

Inside Trauma



A Word from the Editor

Doctors, nurses, psychologists and other health care professionals are there for us in times of distress. They are a shoulder to cry on, an ear to listen to and a support in a time of need. However, while we lean on them, they rarely have someone to lean on. The build-up of the traumatic experiences of their patients, be it the death of a loved one, a serious injury or an accident can leave those professionals hurting.

Awareness of the health of our health professionals is becoming a more prominent topic of conversation. Vicarious Trauma, burnout and compassion fatigue are a risk in the health profession. This is due to the amount of support they provide and the traumas they witness or are a part of. It can be difficult for some of them to separate the stress encountered from their life outside of work. The promotion of self-care for those in the helping profession is vital.

WorkSafe Victoria and the Department of Health and Human Services ran a campaign bringing awareness to the violence and aggression experienced by health care professionals. These risks of aggression can do as much harm and contribute to the vulnerability of developing vicarious trauma, burnout and compassion fatigue.

Keep reading for more discussions on the different presentations and ways in which to prevent or support those with vicarious trauma as well as the differences between vicarious trauma and burnout. Remember that self-care is vital, and to take a minute for yourself.

Emily Clinch
Editor



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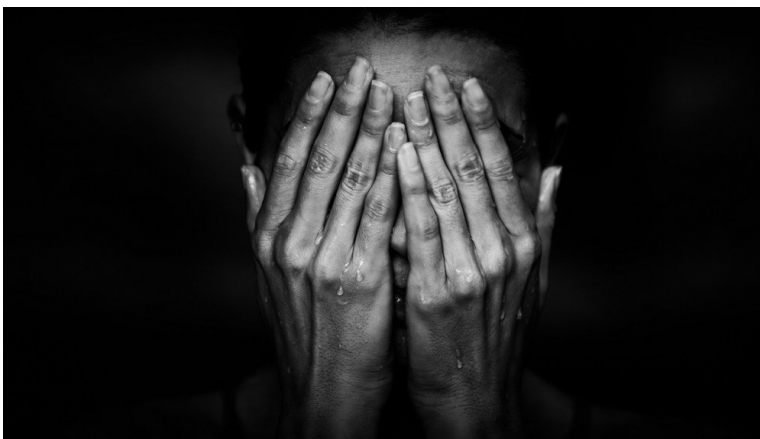
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Vicarious Trauma in the Helping Profession

Vicarious Traumatization (VT) is defined by Pearlyman and Saakvitne (1995, p.31), as the “negative effects of caring about and caring for others”. VT is the “cumulative transformation in the inner experience of the therapist that comes about as a result of empathic engagement with client’s traumatic material”. Empathy is the helper’s greatest asset and also possibly his/her greatest liability.

Work in the helping profession involves being exposed to emotionally disturbing information from children to adults. Our/their ability to engage and empathise with clients about their stories and narratives through play, listening, informal conversation and direct counselling arouses a response of validation, understanding and acute history gives acknowledgment that are understood. Continued exposure to traumatic material can impact emotionally and psychologically on the receiver of information. Vicarious Trauma is the impact of debilitating emotional and psychological impact of others upon the helper/listening which changes and challenges a person’s view of the world. While the evidence suggest that vicarious trauma is accumulative over time affecting cognitive functioning and challenging core values of self.



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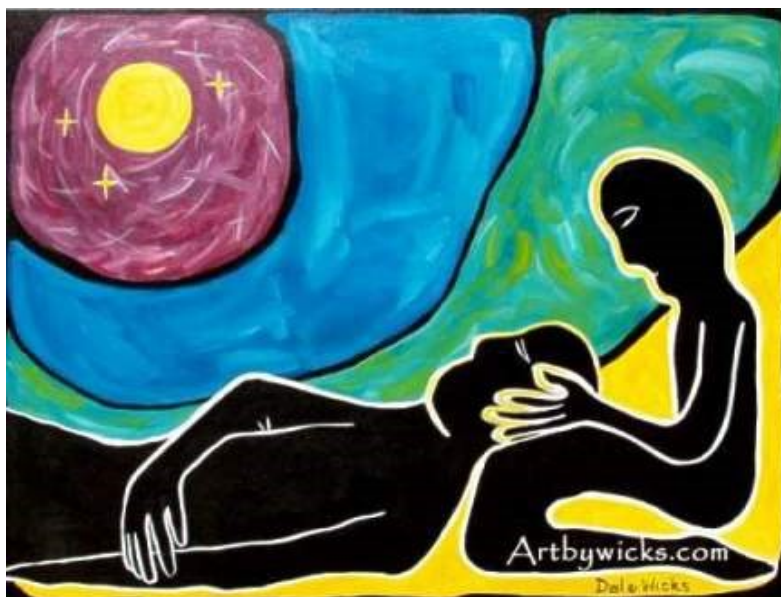


