

# **VICARIOUS TRAUMA AND SELF-CARE**

**FOR FOSTER CARE PROFESSIONALS**

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## VICARIOUS TRAUMA, COMPASSION FATIGUE, AND BURNOUT

- **Vicarious Trauma** - Substantial shift in personal worldview that occurs in helping professionals in direct contact with victims or clients with trauma issues
- **Compassion Fatigue** - Emotional and physical deterioration that results when helping professionals are not capable of refueling and re-energizing
- **Burnout** – Physical and emotional exhaustion resulting from exaggerated and untreated stress, low job satisfaction, and feelings of powerlessness at work

(Mathieu, 2019)

# VICARIOUS TRAUMA

**Vicarious Trauma** – negative stress and symptoms of trauma due to indirect exposure to a traumatic event through the helping relationship with a survivor of trauma.

(Good Therapy, 2016)

“**Vicarious trauma** is an occupational challenge for people in the fields of victim services due to their continuous exposure to victims of trauma and violence”.

(U.S. Office for Victims of Crimes, n.d.)



# SYMPTOMS OF VICARIOUS TRAUMA

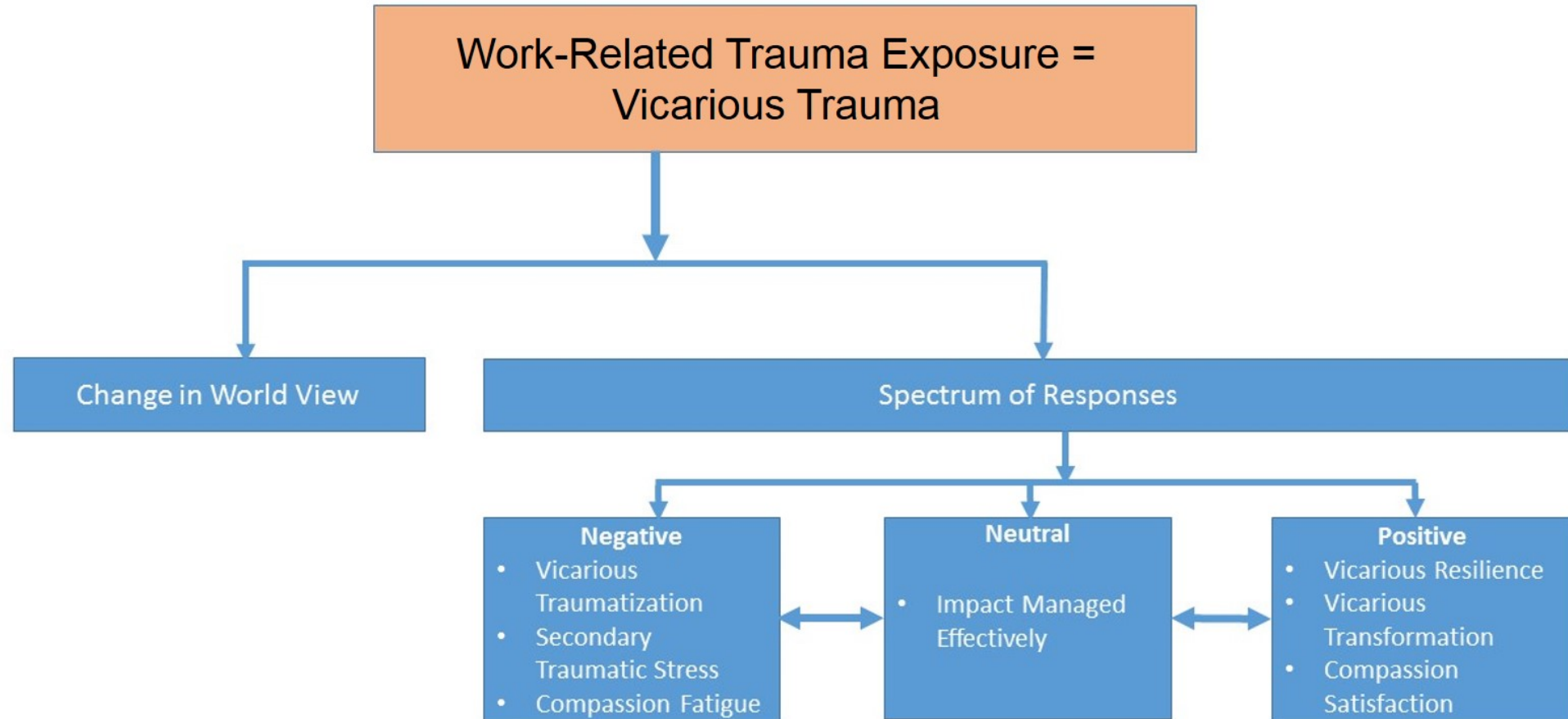
- Fatigue
- Sleep Disturbances
- Physical Aches or Pains
- Emotional Instability
- Emotionally Numb
- Relationship Problems
- Increased Irritability
- Increased Isolation
- Negative Coping Skills
- Loss of Meaning
- Feeling of Hopelessness
- Avoiding Work or Clients
- Excessive Involvement with Client
- Bystander Guilt or Shame

(U.S. Office for Victims of Crimes, n.d.)

