

VICARIOUS TRAUMA ASSESSMENT

When you work in public health you have direct contact with consumers and their lives. As you may have found, your compassion for those you work with can affect you in positive and negative ways. Below are some questions about your experiences, both positive and negative, as a helper. Your responses will allow you to assess your level of compassion fatigue, burnout, and vicarious trauma.

Disclaimer: this is not a clinical diagnostic assessment. This tool should be used for self-assessment and reflection.

INSTRUCTIONS

Consider each of the following questions about you and your current work situation. Select the number below that honestly reflects how frequently you experienced these things in the last 30 days; be sure to respond to every question.

1 Never **2** Rarely **3** Sometimes **4** Often **5** Very Often

- _____ 1. I feel overwhelmed by the thought of going to work each day.
- _____ 2. I feel exhausted from the moment I get to work.
- _____ 3. I am unable to stop thinking about a particular situation I worked on.
- _____ 4. I have little motivation when I am at work.
- _____ 5. I have a difficult time not thinking about work when I am home.
- _____ 6. I am startled easily by loud noises.
- _____ 7. I am easily irritated and have a harder time coming back to center once I am irritated.
- _____ 8. I feel like I have little to no control over my day-to-day life.
- _____ 9. I feel as though I am experiencing the trauma of someone else (I have helped).
- _____ 10. I am preoccupied with wanting to follow-up with specific consumers I have interacted with.
- _____ 11. I feel overwhelmed by the system I work within.
- _____ 12. I have a difficult time seeing any good in the work I have done.
- _____ 13. I feel trapped by my work.
- _____ 14. I am having a difficult time sleeping.
- _____ 15. I have headaches which only occur when I am at work.
- _____ 16. I have had a change in appetite.
- _____ 17. I no longer find pleasure in the things I used to do for fun.
- _____ 18. I do not want to attend supervision.
- _____ 19. I am avoiding my colleagues.
- _____ 20. I have begun to procrastinate more.
- _____ 21. I no longer find joy in my work.
- _____ 22. I have little to no compassion for the consumers I engage with.
- _____ 23. I feel distant or cut off from other people.
- _____ 24. I feel emotionally numb or feel unable to have loving feelings for those close to me.
- _____ 25. I am having trouble falling or staying asleep.
- _____ 26. I have difficulty concentrating.
- _____ 27. I am "super alert" or watchful/on guard.
- _____ 28. I am feeling jumpy.
- _____ 29. I feel as if my future will somehow be cut short.
- _____ 30. I have been having angry outbursts.

SCORE

WHAT DOES YOUR SCORE MEAN?

SCORE	SCORE CLASSIFICATION	WHAT TO DO (I.E., FOR THE INDIVIDUAL, SUPERVISOR, OR AGENCY)
30-33	No signs of burnout	You are not showing any signs of burnout. Make note of how you currently are doing and what your day-to-day looks like to be able to determine if there are any shifts for you in the future and how to address them before you begin to feel burnt out.
34-62	Low risk of burnout unless some factors are particularly severe.	Supervisors should be touching base to determine best ways to support to ensure increasing levels of burnout do not occur. This can and should include decreased workload and/or additional time off and connection to clinical supervision (i.e., supervision with someone who has a therapeutic background/credential).
62-75	High burnout risk	Steps put in place for those beginning to experience burnout should be continued and tweaked as necessary. Additional time off, change in work schedule and workload should be discussed and implemented.
75-90	Burnout	Provide agency feedback forms to gain understanding of what led to burnout to be addressed at a structural level; ensure staff who are burnout have additional time off either each day or can end their week early; provide access to free counseling;
90-150	Vicarious trauma	In order to address and heal from vicarious trauma, having a substantial amount of time away from work may be necessary; in order to return to center and regain previous experience and understanding of the world. Ongoing clinical supervision and connection to peers can also be helpful in addressing and dealing with vicarious trauma. Agencies should be prepared to have protocols in place to prevent VT or to ensure necessary time off with job security.

CLASSIFICATION DEFINITIONS

BURN-OUT

“Burn-out is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterized by three dimensions: feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; increased mental distance from one’s job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one’s job; and, reduced professional efficacy.” ([WHO](#))

VICARIOUS TRAUMA

“The profound shift in worldview that occurs in helping professionals when they work with individuals who have experienced trauma: helpers notice that their fundamental beliefs about the world are altered and possibly damaged by being repeatedly exposed to traumatic material.” (Pearlman & Saakvitne, (1995))