

# Vicarious Trauma Toolkit: Becoming a Vicarious Trauma-Informed Organization

Part 1—Getting Started



# Technical Overview

- If you are experiencing any technical issues, please let us know in the chat box.
- If you have technical difficulties during the webinar, contact—

**Jason Adams**

**Jadams@OVCTTAC.org**

- Today's session will be recorded and made available on the OVC TTAC website.
- If you have questions, type them in the chat box.



# The Purpose of This Training

## ***“Getting Started-Getting Buy-In”***

Friday, October 18, 12:00–1:00 p.m. eastern time  
(11:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. central time, 10:00–11:00 a.m.  
mountain time, 9:00–10:00 a.m. pacific time)

## ***“Taking Our Temperature - Using the VT-ORG Assessment”***

Friday, November 8, 12:00–1:00 p.m. eastern time  
(11:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. central time, 10:00–11:00 a.m.  
mountain time, 9:00–10:00 a.m. pacific time)

## ***“Now What? Moving Forward With Your Vicarious Trauma Action Plan”***

Friday, December 6, 12:00–1:00 p.m. eastern time  
(11:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. central time, 10:00–11:00 a.m.  
mountain time, 9:00–10:00 a.m. pacific time)

# Today's Presenters



**Katherine Manners**



**Lisa Tieszen**

# Vicarious Trauma Toolkit

OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

OFFICE FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

## THE VICARIOUS TRAUMA TOOLKIT

Message From The Director   About The Toolkit   Where Do We Begin?   The VT-ORG and Compendium   What Is Vicarious Trauma?

### INTRODUCTION

It takes courage to help child and adult victims of sexual abuse, assist survivors of acts of terrorism and mass violence, fight fires that may have taken people's lives, or respond to shootings and other crime scenes. It also takes commitment to do this work despite the personal, physical, emotional, and mental impact it can have.

The *Vicarious Trauma Toolkit* (VTT) was developed on the premise that exposure to the traumatic experiences of other people—known as **vicarious trauma**—is an inevitable occupational challenge for the fields of victim services, emergency medical services, fire services, law enforcement, and other allied professionals; however, organizations can mitigate the potentially negative effects of

Compendium of Resources

Featured Tool

The toolkit makes a major contribution to the field by providing the Vicarious Trauma-Organizational Readiness Guide (VT-ORG) to help guide organizations' efforts to become more vicarious trauma-informed. The VT-ORG is an assessment

https://vtt.ovc.ojp.gov/

# Goals of This Webinar

After completing this webinar, you should be able to—

- Define vicarious trauma.
- Discuss the spectrum of responses to vicarious trauma.
- Describe the concept of being "vicarious trauma-informed."
- Name one of the five pillars of a healthy organization.
- Describe Step 1 of the Blueprint for a Vicarious Trauma-Organization.

# What Is Trauma?

*Individual trauma results from an EVENT, series of events, or set of circumstances that is EXPERIENCED by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse EFFECTS on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being.*

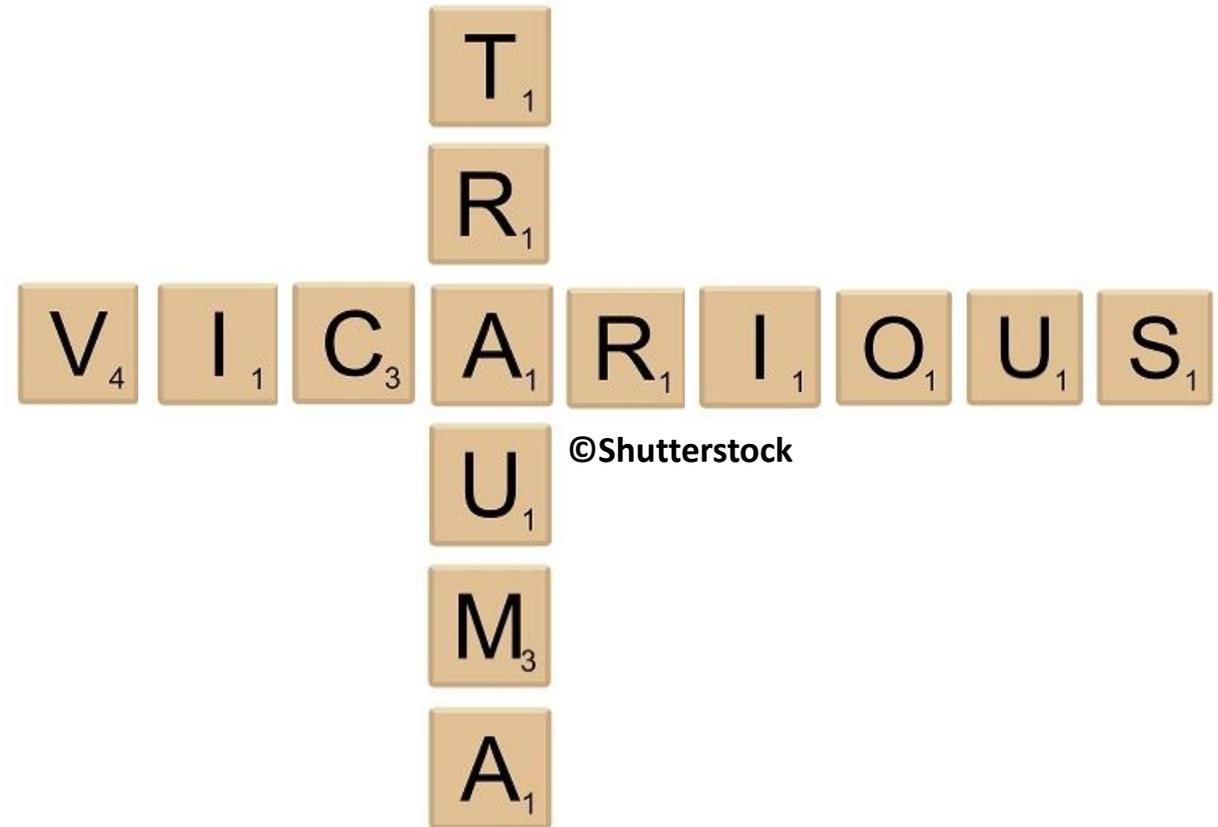
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014). *SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach*. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.



