

Signs of Vicarious Trauma

PHYSICAL SIGNS

- Headaches
- Fatigue without clear reason
- Gastrointestinal trouble
- Changes in appetite

BEHAVIOUR AND RELATIONSHIPS

- Boundaries — difficulty separating work from personal life
OR feeling disconnected from people even while communicating with them.
- Withdrawal — from social interactions or pleasurable activities.
- Moods — irritable, intolerant, agitated, impatient, needy.
- Escape (or addictions) involving nicotine, alcohol, food, other substances, sex, shopping, internet.

Trauma-Informed Resilient Actions

- Awareness: What am I thinking or feeling?
- Where is my energy? Am I in my “window of tolerance?” Or am I above it (Hyperarousal) or below it (hypoarousal)? What do I need to get centered or grounded?
- Do I need to use distraction, a time-out, or self-care?
- Who can I get support from or share my experience so I am not holding it alone?
- What are my signs of stress and how do I know I am close to my edge?
- What routines or practices will I use to support myself?
- How am I supporting others?

PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNS

- Fear
- Intrusive thoughts and images coming to mind against your will
- Unrealistic expectations of yourself
- Cynicism
- Hopelessness, loss of idealism
- Guilt about your own survival/pleasure
- Anger Disgust
- Disturbed sleep or nightmares
- Problems concentrating
- Being easily startled
- Feeling numb
- Feeling unable to tolerate strong emotions
- Increased sensitivity to violence

When to refer for medical help:

- Recurring intrusive thoughts and images
- Upsetting dreams
- Acute stress responses
- Sustained difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Irritability or outbursts of anger
- Difficulty concentrating
- Being easily startled
- Symptoms of dissociation or de-realization (You feel like the world isn't real or you are watching from the outside)

Trauma-Informed Supportive Conversations

Task	Conversation or Focus
Check in with yourself and the other person	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check in with yourself: Am I in a good place to have a conversation? With the other person: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What happened?• What was your experience?• What was the hardest part for you?• What strengths are you leaning on?
Stabilize/Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are your biggest sources of stress?• What are your signs of stress?• How will I know that you need help?• What are your sources of support?• What can I do to support you at this time?• Who else is on your 'team' and is supporting you?
Educate/Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Normalize trauma response and provide resources for information• Encourage use of professional mental health support when needed• Follow up with guidance and referrals
Strengthen Resources and Social Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support policies and behavior that allows people to use and strengthen their relationships and their resources• Create forums for learning and conversation