview
- Personal Relationships
- Spirituality
- Physical body & function
“Exposure to others’ trauma doubles the risk that social workers will experience post-traumatic stress disorder.”

“. . . While the rate of secondary trauma among social workers is high, their awareness of trauma’s effects on them is low.”

Brian Bride, University of Georgia
Vicarious Trauma vs. Burnout

**Vicarious Trauma:**
- I still do care
- Temporary - take a break
- Loss of fuel and energy
- Over-engagement
- Physical damage

**Burnout:**
- I don’t care anymore
- Requires more than a break
- Loss of ideals and hope
- Disengagement
- Emotional/Spiritual damage
“My question is: Are we making an impact?”
MOON, SHMOON.
Signs of Vicarious Trauma

- Feeling hopeless and helpless
- A sense that one can never do enough
- Hypervigilance
- Diminished creativity
- Inability to embrace complexity
- Minimizing
- Chronic exhaustion/physical ailments
- Inability to listen/deliberate avoidance
- Dissociative moments
- Sense of Persecution
- Guilt
- Fear
- Anger & cynicism
- Inability to empathize/numbing
- Addictions
- Grandiosity
Hypervigilance

“I bark at everything. Can’t go wrong that way.”
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- Grandiosity
Inability to Embrace

"I'll be happy to give you innovative thinking. What are the guidelines?"
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- Inability to empathize/ numbing
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- Grandiosity
Dissociative Moments

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I've decided to forgive you, and stop ignoring you.

You were ignoring me?
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• Inability to empathize/ numbing
• Addictions
• Grandiosity
Grandiosity

AND WHY DO WE THINK WE NEED TO SEE A DOCTOR TODAY?
Trauma Stewardship

“Eventually, I’d like to see you able to put yourself back together.”
Resiliency

- Open the inquiry: Why am I doing this work? What intention do I bring to my work?
- “Felt Sense”
- Resourcing
- Plan B: “if I weren’t doing this work, what would I love to do?”
- Practice “fierce compassion”
- Moving Energy Through
- Gratitude
Reframing our approach to this work

It is a gift to be present when people deal with trauma

This work can often nurture our capacity to help

By participating in trauma stewardship we are reminded of the privilege and sacredness of being called to help
Things to Remember

- An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure

- Even staff who don’t come in direct contact with clients can be equally affected by the stories

- There is only one of you and you are important to the work you do
“Can I call you back, Ed? I’m in the moment here.”
Resources

*Trauma Stewardship* by Laura Van Dernoot Lipsky

*Trauma & Recovery* by Judith Herman

Kacy Silverstein, TN Coalition to End Domestic & Sexual Violence
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We are here to help!

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