



**Home Visiting Regional Meetings
March 27th-March 31st, 2023**

**Trauma-Informed,
Reflective Practice:**

Using the FAN to Navigate
Overwhelming Moments
With Families

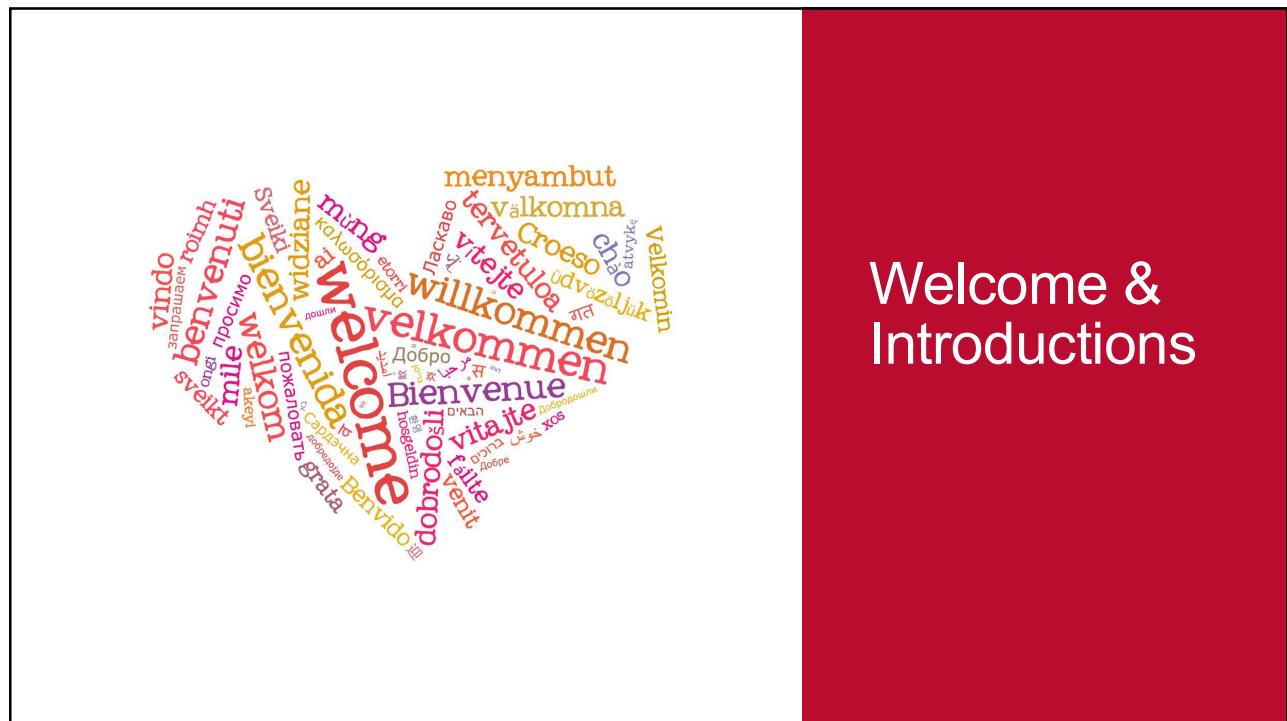
Karen Longenecker, MA, LCSW

Peggy MacLean, Ph.D.

Naomi Roibal, LCSW

Agenda

- What is trauma, and what does it do?
- Developing a Trauma-Informed, Reflective Practice
- Four Rs of Trauma-Informed Practice
- Key Components of a Trauma-Informed, Reflective Approach
- Capacity Building: Using Trauma-Informed, Reflective Skills
- Capacity Building: Vicarious Trauma & Resilience




