

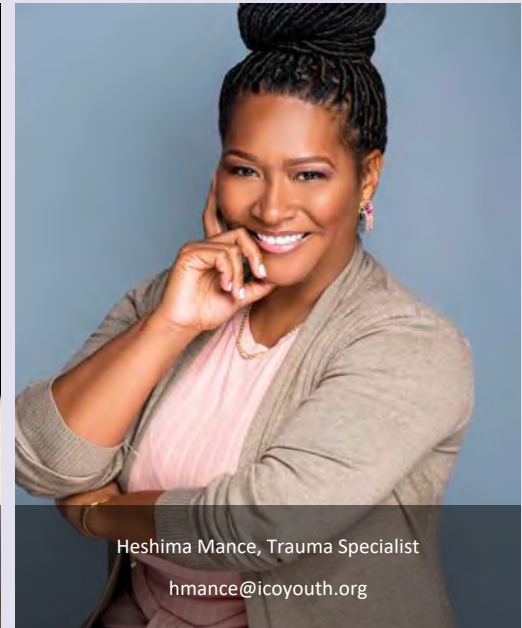
# Vicarious Trauma

The Cost of Caring



Partnering to build brighter futures

# Meet your Presenters-ICOY Trauma Team





## Ice Breaker Polls! Which meal is your favorite

- A. Breakfast
- B. Lunch
- C. Dinner
- D. Breakfast for Dinner
- E. Do snacks count?



# Objectives



**Provide an overview of trauma and its impact.**



**Discuss the differences between various trauma types and terms to promote better understanding and identification to address vicarious trauma.**



**Contextualize concepts by examining systemic issues that can contribute to vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue.**



**Learn about ways to address vicarious trauma, including self-care and collective care strategies.**

# SELF-CARE CHECK-IN

HOW ARE YOU  
FEELING?

WHAT ARE  
YOUR NEEDS  
TODAY?

WHAT ARE YOU  
GRATEFUL FOR?

TAKE 1 MIN TO  
BREATHE AND  
GROUND  
YOURSELF

WHAT DO  
YOU WANT TO  
ACCOMPLISH TODAY?

Step out  
and take a  
break

Engage your  
senses

Stand up;  
stretch

Debrief –  
who can  
you talk to?



Poll: Is there one type of trauma?

- A. No
- B. Yes
- C. Not sure



Poll: Do service providers experience a unique type of trauma on the job?

- A. No
- B. Yes
- C. Not sure

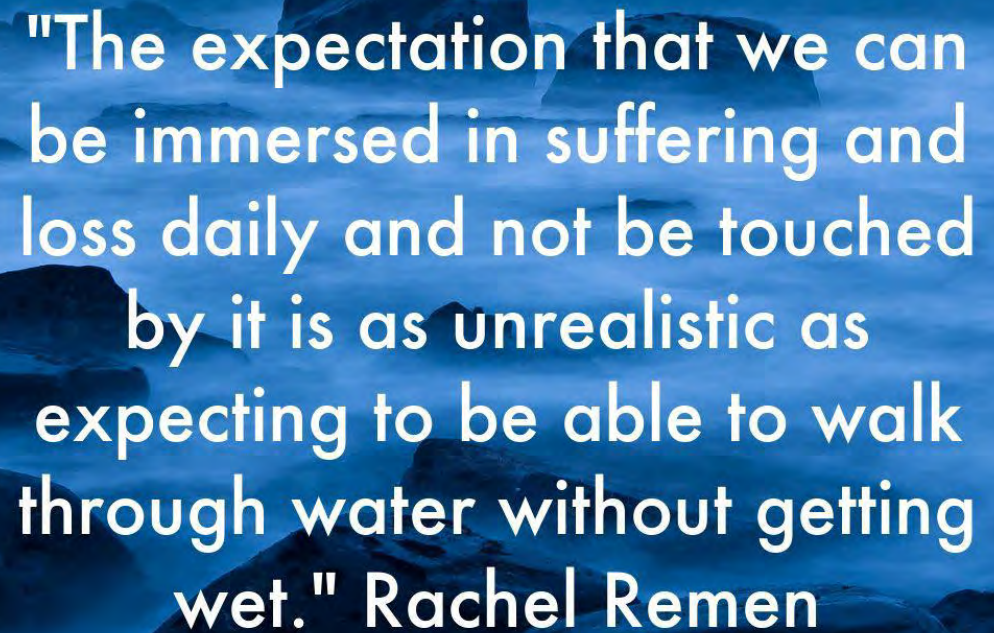


# Vicarious Trauma





Why Care  
About  
Vicarious  
Trauma?



