

Here are some definitions of concepts associated with *trauma-informed workplaces*.

Compassion Satisfaction is the sense of reward, efficacy, and competence one feels in your role as a helping professional. It's about the pleasure you derive from being able to do your work well. You may feel positively about your ability to make a difference and to contribute to the work setting and/or the greater good of society. Assess your level of compassion satisfaction by clicking [here](#).

Compassion Fatigue (CF) “affects those who do their work well” (Figley, 1995). CF is associated with caring for others in significant emotional pain and physical distress (Figley, 1995; Mathieu, 2013). It is recognized in a *shift* in a professional's sense of hope and optimism about the future and the value of their work. Symptoms resemble those of post-traumatic stress disorder (see below). Assess your level of compassion fatigue by clicking [here](#).

Burnout is a condition characterized by emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. One could say burnout resides in emotional exhaustion and lack of self-efficacy, compassion fatigue dwells in the neighborhood of fear and anxiety, and compassion satisfaction lives in pleasure or happiness (Figley, 2002; Jenkins & Baird, 2002; Larsen, Stamm, & Davis, 2002; Robinson et al., 2003; Sabin-Farrell & Turpin, 2003). Assess your level of burnout by clicking [here](#).

Resilience is defined as the personal characteristics, resources, and processes that enable one to thrive in the face of adversity. Resilience carries multiple meanings across disciplines and helping professions, but most definitions center around adversity and a process of positive adaptation (Killian, 2016). Principle components include a balanced perspective on life (equanimity), capacity to carry on despite adverse events and conditions (perseverance), awareness of our own strengths and weaknesses (self-belief or self-reliance), and having goals (motivation and meaningfulness).

Vicarious resilience refers to unique, positive effects that transform therapists in response to witnessing trauma survivors' healing, recovery and resilience ([Killian, Hernandez, Gangsei, & Engstrom, 2017](#)). It is a promising and positive new area of research.

Trauma is an emotional response to a catastrophic, unpredictable event like a serious accident, the sudden death of a person close to you, being robbed or mugged, a sexual assault, and other severely upsetting situations ([American Psychological Association, 2018](#)).

Traumatic Stress/Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): A psychological reaction that occurs after experiencing a highly stressing event outside the range of normal human experience. Four components:

1. **Re-experiencing** memories of the traumatic event, recurrent dreams related to it, flashbacks or other intense psychological distress.
2. **Avoidance** of distressing memories, thoughts, feelings or external reminders of the event.
3. **Negative cognitions and mood** come in the forms of persistent sense of blame of self and/or others, estrangement from others or markedly diminished interest in activities, and inability to remember aspects of an event.
4. **Arousal** is often experienced as hypervigilance, startle response, and ongoing intense emotional and physiological reactions to situations.

PTSD is diagnosed when the above symptoms last longer one month following an event (*5th Edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*).

Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) is the emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the firsthand trauma experiences of another. Its symptoms mimic those of PTSD.

Vicarious Traumatization (VT) is the transformation that occurs within the therapist (or other trauma workers) as a result of empathic engagement with clients' trauma experiences and their sequelae.

Such engagement includes listening to graphic descriptions of horrific events, bearing witness to people's cruelty to one another, and witnessing and participating in traumatic reenactments (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995a). Vicarious traumatization is an occupational hazard for those who work with trauma survivors (Munroe et al., 1995).

The experience of VT includes a disruption in thinking and changes in beliefs. These may include shifts in one's:

- safety in the world (“I am vulnerable” or “I can’t keep myself or family safe”)
- the belief that people are good and/or trustworthy (“I can’t trust anyone”)
- spiritual belief (“Why does evil happen?”, “If God was really there,...”)

Critical Incidents (CIs) are highly stressful situations, a traumatic event (or perceived life-threatening event) that has sufficient power to overwhelm an individual's ability to cope. Normal physical and psychological responses occur which place considerable pressure upon that person. When a stressor becomes very threatening or overwhelming, it often produces a heightened state of cognitive, emotional and behavioral arousal called Traumatic Stress.

Following exposure to traumatic stress, employees may experience a range of reactions, including deterioration of job performance, personality change, anxiety states, grief reactions, relationship discord, depression and suicidal ideations. These effects can be immediate, appear later, or both (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2013).