

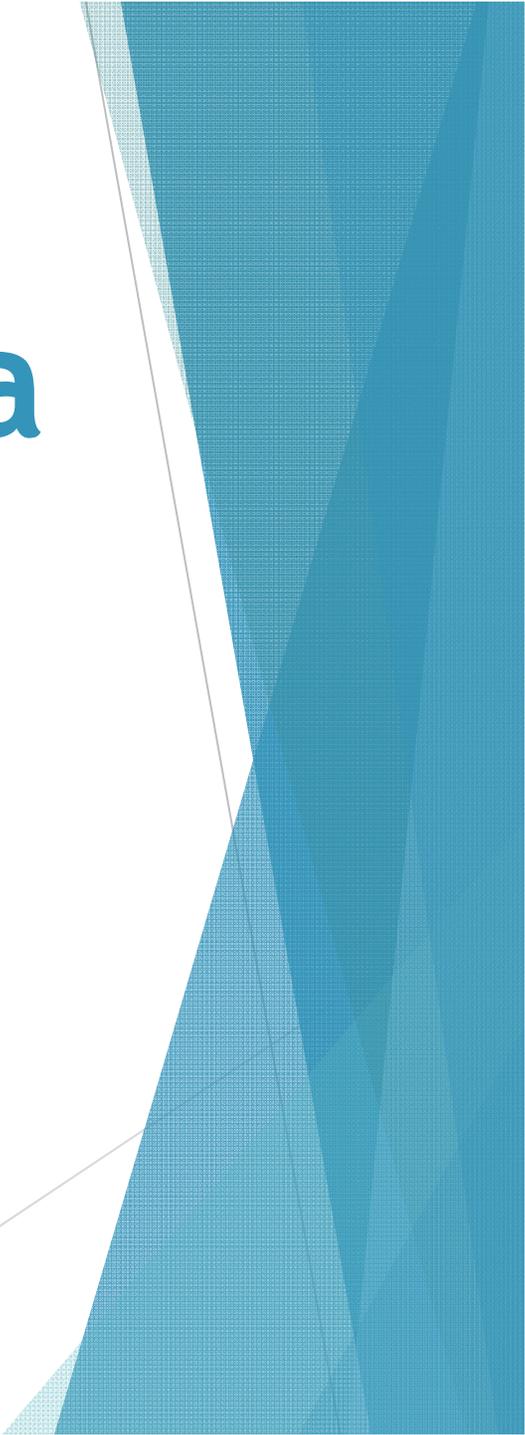
# Supporting Staff by Building Organizational Resilience

Vicarious Trauma, Compassion Resilience, and  
Organizational Response





# Vicarious Trauma or Compassion fatigue or....



# Vicarious trauma

“The transformation that occurs in the inner experience of the worker that comes about as a result of empathetic engagement with a client’s trauma”

▶ (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995)

# This is our work

In a survey of 148 counselors, Schauben and Frazier (1995) found that those who worked with a higher percentage of sexual violence survivors reported more symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder and greater disruptions in their beliefs about themselves and others.

# The Impact of Trauma on the Trauma Worker

“When trauma workers open their hearts to hear someone’s story... their belief systems are challenged and they are changed” (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995, p. 25).

