







LEARNING OBJECTIVES

PARTICIPANTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Define vicarious trauma and list at least three examples of how it manifests in treaters.
- List three ways in which the multi-generational history of racism could influence the work experience of treaters.
- Identify three possible ways to make our recommendations for combatting VT more inclusive.
- Create a plan to implement at least one change in their agencies.



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VICARIOUS TRAUMATIZATION

HOW THIS WORK WILL CHANGE YOU

VT refers to the negative changes in the helper as a result of empathically engaging with and feeling responsible for traumatized clients.

Hallmark of VT is disrupted sense of hope and meaning.



VICARIOUS TRAUMATIZATION

VT is an inescapable effect of trauma work -- an occupational hazard.

It is neither the fault of the person, nor a result of "weakness" on the part of the treater.

VT damages hope and optimism which are essential gifts we bring to our work.





VICARIOUS TRAUMATIZATION

The single most important factor in the success or failure of trauma work is the attention paid to the needs of the treater.

Addressing VT is an ethical imperative.





HOW VT CHANGES US

VT can impact:

- Our core sense of meaning and hope
- Our identity and worldview
- Our core beliefs about safety, trust, esteem, control, and intimacy



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HOW VT CHANGES US

VT can impact:

- Our own ability to manage feelings
- Our bodily feelings including our sexuality



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VICARIOUS TRAUMATIZATION

Grief wounds more deeply in solitude; tears are less bitter when mingled with other tears.

Agememnon Seneca



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COMMON BELIEFS ABOUT VICARIOUS TRAUMA



I should be able to leave my work at the door and not think about work when I am home.

I should not be emotionally affected by my clients.

If I am having trouble with worrying about the job when I am home I may not be cut out for this work.

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COMMON BELIEFS ABOUT VICARIOUS TRAUMA



I'd better keep my reactions to myself or people will think less of me.

I am a supervisor so I should never share that the work is affecting me. I have to model calm and control for my supervisees.

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COMMON BELIEFS ABOUT VICARIOUS TRAUMA



It is my responsibility to take care of myself, there is nothing my program can do.

Either I have self care skills or I don't.

If we start talking with our employees about vicarious trauma it will open a can of worms with bad results.

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SMALL GROUPS

What is your reaction to these beliefs?
Do any influence you?
What are the implications for our work?

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BELIEFS ABOUT VICARIOUS TRAUMA WHICH MAY BE MEANINGFUL TO OUR EMPLOYEES OF COLOR

I feel like I am on probation in my job and if I talk about my VT people will think I do not deserve to be in this position. I am more under a microscope than my white colleagues.

I have to work twice as hard to prove my worth. If I set limits on what I can do and take care of myself, I will be considered less capable and less able to be promoted.

If I tell my white supervisor that the work is affecting me I don't expect support. I expect that this will be seen as a weakness, a character flaw on my part. "I know you are sensitive about these things" rather than "This is a normal reaction to the kind of work we do."

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BELIEFS ABOUT VICARIOUS TRAUMA WHICH MAY BE MEANINGFUL TO OUR EMPLOYEES OF COLOR

As a Black woman I am expected (and I expect myself) to take care of everyone else, clients, staff, etc. I am not expected to need anyone to take care of me



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BELIEFS ABOUT VICARIOUS TRAUMA WHICH MAY BE MEANINGFUL TO OUR EMPLOYEES OF COLOR

As a Black man I am expected and I expect myself to be strong, tough. Compassion and kindness (even to myself) makes me look weak and may lead to my being a victim.

If I talk about being overwhelmed, it will not just reflect on me, it will reflect on my whole race.



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BELIEFS ABOUT VICARIOUS TRAUMA WHICH MAY BE MEANINGFUL TO OUR EMPLOYEES OF COLOR

As a Black man I am worried about sounding angry and scaring people.

As a Black woman I am worried about seeming too intense or too emotional.



