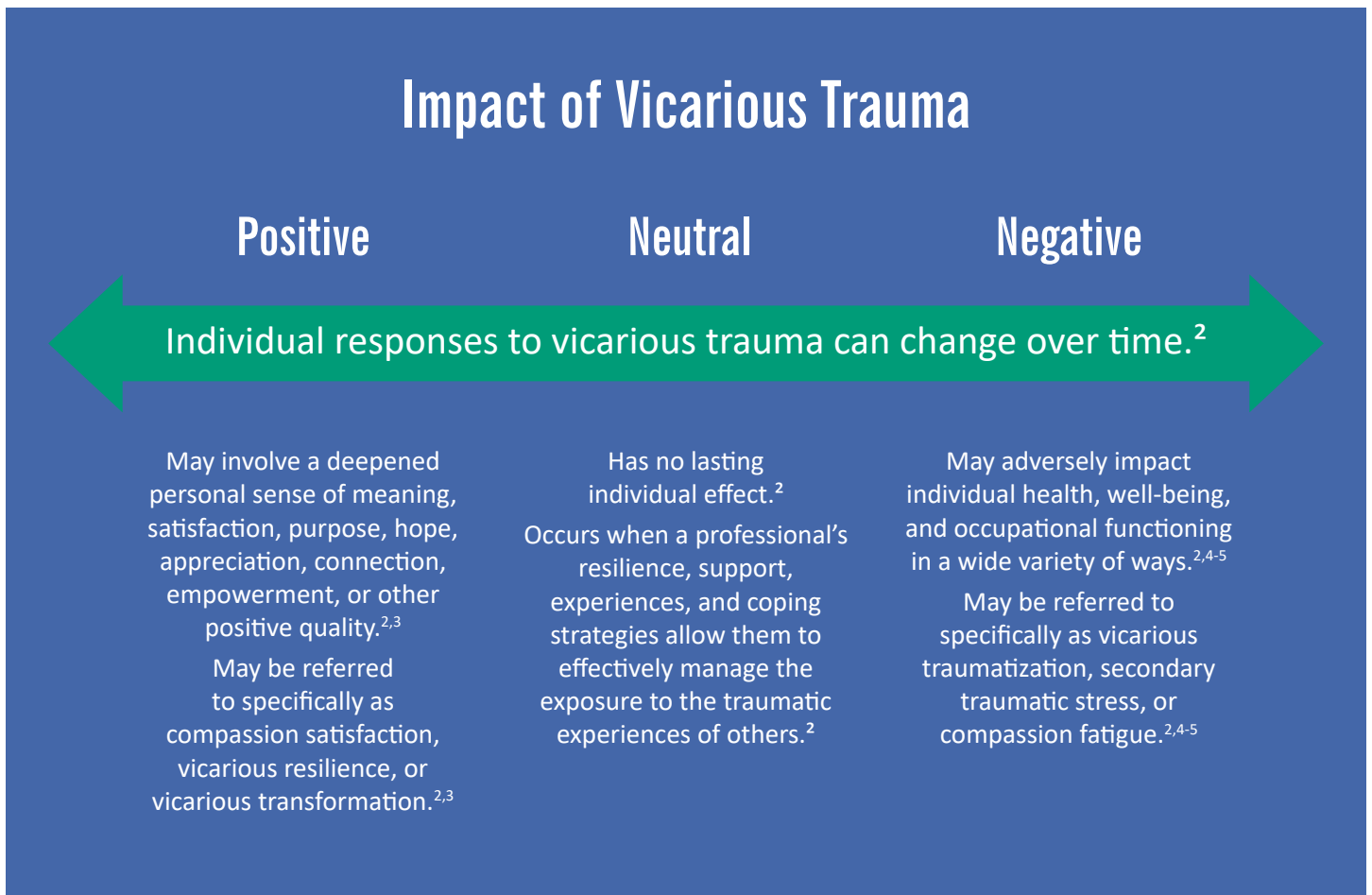


# Vicarious Trauma

## Exposure to the traumatic experiences of others is vicarious trauma.<sup>1</sup>

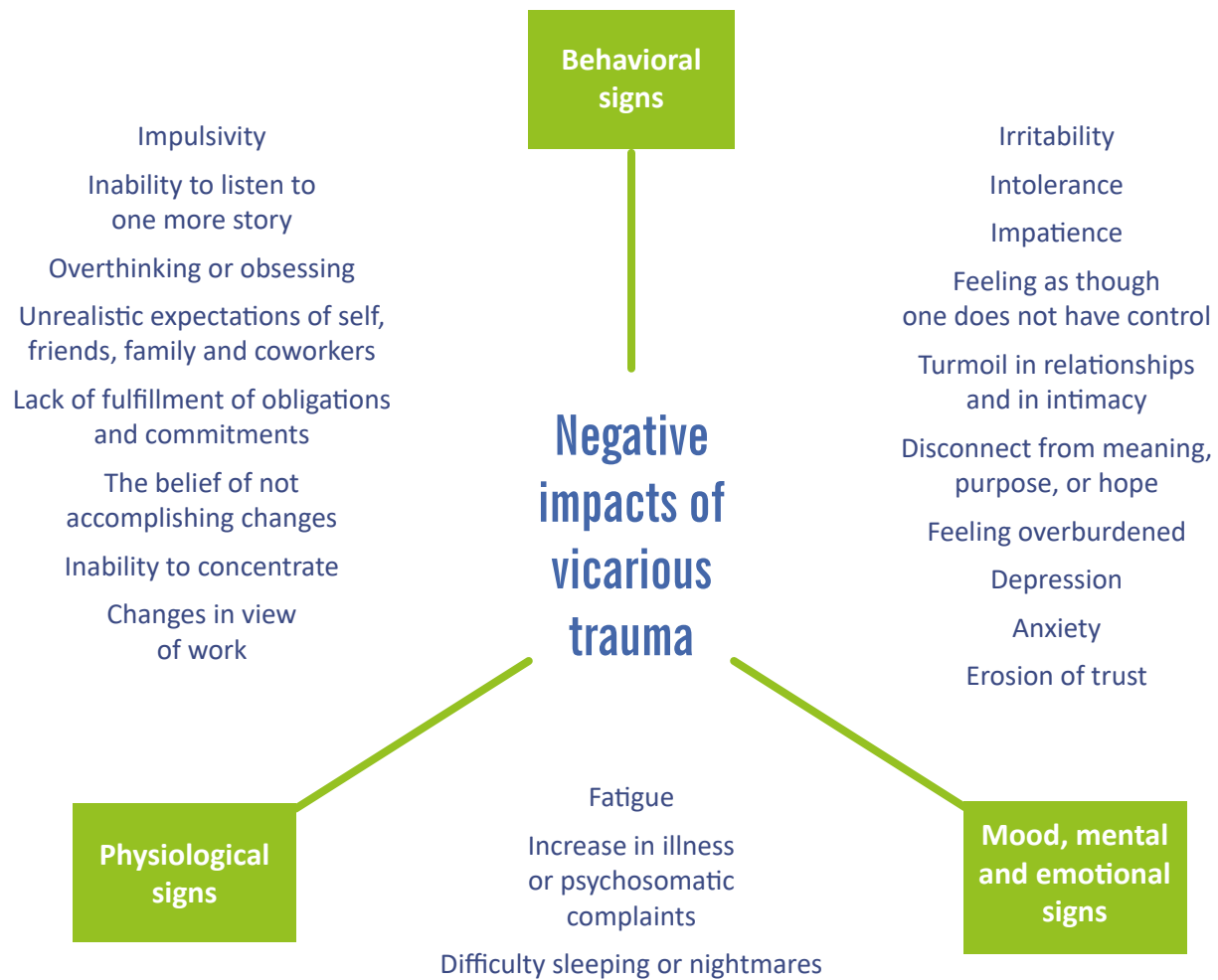
This exposure can occur when providing direct services to trauma survivors who share their trauma narrative, when reviewing case files or other materials related to traumatic incidents, when hearing about or responding to violence or other traumatic incidents, and when engaging in other occupational tasks associated with trauma-related content.<sup>2</sup>

*After vicarious trauma, a change in worldview is considered inevitable; additional negative, neutral and positive responses to vicarious trauma are possible.<sup>2</sup>*



Within occupational contexts where vicarious trauma is present, each person can experience the range of impacts of vicarious trauma.<sup>2</sup> Given that individual responses to vicarious trauma can change over time, individuals should regularly check in with themselves about how they are currently being impacted, with particular attention to any signs of negative impacts of vicarious trauma.<sup>2</sup>

Behavioral, physiological, mood, mental and emotional signs can indicate that individuals are being negatively impacted by vicarious trauma.<sup>4</sup>



**Awareness of these signs can help individuals recognize when they may benefit from additional support, including professional mental health services.**

The Psychology Today website at [psychologytoday.com](https://www.psychologytoday.com) is an excellent resource for finding support and licensed mental health professionals. The website provides search tools for finding local therapists with options to filter searches by therapists' specialty areas, gender and accepted insurance.

