

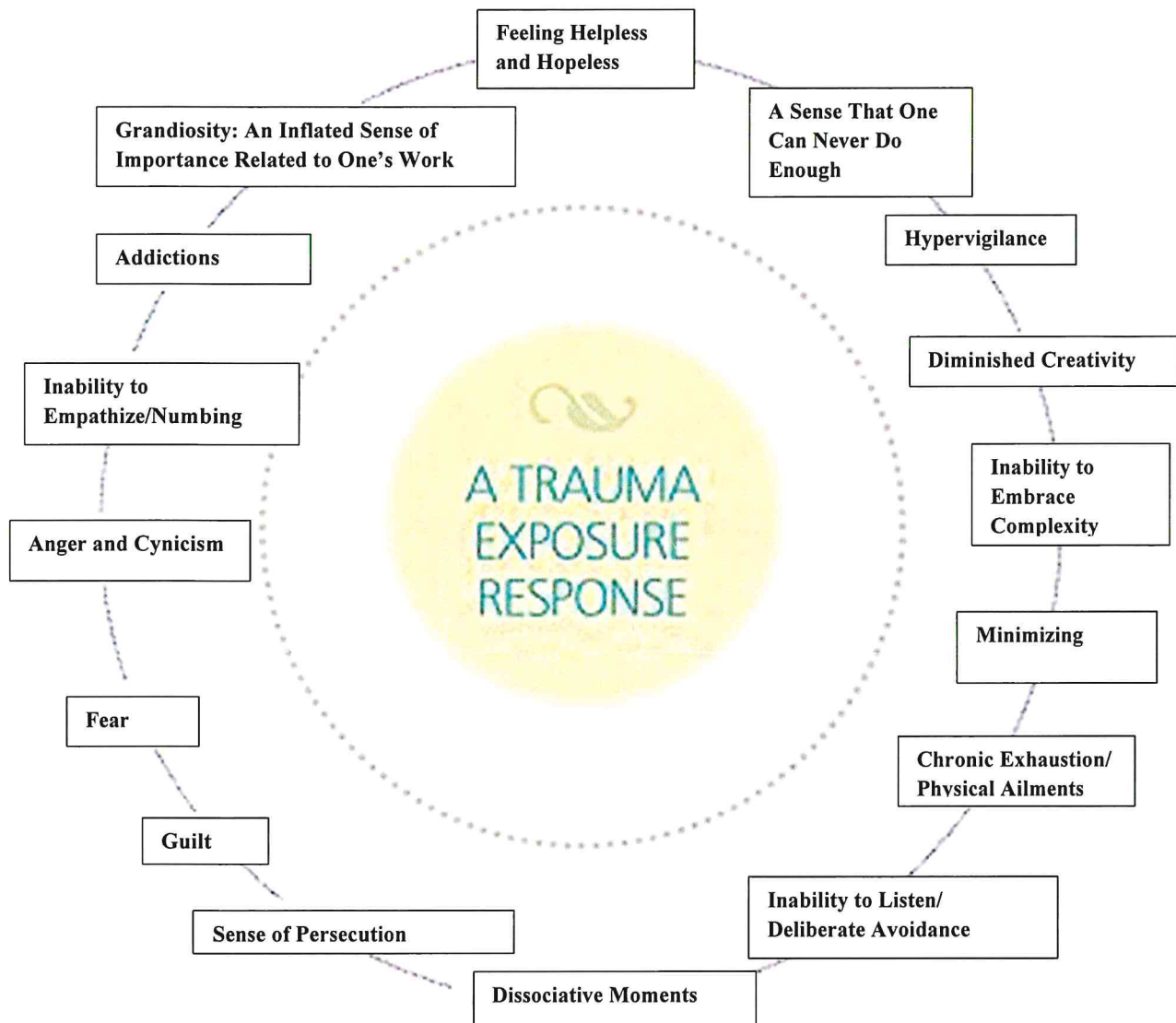


Vicarious Trauma

What are other names Vicarious Trauma can be called? (i.e., compassion fatigue, secondary trauma, Can lead to burnout)

- What is trauma? Trauma is an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individuals functioning and physical, social, emotional or spiritual wellbeing (SAMHSA)
- There are varying definitions of trauma and there are a wide range of events and circumstances that can be traumatic and differing levels of subjective severity, Trauma affects each person differently.
- Vicarious Trauma is trauma as defined above. It can be defined as a transformation in the inner experience of the professional that results from empathic engagement with client's trauma material. VC is a process that unfolds over time. As we interact with YP we can begin to feel some of their pain, fear, anger, and other intense emotions. Vicarious trauma is essentially a response to the client's trauma, not the client themselves.
- People in the helping professions references and schemas are repeatedly challenged by the material they hear from clients. The reality of people's cruelty to one another, the abuse and neglect of children, stories of homelessness can have the ability or **overwhelm our defenses** when we hear the many ways that our clients have been injured, humiliated, molested and systematically dehumanized. Another key factor to keep in mind is that we are also human and may have our own unresolved personal conflicts and issues, which can be triggered by our clients and set the stage for secondary trauma.
- It is not wrong for the helping professional to be impacted by their client's trauma stories, nor is it a matter of choice. In choosing to become a helping professional we have essentially made a commitment to bear witness to human suffering. What is our responsibility is for us to be aware of this occurrence and find ways to ameliorate the consequences before they become detrimental to ourselves and our health, well-being and safety.
- Who is at risk for VC? Therapists, lawyers, residential staff, doctors, teachers, disaster response teams, essentially **ANYONE** who is exposed on a consistent basis to others trauma material.
- Why is it important to be aware of vicarious trauma? Vicarious trauma can lead to burnout in the helping professional. It can also lead the professional to becoming less attuned/empathic with their clients and can have detrimental effects on the helping professional's Physical health, mental health, and personal and professional relationships. In addition vicarious trauma can negatively impact an agency's organizational health.
- **VICARIOUS TRAUMA IS TRAUMA**

Warning signs of a trauma exposure response



Lipsky, L. v. D., Burk, C., & Safari Books Online (Firm). (2009). *Trauma stewardship: An everyday guide to caring for self while caring for others*. San Francisco, Calif.: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.