



Managing Workplace Stress and Vicarious Workplace Trauma

1.28.25

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Are you a can of soda?





Stanford | SPARQtools

SPARQtools: Rethinking Stress Toolkit Workbook

The questions and statements found below are part of the [Rethinking Stress](#) toolkit from [Stanford SPARQ](#), a nonprofit “do tank” that creates and shares social psychological insights with people working to improve society. The toolkit, part of [SPARQtools](#), presents science-based activities that help people use stress to enhance their work and health.

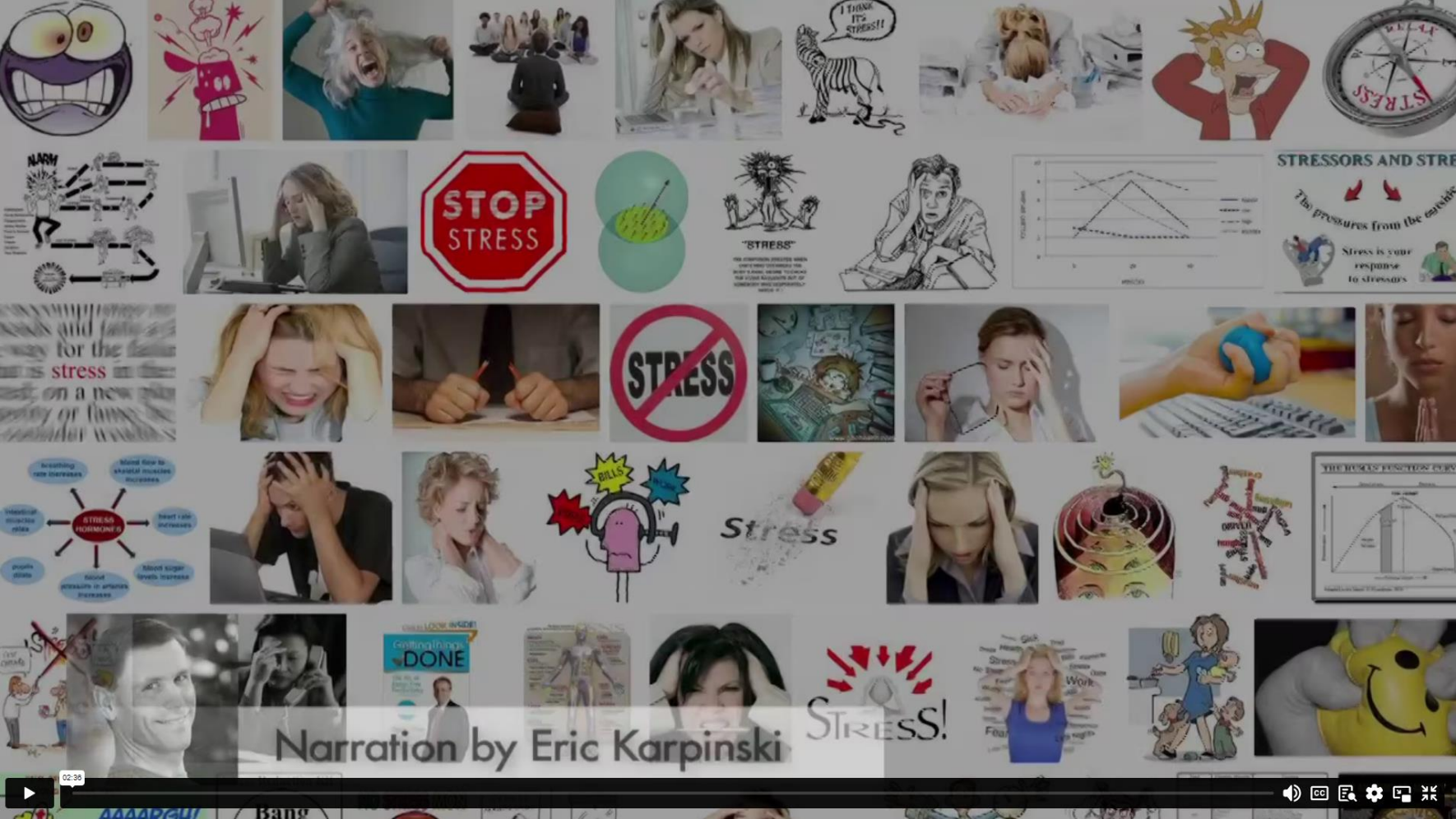
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Email Stanford_SPARQ@stanford.edu if you have any questions, or find us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), or [LinkedIn](#). And if you'd like to keep up with SPARQ's activities, [subscribe to the team's quarterly newsletter](#).

