

Staff Wellbeing Seminar

Vicarious Trauma: A potential risk for staff exposed to the trauma of others

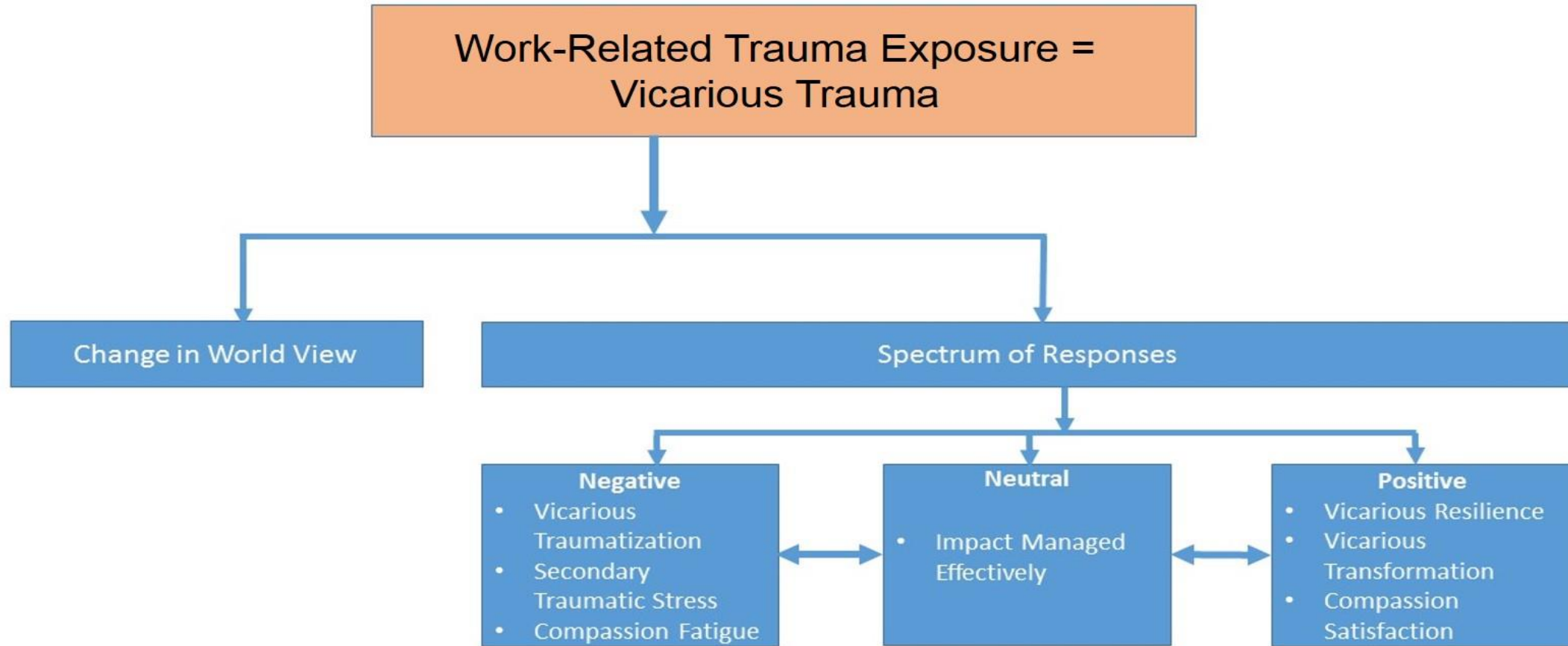
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Vicarious Trauma (From The Vicarious Trauma Toolkit <https://ovc.ojp.gov/program/vtt/what-is-vicarious-trauma#vtt-model>)

- ***Vicarious trauma*** is work related trauma that can be experienced by people working in roles where there is continuous exposure to victims of trauma and violence..... can occur from such experiences as listening to individual clients recount their victimization; looking at videos of exploited children; **reviewing case files**; hearing about or responding to the aftermath of violence and other traumatic events day after day

Vicarious Trauma Toolkit Model



Vicarious Trauma

• **What might make people vulnerable?**

- prior traumatic experiences;
- social isolation, both on and off the job;
- a tendency to avoid feelings, withdraw, or assign blame to others in stressful situations;
- difficulty expressing feelings;
- lack of preparation, orientation, training, and supervision in their jobs;
- being newer employees and less experienced at their jobs;
- constant and intense exposure to trauma with little or no variation in work tasks; and
- lack of an effective and supportive process for discussing traumatic content of the work.

• **Negative Responses**

- Difficulty managing emotions;
- Feeling emotionally numb or shut down;
- Fatigue, sleepiness, or difficulty falling asleep;
- Physical problems or complaints
- Being easily distracted
- Loss of sense of meaning in life/hopelessness
- Worrying excessively about potential dangers in the world and loved one's safety
- Increased irritability
- Destructive coping behaviours
- Avoiding work & related interaction
- A combination of symptoms that comprise a diagnosis of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Applying socio-ecological model to VT

(Guidelines for the prevention and management of vicarious trauma among researchers of sexual and intimate partner violence. (2015). Sexual Violence Research Initiative. Pretoria: South Africa.)

	RISK FACTOR	PROTECTIVE FACTOR
ORGANISATIONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - tolerating or not responding to VT - stigma associated with VT - lack of support for self-care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strategies to identify and respond to VT - self-care and team working valued & included in policies and training
PROJECT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exposure to traumatic subject - No safety planning or recognition of the need to address VT in project plans - Working in isolation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - researcher safety built into project design - researcher trained to recognise VT and management strategies - Team approach to 'debriefing' and consistent check-ins with managers and colleagues - Connection with other similar projects
INDIVIDUAL Blurred work/home boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - young age and inexperience - personal coping style - Lack of support - Personal history & exposure to subject - Previous exposure to VT that was unrecognised or stigmatised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - recognition of importance of self care - Recognition of the impact of researching the issue on wellbeing - Knowledge of what to do and where to access support - Belief that research will be used for positive change