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# What Is Vicarious Trauma?

Exposure to the trauma of others.



# The Importance of Addressing Vicarious Trauma



# The Prevalence of Vicarious Trauma



- 50 percent—traumatic stress symptoms in the severe range
- 50 percent—high to very high levels of compassion fatigue
- 37 percent—clinical levels of emotional distress
- 34 percent—meet PTSD diagnostic criteria

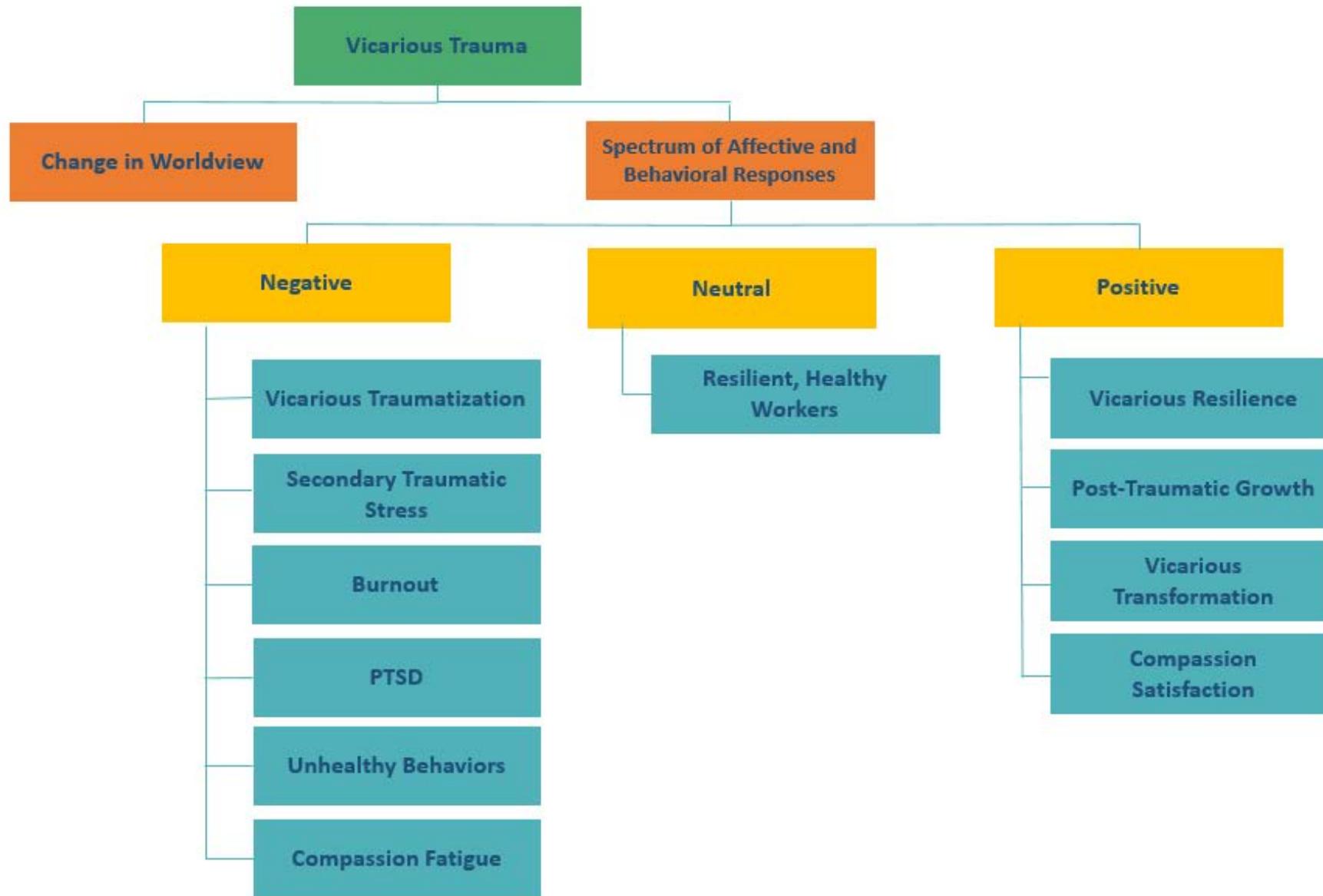
# Risk Factors

## Personal

- Trauma history
- Preexisting psychological disorder
- Young age
- Isolation; inadequate support system
- Loss in last 12 months

