



Practical tools for managing vicarious trauma

To reduce the development of vicarious trauma it is paramount to consistently monitor our reactions to manage the negative impact. One way of achieving this is through reflective practice and supervision.

Exercise: Work-life balance

- On a blank piece of paper, draw a large circle to represent your life.
- Place a smaller circle in the centre to represent you and label it with your name.
- Divide the large circle into slices of a pie to show the various activities that you're engaged in on a regular basis, e.g., work, family, leisure, physical exercise, emotional self-care, spiritual well-being.
- Reflect on this and ask yourself to what extent you are living a balanced life. Are your values reflected in how you spend your time? Are you spreading yourself too thinly? If you had only one month to live, how would you divide your time? Are there things that you are avoiding or putting aside? What changes would you like to make?
- On a new sheet of paper draw a circle and divide it into how you would like to balance your life.

Exercise: Exploring signs of stress

- On a sheet of paper list in what way your work impacts you
- Next reflect on how you know that you are becoming stressed and list any signs or symptoms. Look at these and make a list of what you commonly do to manage these.
- Next list some of the triggers that cause you to become particularly stressed.
- Reflect on what you have written and consider what would help you most to manage triggers and stress reactions.

Exercise: Mapping your support network

- On a blank sheet of paper, draw a large circle.
- Divide the circle into slices as in a pie and place headings such as emotional support, informational support, instrumental support, companion support and any other category of your choice.

- Next write the names of those people in your personal, professional and social world that can offer you support in the categories (you can put the same person in more than one slice).
- Reflect on this and identify how you feel about your social support network. Do you have enough people in your network? Do they provide you with the support you need? Do you seek support from the person who can offer it? Would you like more support and in which areas? How might you be able to seek such support?
- Reflect on how frequently you have accessed members in your support network in the last month and the last seven days.
- Look at this and think about whether there are things you would like to change.
- It is also worth reflecting on how many people you support in your social network. And how comfortable you are with that.

Self-care

We can divide self-care into 6 categories. It is helpful to engage in some of the activities on a weekly basis and to incorporate them into your weekly schedule.

Work - supervision, consultation, mentoring, peer support, cpd, balance trauma work, regular breaks, set limits and boundaries.

Body - physical health diet, rest, relaxation, yoga, martial arts, play.

Mind - reflection, sense of control and agency, recreational activities that stimulate, reading for fun.

Emotion - respect and nurture self, listen to music, watch films, see plays, laughter, humour.

Creativity - allow for inspiration, write, draw, paint, sculpt, make music.

Spirituality - beauty, nature, tranquillity, hope, optimism, passion.

Exercise: Self-care

- Take a piece of paper and divide into four or more columns with the following headings - Physical self-care, emotional and psychological self-care, workplace self-care and any other sources.
- Next place as many activities you can think of under the headings and highlight those that you already engage in regularly.
- Look at the activities and put a star next to those that you would like to incorporate into your life.
- Make a commitment to incorporate these in the future.