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BELIEFS ABOUT VICARIOUS TRAUMA WHICH MAY BE MEANINGFUL TO OUR EMPLOYEES OF COLOR



The ideas you have about self-care (like massages and hot tubs) are not relevant to me. Some of them are out of my price range or are not available.

You do not mention the type of self-care that sustains me, such as my participation in my faith community.

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SMALL GROUPS

What is your reaction to these beliefs?
Do any influence you?
What are the implications for our work?

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THE WORK MAY AFFECT OUR STAFF OF COLOR IN UNIQUE WAYS

Constant weathering of racism in life (including painful news events) and in the workplace increases the cumulative effect.



Possible over identification of problems people have experienced personally and in their community

Having to mitigate racial activation within the agency, within the community and within clients, as well as own personal exposure to racism

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THE WORK MAY AFFECT OUR STAFF OF COLOR IN UNIQUE WAYS

Lack of trust with supervisor and/or colleagues makes it difficult to share pain of the work, leading to pain building up.



How do you recognize an anti-racist organization if you have never experienced one?

Being a helping resource in one's community may combine with being a helper at work- where do I get to relax and replenish?

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THE WORK MAY AFFECT OUR STAFF OF COLOR IN UNIQUE WAYS

Power dynamics of agency may be reminiscent to power dynamics of society
Assumptions about power- do I anticipate that it will be used for good?
Is power structure clear and transparent- and predictable?



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THE WORK MAY AFFECT OUR STAFF OF COLOR IN UNIQUE WAYS

The role of transgenerational transmission of trauma: historical trauma and racism interferes with developmental stages
Generational transmission of values interrupted
Takes generations to repair

My role in the community might be tainted by parental problems
Transgenerational trauma ripples through generations
How do you change the narrative?



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THE WORK MAY AFFECT OUR STAFF OF COLOR IN UNIQUE WAYS



How much can I feel at ease at work, that my whole self is welcomed, appreciated and seen as an asset to the process?

Can I represent my culture in the way I want to?

Is there a pretense that there is no power dynamic at play?

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THE WORK MAY AFFECT OUR STAFF OF COLOR IN UNIQUE WAYS



How are behaviors attributed? Is it in the direction of stereotypes?

Example: Who comes in to work or a meeting late-it's the black folks-black folks are always late. Is that borne out by data?

Who do we acknowledge as kin, as family- structures may differ in communities of color and white communities.

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TRAUATIC STRESS INSTITUTE



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SMALL GROUPS

Which of these observations resonate with you?
Are there any you would object to?
Are we being racist by even naming these possible differences?
What are the implications for our work?

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IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

TALK ABOUT IT!!!!!!!

Resource: [We Can't Talk about That at Work!](#)
[How to Talk about Race, Religion, Politics, and Other Polarizing Topics](#)
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IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Don't make assumptions- create space where all helpers' experiences are welcome

Be respectful of staffs' differing comfort level of sharing. Utilize various techniques such as anonymous sharing to give everyone a chance to contribute.

One size does not fit all



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IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Be open to listening to painful stories

Validate

Do not judge

Do not try to fix



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IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Create forums where social justice issues and their effects on us and our work are discussed.

Share responsibility for leading these discussions.

Have special, longer discussions when an upsetting event happens, either at work or in the world.



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IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

When discussing and recommending self-care be open to many different methods and sources of support

Ask the treater what brings joy and energy to their life

Be aware of constraints such as access and finances that may impact people's access to activities



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IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Create MANY opportunities for connection and compassion among staff. It is our connections to each other that promote a sense of safety and allow us to do better work, and to stay energized and hopeful. Prioritize team events, pot lucks, celebrations, recognition, fun.



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IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

MODEL:
Compassion for your self and others
That the work affects you
Setting reasonable limits
Giving each other grace



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SMALL GROUPS

Which if any of these suggestions could you use?
What difficulties do you foresee?
Where will you start to bring these ideas into your work life?

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THANK YOU

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PRESENTER INFORMATION



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