## Professional

- Lack of quality supervision
- High percentage of trauma survivors in caseload
- Little experience
- Worker/organization mismatch
- Lack of professional support system
- Inadequate orientation and training for role



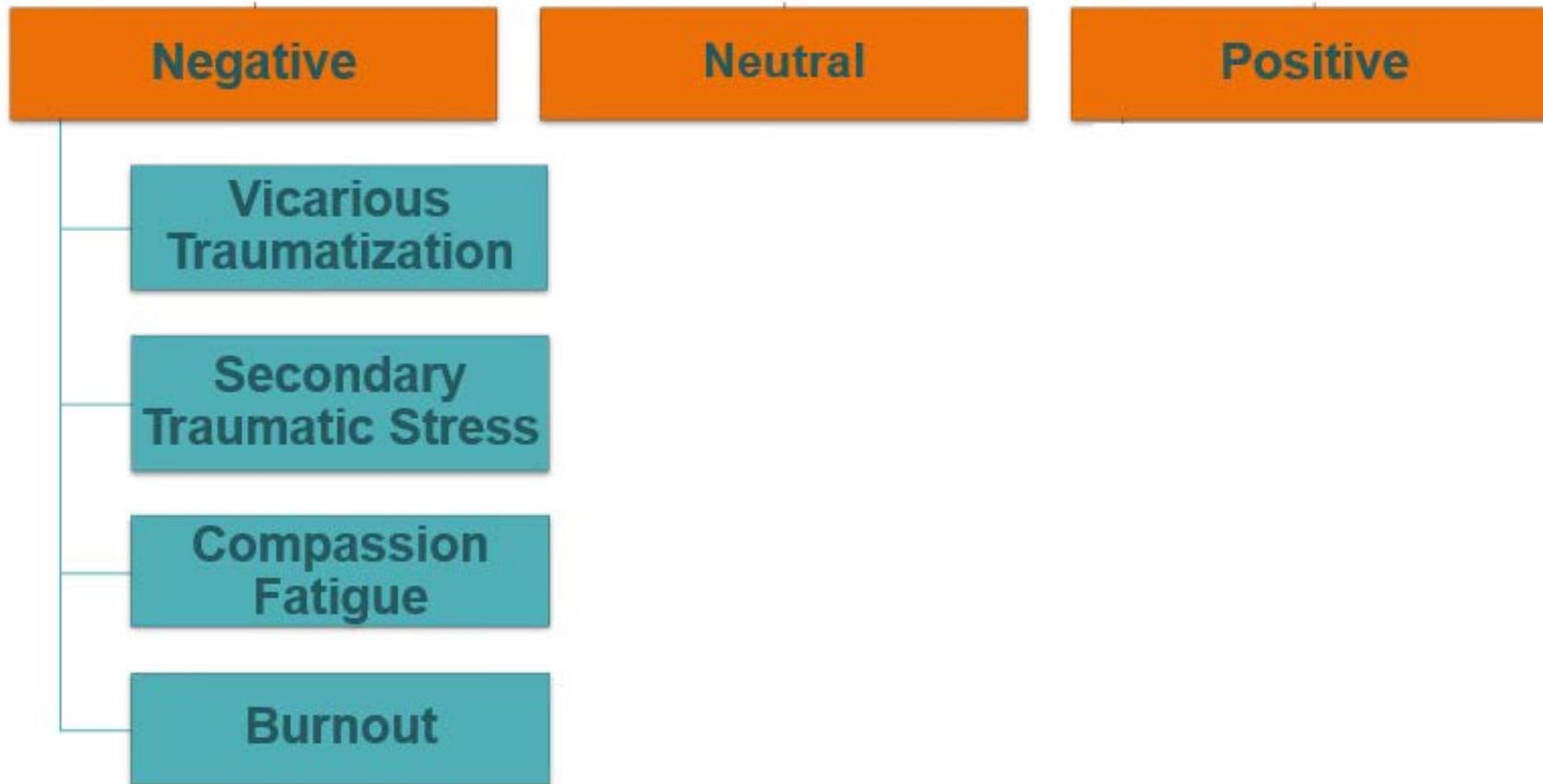
# Change in Worldview

“...the transformation or change in a helper’s inner experience as a result of responsibility for and empathic engagement with traumatized clients.”

