

Vicarious trauma results when caregivers become emotionally drained from hearing about and being exposed to the pain and trauma of the people whom they are helping.

Self-Awareness and Self-Care

1. Learn as much as possible about the event and deal with and articulate the powerful emotions and reactions related to the event.
2. Know your own “triggers” and vulnerable areas; learn to defuse them or avoid them.
3. Try to resolve your own personal issues and continue to monitor your own reactions to others’ pain.
4. Be human. Allow yourself to grieve when bad things happen to others. Remember that “normal responses to abnormal situations” is true for helpers too.
5. Develop realistic expectations about the rewards as well as limitations of being a helper. Set boundaries for yourself. Ask yourself, “Would the world fall apart if I step away from helping for a few days?” If you never say “no,” what is your “yes” worth?
6. Engage in activities, hobbies and interests other than helping. Balance your schedule with activities that provide opportunities for growth and renewal.
7. Ask for and accept help from others, including professionals.
8. Seek assistance from other colleagues and caregivers who have had experience with trauma and have remained healthy and hopeful, or have learned from their experiences. Take their advice.
9. Delegate responsibilities and get help from others for routine work when appropriate.
10. Recognize your healthy support system to protect yourself from further fatigue and emotional exhaustion.
11. Most victims of trauma grow and learn from their experiences. So can their helpers.
12. Find ways to provide yourself with emotional and spiritual strength for the future.
13. Develop and reward your sense of humor. Expose yourself to humorous situations. Learn to laugh, enjoy life, have healthy personal relationships and breathe deeply.