



---

INSTITUTE FOR  
HEALTH & RECOVERY



# Addressing Secondary Trauma



Create a distance that feels safe for you.

# Trauma Definition

- Extreme stress that overwhelms a person's ability to cope
- The individual's experience of a threat to life, bodily integrity, or sanity
- A normal response to an abnormal event that results in a disruption of equilibrium

## Examples of Traumatic Events

- Physical abuse/assault
- Sexual abuse/assault, including exchanging sex for necessities
- Emotional/psychological abuse
- Domestic violence
- War/genocide
- Accidents
- Natural or man-made disasters
- Witnessing abuse/violence
- Living in a dangerous environment
- Homelessness

## Trauma and Staff

- Staff members may have their own trauma histories
- Staff members may experience trauma at work
- Staff members may experience secondary trauma



## Secondary Trauma

Changes in the inner experience of service providers that come about as a result of empathic engagement with the participant's experience of trauma





## Impact of Primary/Secondary Trauma

- We may take things out on ourselves
- We may take things out on other staff
- We may take things out on people involved in the justice system



Due to parallel processing trauma can affect:

Individuals in the system

The system itself

Signs of chronically stressed or traumatized organizations:

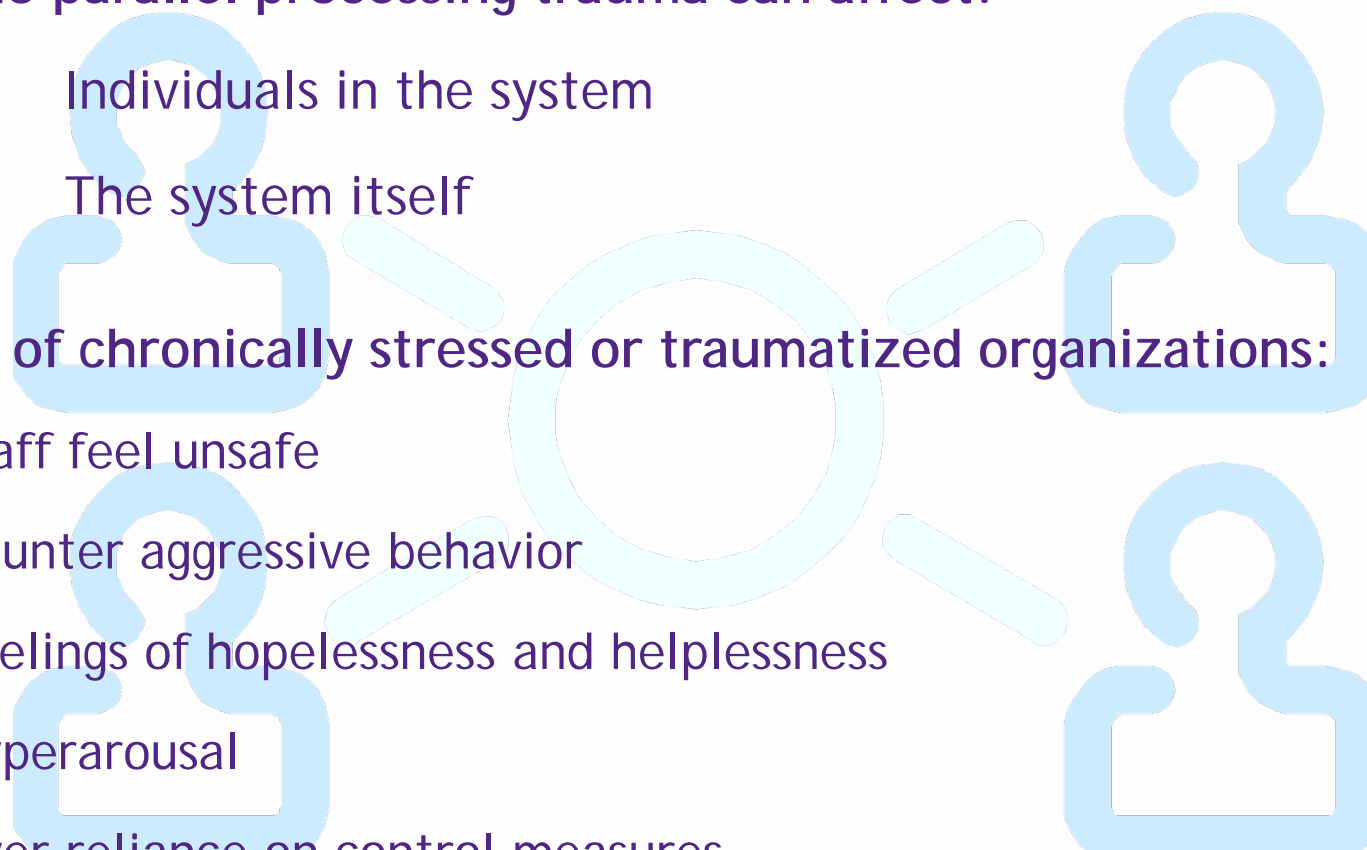
Staff feel unsafe

Counter aggressive behavior