Before We Start

This topic can be hard

Be mindful of what is coming up for you

Notice what reactions you may have

Do what you need to do to care for yourself



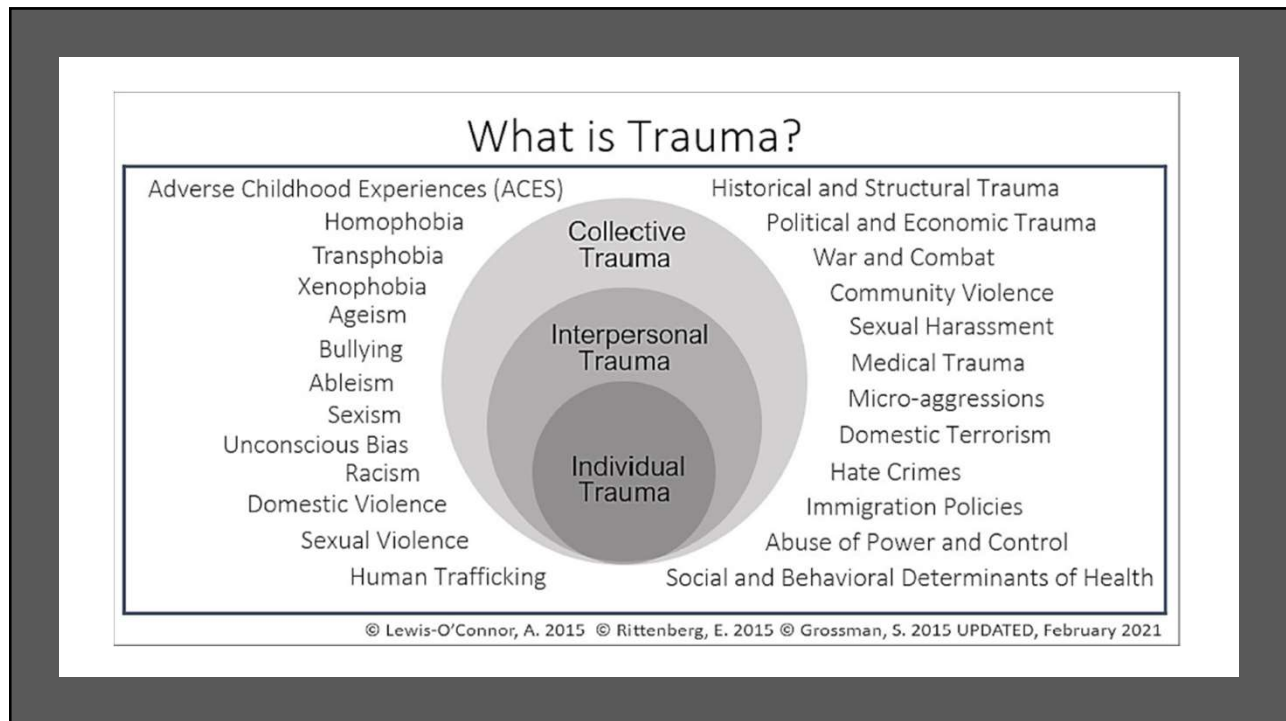
<http://www.saddleworthphysio.co.uk/>

Remembering Mindful Self-Regulation

- MSR is about reading your own regulation cues.
- MSR helps you gently catch yourself in the moment when you feel out of balance.
- MSR is truly personal.
 - What works is what helps you feel calmer and more aware.

What is trauma?

- *“Frightening, often dangerous, and/or violent events or conditions that are experienced as overwhelming to a family and/or any or all its individual members.” (National Child Traumatic Stress Network)*
- Simply put, trauma is anything that overwhelms someone’s ability to cope.
- There is an intense fear for safety, and it usually gives the sense that *“my world will never be the same again.”*



Trauma Responses

- Differ across people
- May be unpredictable
- May range from subtle to observable
- Seen in the children we serve, the parents we work with, and ourselves

Flight/Fight

- Hyperarousal
 - Hypervigilance
 - Reactive
 - Rapid heart rate
 - Pale skin
 - Dilated pupils

How it shows up in the work...

You are in a visit with a mom you've been working with for a while, and you've had concerns about how she's doing. She seems overwhelmed often. She has three kids, her partner is incarcerated, and she's just shared with you that she's pregnant and didn't want to be pregnant again. You notice your heart rate is increasing and you can't stop thinking about how worried you are about her kids. Mom starts to cry, then quickly yells at her kids to be quiet.

