Vicarious Trauma

- Acute visceral reactions to exposure of trauma, graphic stories, crisis, pain & suffering of others.

Compassion Fatigue

- Cumulative build up over time due to prolonged exposure to grief, pain, trauma & stress.

Resilience

- The ability to “bounce” rather than “break” when faced with stress, trauma & suffering.

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**Increase self-awareness**

**Moral Distress/Conflict:**
Inconsistency between our beliefs/values and what we are faced with in the workplace. Policies, politics, systemic issues, conflicts and morale dilemmas cause added stress and distress.

**Decision Fatigue:**
Brain becomes fatigued from multiple, complex & difficult decisions, each expending executive command energy exhausting the pre-frontal cortex.

**What is going on for you?**
Be aware of stresses in personal life, primary trauma triggers, relationship & financial issues all impact risk for Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma.

Know your warning signs:
- Physical: headaches, back/neck pain, teeth grinding, eye twitch, sleep problems
- Emotional: anxiety, depression, anger, hopeless & helpless, numb, irritable
- Behavioural: drug & alcohol use, impaired decision making, perfectionism, overcompensating, absenteeism, avoidance

Do you recognize when you are stressed? Would someone else?

**Recommended Reading:**

- When the Body Says ‘NO!’ - the cost of hidden stress, Dr. Gabor Maté
- Help for the Helper: the Psychophysiology of Compassion Fatigue & Vicarious Trauma, Dr. Babette Rothschild
- Daring Greatly, Dr. Brené Brown
- Gratitude & Trust, Paul Williams & Tracey Jackson
- The Happiness Advantage, Shawn Achor

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“The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to walk through water without getting wet.”

-Dr. Rachel Remen

Kitchen Table Wisdom

Remember:
Keep an eye on your G.A.S. Meter!
Are we “Sliming” each other?

**Low Impact Debriefing:**
1) Self-Awareness (why now, what’s triggered, how do I feel?)
2) Fair Warning (prepare before venting/debriefing)
3) Get Consent (get permission before unloading your burden)
4) Low Impact Debrief (start from the outer edge, how you are doing, the gory details are not necessary for relief)

**Compassion Fatigue Strategies:**
1) Know your stressors, vulnerabilities & strengths
2) Enhance self-care (physical, emotional/spiritual, psychological, professional)
3) Develop resilience training techniques (mindfulness & relaxation)
4) Make a commitment to implement changes

**Recommended Reading:**

*Trauma Stewardship – an everyday guide to caring for self while caring for others*, Laura VanDernoot-Lipsky

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**Identify what you can change**

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**Decide where to begin**

Where will your stress lead you? What is your Resilience Building Activity?

### Resilience Tool Kit:
1) Tool Belt: (have on you at times) music, laughter, book, Life Savours
2) Power Tools: gym membership, musical instrument, hobby, recreational activity which is scheduled, often with others
3) Tool Bench: planned events, vacation, date nights, massage, counselling

### Resilience Building Activities:
- mini-mindful vacations (suck a mint!), laugh, dance, cry, sing out loud, gardening, cycling, walk the dog (borrow a dog), running, sports, knitting, reading for pleasure, play a musical instrument, painting, de-clutter a room, massage therapy, say “NO” without guilt, yoga, mindfulness meditations

**Stop, Breathe & Think App**
- great tools available to help with guided mindfulness

**Recommended Resources:**
- positive, life-affirming, inspirational or funny videos & jokes which ignite your spirit will add to resilience building

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**Effective low impact debriefing validates feelings of fear, professional helplessness, and our human vulnerabilities often triggered by trauma work.**

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**Mindfulness Meditation:**

*The relaxation response is a physical state of deep rest that changes the physical and emotional responses to stress... and the opposite of the fight or flight response.*

- Dr. Herbert Benson, Harvard Medical School