"The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet." Rachel Remen

# What is Vicarious Trauma?

**Vicarious Trauma** refers to the ***cumulative*** effect of working with survivors of traumatic life events. Anyone who engages empathically with victims or survivors is vulnerable. (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995.)

- Includes:
  - Identity
  - Sense of Safety
  - Ability to Trust
  - Self-esteem
  - Intimacy
  - Sense of Control

# Signs of Vicarious Trauma

Emotional	Behavioral	Physical	Spiritual	Cognitive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prolonged grief.</li> <li>• Prolonged anxiety.</li> <li>• Prolonged sadness.</li> <li>• Irritability.</li> <li>• Labile mood.</li> <li>• Depression.</li> <li>• Agitation/anger.</li> <li>• Changed sense of humor.</li> <li>• Tuning out.</li> <li>• Feeling less safe in the world.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isolation.</li> <li>• Avoidance.</li> <li>• Numbing.</li> <li>• Staying at work longer.</li> <li>• Not being able to separate work from personal life.</li> <li>• Increased alcohol consumption.</li> <li>• Undertaking risky behaviors.</li> <li>• Avoiding people or duties.</li> <li>• Difficulty sleeping.</li> <li>• Changed eating habits.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Headaches.</li> <li>• Hives or rashes.</li> <li>• Heartburn.</li> <li>• Migraines.</li> <li>• Stomach ulcers.</li> <li>• Tics.</li> <li>• Anxiety.</li> <li>• Hot Sweats.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changed relationship with meaning and hope.</li> <li>• Lack of sense of purpose.</li> <li>• Decreased sense of agency.</li> <li>• Reduced sense of connection to others.</li> <li>• Challenged to maintain a sense of self as viable, worth loving, deserving.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cynicism.</li> <li>• Becoming judgmental of others.</li> <li>• Negativity.</li> <li>• Thinking about clients' traumas when at home/not at work.</li> <li>• Difficulty thinking clearly, concentrating, and remembering things.</li> <li>• Difficulty making day-to-day decisions.</li> </ul>

From *Living Well*, Australian organization supporting male survivors of sexual assault





## Resource Share: 5 Ds of Trauma Responses

# Examples of Vicarious Trauma

Rape  
Crisis Hotline  
volunteer  
begins  
to assume  
that all men  
are unsafe



A nurse finds  
himself thinking  
“Yeah, right –  
whatever,”  
in response to a  
story told by  
a friend/colleague  
with whom he  
has always had a  
trusting  
relationship

A social worker  
whose favorite  
way to relax is to  
spend time with  
her children,  
finds  
herself wishing  
they would  
go away



A  
counselor has  
nightmares  
about  
the traumatic  
experience  
of their clients