# VICARIOUS TRAUMA IN FOSTER CARE

- High levels of vicarious trauma are prevalent among foster care professionals (Rienks, 2020).
- Vicarious trauma is positively associated with burnout and negatively associated with organizational support (Rienks, 2020).
- Workers that utilize coping strategies in an established self-care plan report fewer symptoms of vicarious trauma (Rienks, 2020).
- Child welfare workers experiencing high rates of vicarious trauma are more likely to leave their organization (Middleton, 2015).
- Flexible work schedules, adequate paid time off, discussing vicarious trauma in weekly supervision, and access to affordable therapeutic resources help relieve symptoms of vicarious trauma and prevent burnout (U.S. Office for Victims of Crimes, n.d.).

# Vicarious Trauma Toolkit Model



## **VICARIOUS TRAUMA ASSESSMENT TOOL**

**Professional Quality of Life Scale  
(ProQOL)**

- 30 item scale
- Measures rates of compassion satisfaction, compassion fatigue/vicarious trauma, and burnout
- Simple scoring instructions and results interpretation guide
- Effective assessment for agencies to incorporate to monitor vicarious trauma
- May help increase employment satisfaction and retention

(Stamm, 2012)

# PROFESSIONAL QUALITY OF LIFE SCALE (PROQOL)

## COMPASSION SATISFACTION AND COMPASSION FATIGUE

(PROQOL) VERSION 5 (2009)

When you [help] people you have direct contact with their lives. As you may have found, your compassion for those you [help] can affect you in positive and negative ways. Below are some-questions about your experiences, both positive and negative, as a [helper]. Consider each of the following questions about you and your current work situation. Select the number that honestly reflects how frequently you experienced these things in the *last 30 days*.

	1=Never	2=Rarely	3=Sometimes	4=Often	5=Very Often
_____ 1.					
_____ 2.					
_____ 3.					
_____ 4.					
_____ 5.					
_____ 6.					
_____ 7.					
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_____ 29.					
_____ 30.					



# SELF-CARE

“The practice of taking an active role in protecting one's own well-being and happiness, in particular during periods of stress.”

(Lexico, 2021)

Since foster care professionals endure daily stress and high risk for vicarious trauma from the complex nature of child welfare, it is essential for agencies and workers to place an emphasis on the importance of daily self-care.

(Child Welfare Information Gateway, n.d.)



# CREATING A SELF-CARE PLAN

## WHY?

- Customizing a self-care plan when you are not in crisis offers you a roadmap to follow for preventive measures.
- Having a set plan helps you respond instead of react to stressful situations.
- An established plan helps keep you accountable.

## HOW?

- Decide what areas of self-care are important to you (spiritual, physical, etc.).
- List multiple activities for each area that you can choose.
- Note any barriers to listed activities that may occur and understand you may have to choose other activities to fit your need at any time.
- Connect with others for accountability (self-care buddies).

(Tygielski, 2019)

# Jaclyn's

## Self-Care List

### PHYSICAL

Run  
Walk  
Hike  
Bike  
Sleep 7-9 hours  
Yoga/Stretch  
Nutritious Diet

### EMOTIONAL

Practice Affirmations  
Journal  
Thought/Feelings Log  
Share Emotions  
Enforce Boundaries  
Attend Therapy

### SOCIAL

Phone a Friend  
Visit with a Friend  
Visit with Mom  
Dinner Out with Friend  
Group Hikes  
Face Time Video Calls

### INTELLECTUAL

Read  
Learn  
Training / Conferences  
Podcasts  
Intellectual  
Conversations  
Crossword Puzzles

### SPIRITUAL

Mindfulness Activities  
Guided Meditation  
Barefoot in Grass  
Nature  
Self-Reflection  
Unplugged Alone Time

### PRACTICAL

Bath / Shower  
Drink Water  
Limit Caffeine/ Alcohol  
Limit News  
Organize Home  
Essential Oils  
Listen to Music

# RESOURCES

## Vicarious Trauma

Child Welfare Information Gateway

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/management/workforce/workforcewellbeing/burnout/>

Northeast Regional Children's Advocacy Center

<https://www.nrcac.org/resources-old/vicarious-trauma-resources/>

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## Self-Care

### Books:

*The A-to-Z Self-Care Handbook for Social Workers and Other Helping Professionals*

*Burnout and Self-Care in S*

### Meditation apps:

Calm

Headspace Meditation & Sleep





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