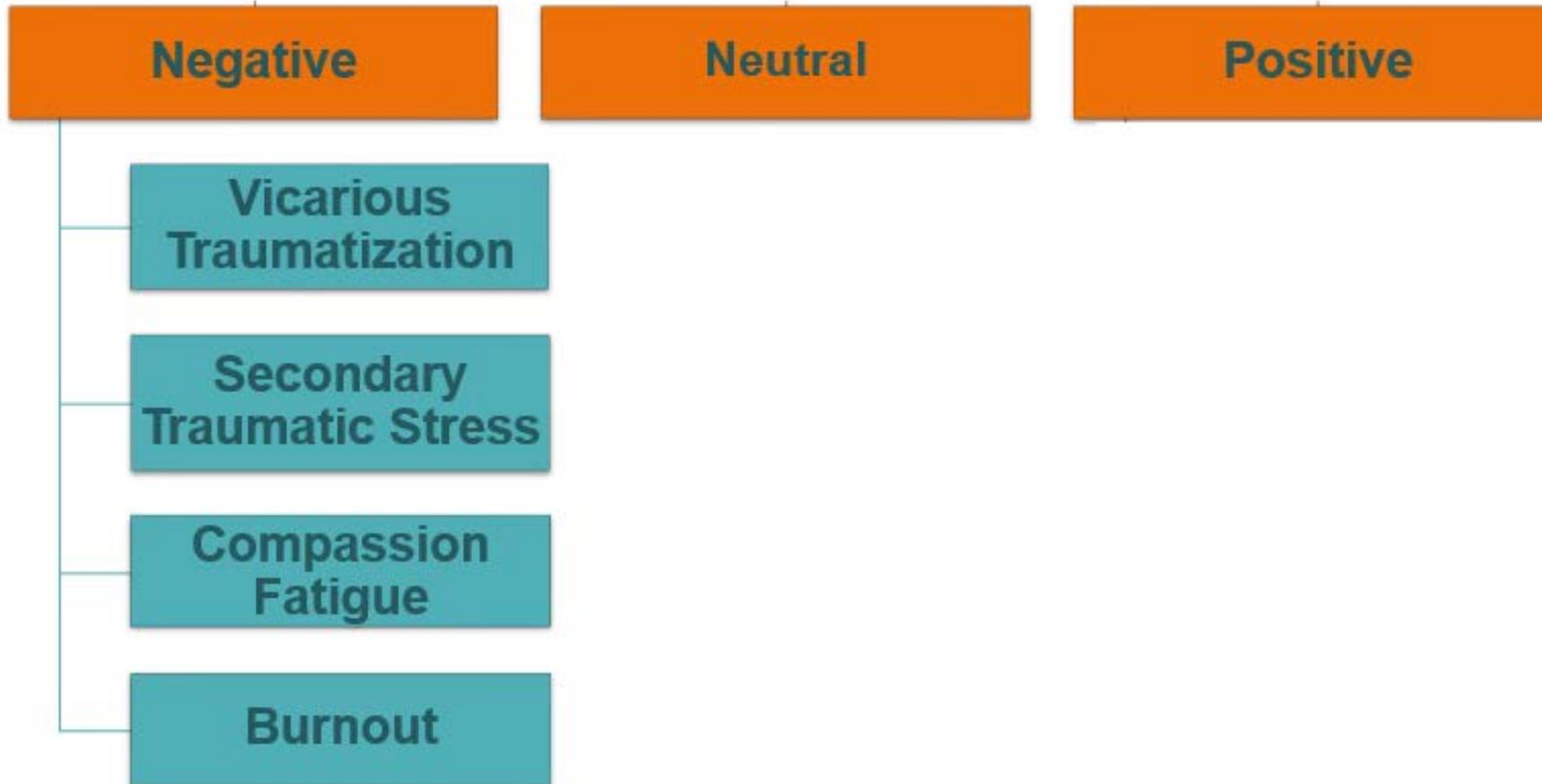
Change in Worldview

(Saakvitne et al. 2000)