## Resource Share: Secondary Traumatic Stress & Self Care Packet

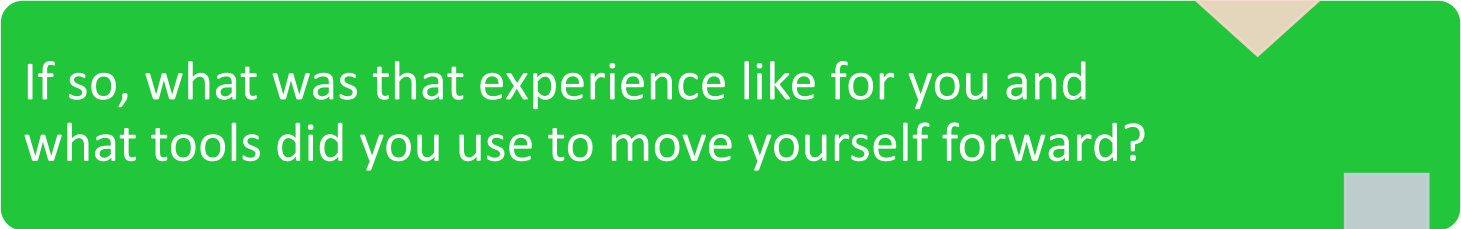


# Reflection Activity

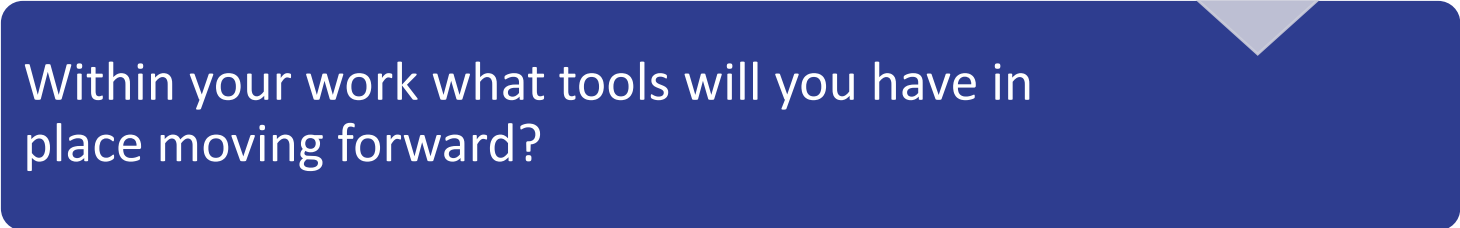
Have you noticed a time that you experienced Vicarious Trauma?

An orange rounded rectangular box containing the first question. A light orange arrow points downwards from the bottom right corner of the box to the top right corner of the green box below.

If so, what was that experience like for you and what tools did you use to move yourself forward?

A green rounded rectangular box containing the second question. A light green arrow points downwards from the bottom right corner of the box to the top right corner of the blue box below.

Within your work what tools will you have in place moving forward?

A blue rounded rectangular box containing the third question. It is the final box in the sequence and does not have a downward arrow pointing to another box.



# The Silencing Response

The Silencing Response refers to the helper's inability to attend to the stories/experiences of their clients by redirecting to material that is less distressing or uncomfortable (Baranowsky, 2002).



## Signs Include:

Changing the subject	Providing pat answers	Being angry or sarcastic with clients	Using humor to change or minimize the subject	Blaming clients for their experiences	Faking listening	Not being able to pay attention	Being afraid of what is going to be said	Suggesting the person just "get over it"
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## Recognizing Trauma