# Vicarious trauma

Physiological symptoms may resemble post traumatic stress disorder

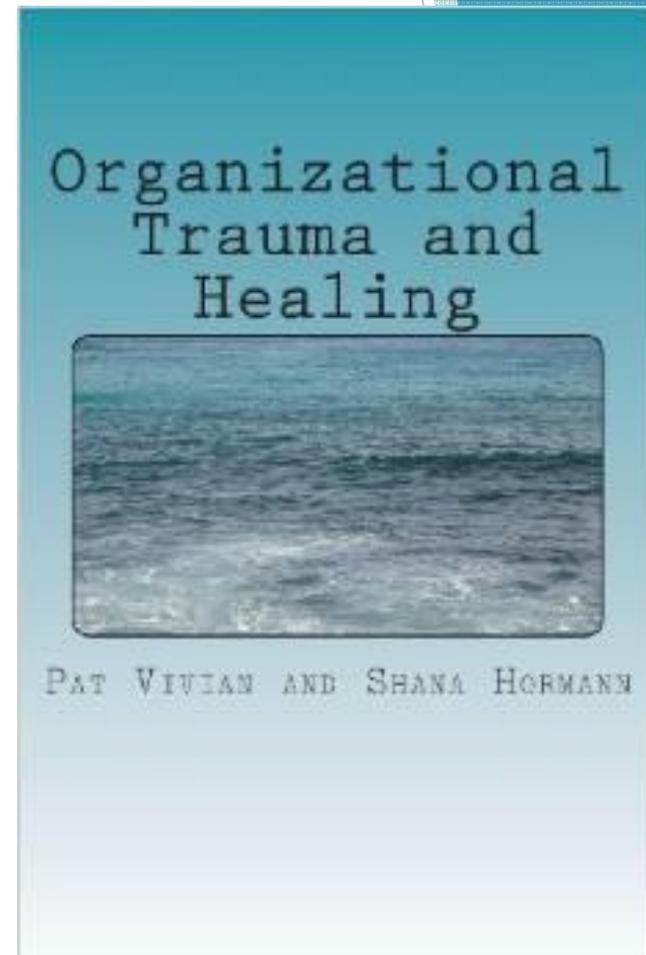
- ▶ Intrusive symptoms
- ▶ Detachment symptoms



“Preliminary findings indicate that participants were definitely experiencing vicarious trauma as a result of this work, but we also are finding that when people perceive their organizations to be supportive, they experience lower levels of vicarious trauma.”

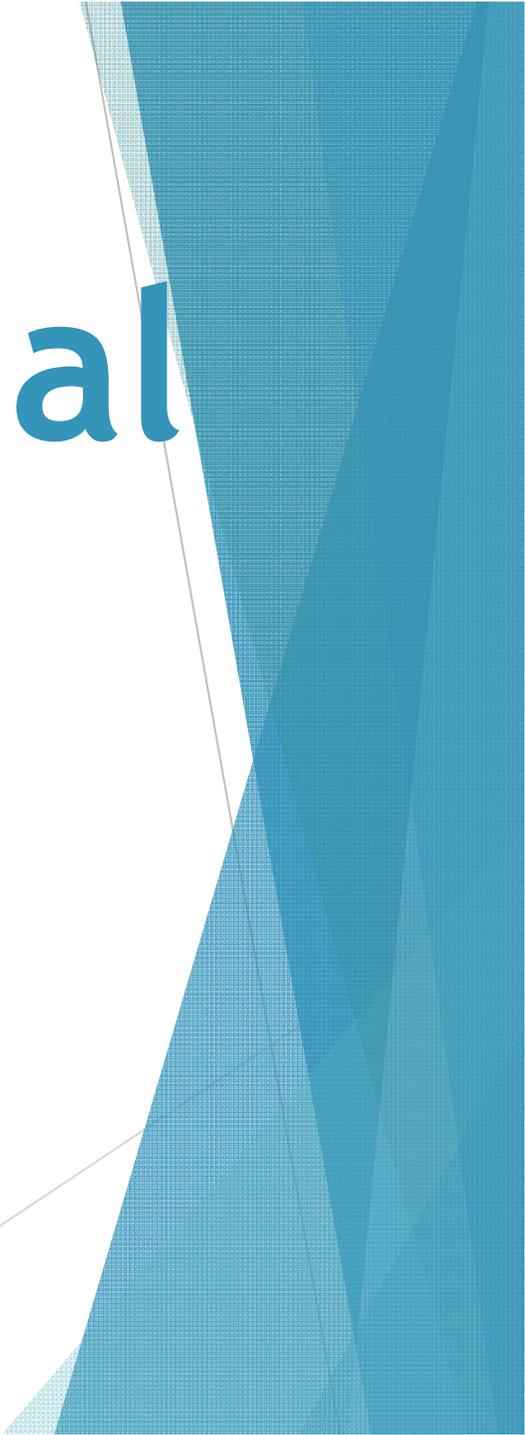
Golie Jansen in WCSAP Digest on Vicarious Trauma and Its Impact on Advocates, Therapists and Friends