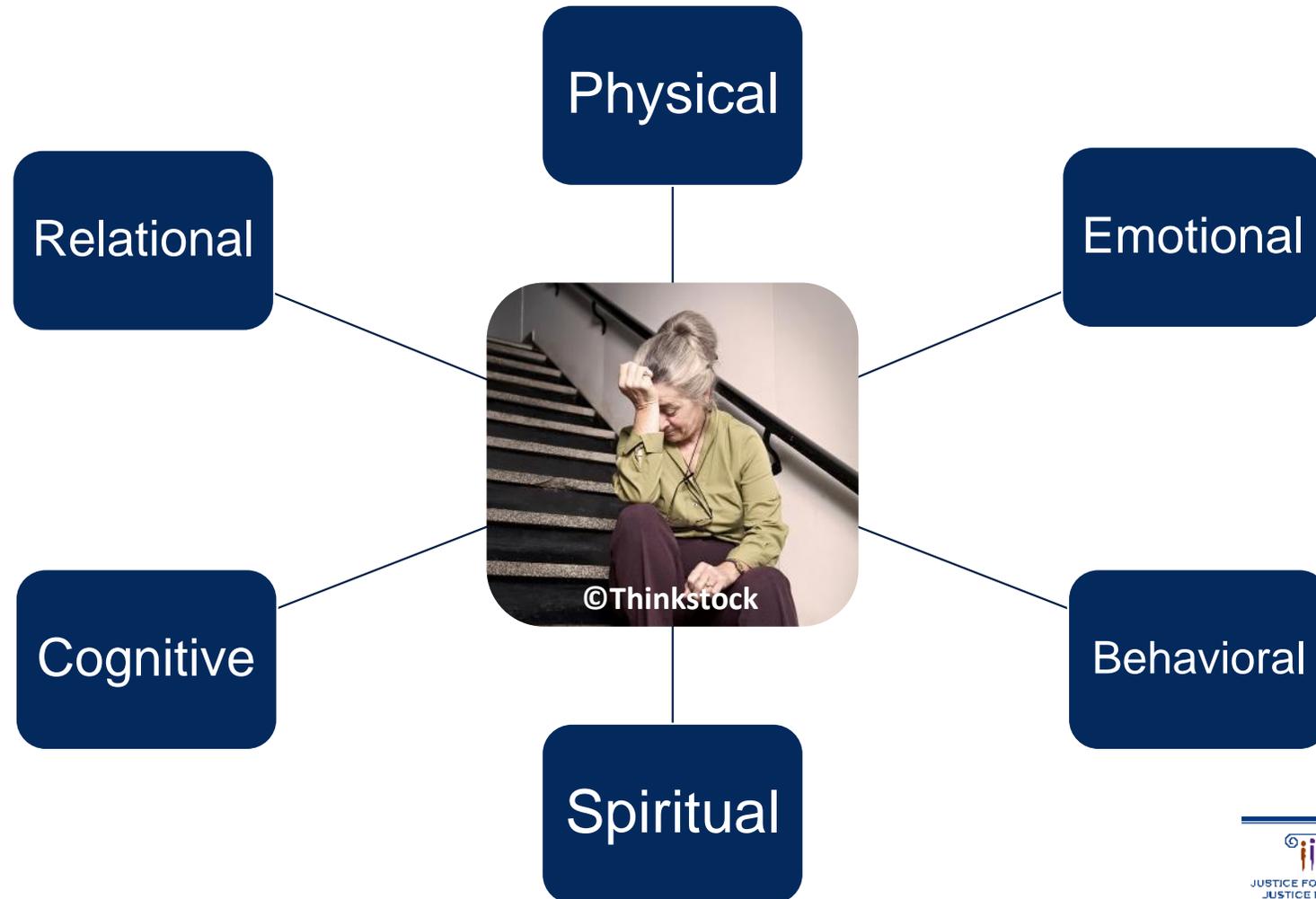
# Neutral Responses to Vicarious Trauma



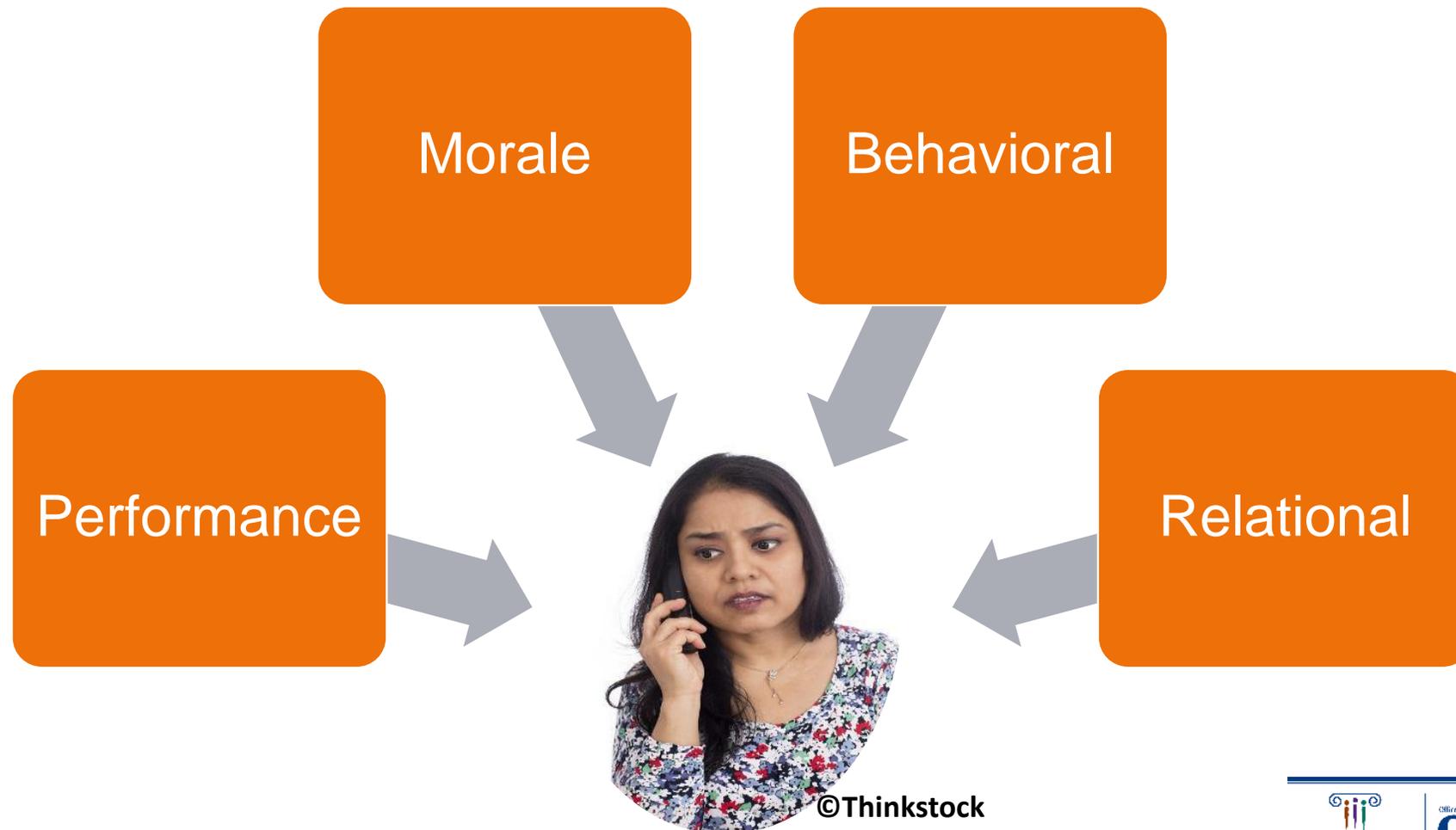
# Negative Effects of Vicarious Trauma



# Personal Effects of