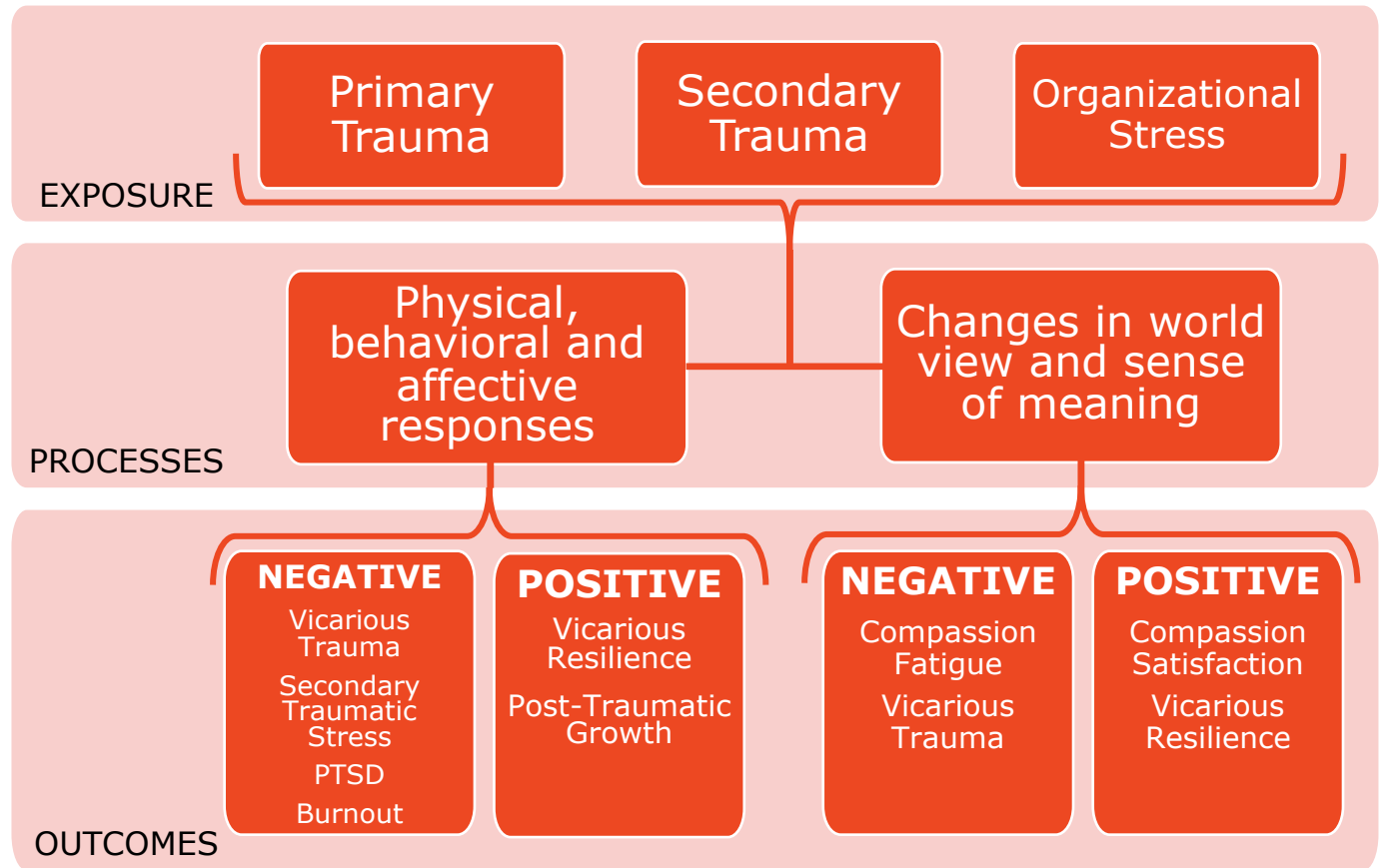
Trauma Glasses OFF	Trauma Glasses ON
Manipulative	Getting needs met in ways that have worked in the past. Doing what is necessary to survive
Lazy	Overwhelmed. Lacks the skills to make the decisions about what to do first
Resistant	Mistrust of others due to past hurt by others
Unmotivated	Depressed. Fearful. Overwhelmed. "Frozen"
Disrespectful	Feeling threaten. Unsafe

# Mindful Minute Break



# The Caring Traumas

# The Caring Traumas



## Burnout

- A state of psychological and physical exhaustion
- Results from prolonged exposure to a stressful work environment
- Includes a progressive loss of idealism, energy, and goals as the result of personal or occupational stress.

Maslach & Leiter, 2016

## Compassion Fatigue

- A decline in the ability of caregivers to empathically engage or connect with others.
- Gradual desensitization to client stories and problems
- Diminished capacity to experience joy

Alameda County Behavioral Health Care

## Secondary Traumatic Stress

- Traumatized not by direct experience, but by hearing about traumatic events experienced by others.
- **Effects similar to primary exposure** including intrusive imagery, hyperarousal, avoiding reminders, distressing emotions, and functional impairment

Cieslak, et. al, 2013

## Vicarious Trauma

- Cumulative result of empathic engagement with traumatized clients and exposure to their stories **and** symptoms
- Effects like those of primary/secondary trauma, while also including disruption to the caregiver's **sense of spirituality, meaning and/or hope**

