

Vicarious Trauma: Narrative and Mindfulness

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Burn out, Compassion Fatigue, Vicarious Traumatization

Vicarious traumatization (VT) is a transformation in the self of a **trauma** worker or helper that results from empathic engagement with **traumatized** clients and their reports of traumatic experiences. Its hallmark is disrupted spirituality, or a disruption in the **trauma** workers' perceived meaning and hope. -Wikipedia

Objectives

- Define Vicarious Trauma
- Understand Trauma's impact on the brain
- Explore Narrative Therapies approach to Vicarious Trauma
- Explore Mindfulness Therapies approach to Vicarious Trauma

Everyone in this room is a situational expert on this subject.

Today will be full of information, and discussion.

I hope you will feel safe enough to share your thoughts.

2nd Most Stressful Job in America

- In 2013, Business Insider Magazine ranked being a mental health counselor the 2nd most stressful job in the USA.
- #1 was being a cop. And we make 1/2 as much \$\$\$.
- We are higher on the list than air traffic controllers and surgeons .

Worried you're not doing enough,
losing sleep.

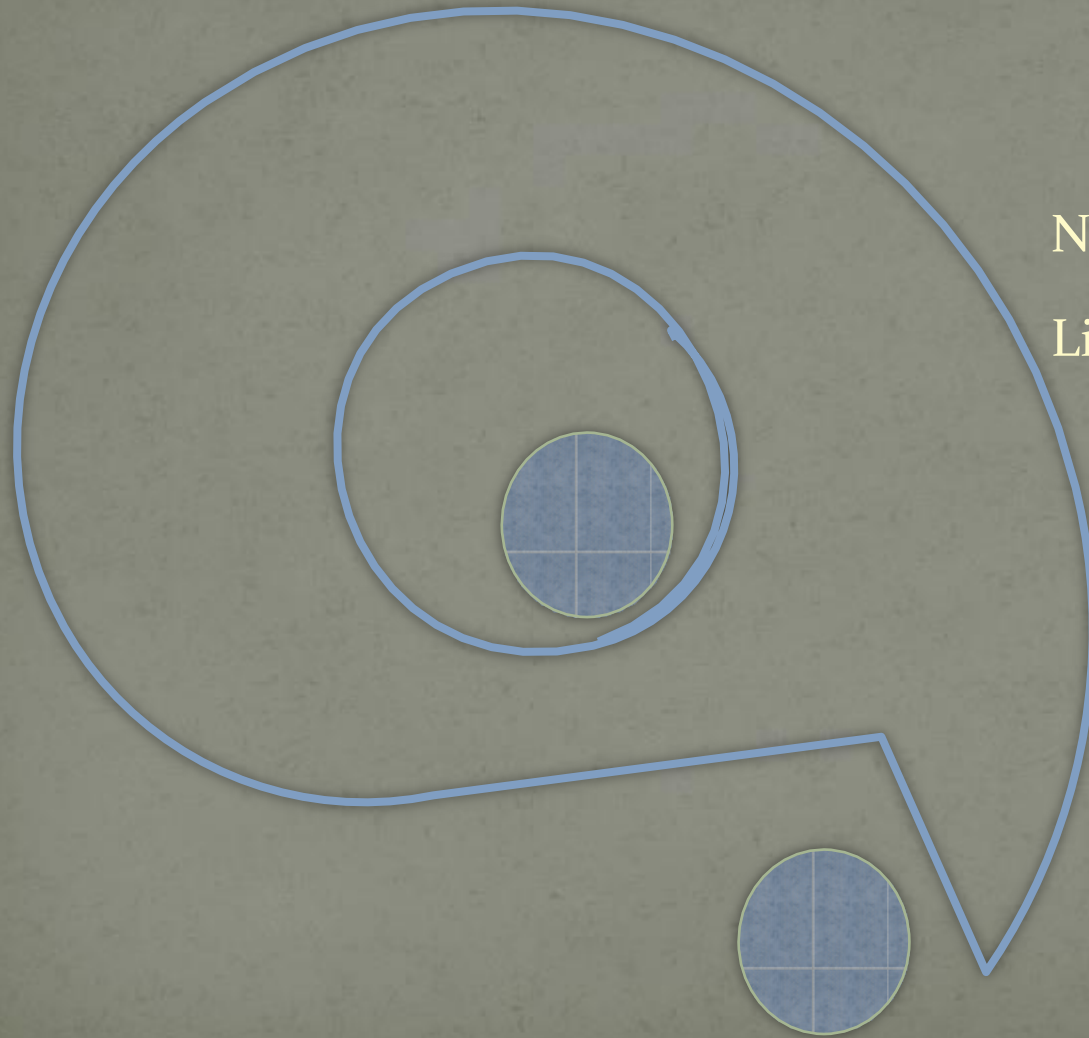
Feeling trapped in your
work, feeling hopeless.