Vicarious Trauma



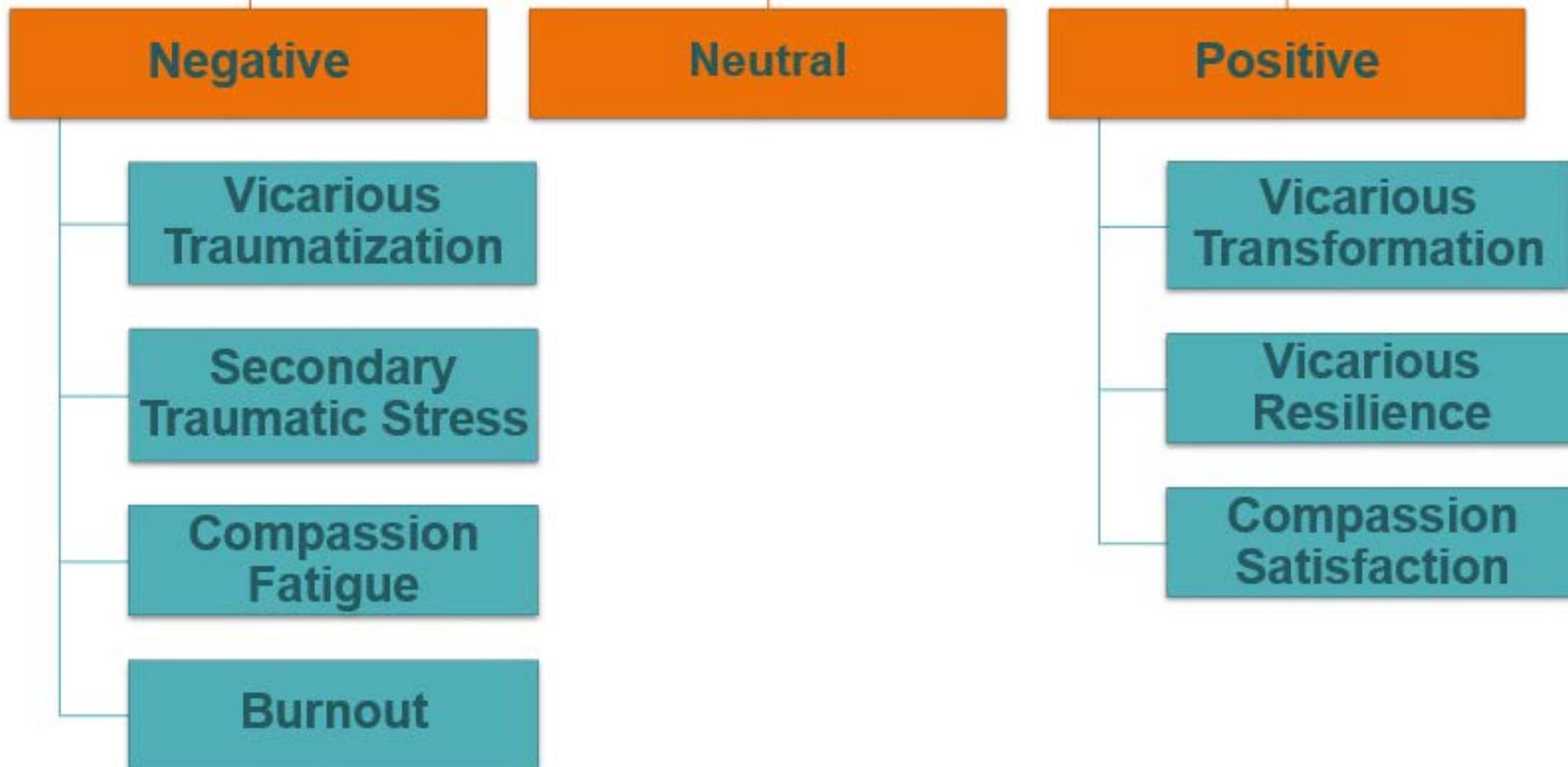
# Professional Effects of Vicarious Trauma



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So, why do you do this work?

