Vicarious Trauma: Managing the Inevitable
NSW Rape Crisis Centre
Working against sexual violence

24/7 state-wide telephone and online crisis intervention, support counselling and referral for: victims of sexual assault whether the assault happened recently or in the past, family and friends of someone who has been sexually assaulted, and anyone who has assisted a person who has been sexually assaulted and needs to debrief.

Counselling 1800 424 017  www.nswrapecrisis.com.au

Administration
Telephone 02 9819 7357  Facsimile 02 9819 6295
info@nswrapecrisis.com.au

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Definitions

• Burnout
• Compassion fatigue
• Secondary Traumatic Stress
• Vicarious Trauma
What is Vicarious Trauma?

The effects upon workers of providing service to traumatized populations or witnessing the aftermath of a traumatic event.
Vicarious Trauma

- Beneficial Effects (Salutogenic)
- Neutral Effects
- Detrimental Effects

**Secondary Traumatic Stress**
- Re-experiencing symptoms
- Avoidance symptoms
- Increased arousal

**Cognitive Changes**
- Frame of reference
- Self capacities
- Ego resources
- Psychological Needs
Stories of VT
Costs of Vicarious Trauma

- Decreased performance quality and quantity
- Replacement recruiting, orientation and training
- Excess on worker’s compensation claims
- Increased Insurance premiums
- Possible professional misconduct
- Possible professional indemnity claims

> $74,000 per year
(based on staff of 14 over 203 hours per week)
Risk factors for Vicarious Trauma

- Worker’s history of trauma
- Exposure to trauma material
So Vicarious Trauma is

• Inevitable – an OH&S risk
• Not about worker weakness/inadequacy
• An organizational responsibility
Detrimental VT Continuum

Minimal Symptoms  Psychological Injury
The Role of Management

1. Acknowledge the risk
2. Reduce the risk
3. Build resilience
4. Monitor symptoms
5. Early Intervention
1. Acknowledge the Risk

Build a Culture of Inevitability
2. Reduce the Risk

1. Elimination  X
2. Substitution  X
3. Isolation     X
4. Admin & Training  ✓
Administrative and Training Procedures

Reduce level of risk with

- Professional Development re the role
- Professional Development re VT
- Supervision
- Shift Handover
3. Build Resilience

- Individual nature of VT
- Tailored self care packages
- Linked to measurable outcomes
4. Monitor Vicarious Trauma

Monitor Levels of VT Using:

- Direct monitoring – STS and Cognitive Change
- Indirect monitoring – QA and Sick Leave
5. Early Intervention

Manage symptoms with

- 24 hr On-Call Support
- Follow up in Supervision
## Costs of Managing VT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Costs of VT Management</th>
<th>Costs of not managing VT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admin Support</td>
<td>Insurance premium increases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisory support</td>
<td>Excess on insurance claims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-call wages</td>
<td>Recruitment and orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 min handover</td>
<td>Additional sick leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Care packages</td>
<td>Supervisory support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$ 700</td>
<td>$ 36,672</td>
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<tr>
<td>$ 2,436</td>
<td>$ 170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$28,992</td>
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<tr>
<td>$16,425</td>
<td>$ 4,032</td>
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<tr>
<td>$21,000</td>
<td>$ 4,872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total per year</strong></td>
<td><strong>$50,561</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>$74,738</strong></td>
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Saving almost $25,000 per year
## Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-VT Management</th>
<th>Post-VT Management</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of sick leave entitlements taken</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers Comp Claims from VT</td>
<td>2 per year</td>
<td>0 for 8 years</td>
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Outcomes
3 Keys

- Accepting the risk is inevitable
- Positive management – staff relationships
- Multi-pronged approach
Contact Us

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