

Identifying Impacts and Developing Coping Strategies for Judicial Vicarious Trauma

SHIFT

Supporting Heroes In mental health Foundational Training

Helping Those Exposed to Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation

Part I

Supporting Heroes in mental health Foundational Training (SHIFT)
An Innocent Justice Foundation project funded by Department of Justice, OJJDP

funded by

Department of Justice, OJJDP
ICAC Training & Technical Assistance



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Course developed by

The Innocent Justice Foundation

in partnership with

Jean G. McAllister, MSW (JGM Consulting, LLC)

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Objectives: Part I

- ❖ Understand the psychological and physiological impact of stress and trauma.
- ❖ Understand the psychological impact of child sexual exploitation and other serious cases.

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Types of Stress

- ❖ Normal
- ❖ Situational
- ❖ Traumatic



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What are we talking about?

- Burnout
- Compassion Fatigue
- Secondary Trauma
- Vicarious Trauma
- Safety Concerns



Reasonable responses to difficult realities

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"Cases of horrible, sexual, predatory exploitation of children haunt me. I keep my balance and my job as a judge by profoundly guarding myself against being swept away by the gruesome evidence I have to confront."

Makin, 2002

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Child Sexual Exploitation Impacts

Increasing Cases – and Exposure

- ❖ Graphic images and videos
- ❖ Production/Self-production
- ❖ P2P Networks

Victims: Younger

Abuse: more violent and sadistic

Offenders have multiple victims

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Additional Impacts for Judges

Changing nature of cases:

- ❖ Numbers increasing
- ❖ Resources decreasing
- ❖ More egregious cases

The nature of evidence:

- ❖ Graphic medical evidence
- ❖ 911 tapes
- ❖ Photos and videos of injuries
- ❖ Victim testimony at trial
- ❖ Victim impact statements

Town, 2003

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Physiology of Stress



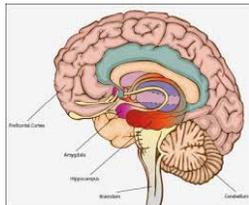
Responses are dependent upon on the **severity** of the stressor and the **duration** of the stress.

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Normal Responses During Exposure

Physiological:
Stress chemicals released
Primitive brain in charge
Fight, Flight or Freeze

Psychological:
Anxiety
Dissociation



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Traumatic Information Storage

Sensory in Nature

- ❖ Images
- ❖ Physical sensations
- ❖ Emotions
- ❖ Behaviors

Not subject to voluntary recall and dismissal

Triggered by environmental cues

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Identify challenges or impacts you have seen in yourself or your staff.

PARTICIPANT EXERCISE

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Signs and Symptoms

Physical

- ❖ Fatigue
- ❖ Digestive Problems
- ❖ Headaches
- ❖ Sleeping Difficulties
- ❖ High Blood Pressure
- ❖ Eating Habits –Weight loss or gain
- ❖ Loss/Decrease Libido



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Signs and Symptoms

Intellectual/Cognitive

- ❖ Indecision
- ❖ Loss of concentration
- ❖ Confusion/Forgetfulness
- ❖ Low productivity
- ❖ Negative attitude/Cynicism
- ❖ Loss of sense of humor



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Signs and Symptoms

Emotional

- ❖ Excessive emotion
- ❖ Mood swings
- ❖ Increased irritability
- ❖ Anger and sadness
- ❖ Fear and worry
- ❖ Loneliness-Isolation
- ❖ Crying spells



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Signs and Symptoms

Behavioral

- ❖ Numbing
- ❖ Shutting down
- ❖ Risk-taking
- ❖ Excessive drinking
- ❖ Substance abuse
- ❖ Driving fast and/or angry
- ❖ Extramarital affairs



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Signs and Symptoms

Spiritual

- ❖ Extreme religiosity
- ❖ Blaming God
- ❖ Feeling abandoned by God
- ❖ Difficulty praying or obsessing on fate
- ❖ A change in views of God, your life or your world



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Factors Contributing to Trauma

Death penalty cases

Crimes against children & violent crimes

Graphic, disturbing and horrific evidence

Responsibility of deliberating & rendering verdicts

The intrusiveness of the jury selection process



Miller, 2008

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Factors Contributing to Trauma

Safety concerns

Life disruption

Negative fiscal impact

Extended exposure to traumatic evidence

Little training or preparation regarding the nature of the material.



Miller, 2008

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Factors Contributing to Judicial VT

Isolation

The requirement of impartiality

The requirement of confidentiality

Unprepared counsel or experts

Concern for impacts on jurors and court staff



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Factors Contributing to Judicial VT

Level of trauma in the cases

High profile cases

Magnitude of needs & lack of resources

Lack of training about case content issues

Prohibitions about admitting vulnerability, need or weakness



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Judges' Experience of VT

Study of 105 judges:

Average experience of 10 years

63% reported experiencing one or more symptoms
73% of females
54% of males

Judges with 6+ years of experience reported significantly more symptoms.