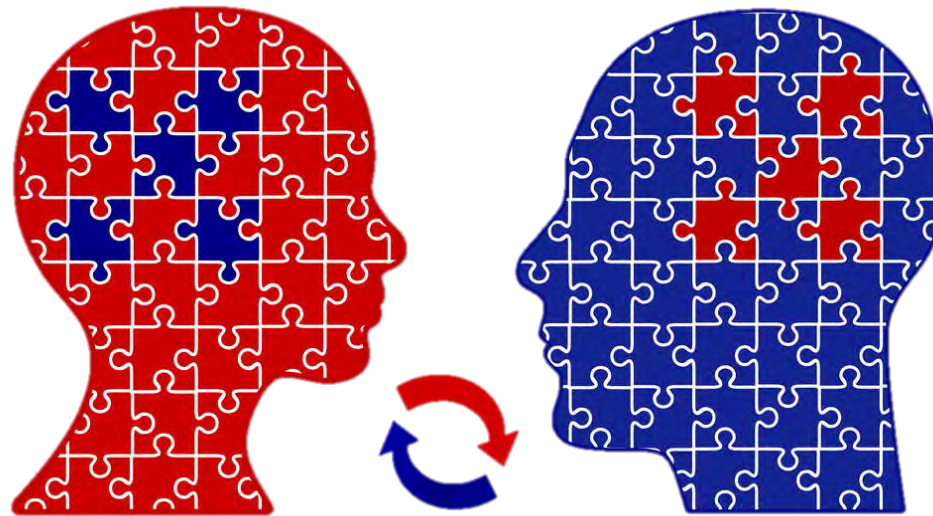
Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995.





"As we listen empathically to the stories of our clients, it becomes impossible not to enter their world and experience their pain."  
(Shallcross, 2013)

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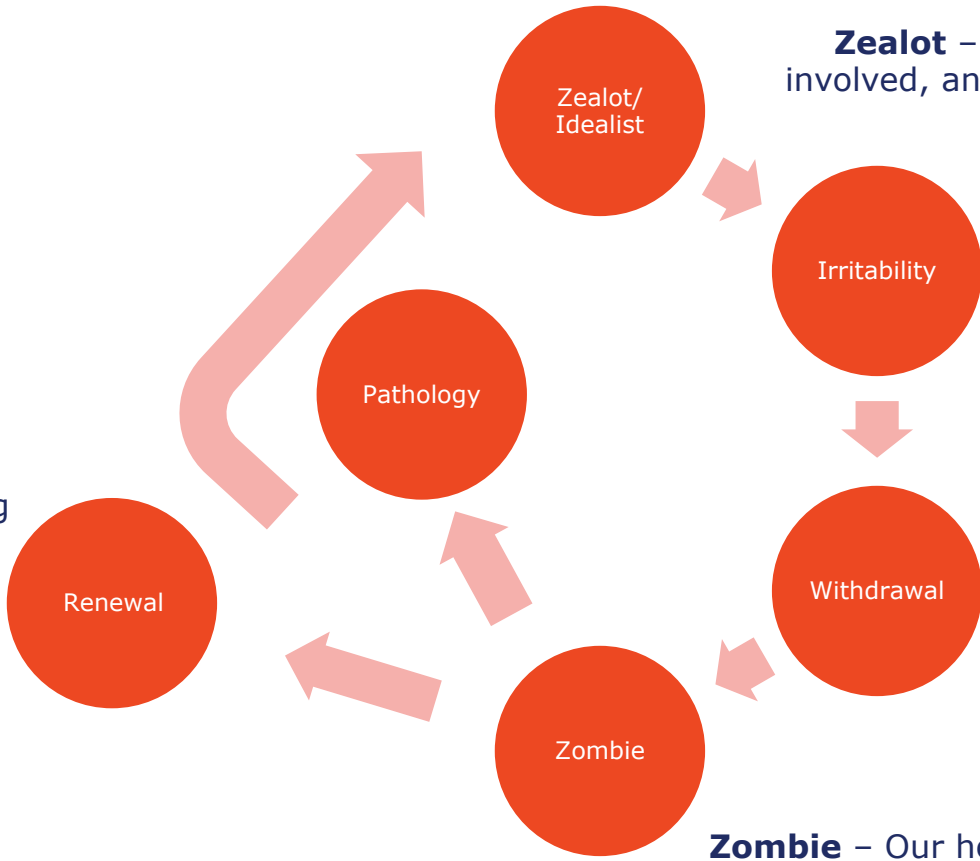




# Compassion Fatigue



**Pathology/ Renewal** - We come to a fork in the road where we either continue deeper into compassion fatigue to a place of *pathology and victimization* (overwhelmed, leaving the profession, changing positions and repeating the cycle, somatic illness) or take a turn towards *maturation and renewal* (hardiness, resiliency, transformation).