# Positive Responses to Vicarious Trauma



# Organizational Effects



# Organizational Effects: Lost Productivity

Lost productivity stems from—

- Low staff morale.
- Blocked lines of communication.
- Lack of collaboration and cohesion.



# Organizational Effects: Staff Turnover

Staff turnover can lead to—

- Additional stress on staff.
- Limited time and resources.



# Organizational Effects: Poor Organizational Health

Poor organizational health is caused by the erosion of—

- Concentration.
- Focus.
- Decisionmaking.
- Motivation.
- Performance.





“The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet.”

—R. N. Remen, M.D., 1996

# Vicarious Trauma-Informed Organization

1. Recognizes that vicarious trauma is an occupational challenge and has potential negative consequences.

2. Proactively addresses impact through policies, procedures, practices, and programs.

# The Five Pillars of Organizational Health



# Strategies for Vicarious Trauma- Informed Organizations

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Promote a healthy organizational culture.

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Provide supportive leadership.

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Offer quality supervision.

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Debrief staff.

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Have formal and informal opportunities to socialize.

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Encourage peer support.

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Acknowledge stress as real, no stigma.

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Provide training on victim services and on vicarious trauma.

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Encourage staff health and wellness.

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# Getting Started: Blueprint for a Vicarious Trauma-Informed Organization

The screenshot displays the website for the Office of Justice Programs, specifically the Vicarious Trauma Toolkit. The page features a blue header with the title "THE VICARIOUS TRAUMA TOOLKIT" and a navigation menu with options like "Message From The Director", "About The Toolkit", "Where Do We Begin?", "The VT-ORG and Compendium", and "What Is Vicarious Trauma?". The main content area is titled "BLUEPRINT FOR A VICARIOUS TRAUMA-INFORMED ORGANIZATION" and includes a sub-section "Where Do We Begin?" with introductory text.

OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

OFFICE FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

## THE VICARIOUS TRAUMA TOOLKIT

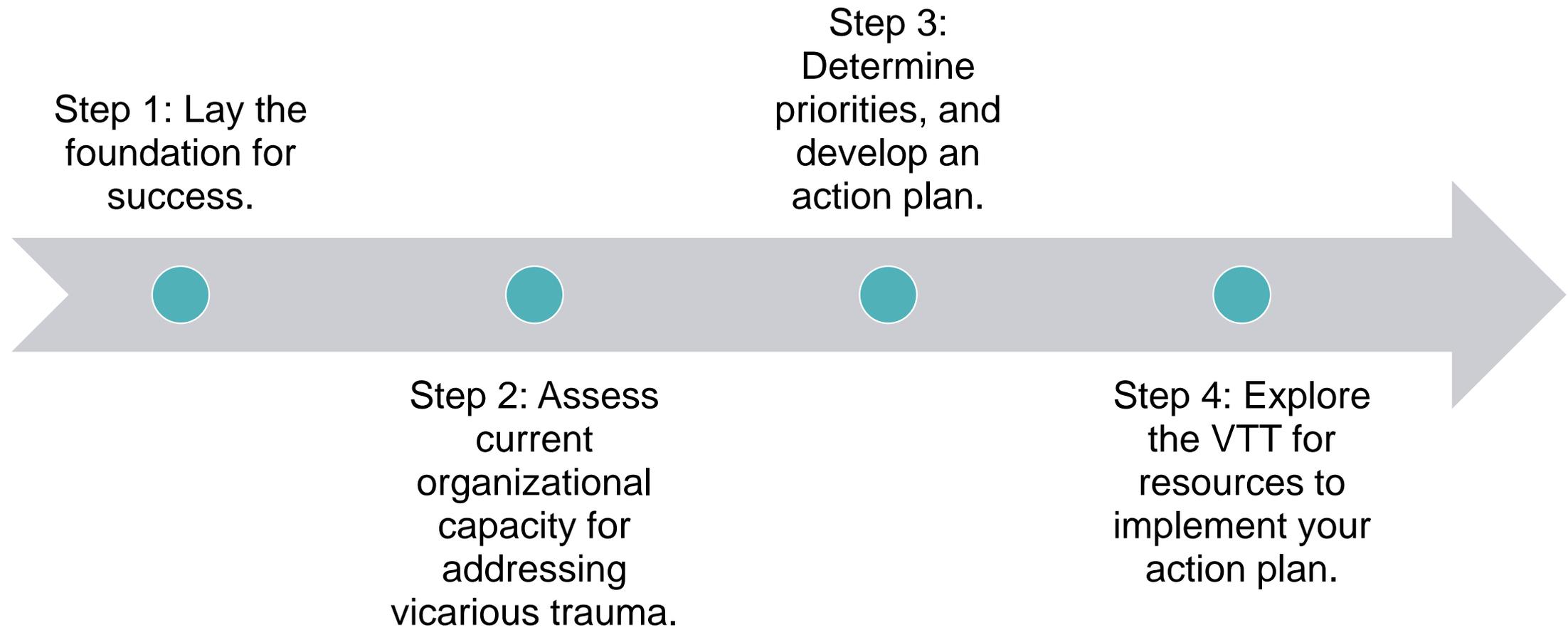
[Message From The Director](#) [About The Toolkit](#) [Where Do We Begin?](#) [The VT-ORG and Compendium](#) [What Is Vicarious Trauma?](#)