- What comes up for you?
- Where do you feel it in your body?
- What are your thoughts?
- What are your feelings?



Freeze

- Dissociation
- Numbing
- Out of body sensation
- In extreme, faint/collapse

How it shows up in the work...

You are in a home visit with a mom you've been working with for about 6 weeks. She has been consistent with visits, but guarded at times and doesn't open up easily. You need to complete the Relationship Assessment Tool (RAT) and you brought it with you to the visit. You start to discuss the purpose of the tool and you notice she gets very still and stares off into the distance.

- What comes up for you?
- Where do you feel it in your body?
- What are your thoughts?
- What are your feelings?



Fawn

- Appease the abuser/oppressor
- Comply
- Identify with the abuser/oppressor

How it shows up in the work...

You are working with a mom who has a history of domestic violence as well as violence within her family system. As you begin your work with mom you notice she is often very agreeable and continues to refer to you, the home visitor, when it comes to what she wants for her child or what you all should work on. You also notice mom often shares personal information about herself that pulls for you to be more of a friend role.

- What comes up for you?
- Where do you feel it in your body?
- What are your thoughts?
- What are your feelings?



Over Time

- These become adaptive responses that helped the individual cope.
- The brain and body become wired to support that patterned response.
- The response becomes their automatic response to any stressor
 - *States become traits (Dr. Bruce Perry)*

Pair and Share

How is this for you so far?

What is coming up for you?

Practice mindful listening with your partner.



Inhale.
Exhale.
Repeat.

Developing Trauma- Informed, Reflective Practice



Four Rs of Trauma- Informed Care

- **Realize** its prevalence and impact on others and self
- **Recognize** signs in others and self
- **Respond** sensitively
- **Avoid Re-traumatization**

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach

Realizing and Recognizing Trauma

- Recognizing that the families and children whom we serve may have gone through painful experiences
 - Adopting a broader definition of trauma
 - Utilizing a trauma lens
 - Noticing trauma responses



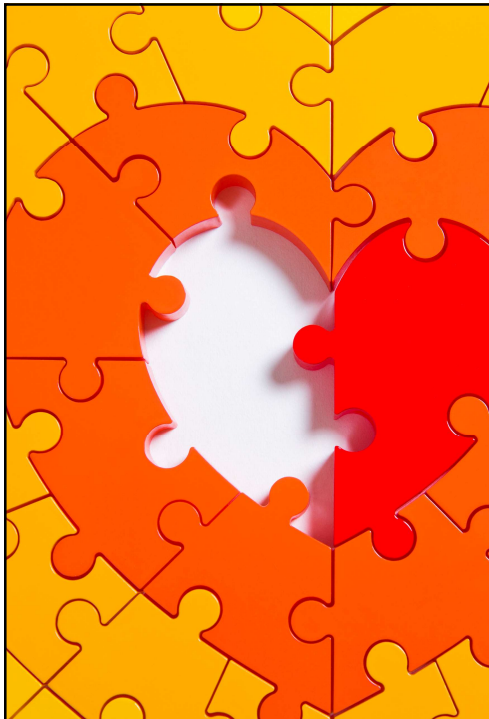
Responding and Resisting Re-Traumatization

- Avoid replicating experiences of trauma and discrimination
 - Approach and practices
- Making trauma inquiries sensitive
- Avoiding causing more shame
- Letting families determine what they are ready for.



Shifting Perspective

- From 'What is wrong with you?' to 'What happened to you? **AND** that is not all of you.'
- Understanding the function of behavior
- Relevant for children and adults



Adopting a Non-Judgement Approach

- Caregivers who have a history of trauma often feel judged and criticized and might be particularly sensitive to this feeling.
- **"A provider who takes a non-judgmental, respectful, empathic stance understands that behavior has meaning and that a parent's maladaptive coping may be related to a disclosed or undisclosed trauma history" (Gilkerson et. al., 2016)."**



Your Way of Being With

§ Your way of being with is more important than what you do ...

§ The importance of being heard, understood, and accepted in the context of a safe and respectful relationship.