**Zealot** – We are committed, involved, and available to save the world.

**Irritability** - We see the imperfect nature of the systems and people around us. We begin to distance ourselves from clients, their families, coworkers and friends. We notices our anger, cynicism, diminished creativity, and sadness.

**Withdrawal** – The shield we put up to block the pain and sadness of our work becomes thicker. It’s more difficult to empathize with others. Clients become irritants.

**Zombie** – Our hopelessness turns to rage. We view those around us as incompetent or ignorant. We silo ourselves.

*Adapted from Eric Gentry (2012) and the Compassion Resilience Toolkit*



# Signs of Compassion Fatigue

## Compassion Fatigue: The Organization

- High absenteeism
- Constant change in coworkers relationships
- Inability for teams to work well together
- Desire among staff members to break company rules
- Outbreaks of aggressive behaviors among staff
- Inability of staff to complete assignments and tasks
- Inability of staff to respect and meet deadlines
- Lack of flexibility among staff members
- Negativity towards management
- Strong reluctance toward change
- Inability of staff to believe improvement is possible
- Lack of a vision for the future

# Self-Care and Collective Care

ZONE OF

# FABULOUSNESS

RESISTING BURNOUT & SHOULDERING EACH OTHER UP



## Individual

- Boundaries
- Saying “no”
- Unaddressed Personal Trauma
- Measuring Self-Worth by How Much You Help Others
- Poor Self-Care
- Current Life Circumstances

## Organizational

- Peer/ Supervisor Support
- Regular, Trauma-Informed Supervision
- Training
- Balanced Workload
- Access to and Ability to Take Time Off
- Ability for Staff to Bring their “Whole Selves” into Work