***Organizational  
Trauma and Healing***  
**by Pat Vivian &  
Shana Hormann**

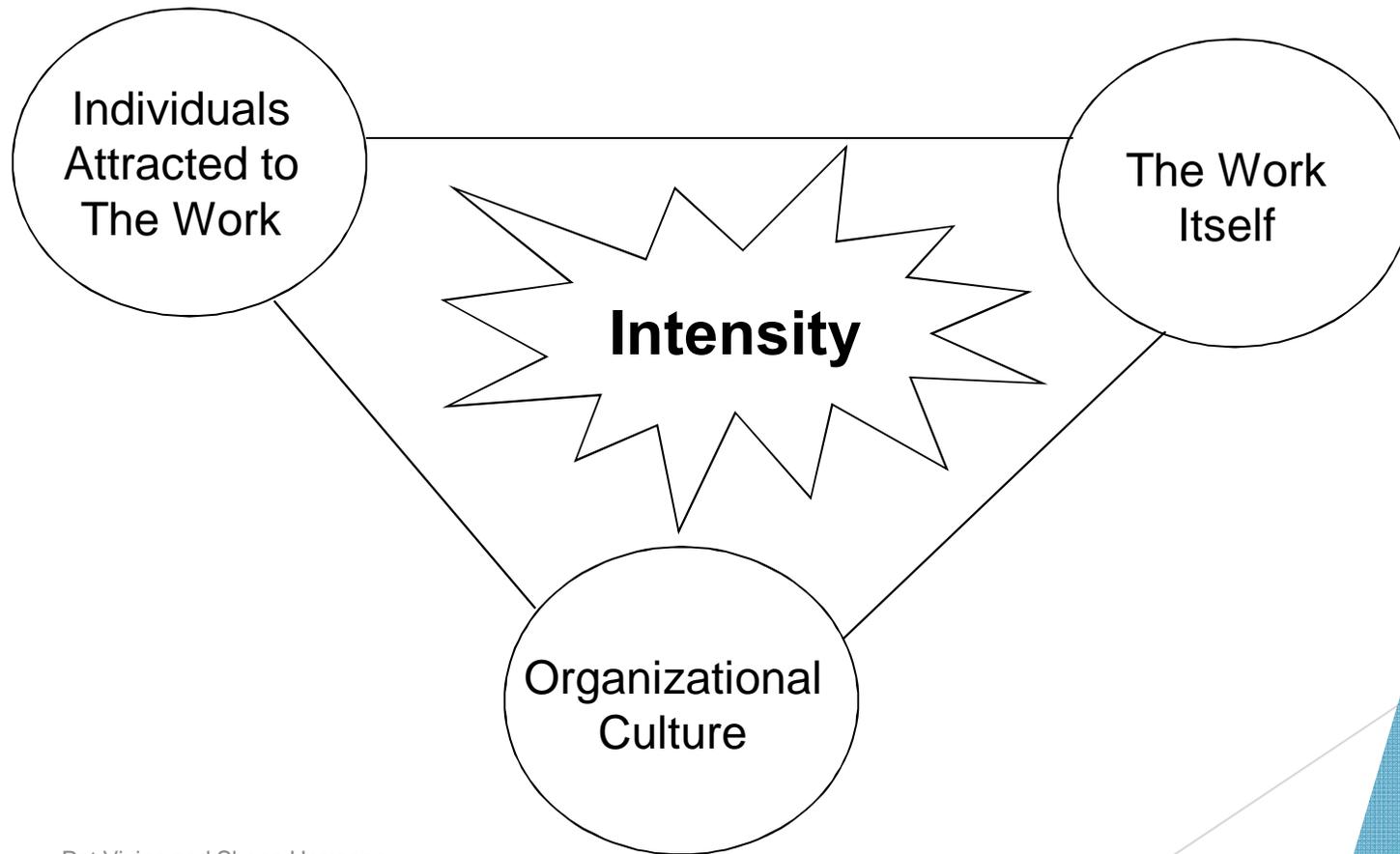


Much of the following information is adapted from Pat Vivian and Shana Hormann, 2014-2016

# Organizational Perspective

A large, abstract graphic on the right side of the slide. It consists of several overlapping, semi-transparent blue shapes. The top part is a vertical rectangle with a fine grid pattern. Below it, there are several overlapping triangles and trapezoids in various shades of blue, creating a layered, geometric effect. A thin white line runs diagonally across the shapes.