Jaffe et al, 2003

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Judges' Experience of VT

Most Identified Symptoms

Short term:

Sleep disturbance
Intolerance of others
Physical complaints

Long Term:

Sleep disturbance
Depression
Sense of isolation



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Utah Judges Brief Survey

- ❖ Number responding: 49
- ❖ Sleep disturbance: 82%
- ❖ Irritation or anger: 47%
- ❖ Intrusive thoughts or feelings: 43%
- ❖ Hopelessness or intense sadness: 35%
- ❖ Numb or emotionally unresponsive: 20%



TLJF and Utah Judicial Institute, 2014

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Jurors' & Court Staff Experience

Survey of 280 jurors & 38 court employees:

- Expressed concerns about viewing disturbing evidence
 - 42% of jurors
 - 59% of employees

Court staff reported higher levels of stress than jurors after high profile trials

Woolf, 2011

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Jurors' & Court Staff Experience

Multiple studies show high rates of anxiety, depression and PTSD in trials related to:

- Capital murder
- Aggravated kidnapping
- Aggravated sexual assault
- Aggravated assault
- Child abuse

Miller 2008

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Compounding Personal Factors

- ❖ Personal or family history
- ❖ Family Stressors
- ❖ Marital Conflict
- ❖ Current or recent loss
- ❖ Illness
- ❖ Losing support/friends



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Symptoms of Chronic Exposure

Normal

non-persistent non-intrusive

Warning Signs

persistent mildly intrusive

Trouble Indicators

persistent intrusive



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Building Resilience

The Good News:

People who experience trauma and successfully integrate it, or recover, are stronger and more resilient than people in the general population.



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Part II

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Objectives: Part II

- ❖ Develop coping mechanisms and self care strategies to build resilience
- ❖ Understand the importance of coping strategies and training for staff members and jurors

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Factors That Build Resilience

- ❖ Presence and use of social support
- ❖ Ability to plan and take action
- ❖ Positive self assessment
- ❖ Communication and problem solving skills
- ❖ Tolerance and management of strong feelings and impulses



APA 2008

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What are you doing that builds resilience for you? For your staff & jurors?

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Coping Skills Prior to Exposure

Prepare for exposure:

- Protect yourself
- Identify your task



Notice your responses

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Coping Skills During Exposure

De-escalate physiological responses

- Tension
- Posture
- Breath
- Movement



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Coping Skills After Exposure

- ❖ Take regular breaks
- ❖ Leave the trauma behind
- ❖ Rituals
- ❖ Physical movement
- ❖ Plan for next activity



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Coping Skills After Exposure

- ❖ Write down your worries
- ❖ Work to home transitions
- ❖ No exposure prior to end of work day
- ❖ Laughter is the best medicine



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Work Environment

- ❖ Location of family photos
- ❖ Tailoring your personal space
- ❖ Comfort - Ergonomics
- ❖ Inspirational images
- ❖ Educating colleagues
- ❖ Ongoing training and education



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“What fits your busy schedule better, exercising one hour a day or being dead 24 hours a day?”

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Coping Skills: Personal Care

Under Your Personal Control

- Exercise
- Healthy diet and water
- Sleep
 - Time
 - Rituals
 - Plans for waking
- Social life
- Personal interests

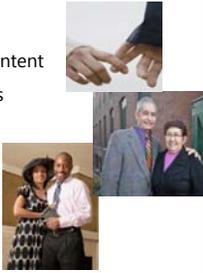


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Incorporating Family

Spouse/Significant Other

- Overview of job-not the graphic content
- Talk about normal vs. warning signs
 - Develop a code word
- Talk about intrusive thoughts
- Talk about hyper-vigilance



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Incorporating Family

Children

- Age appropriate discussion
- Talk about feelings
- Answer questions if they have them
- Allow them to give to you



Have fun together:

Laugh and play!



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Building Resiliency Outside of Work

- ❖ Education or self-help
- ❖ Being part of a group
Social support
- ❖ Outside interests and hobbies
- ❖ Spiritual practice
- ❖ Seek professional assistance when needed:
Individual
Marital
Pastoral



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Colleagues and Staff

- Get to know each other
- Give positive reinforcement
- Offer training and information
Impacts
Coping skills
Support and intervention options



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Colleagues and Staff

Pay Attention
Check in as necessary
Offer support

Share informal events
Eat lunch together
Celebrate life events together
Celebrate successes

Accept support when it is offered



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Jurors

- ❖ Information on possible effects and coping behaviors
- ❖ Enforce consistent breaks
- ❖ Provide trial schedule information
- ❖ Limit long hours and sequestration
- ❖ Address safety concerns
- ❖ Provide debriefing for difficult cases
- ❖ Referrals for post trial counseling



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Court Staff

- ❖ Provide training
- ❖ Enforce consistent breaks
- ❖ Limit exposure prior to the end of the workday
- ❖ Provide debriefing for seriously difficult cases
- ❖ Provide regular opportunities for checking in regarding impact of the work
- ❖ Referrals to EAP or other behavioral health support



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Development of Transformational Meaning



Meaningfulness makes a great many things endurable, perhaps everything.

C. G. Jung

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Wrapping Up

Questions?

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www.Shiftwellness.org

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