



Responding to Staff Exposure of Highly Stressful Events and Traumatic Patient Experiences: Supporting Health Center Staff & Promoting Resilience

Presenter: Joe Hyde, LMHC, CAS

Vision: Healthy Communities, Healthy People



About this Presentation

The JBS HRSA Behavioral Health Technical Assistance Team is here to support health centers building internal capacity for addressing staff exposure to highly stressful and potentially traumatic patient experiences. This presentation is a primer for a set of practices known to support staff resilience and well being and is intended for Supervisors and Health Center leadership.

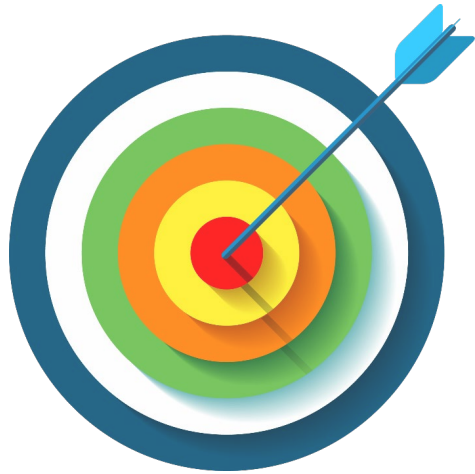


Presenter



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Objectives



Source: iStock

Session Goals:

- ✓ To understand the universality of trauma as it exists in our patients' life experience
- ✓ To normalize staff member stress responses to patient pain and suffering
- ✓ Describe specific evidence-based practices for responding to staff exposure to traumatic events
- ✓ To review proven strategies that support a range of trauma responses, staff well being, resilience

Our work is Values Driven, it Supports Those in Our Community Who Often Are Most in Need

- Our populations served are at higher risk of mental disorders because of greater exposure and vulnerability to unfavorable social, economic, and environmental circumstances, interrelated with race, ethnicity and gender disparities.
- Disadvantage in many cases is intergenerational, it starts before birth and accumulates throughout life.
- Mental health and many mental disorders are shaped to a great extent by the social, economic, and physical environments in which people live.
- Social inequalities are associated with increased risk of many mental disorders.



Source: World Health Organization and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. Social determinants of mental health. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2014.



Trauma has roots in the human experience of pain.

Pain is normal, it is important, and everyone has it.

Its part of life and living, just as is love and connection.

You cannot deliberately get rid of pain, although you can take steps to avoid increasing its impact.

The experience of pain and suffering is especially true for the persons we serve.

What is Traumatic Stress?

“Traumatic stress is a normal reaction to an abnormal event. Usually, symptoms get better with time...”

~APA: <https://www.apa.org/topics/trauma/stress>



A Trauma-Informed Organization: A Framework for Traumatic Stress Response

- Builds a culture of staff cohesion, collaboration, communication
- Lays a foundation of agency-wide support & for resilience from which staff will respond to primary and secondary traumatic stress.
- This foundation can contribute to ameliorating traumatic stress.
- *Do not* underestimate the power of a supportive response to adversity.



Key Aspects of a Trauma-Informed Organization

- **Leadership and Mission**
 - Effective leadership embraces values alignment
 - **Management and Staff Supervision**
 - Clear, respectful communication
 - **Employee Empowerment and Work Environment**
 - Promotes supportive teamwork, effectiveness
- **Training and Professional Development**
 - Adequate and ongoing
- **Staff Health and Wellness**
 - Physical safety, emotional safety, cultural safety



And for us....

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

(Remen, 2006)



Strategies that Support Staff Resilience

What might you do?

Mid-level supervisory strategies that are effective in supporting employee engagement, resilience, and retention



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Source: Shutterstock.

Supervisory Practices That Support Staff Resilience



Your staff knows what is expected of them.



Provide your staff with tools and resources to do their jobs.



Align tasks that play to staff strengths.



Support staff growth and development.



Provide recognition for work well done and do it regularly.



Promote and model staff caring for one another as persons.



Communicate and model the message.

Staff Know What is Expected of Them



Your assigned tasks and responsibilities, documentation bla bla bla
A coherent job description helps **but rarely covers everything.**



As important of a message as is the above, it is equally important to communicate,
'we practice a team sport'.



We look out for one another and sometimes we will pitch in where needed, even when we are not asked. Saying to a coworker: "You look really busy right now, would you like me to pick up X?" **Your kindness and collegiality is not forgotten.**



Supervisors & Managers
Provide recognition for
work well done and do it
regularly.