§ *"Slowly, I have come to see that asking, and listening, and accepting are a profound form of doing." Vincent J. Felitti, M.D.*

"Safety is not the absence of threat, it is the presence of connection."

– Dr Gabor Maté



My Big Moments

The Importance of Connection

- Validating experiences that are shared
- Being honest and open about concerns
- Utilizing collaboration in the work



Transparency, Trust, and Safety

- Parents who have experienced trauma may have a harder time establishing trusting relationships.
- Transparency is the foundation of trust and safety.
- Therefore, it is important to explain your role as a home visitor and as a mandated reporter.
- Privacy considerations are part safety.



Utilizing Reflective Supervision

- Using **reflective supervision** as a space to explore what might be coming up for the family.
 - Allows you to partner with someone to understand how trauma shows up in your work with family.
- Also, allows you a space to explore what might be coming up for you and how it impacts your work with the family.

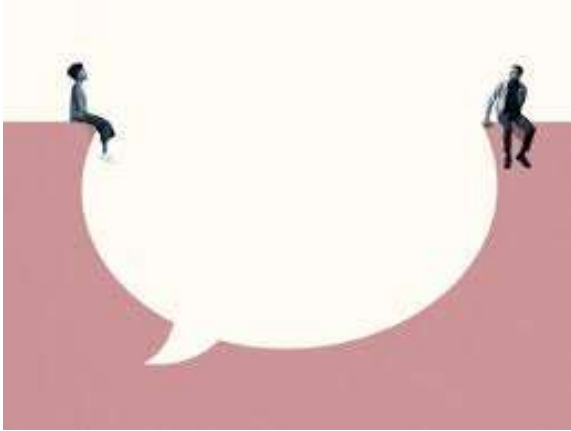


Capacity Building:

Using Trauma-Informed, Reflective Skills

Setting The Frame

- Discussing expectations at the start of the working relationship demonstrates transparency.
- "These are some topics I may bring up ..."
 - Substance use and relapse
 - Mental health concerns
 - Difficult childhood experiences
 - Safety considerations for you and your child
- "I mention these because we know that our experiences influence how we want to parent our children."
- "If I have concerns, how would you like me to discuss them with you?"



Setting the Frame:

“During our work together, I may ask you questions about hard topics like substance use, domestic violence, and mental illness. I ask these questions to everyone I work with because these things impact you as a parent and impact your child. I know these topics can be hard to talk about but I hope that you will feel safe with me to talk about them so I can help you access the help you may need.”

Setting the Frame:

“Sometimes, I may tell you that something you are sharing with me requires the help of someone else. That doesn’t mean that I don’t want to hear about your concerns. Rather I want to understand what you are struggling with so we can find someone to help you.”

Setting the Frame:

"I know your child is here, and I have learned that even small children have very good hearing and awareness — especially when we think they aren't listening!"

At times, I may bring some assessments that we will complete together to see what challenges might get in the way of achieving your parenting goals. These include screening for depression, domestic violence, social supports, substance use, and difficult childhood experiences. Before I bring these though, we will talk about what is a good time for us to complete them and if there is someone else whom you would like to be there. Also, always remember that what and how much you share with me is completely up to you."