Rethinking Stress - It Can Be A Motivator



- <https://sparqtools.org/rethinkingstress-instructions/#step1>





“Vicarious trauma is an occupational challenge for people working and volunteering in the fields of victim services, law enforcement, emergency medical services, fire services, and other allied professions, due to their continuous exposure to victims of trauma and violence. This work-related trauma exposure can occur from such experiences as listening to individual clients recount their victimization; looking at videos of exploited children; reviewing case files; hearing about or responding to the aftermath of violence and other traumatic events day after day; and responding to mass violence incidents that have resulted in numerous injuries and deaths.”

(Office for Victims of Crime – OVC)





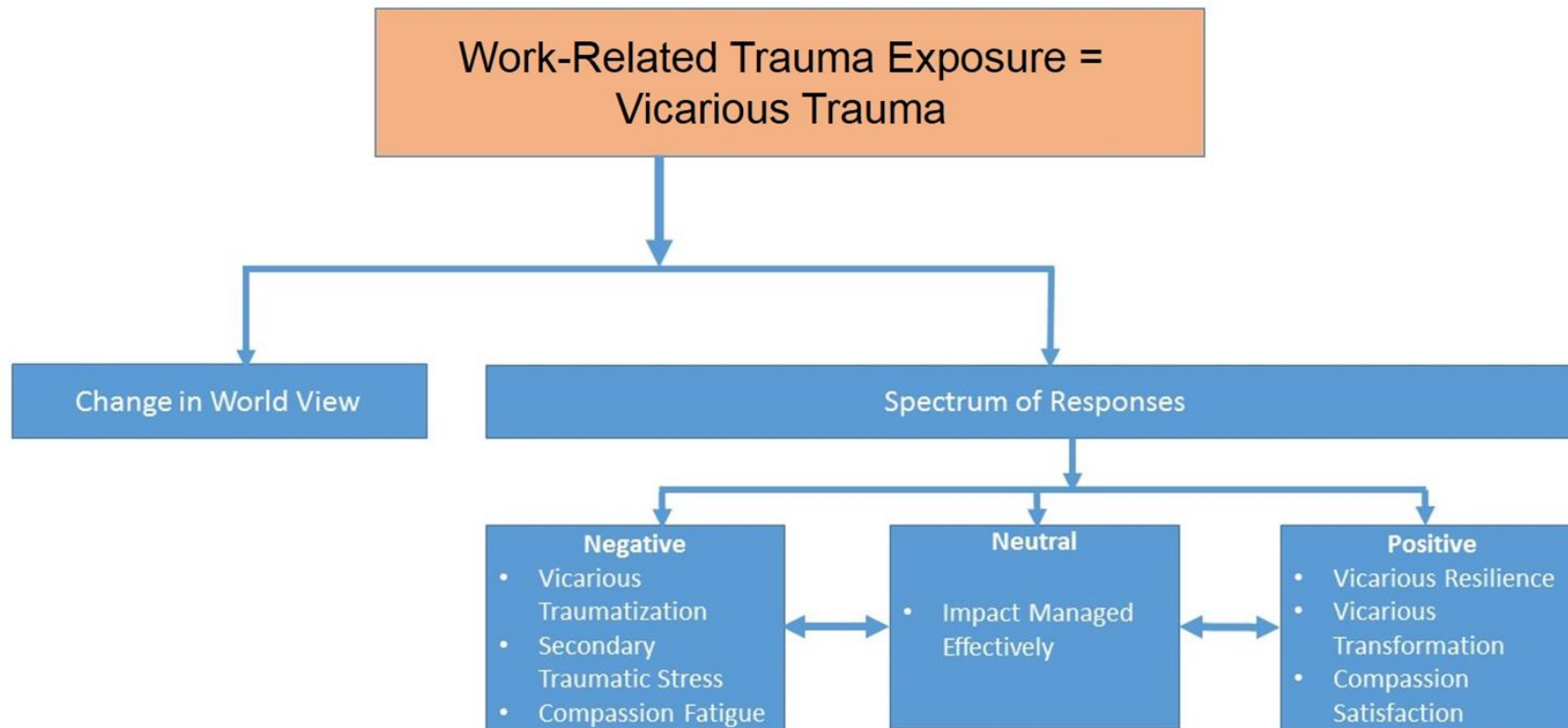
- While individuals respond to vicarious trauma in a number of ways, a change in their world-view is considered inevitable—people can either become more cynical or fearful, or they can become more appreciative of what they have, or both. Responses to vicarious trauma can be negative, neutral, or positive; can change over time; and can vary from individual to individual, particularly with prolonged exposure.