**Promote and model
compassion for one
another as persons.**

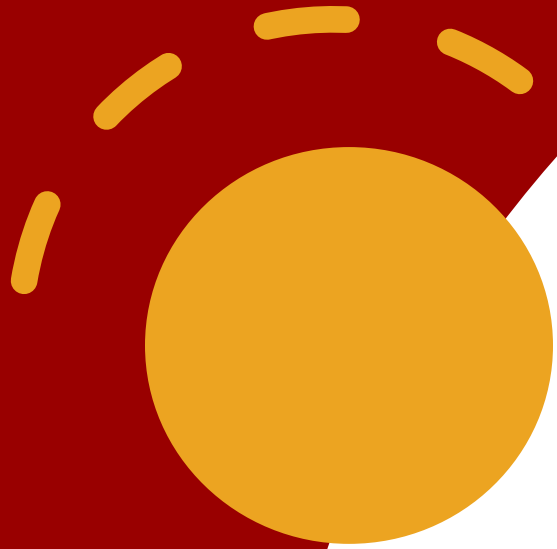


Develop Your Employees



- **Provide constructive feedback and coaching**
- **Look for opportunities to:**
 - Contribute to job satisfaction.
 - Contribute to their career development.
 - Meet regularly to discuss employees' goals for themselves.
 - Align growth opportunities (as is possible) with staff's professional goals.

Source: Microsoft® PowerPoint® for Microsoft 365.



And Plus+ One

*Communicate the Positive
Impact of Staff's Efforts*

Common Responses to Traumatic Events



We are compassionate people and the pain and suffering of others affects us.



Two Types of Responses to Trauma

Responses Associated with Primary/Direct Trauma

- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Post Traumatic Symptoms
- Critical Incident Stress

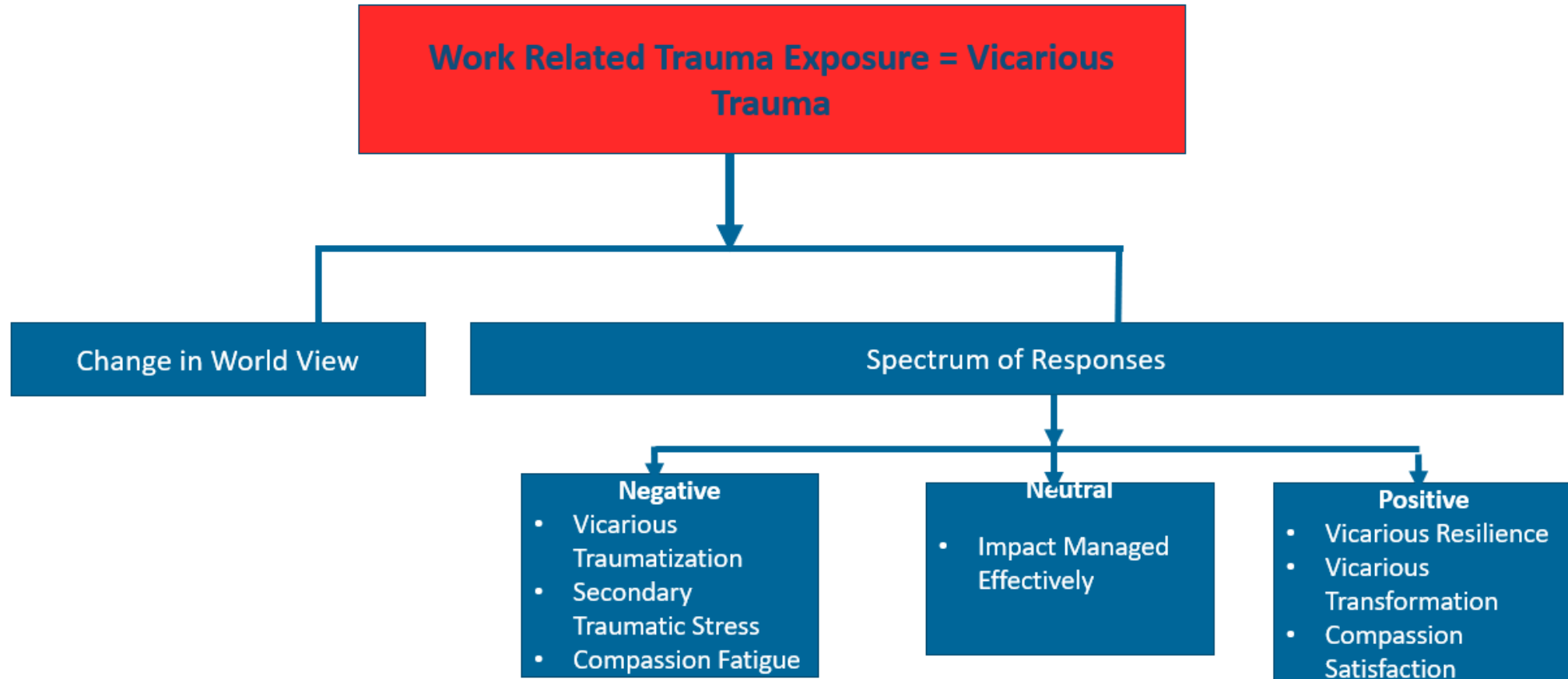
Responses Associated with Secondary/Indirect Trauma

- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Post Traumatic Symptoms
- Empathic Strain
- Vicarious Traumatization
- Compassion Fatigue¹



Adapted from : <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/kidsfamilies/youth/Documents/forum-speaker-presentations/2019/dixon-intro-vt-and-resilience.pdf>

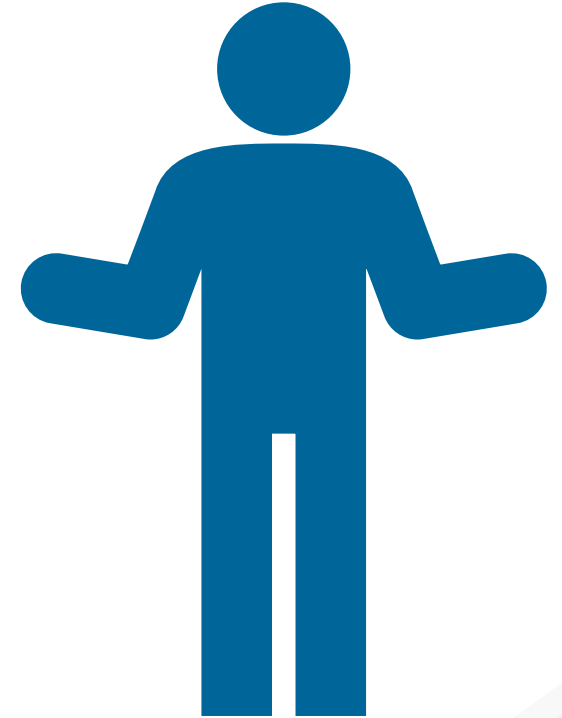
Responses to Vicarious/Secondary Trauma



Adapted from works by Northeastern University's Institute on Urban Health Research and Practice, in collaboration with the Center for Violence Prevention and Recovery at the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center.

Changes in Staff World View

- Accepting that pain is part of life
- Terrible things can happen to kind people
- Sometimes, some people do terrible things to others



Signs and Symptoms of Difficult Responses to Traumatic Events

Behaviors

- Social withdrawal
- Inability to rest
- Restlessness, agitation
- Tremors
- Change in social activity
- Loss or increase of appetite
- Increased alcohol use to calm down, “numb feelings”
- Missing work, late

Cognition

- Confusion
- Nightmares
- Uncertainty hyper-vigilance
suspiciousness
- Intrusive thoughts or images
- Blaming someone
- Poor problem solving

Emotions

- Fear
- Guilt
- Grief
- Panic
- Denial
- Anxiety
- Agitation
- Irritability
- Depression
- Intense anger
- Apprehension
- Emotional outbursts
- Feeling overwhelmed





Supervisor Responses Can Make a Difference

A Model of Behavioral Health First Aid

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) and Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

- CISD is brief evidence informed intervention commonly deployed shortly following a potentially traumatic event.
- CISD can be provided for an individual or small group of staff.
- CISD is a semi-structured intervention.
- CISM is a more comprehensive and multi-component psychosocial support specifically designed to meet the needs of personnel.

Who Should Provide CISD?