Pair and Share

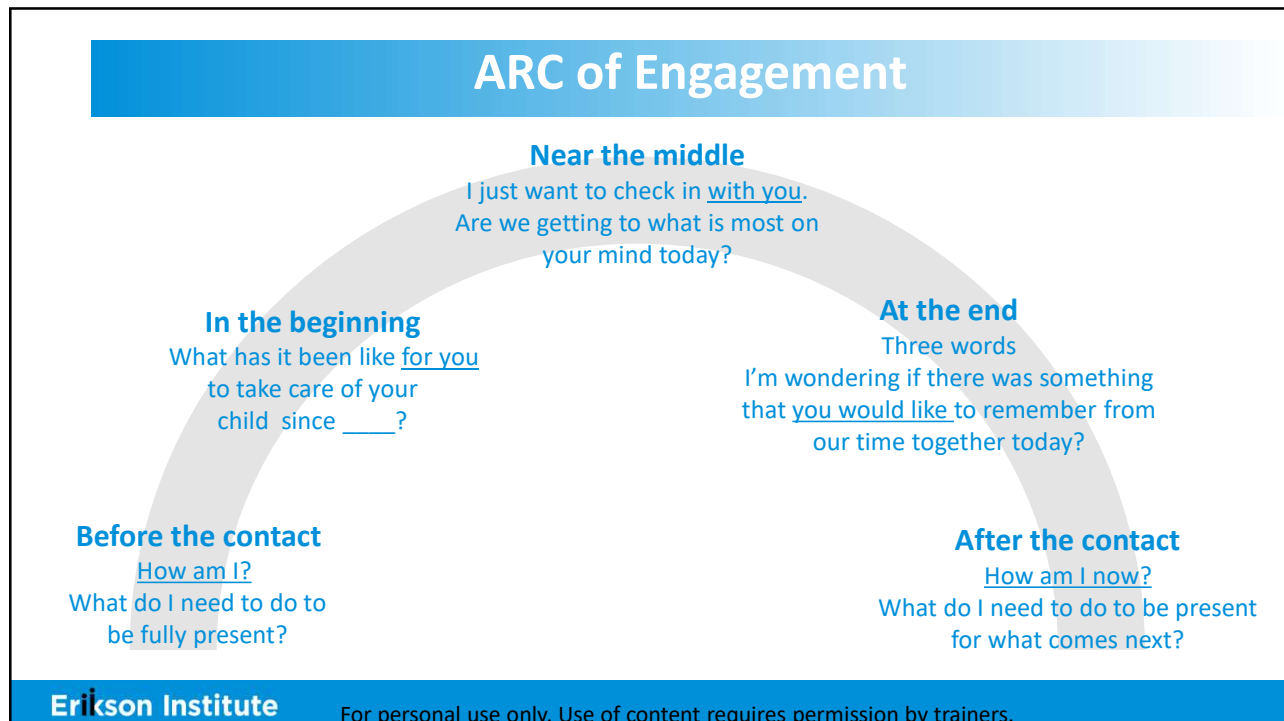
In pairs discuss the following questions:

- How do you set the frame with families?
- How do you see this fitting into your practice?
- Can you think of families for whom this would be helpful?



Creating Predictability

- The ARC of engagement as a trauma-informed tool becomes even more important
 - Provides structure and predictability
 - Grounds our work in the parenting role
 - Allows for urgent concerns to be discussed earlier in the visit
 - Completes a communication circle





Activity

Take a moment and share with a new partner how you are using the ARC of engagement in your work.

If you are new to the FAN, share with your partner how you prepare for visits, how you create predictability in your visit, and how you transition and care for yourself after a visit.

Hard Disclosures in Home Visits

Sometimes a family shares something with you that is so powerful that it throws you off. Maybe this is something they've experienced in the past, and you've just now learned about it.

- Breathe, pause.
- Remember that listening is a critical intervention.
 - Slow down the conversation.
 - Allow space for listening.



Responding to Hard Disclosures

- Notice what is coming up for you.
 - Judgments, worries, and presses to fix or reassure
- Focus on your regulation.



Trauma Evokes Big Emotions in Us

Evokes strong protective urges

Elicits an urge to fix and do

Pulls you to avoid

When families share painful experiences, what is evoked in you?

What do you feel?

Where do you feel it?



Responding to Hard Disclosures

- Follow the client's lead.
 - If they are in feelings
 - Validate their experience.
 - Name what the caregiver might be feeling.
 - If they are in thinking,
 - You may want to explore what got them through those hard times or how it impacted them as a parent.



Responding to Hard Disclosures

- Resist the urge to ask for details of their experience.
 - Let them decide what information to share.
- Avoid saying nice things or rush into a conversation about resilience as it denies what the caregiver has shared.



Responding to Hard Disclosures - Examples

"Thank you for trusting me. I know that sometimes remembering is painful. I feel honored that you shared this with me."

"I appreciate how hard it is to think about these difficult experiences. How do you want it to be different for your child?"