# Individual-Work-Culture Connection



# Organizational Trauma

- ▶ Organizations, like individuals, can be traumatized.
- ▶ Organizational trauma can be a barrier to building a culture of trauma-informed care and to providing services.

# Sources of Organizational Trauma

- ▶ Single catastrophic event
- ▶ Ongoing wounding (internal or external)
- ▶ Redemptive nature of the work
- ▶ Empathic nature of the work

# Exacerbating Factors

- ▶ Limiting attitudes and worldview
- ▶ Organizational amnesia
- ▶ Unproductive relationships between organization and environment
- ▶ Unrecognized wounding from trauma

# Characteristics of a Traumatized Organization

- ▶ Closed boundaries
- ▶ Stress and anxiety contagion
- ▶ Worldview and identity erosion
- ▶ Depression, despair and loss of hope and trust

# Characteristics of a Traumatized Organization

- ▶ Cumulative discouragement
- ▶ Cyclical burnout of staff and leaders
- ▶ Regularity of re-traumatizing triggers
- ▶ Anxiety-based conversations and decisions
- ▶ Ongoing instability

# Resiliency Factors

- ▶ Strong core identity
- ▶ Organizational esteem
- ▶ Facilitating structures and processes
- ▶ Positive connection to peer agencies
- ▶ Hopeful and energetic leadership



# Leadership in Building and Supporting Resilience

- ▶ Act as a role model
- ▶ Recognize & acknowledge trauma
- ▶ Ensure safety & contain anxiety
- ▶ Integrate trauma in affirming & meaningful ways

# Leadership in Building and Supporting Resilience

- ▶ Offer optimism, confidence & energy
- ▶ Build on strengths & bolster organizational esteem
- ▶ Institute facilitating structures & processes

# Leadership in Building and Supporting Resilience

- ▶ Open the organization to new energy & information
- ▶ Set priorities to move forward



# **Organizational Response Requires Facilitating Structures and Processes**



# Organizational Response

## Culture

- ▶ Work towards deep equity
- ▶ Center people over processes
- ▶ Liberatory practices

# Organizational Response

## Culture

- ▶ Acknowledge impact of trauma
- ▶ “Normalize” the effect of working with trauma
- ▶ Create opportunities for self-care

# Organizational Response

## Workload

- ▶ Vary
- ▶ Allow for other activities such as education and outreach - e.g. not just direct service
- ▶ Collaborate and connect

# Organizational Response

## Work environment

- ▶ Physically safe
- ▶ Personal control
- ▶ Space to rest and retreat

# Organizational Response

## ▶ Education

- ▶ Trauma-specific
- ▶ Education on how clients can address trauma can also help address vicarious trauma

# Organizational Response

## Group support

- ▶ Informal debriefing
- ▶ CISD in some circumstances
- ▶ Team-building
- ▶ Peer support
- ▶ External supports

# Organizational Response

## Trauma-Informed Supervision

- ▶ Vicarious trauma addressed
- ▶ Performance supervision separate from supportive supervision
- ▶ Outside clinical support

**Organizational response  
builds**

**Staff support  
builds**

**Survivor healing  
builds**

**Community resilience**



# Our Sincere Thanks to:

- ▶ Our six SADI Project Sites
- ▶ Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition
- ▶ National Organization of Asian and Pacific Islanders Ending Sexual Violence
- ▶ National Sexual Violence Resource Center
- ▶ Resource Sharing Project of IowaCASA
- ▶ Sisters of Color Ending Sexual Assault
- ▶ Office on Violence Against Women
- ▶ Dr. Stephanie Townsend

Learn more!

Materials and resources  
available at [www.nsvrc.org/SADI](http://www.nsvrc.org/SADI) or  
[http://www.resourcesharingproject.org/sexual-assault-demonstration-  
initiative](http://www.resourcesharingproject.org/sexual-assault-demonstration-initiative)



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