

Vicarious Trauma Self-Assessment

The following questions were adapted from this source:

• Pearlman, L.A., Saakvitne, K.W., (1995). Treating therapists with vicarious traumatization and secondary traumatic stress disorders. In C. R. Figley's (Ed.) Compassion Fatigue: Coping with Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder. Levittown, PA: Brunner/Mazel.

Frame of Reference: identity, Worldview, and Spirituality

1. Do you find yourself questioning who you are as a counselor, as a man or woman as a parent or human? In what ways?

2. Has your exposure to traumatic life events resulted in changes in the way you view the world, including causality, life philosophy, and moral principles? Have you experienced an emergence of cynical beliefs?

3. Have you experienced spiritual impoverishment? Do you find yourself at a loss for a sense of meaning for your life, a loss of hope or idealism, a loss of connection with others or a devaluing of awareness of your experience?

Disruptions in Self Capacities

4. Have you experienced a decrease in the inner or intrapersonal abilities that allow you to maintain a continuous, relatively positive sense of self that are critical for self soothing and affect tolerance?

a. Do you overextend yourself?

b. Overindulge or compulsively consume to manage or avoid affect (e.g., overeating, substance abuse, binge shopping)?

c. Do you experience frequent or intense self criticism or self-loathing?

d. Do you have difficulty tolerating strong feels or are you hypersensitive to emotionally charged stimuli (inability to read the newspaper or watch movies because they are disturbing, or a numbing or insensitivity to emotional material

that previously provoked a response).?

e. Do you feel a sense of isolation or disconnection from loving others?

Disruptions in Needs, Beliefs, and Relationships

5. Have you found yourself questioning whether certain basic beliefs cannot and will not ever be met? (i.e., "I am not safe", "People are not trustworthy", "I am not worthy of being loved".)

6. Have you noticed changes in the following schemas?

a. An increased sense personal vulnerability or capacity to do harm? (safety)

b. A decreased sense of trust in your perceptions or judgments or in others? (trust)

c. A devaluing of yourself for others? (esteem)

d. An increased need for control or a decreased sense of control over self or others? (control)

e. A decreased sense of connection with self or others? (intimacy)

Ego Resources

7. Have you experienced interference in your judgment that resulted in an inability to foresee consequences accurately?

8. Have you been challenged by establishing mature relations with others?

a. Difficulty maintaining appropriate boundaries in relationships, personal and professional?

Trauma History

9. Do you have your own trauma history? Have you done personal counseling work to achieve resolution?

Behavior Changes

10. Have you noted behavior changes that relate to your disrupted cognitive processes? (Such as talking to yourself in critical ways, going out to avoid being

alone, dropping out of community activities, or rejecting your partner’s sexual advances?)