### BLUEPRINT FOR A VICARIOUS TRAUMA-INFORMED ORGANIZATION

#### "Where Do We Begin?"

Much like building a house, an organizational response to vicarious trauma requires vision, commitment, and a methodical approach that starts with laying a foundation and then builds up from there. This blueprint, informed by research and lessons learned from the field, was created as a step-by-step guide to assist organizations in becoming more vicarious trauma-informed. It provides guidance on using the [Vicarious Trauma—Organizational Readiness Guide \(VT-ORG\)](#) to assess your organization's current capacity as a vicarious trauma-informed organization, and offers suggestions on how to use the free, online repository of policies, research, and websites in the [Compendium of Resources](#), including the [New Tools for the Field](#), created specifically for the VTT.

# Getting Started: Blueprint for a Vicarious Trauma-Informed Organization

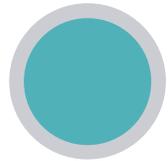


# What's Your Role Going To Be?



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# Step 1: Lay the Foundation for Success



## **Step 1: Lay the Foundation for Success**

1. Obtain commitment to establish an organizational response.
2. Designate an individual or team to coordinate and guide the effort.
3. Encourage open communication with staff.

# Step 1: Lay the Foundation for Success

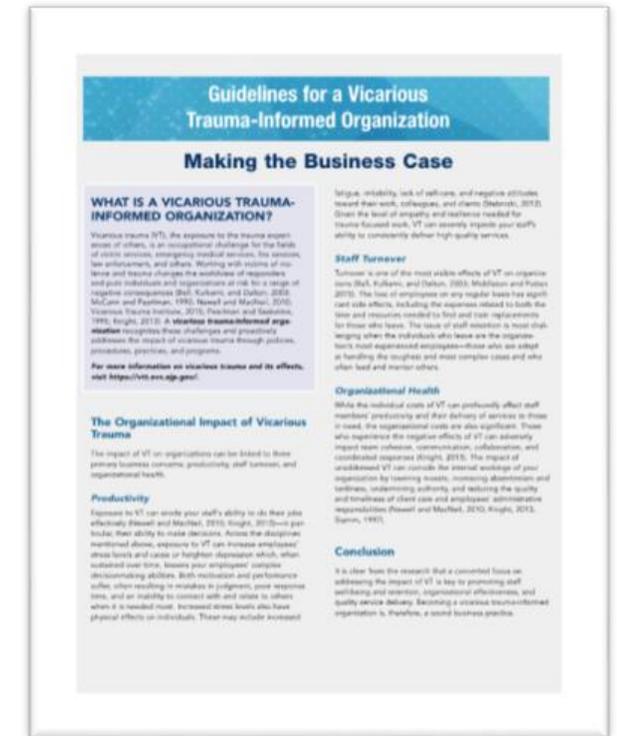
## 1. Obtain commitment to establish an organizational response.

### Tasks

- Gather leaders.
- Discuss “why” you should have an organizational response.
- Evaluate the benefits of using the VTT as your approach.
- Show the video and see what your peers are saying.

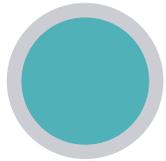
### VTT Tools

- Making the Business Case
- Talking Points: Using the VTT to Address Vicarious Trauma
- Victim Services Video Testimonial
- Introduction to Vicarious Trauma



# Step 1: Lay the Foundation for Success

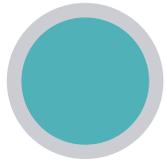
## 2. Designate an individual or team to coordinate and guide the effort.



- Gain buy-in throughout the organization.
- Create a workgroup that represents the organization.
- Give the workgroup the authority to act.
- Convene the workgroup and introduce members to the VTT and their role.

# Step 1: Lay the Foundation for Success

## 3. Encourage open communication with staff.



- Keep management and staff informed throughout the process.
- Use sample emails to communicate with staff.



VTT Home

The Vicarious Trauma Toolkit

Introduction

Message From The Director

About the Toolkit

Where Do We Begin?

The VT-ORG and Compendium

What Is the VT-ORG?

What Is the Compendium?

What Is Vicarious Trauma?

Tools for Victim Services

Tools for EMS

Tools for Fire Services

# THE VICARIOUS TRAUMA TOOLKIT

- Message From The Director
- About The Toolkit
- Where Do We Begin?**
- The VT-ORG and Compendium
- What Is Vicarious Trauma?

## BLUEPRINT FOR A VICARIOUS TRAUMA-INFORMED ORGANIZATION

### “Where Do We Begin?”

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<https://vtt.ovc.ojp.gov/blueprint-for-a-vicarious-trauma-informed-organization>



# Webinar 2: Taking Our Temperature – Using the VT-ORG Assessment

## ***“Taking Our Temperature - Using the VT-ORG Assessment”***

Friday, November 8, 12:00–1:00 p.m. eastern time  
(11:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. central time, 10:00–11:00 a.m.  
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**REGISTER**

# Review of Webinar Goals

You should now be able to—

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- Discuss the spectrum of responses to vicarious trauma.
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# Conclusion

## Final Questions?



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