

Vicarious Trauma & Burnout

Helping victim-survivors is rewarding and immensely important. However, it is important to acknowledge the effects it has on you as an individual.

Vicarious trauma

Experiencing symptoms of trauma as a result of exposure to other people's trauma.

Burnout

Exhaustion as a result of long periods of physically and/or psychologically taxing work without breaks.

Recognising the signs of vicarious trauma

- Intrusive thoughts of a victim-survivor's experience or story
- Intensified fear and anxiety
- Disruption of sleep and recurring nightmares
- Racing thoughts
- Loss of connection with identity, self and others
- Lack of ability to appropriately manage personal boundaries
- Loss of pleasure in daily activities and personal interests
- Withdrawal from others
- Physical and emotional distress.

Recognising the signs of burnout

- Struggling to manage personal boundaries
- Constant dissatisfaction
- Difficulty leaving work at the end of the day or never leaving on time
- Feeling constantly under pressure, powerless and overwhelmed
- Feeling frustrated or constantly judged by others
- Being unable to properly refuel and rest
- Loss of connection with yourself and your own identity
- Irritability and anger.

These lists are not exhaustive and vicarious trauma and burnout can impact everyone differently.

There are a few ways to prevent or mitigate the effects of vicarious trauma and burnout. Taking care of yourself mentally and physically is extremely important, which can be done through self-care, rest and reaching out to your support networks. If you are affected by symptoms of vicarious trauma or burnout within your workplace, let your team or managers know how you are feeling. There may be employee assistance programs available to you that can help create a safer and more supportive workplace environment.