Blaming others, diminished joy,
intrusive thoughts.

What you gain from the work?

What are draw backs of the work?

Trauma and the Brain



Neocortex- reason

Limbic System - emotions

Reptilian - instincts

Overactive Adrenal
response

“Life does not give you any thing you
can not handle.
And it is all in the handling.”

-John Trudell

“In a study of 151 community mental health workers in Northern California, Webster and Hackett (1999) found that 54% had high emotional exhaustion and 38% reported high depersonalization rates, but most reported high levels of personal accomplishment as well.”

-National Institute of Health

Pat Ogden's types of responses to trauma:

Fight

Flight

Freeze

Faint

Cry

This meta-analysis of 38 published studies examines 17 risk factors for STS among professionals indirectly exposed to trauma through their therapeutic work with trauma victims.

- trauma caseload volume ($r = .16$)
- personal trauma history ($r = .19$)
- work support ($r = -.17$)
- social support ($r = -.26$)

Hensel, JM (2015)

Chronic Stress

- Shrinks the size of the hippocampus
 - impacting decision making and the ability to self regulate
 - Microglia cells overreact
 - mood fluctuations and poor executive functioning

Statistics

“Working with perpetrators of sexual abuse was found to have a negative impact, with 46.2% of the sample presenting at a moderate or higher risk of developing Compassion Fatigue.”

Steed, 2001

Stay on the Boat



“I was working with homeless youth - many of whom had traumatic backgrounds, dual diagnoses, self-harming and were often suicidal. For several months I had low energy, wasn't able to sleep well the nights before I worked, I was avoiding seeing my friends and always had an upset stomach. I did enjoy the work. I think that's why it was so hard to see I was wearing myself out.”

History

Field of nursing and its contributions

“Expectation that providing a specific level of care will ultimately lead to positive outcomes for every patient is not only unrealistic and naïve but may set nurses up for stress when they are unable to meet their expected goals.”

- Laschinger & Finegan, 2005; Leiter, 2005

Image or words that describe you as a professional and as a rescuer.

Professional

Rescuer

Narrative Therapy

With respect, and a non-blaming which allows people to be experts in their own lives. The problems are viewed as separate from people and assumes people have many skills, and abilities that will help them to reduce the influence of problems in their lives.

Karen Saakvitne's 9 questions (1995)

How has working with traumatized clients impacted:

- Beliefs about the world
- Spiritual beliefs
- Sense of self, groundedness, emotional stability
- Sense of personal safety or family's safety
- Trust of yourself or others
- The way you judge people
- Sense of control
- Ability to be alone, to be with others
- Relationship to your body

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Follow up questions

What themes did you notice?

Any surprises?

Mindfulness Theory

“When we encounter an event or loss that hurts us enough, it pushes us into an emergency state, and can activate thoughts, perspectives, and behaviors that, paradoxically, add to suffering. We may feel so “bad” that we end up thinking that we are bad, we may blame ourselves for what happened, and expect it to happen again. And, in our pain, we may do whatever we can to feel less overwhelmed. We may use alcohol or drugs, distracting behaviors, dissociation, or denial. Or we may withdraw from the world, pull into ourselves, and stay there. All these reactions are perfectly understandable.

John Briere, Ph.D

Guided Meditation

Take a breath

Smile and say:

“You are doing a good job.”

“How does it feel?”

When Helping Hurts

Resources

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Resources

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Resources

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