(Office for Victims of Crime – OVC)





Vicarious Trauma Toolkit Model





“First, you should understand that it’s a process. It’s not a matter of one day, you’re living your life with a great deal of energy and enjoyment, and the next, you wake up exhausted and devoid of any energy – both physical and emotional. Compassion fatigue develops over time – taking weeks, sometimes years to surface. Basically, it’s a low level, chronic clouding of caring and concern for others in your life – whether you work in or outside the home. Over time, your ability to feel and care for others becomes eroded through overuse of your skills of compassion. You also might experience an emotional blunting – whereby you react to situations differently than one would normally expect.”

F. Oshberg, MD, “When Helping Hurts”





- Rethink Stress
- Create a Healthy Work Environment
- Allow for Humor as Part of Your Day
- Be Mindful of Your Own and Your Co-workers Experiences
- Apply Principles of “The Happiness Advantage”



<https://sparqtools.org/rethinkingstress-instructions/#step2>





Hack Your Habits

Create mindful reminders

Use practical passwords

Don't be so efficient



Enrich Your Environment

Personalize your space

Cut clutter

Go green...and brown



Remember Relationships

Chat by the watercooler

Know roles *and* souls

Practice kindness



Physical Health Benefits of Laughter;

- Laughter relaxes the whole body relieving stress for up to 45 minutes after a good laugh.
- Boosts your immune system in part by decreasing stress and increasing infection fighting antibodies
- Triggers the release of endorphins
- Protects the heart by improving the function of blood vessels and increasing blood flow.

Emotional Health benefits of laughter;

- Laughter dissolves distressing emotions – can't feel angry or sad when you are laughing
- Helps you relax and recharge
- Humor shifts perspective

Social Health benefits of laughter;

- Humor and playful communication strengthen our relationships by triggering positive feelings and fostering emotional connection. When we laugh with one another a positive bond is created. This bond acts as a buffer against stress, disagreements, and disappointments.



Be Mindful of Your Co-worker

Consider...

- reaching out and talking to them individually about the impact of the work;
- helping them establish a consistent work-to-home transition that creates an important boundary and safe place outside the workplace;
- encouraging them to attend to the basics—sleep, healthy eating, hygiene, and exercise;
- supporting connections with family, friends, and coworkers;
- referring them to organizational supports such as a peer support team, employee assistance program, or chaplain; and
- encouraging them to discuss their experience with their supervisor.

(Office for Victims of Crime – OVC)





- The Happiness Advantage

3 Gratitudes

Journaling

Exercise

Meditation

Random Acts of Kindness





- Rethink Stress
 - While it is very likely that we will experience stress within our workplace there are effective ways of thinking about and managing it.
 - Move it from a demotivator to a motivator
- Vicarious trauma does effect many people across a variety of occupations.
 - There are common reactions we can identify
 - It is a process
- Health Approaches Do Exist
 - Being your best in the workplace is something you can do