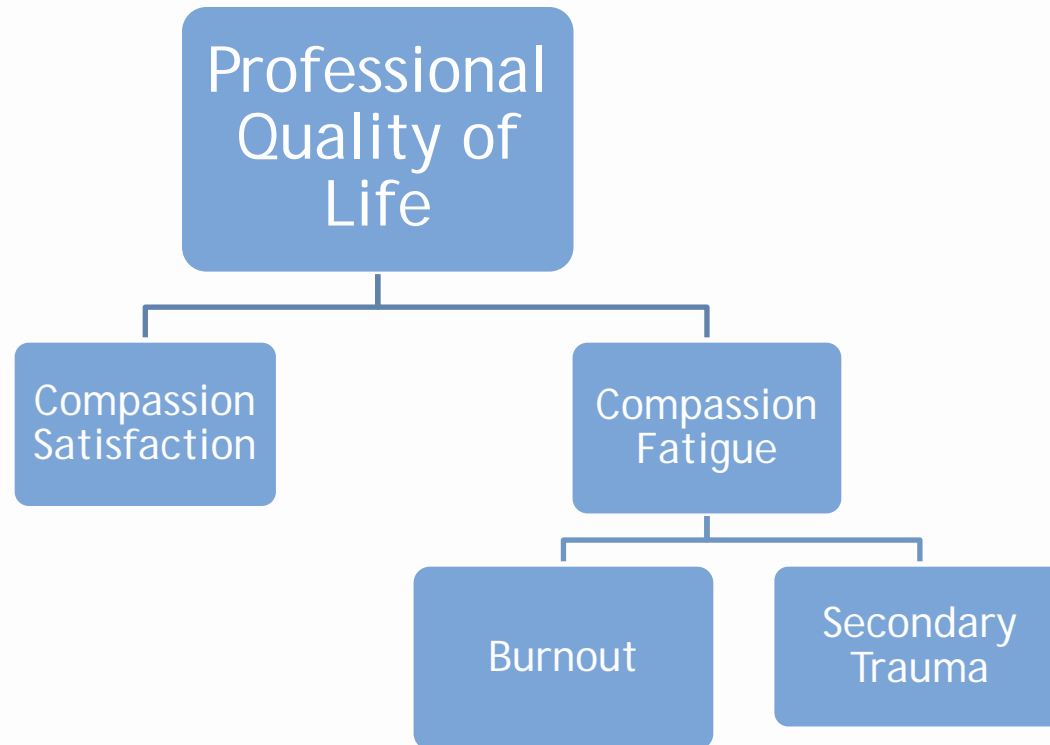
Feelings of hopelessness and helplessness

Hyperarousal

Over reliance on control measures



# Professional Quality of Life



*Stamm (2010)*

## Why Do We Do What We Do?

- Life becomes harder for us when we live for others, but it also becomes richer and happier. -Albert Schweitzer
- The great use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it. -William James
- A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives. -Jackie Robinson





## Impact of Secondary Trauma

Symptoms Resemble Post-Traumatic Stress Reactions

### Intrusive symptoms

- Flashbacks, nightmares, obsessive thoughts

### Difficulties with emotional regulation

- Numbing, dissociation, reactivity

### Physical

- Somatization, frequent illness

# Impact of Secondary Trauma

## Changes in:

- Beliefs about self, others and the world
- Sense of trust or sense of esteem in self or others
- Perception of safety of self or others
- Feeling connected
- Sense of control

# Resiliency Factors

## Awareness

- Of all aspects of one's experience
- Needs, limits, emotions, resources

## Balance

- Time for reflection

## Connection

- Social support





# Countering Secondary Traumatization

## Address The Stress

- Self-care
- Nurturing activities
- Escape/Distraction

# Countering Secondary Traumatization

## Transform the Despair

- Focus on hope
- Examine negative beliefs and assumptions
- Participate in community-building activities