Responding to Overwhelmed Parent Moments



Sometimes, what the parent is going through or what they've shared is so evocative that the parent may lose the ability to attend to their child in the moment or attend to themselves. This is an Overwhelmed Parenting Moment.

- When a parent's affect is so dysregulated "in the moment" that they are unable to reflect or calm and unable to focus on their child's needs.
- **Our focus shifts to supporting the parent in the moment.**
- The parent still has resilience and competence. They might need help accessing these skills in difficult moments.

Overwhelmed Parenting Moments Examples

Parent dissociates/"spaces out"

- When you are doing an activity with parent and baby, parent suddenly seems disconnected from what is happening. It seems as though she "lost time."
- When baby is crying and parent seems frozen and unable to comfort/soothe baby.
- Parent may later share that she felt like she was "floating above her body" in a stressful moment.

Parent reacts strongly to something in environment

- Baby cries loudly and parent yells, "Shut up!" and appears very angry.
- A parent becomes so anxious as she is trying to get her baby dressed, that she starts to cry and leave the room.

Verbal fighting among parents

- "You're a jerk. You're never here." "You know why? Because you make it hell."

-T-T-

For personal use only. Use of content

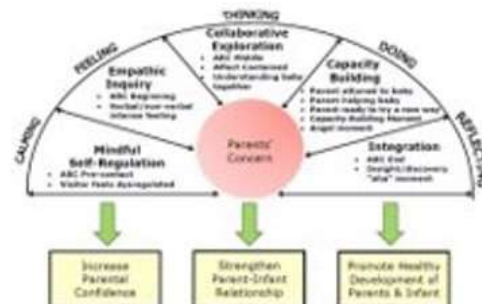
Mindful Self-Regulation



For personal use only. Use of content requires permission by trainers.

Overwhelmed Parent Moment

- Focus first on your regulation
 - Use Mindful Self-Regulation
 - Stay balanced in the present moment
 - Seek clarity
- Then shift to the caregiver's regulation
 - Acknowledge and Validate
 - Help the Parent Regulate
 - Slow the pace



Examples of Possible Responses:

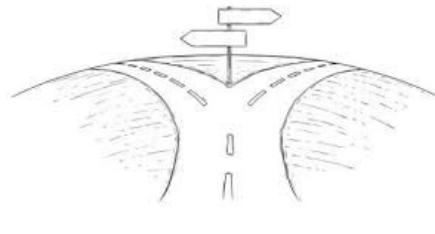
- *“It feels like this issue is really heavy for you right now. I hear you. When something comes up that gives you strong feelings, what do you do for yourself to feel better?”*
- *“I appreciate you sharing this with me. I know how hard it is to talk about this. Would it be okay if we pause for a moment and take some deep breaths together?”*
- *“I see/feel/think you’re getting pretty upset. I want to support you, but first, I want to help you be safe, emotionally and physically. This is powerful, painful stuff. How do you usually help yourself feel calm?”*

Examples of Possible Responses:

- *“It feels like this issue is really heavy for you right now. I hear you. When something comes up that gives you strong feelings, what do you do for yourself to feel better?”*
- *“I appreciate you sharing this with me. I know how hard it is to talk about this. Would it be okay if we pause for a moment and take some deep breaths together?”*
- *“I see/feel/think you’re getting pretty upset. I want to support you, but first I want to help you be safe, emotionally as well as physically. This is powerful, painful stuff. How do you usually help yourself feel calm?”*

Overwhelmed Parent Moment

- Once the parent is more regulated, you are able to shift
 - How will you know?
 - Look for cues.
- Prioritize what needs to happen next
 - Together, collaborate around next steps.
 - Discussing a Safety plan
 - Setting up a support plan
 - Discussing concerns in a compassionate and transparent manner



For personal use only. Use of content requires permission by trainers.

Examples of Prioritizing Next Steps:

- *"I recognize we had planned to complete the application for SNAP benefits today, however I know you just received an upsetting phone call about your mom needing to go to the Hospital. I'm wondering if you would like me to help you think about what to do next? If you would like to go to the Hospital to be with her, maybe we can think through who would be a safe person to come watch the kids for a bit? We can call together if that would be helpful"*
- *"I hear you are concerned about your child not yet crawling. We can continue to think about strategies in the next few weeks to support his development. I'm also thinking about what you shared that you are about to be evicted from your house on Friday. I'm wondering if we can shift and explore emergency housing resources so you have somewhere to go. How does that sound to you?"*



For personal use only. Use of content requires permission by trainers.