Reducing the risks and managing the vicarious trauma can involve the following

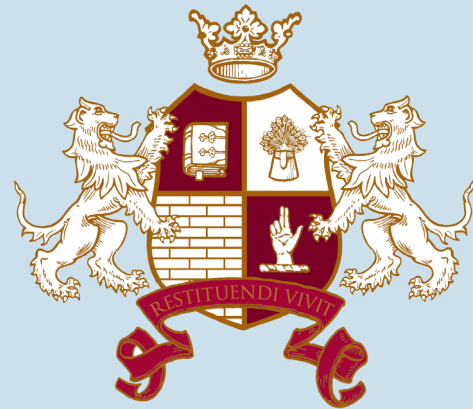
- Being aware of normal reaction to the trauma
- Discussing work related issues with peers, managers or employees assistance counsellors
- Self-care involves balance between work and personal life
- Seek professional supervision
- Seek professional education and developing skills to foster stress management strategies

Caring for one-self allows us to develop models that can be utilized for future stressor, more over it allows us to re-balance.

Peter Horton
Psychologist



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Vicarious Trauma Signs and Symptoms

Vicarious Trauma can be expressed in many ways, some people may become quiet and reclusive, others may throw themselves into their work and others may experience outbursts of anger or sadness. Those around them may also be experiencing those symptoms even though they were not involved in the traumatic incident. This is known as Vicarious Trauma, or Secondary Trauma and it is the emotional reaction to the pain of others through their experience of trauma.

Vicarious Trauma presents very similarly to Trauma, the significant difference is that the person themselves has not experienced the trauma first hand. In workplaces employees can find it hard to separate their personal traumas from their work life. Personal traumas such as death or illness in the family, accidents or a combination of incidents can have a significant impact on their personal well-being as well as their productivity at work. It is important to be aware of an employee's traumatic struggles.

There are a few things workplaces can do in order to care for their employees who are experiencing trauma. These can be as simple as ensuring employees feel safe to talk to a manager about their struggles to organising seminars in psychoeducation. Offering counselling and support can also make a significant difference to the employee's wellbeing. Vicarious Trauma can be experienced differently and it is important that employees are able to work through their problems in a safe and supportive environment.

Emily Clinch
Postgraduate Psychol-
ogy Student



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““Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out”

Robert Collier

“I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.”

Nelson Mandela

“Believe in yourself and you're halfway there”

Theodore Roosevelt



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Did You Know the Difference Between Vicarious Trauma and Burnout?

The difference is that secondary trauma can happen suddenly in one session while burnout is a response to an accumulation of exposure to the pain of others (Figley, 1995). The question of what comes first is similar to the chicken and the egg.

Burnout is a state of chronic stress that leads to physical and emotional exhaustion. It is also related to “compassion fatigue”, another phenomenon from child welfare workers which states that a worker no longer is able to feel empathy for child/families they are caring for.

Burnout however, is reflected by prolonged physical and psychological exhaustion related to one's work, it can be recognised by some of the following common signs,

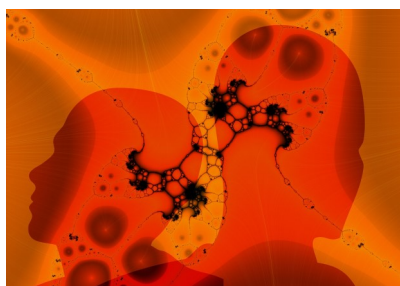
- Physical and Emotional Stress
- Low Job Satisfaction
- Feeling Frustrated
- Frequent Sick Days
- Frequent Mental Health Days
- Irritability and Anger

If you find yourself experiencing these symptoms then you can

- Reach out to someone (e.g. EAP, Psychcare 24/7, psychologist)
- Find a way to escape physically and/or mentally
- Rest
- Play

In the helping profession there are many challenges and also many positive rewards. In order to keep us mentally in charge, self-care is extremely important. Take a moment and reflect wherever you are.

Peter Horton
Psychologist



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Trauma and Psychology Interest Group presents...

**“Demystifying EMDR therapy and its use in trauma—
Where psychology meets physiology”**

When: Monday,
21 May 2018

6pm - 8:30pm

Where: Melbourne Multicultural Hub,
506 Elizabeth St,
Melbourne 3000

Presenter: Dr Darra Murphy

To register, contact
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