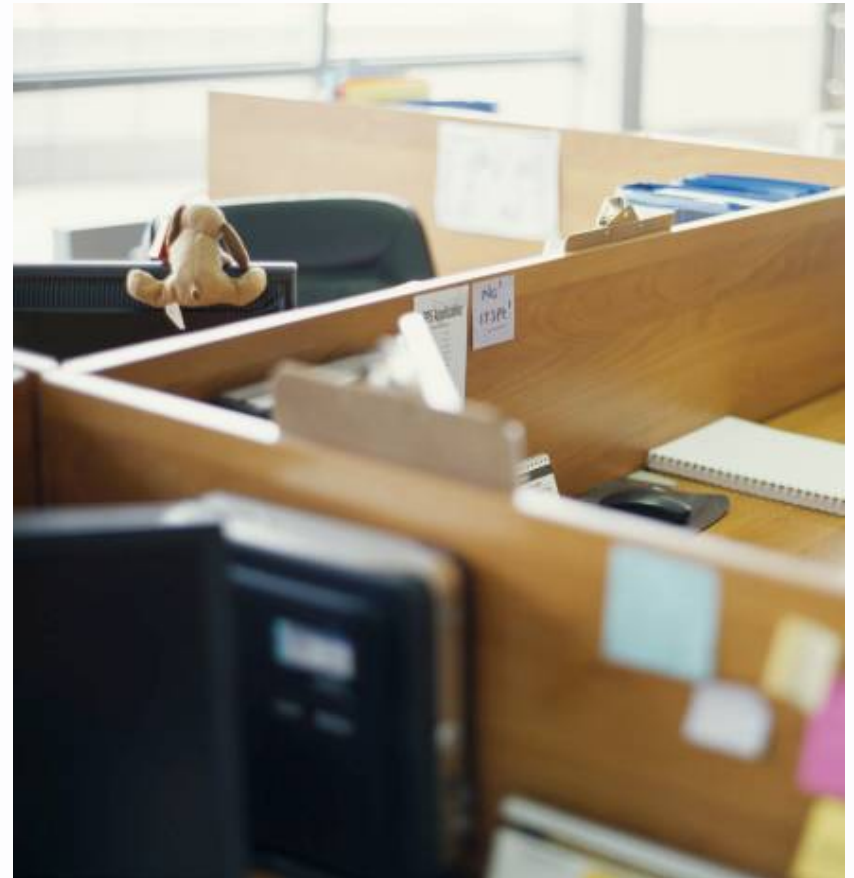
# Manage Your Workload

- Set limits with your hours
- Use your vacation and other time off
- Take breaks
- Use linkages



# Manage Your Work Environment

- Pay attention to your own safety and comfort
- Find space and time away from justice-involved participants
- Bring inspiring items to your workplace



## Seek Education

- About impact of trauma
- About secondary traumatization
- About stress management
- About effective means to interact with people who have experienced trauma



## Use Available Support

- Let your supervisor know when you are overwhelmed
- Seek peer support
- Social activities with colleagues to build connection



# Trauma-Informed Organizations

## Organizational Culture

- Acknowledges and normalizes impact of trauma on staff
- Promotes and supports self-care
- Does not equate overwork with caring and commitment
- Values relationship

# Organizational Strategies

## Workload

- One person performs a variety of activities
- Promoting linkages: those with trauma histories may need many kinds of supports

# Organizational Strategies

## Work Environment

- Attention to workers' safety
- Attention to workers' comfort
- Space to be away from justice-involved people
- Encourage inspiring items in workplace

# Organizational Strategies

## Education

- About impact of trauma
- About secondary traumatization
- About stress management
- About effective means to interact with those who have experienced trauma

# Organizational Strategies

## Resources

- Adequate supervision
- Counseling resources available for staff
- Opportunities for peer support
- Opportunities for stress management and physical activities
- Adequate time off



# Organizational Strategies

## Group Support

- Team-building
- Social activities to build connection
- Opportunities to discuss the work both formally and informally
- Focus on strengths and solutions



## Trauma-Informed Organizational Culture

Using relational skills,  
create a collaborative and  
mutually empowering  
environment in which  
staff have input into  
decisions.





# STAFF SELF-CARE PLAN

## Questions/Discussion

