

# RECOGNIZING SECONDARY TRAUMA

## DEFINITION

"Secondary trauma is defined as indirect exposure to trauma through a first hand account or narrative of a traumatic event. The vivid recounting of trauma by the survivor and the clinician's subsequent cognitive or emotional representation of that event may result in a set of symptoms and reactions that parallel PTSD ... (it) is also referred to as compassion fatigue and vicarious traumatization." (1)

"SECONDARY TRUAMA IS A NATURAL BUT DISRUPTIVE BY-PRODUCT OF WORKING WITH TRAUMATIZED CLIENTS.ONCE RECOGNIZED, SECONDARY TRAUMA CAN BE ADDRESSED AND THE CAREGIVER CAN HEAL, AND EVEN GROW FROM THE EXPERIENCE."(2)

## COMPASSION FATIGUE SYMPTOMS

**Cognitive:** Lower Concentration, apathy, Rigid thinking, Perfectionism, Preoccupation with trauma

**Emotional:** Guilt, Anger, Numbness, Sadness, Helplessness

**Behavioral:** Withdrawal, Sleep disturbance, Appetite change, Hyper-vigilance, Elevated startle response

**Physical:** Increased heart rate, Difficulty breathing, Muscle and joint pain, Impaired immune system, Increased severity of medical concerns (2)

## RESILIENCE STRATEGIES

*Prevention should occur at both the individual and organizational levels*

1. Balancing caseloads and accessible supervision (Professional Strategy)
2. Sufficient release time and safe physical space (Organizational Strategy)
3. Personal strategies, such as respecting one's own limits and maintaining time for self-care activities (Personal Strategy)
4. Self-nurturing and seeking connection (General Coping)(1)