When immediate concerns about mental health arise, contacting a hotline can be helpful. People experiencing emotional distress can call or text the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at any time to talk individuals trained to offer mental health support. Call or text 988.

## Organizational and personal action can mitigate negative impacts.

Vicarious trauma is an occupational challenge present in many organizations and other workplace settings.<sup>1,4,6-7</sup> Vicarious trauma-informed organizations proactively address the existence and impact of vicarious trauma while mitigating the risk of negative impacts.<sup>3</sup> Proactively addressing vicarious trauma can foster self-care and self-compassion while normalizing difficulties, which may improve outcomes at the organizational level.<sup>7</sup>

*Addressing vicarious trauma can involve focusing on leadership and management factors within the workplace and promoting health and well-being.*

A health and wellness promotion approach to intervention for vicarious trauma may include mindfulness, psychoeducation, skill-based training, and bolstering protective resilience factors and effective coping skills including self-care, social support and detachment.<sup>1,3</sup> Within the workplace, addressing leadership and management factors, such as clear, open and respectful communication that includes discussion of vicarious trauma, supervision, benefits provision, and evaluating vicarious trauma's impact is also recommended.<sup>8</sup>

### Free Resources for Individuals and Organizations



**The Professional Quality of Life Measure**

Assess the individual impacts of vicarious trauma<sup>9</sup>



**Calm**

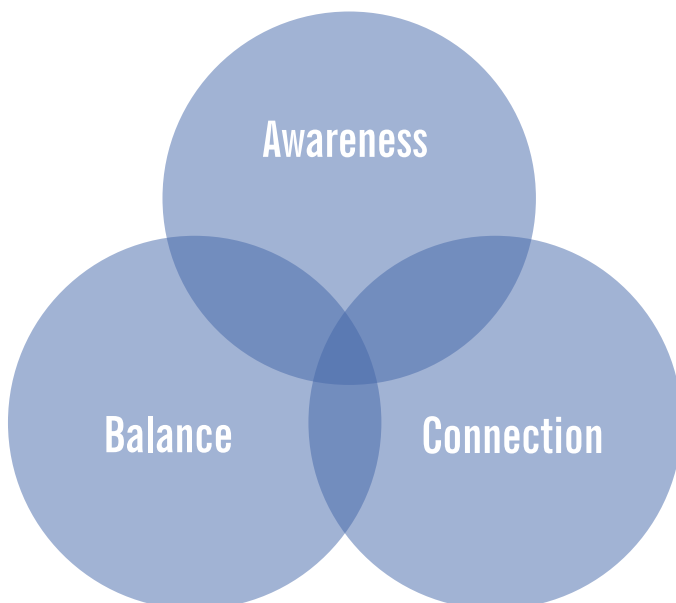
Guided meditations, mindfulness exercises and psychoeducational videos



**TRE® For All**

Trauma releasing exercises created by Dr. David Berceci<sup>10</sup>

*Awareness, balance and connection can be thought of as the “ABCs of self-care” and used as the foundation for individual action to address vicarious trauma.<sup>1,4,11</sup>*



#### Awareness

Being aware of what is happening within one's body, mind and emotions can support well-being during and after vicarious trauma.<sup>12</sup> Mindfulness, a practice which involves nonjudgmentally experiencing the present moment, can support awareness.<sup>10</sup>

#### Balance

Cultivating balance within all areas of one's life can support well-being during and after vicarious trauma.<sup>9,12</sup> Self-care, a learned behavior that involves practices and activities initiated and performed to maintain health, life and well-being, can support balance.<sup>7,12</sup>

#### Connection

Building and maintaining connections within one's personal and professional life can support well-being during and after vicarious trauma.<sup>9,12</sup> Individuals may feel more able to cope when they have social support from friends, family members, peers and supervisors.<sup>1,3</sup>

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