Vicarious Trauma

Examples of Vicarious Trauma

A mom shares a story with her home visitor and the home visitor can't stop thinking about it, even at home.

A home visitor has nightmares about something traumatic that happened to a family she works with.

A home visitor drives home after a very difficult visit and doesn't remember the commute.



As Home Visitors

- We can have Self-awareness when we are impacted by vicarious trauma to build a more sustainable practice.
- We can utilize Reflective Supervision to support increased insight into how you are impacting the work and how the work is impacting us.
- We can support our colleagues when we see they need to Name it to Tame it.

Recognizing Vicarious Trauma

The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water and not get wet."— Rachel Naomi Remen

- Understand that these experiences may bring up your own experiences
 - Noticing your own trauma responses
- When needed, accessing therapeutic support to process your own experiences

Vicarious Trauma to Vicarious Resilience

§ Often, our focus is on vicarious trauma, secondary traumatic stress, and compassion fatigue with a focus on the negative effects of bearing witness to suffering.

§ Feelings of anger, hopelessness, helplessness, fear, grief, and/or overwhelm



-T-T-

Vicarious Resilience

- Witnessing and reflecting on human beings' capacity to heal;
- Altering the perspective of one's own life
- Re-framing struggles
- Developing hope
- Developing tolerance to frustration;
- Altering the perspective of the self



-T-T-

Vicarious Resilience

- Bearing witness to adversity and resilience has the potential to affect and transform us in a unique and positive manner.

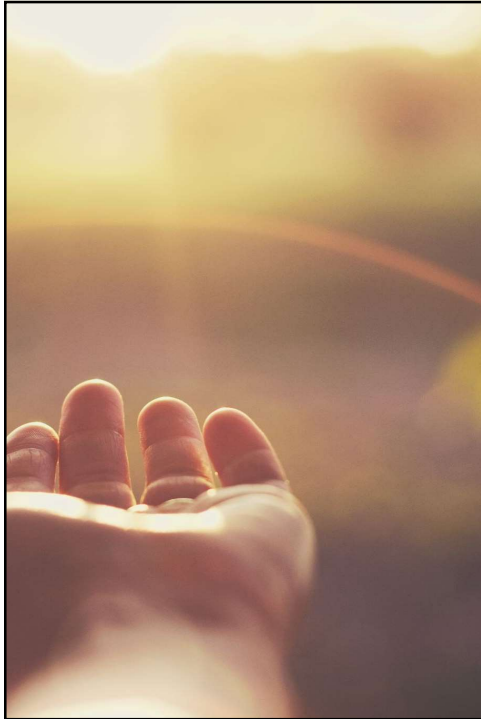


-T-T-

Vicarious Resilience

"[it is] more like ... a flow of energy. So, sometimes, I say, "How did you get through that? How did you cope? How can you be here today?" And I truly mean it because I'm just floored by the answer. And they say, "It's my faith in God" or "My mother always told me she'd be with me" or whatever their answer might be. And it just flows out of them, this kind of love or hope or pure energy that's this life force. And so you get infected or affected by that as well. So it's not always there's a dark, terrible energy, but often this kind of light ... that flows too."

(Engstrom, Hernández, & Gangsei, 2007, p.8)



Mindful Self-Regulation in response to Vicarious Trauma

Please take a moment to give yourself whatever you need.

If you need to name it, send a text to someone you feel safe with telling them what's coming up for you today. Let them know you need to name it to tame it.

If you need to be still and focus on your breath, take a moment now to bring your focus to your breathing. Ask yourself how patient you can be with each breath.

If you need to practice self-talk, perhaps try your go-to strategy. If you don't have one, try telling yourself that while trauma changes us, resilience and healing changes us too.

What would you like to remember from our time together today?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND ATTENTION!