## Societal

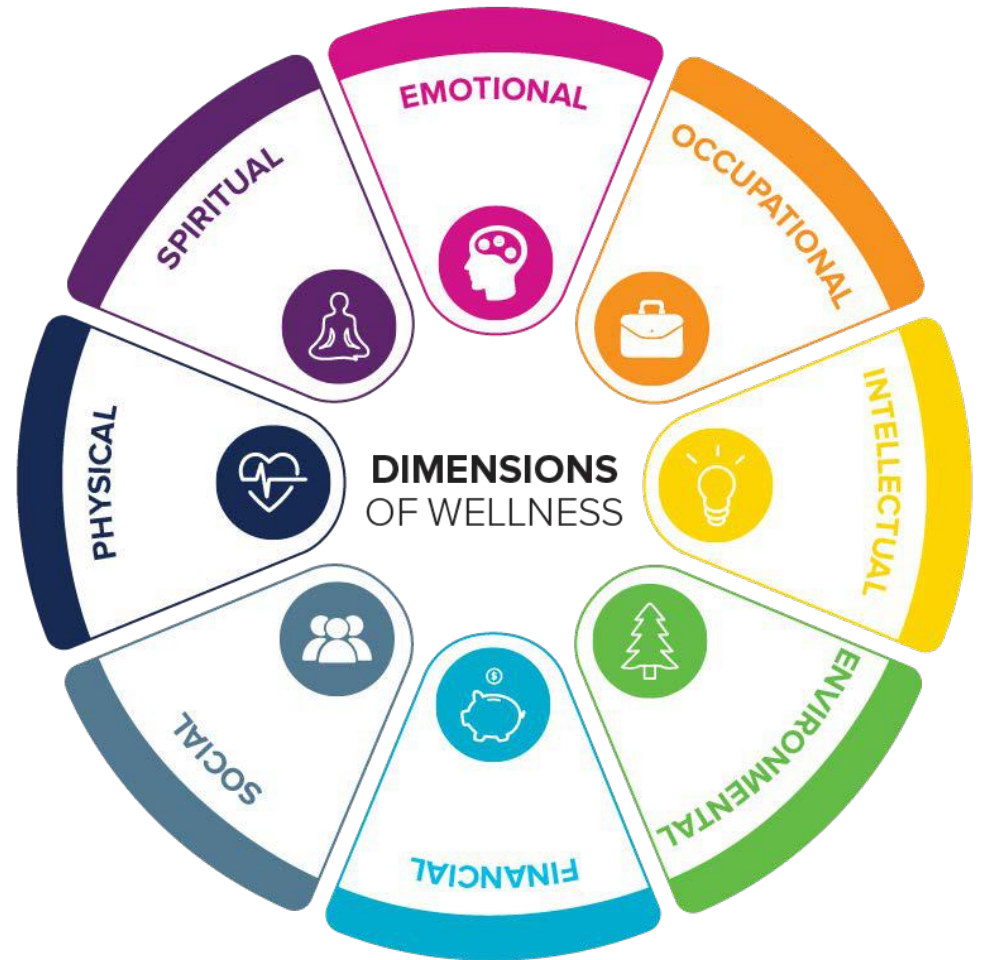
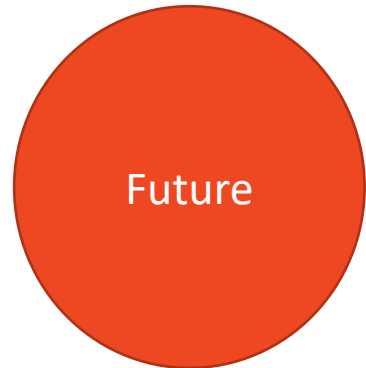
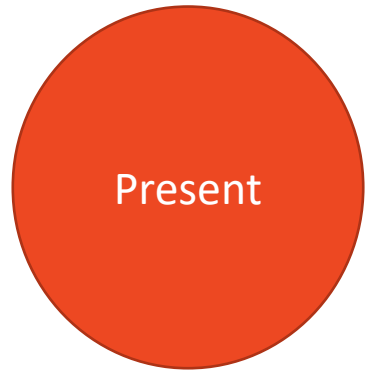
- Mismatch of Perception of and Value assigned to “Care Work”
- Funding of Nonprofits
- Screen Time
- Political Climate
- Media Violence

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Self-Care refers to any intentional actions you take to care for your physical, mental and emotional health and to alleviate or prevent the symptoms of Vicarious Trauma.



# Domains of Self-Care – Self Reflection







Chat: How will you listen to your needs  
without judgement?



## Collective Care

- Be aware of any sensitive issues or subjects that may need a trigger warning
- Be aware of any major issues happening in the personal lives of your colleagues that may require their attention or may impact their lives or work
- Respect when colleagues tell you they need to be offline
- Learn to say no and empower others to flag unreasonable expectations and timelines
- Communicate clearly about any unresolved issues with an individual team member
- Limit channels of communication for work
- Spend 10 minutes at the beginning of a call catching up on life and personal updates with the team member you are speaking to
- Have a team meeting or check ins to chat about non work-related issues occasionally
- Do not work on weekends and ensure no one else does by not emailing other team members during that time. If it is urgent, save the email as a draft before sending it out on Monday

## Collective Care: Low-impact Disclosure

Sharing graphic details of trauma stories can spread vicarious trauma to other and perpetuate a climate of cynicism and hopelessness in the workplace

Low-impact Disclosure is an “Anti-sliming” debriefing strategy

### Steps:

1. Increased self-awareness
2. Fair warning
3. Consent (Ask what need)
4. Low impact disclosure

Ask yourself: Is the listener aware that I am about to share graphic details and are they able to control the flow? How much detail do I really need to share?

# Think of someone who you've struggled with recently...

While thinking about this person, tell yourself...



- "Just like me, this person is seeking happiness in their life."
- "Just like me, this person is trying to avoid suffering in their life."
- "Just like me, this person has known sadness, loneliness and despair."
- "Just like me, this person is seeking to fill their needs."
- "Just like me, this person is learning about life."

# Questions

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