Ideal Facilitator

- Knows the CISD model and the process
- Has Interviewing and Small Group Facilitation Skills
- Skills in Motivational Interviewing (MI)
 - MI spirit
 - MI skills
- Skills in Behavioral Activation (BA)
- Personally Skilled in Distress Tolerance



The Seven Steps of CISD

- Step 1: Assess the critical incident/traumatic event (prior to staff conversation)
- Step 2: Facilitate a factual description of what occurred
 - Identify any immediate safety & security issues (if any)
 - Level set expectations: safe space, respect for differences of experience and opinions,
- Step 3: Allow staff to express thoughts, feelings, & emotions
 - Normalize feelings, emotions and thoughts
 - Avoid blaming
- Step 4: Share emotional reactions
 - Normalize affective responses
- Step 5: Identify symptoms & the incident's impact on staff
- Step 6: Teach and coach practical self care skills & bring closure to the incident
- Step 7: Follow up with staff and support referrals (when indicated)



Activities that Support Moving Forward from Trauma

- **Your reactions are typical/normal;** don't be hard on yourself.
- Maintain as normal a schedule as possible.
- Spend time with others.
- Be there for your co-workers the way you'd want them to be there for you.
- Give yourself permission to feel rotten and share your feelings with others.
- Appropriate physical exercise, alternated with relaxation will alleviate some of the physical reactions.
- Structure your time.
- Keep a journal or drawing, write your way through those sleepless hours.
- Do things that feel good to you.
- Make daily decisions that will give you a feeling of control over your life.
- Get plenty of rest.

Behavioral Activation (BA) for Mental Health

- Behavioral activation helps persons to productively spend time.
- It helps to boost the individual's mood and mental state.
- BA supports the individuals to change the self limiting and establish new, healthier ones.
- BA helps build an individual's confidence and self-efficacy.

Concerning Prolonged Distress Reactions



Signs and Symptoms - Responses to Traumatic Events

Behaviors

- Social withdrawal
- Inability to rest
- Restlessness, agitation
- Tremors
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Watch for improvement



Suggested Steps When Staff Need More Support



Select the best person to have this conversation.



Steps in a referral conversation

1. Build rapport—raise the subject. Explore the what have staff done to deal with response to incident, what has worked OK and not so OK.
2. Provide feedback. Voice concern for staff member wellbeing.
3. Build readiness.
4. Negotiate a plan.
5. Follow up.



To Summarize

- Pain is normal, it is important, and everyone has it.
- This is especially true for the persons we serve.
- We are compassionate people and the pain and suffering of others affects us.
- Your organization and its supervisors can initiate actions that supports staff resilience during traumatic stress.
- When a potentially traumatic event occurs, deliberate actions can be taken to support staff.
- Staff can take action to support their own wellbeing.
- And sometimes, some staff may need further supports.



<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/kidsfamilies/youth/Documents/forum-speaker-presentations/2019/dixon-intro-vt-and-resilience.pdf>

BPHC-BH TA Portal

<https://bphc-ta.jbsinternational.com/>

- Request TA
- Access Learning Management System (LMS) modules
- Learn more about BH TA options
 - One-on-One Coaching
 - E-learning Webinars
 - Intensive TA for Practice Change
 - Integration of Oral Health and Behavioral Health Learning Collaborative
 - Virtual Brown Bag Lunches



The screenshot shows the homepage of the BPHC-BH TA Portal. At the top, there is a logo for BPHC-BH TA (Bureau of Primary Health Care Behavioral Health Technical Assistance) with a navigation menu including 'Event Calendar', 'About Us', and 'Contact Us'. Below the logo is a secondary navigation bar with 'Home', 'Technical Assistance Resources', 'Request Technical Assistance', and 'Learning Management System'. The main content area features a large heading: 'Welcome to the BPHC-BH TA Resource Portal!'. Below this heading is a paragraph describing the portal's purpose: 'The Bureau of Primary Health Care (BPHC) Behavioral Health (BH) Technical Assistance (TA) portal is designed to meet the specific needs of HRSA health centers and shall focus on both mental health and substance use disorders (referred to jointly as “behavioral health”), with an emphasis on the opioid epidemic.' To the right of this text is a box titled 'Learn About BH TA Options' which lists five bullet points: 'One-on-One Coaching', 'E-learning Webinars', 'Intensive TA for Practice Change', 'Join a Community of Practice (CoP)', 'Integration of Oral Health and Behavioral Health Virtual Learning Collaborative', and 'Virtual Brown Bag Lunches'.



Thank you!

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