

**Vicarious Trauma and Resilience:
Strategies for workers**

Liz Davies and Lynn Mitchell
Consultants and Trainers

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What got you into the work and what did you hope to achieve?

What do you value in your workplace and the work you do?

What sustains you?

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It starts with each of us...

If you want others to be happy, practise compassion.

If you want to be happy, practise compassion.

Dalai Lama

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Self-Compassion
Kristin Neff*

- ▶ 1. Self-kindness vs Self-judgment
- ▶ 2. Common humanity vs Isolation
- ▶ 3. Mindfulness vs Over-identification.

What does self-compassion look like for each of us?

Where do you see compassion in action in your working life?

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Compassion vs empathy

- Feeling for vs feeling with
- Recognising vs sharing the suffering of the other
- Motivated to help vs rescue/fix/solve

Characterised by feelings of warmth, concern and care for the other

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**Vikki Reynolds-
a broader view**

- ▶ Vicarious trauma commonly seen as a negative 'transformation of a worker's inner experience resulting from the empathetic engagement with our clients' (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995)



- ▶ Vikki Reynolds brings a broader socio-political view to vicarious trauma and burnout (Canadian Clinical Supervisor, therapist and activist)

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Vikki Reynolds critiques the concept of 'burnout'

The context and injustices of our clients' lives is invisible

Clients seen as a potential source of harm

She agrees that we need to engage in enough self care to be fully present with clients

...But yoga and drinking water are not enough!

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Key actions

- Justice-doing
- Collective ethics
- Solidarity
- Fostering collective sustainability



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Three levels of response

What should we be doing at the:

- > Organisational level
- > Team level
- > Individual level



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Organisational responses to Vicarious Trauma

► Strategies include:

- Awareness of VT at recruitment and in retaining staff
- Ensure appropriate and diverse caseloads
- Provide effective supervision for all
- Access to debriefing
- Staff and peer support
- Safety and comfort in the work environment
- Workplace Culture →

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Workplace Culture

- Connection
- Communication
- Contribution
- Collaboration
- Have values that are shared and enacted
- Look for ways to build diversity and job enrichment
- Support staff to take adequate breaks

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Managers/senior staff can:

- Understand and acknowledge the impact the work may have on staff
- Model good self care
- When the pressure is 'on' look for ways to help staff meet the current challenges
- Promote the importance of self-care and well being
- Provide opportunities for staff to give feedback about their jobs & value this input
- Stay positive, praise and acknowledge effort*

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Towards well-being and resilience

The big three of resilience

- Strength
 - Meaning
 - Pleasure
- (Saakvitne, K.W. et al. 1999)

- TIME...off, out, to eat, to connect with others, to complete tasks
- Boundaries
- A workspace that is comfortable and pleasant
- Regular supervision/consultation
- Negotiate for your needs
- Peer support
- Education/Training
- Work/life balance

Work to live, not live to work

- ▶ <https://self-compassion.org>
- ▶ <https://www.nice.org.uk>
- ▶ <https://www.headington-institute.org>

Thankyou from

Lynn Mitchell
lynnmitchell7@bigpond.com

Liz Davies
lizdaviesamhsw@gmail.com