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Vicarious Trauma: Make an Action Plan

You are now the client . . .

You probably wouldn't set out to help the people you serve without a plan. Why not give yourself the benefit of that same approach? This exercise can be completed in **15 minutes**, or you can spend more time on it. We strongly recommend that you repeat it at least every couple of months.

1. List your important risk factors for vicarious trauma.

These are things that get in the way of you helping others. They come from **three** main areas:

- Personal factors (e.g., past and current stress in your life)
 - External situation (e.g., work-related factors)
 - Cultural context (e.g., stigma, attitudes of intolerance)
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2. Signs and Symptoms

Consider what situations or events tend to trigger your vicarious trauma. Understanding your triggers can help you manage your reactions more effectively.

- Physical
- Psychological
- Behavior and relationships

- Worldview or frame of reference (spirituality, identity, and beliefs)

3. Assess Your Current Coping Strategies

Think about how you can counteract your risk factors and remember that good coping strategies for vicarious trauma are things that help you take care of yourself – especially things that help you escape, rest, and play. How can you take care of yourself in the following areas?

- Physical
- Mental and emotional
- Behavior and relationships
- At work

4. Deepening your coping mechanisms

Transforming vicarious trauma means identifying ways to nurture a sense of meaning and hope. Make changes that are in alignment with your core values. Remember the values that made this work important to you when you began. What steps can you take to help you transform your vicarious trauma risk on a deeper level?

At Work	At Home

5. Making it a Practice

Pick two things you have listed in response to questions 3 or 4 and think about how you will put those into practice this week. Set two specifics, realistic, goals by completing the

sentence below (*Hint: think about how, when, and where you achieve these goals and put that in your answer too*):

This week, I will _____

and _____

to help prevent or manage my vicarious trauma.

6. Identifying Obstacles in Advance

It is normal and natural to face obstacles and setbacks when we put in a plan in place, despite our best intentions. We can fall back into old habits, experience an increase in stressors, or just become overwhelmed and forget. What obstacles might get in the way of you doing the two things you identified in item 5, above?

7. Overcoming Obstacles

What might you do to overcome the obstacles listed above? What will support you in accomplishing your goals (*Hint: think about people who can support you and how they might encourage you.*

8. Creating YOUR Plan

What are 3 things that I have identified that I do at work which lead me to feel burned out?

1.

2.

3.

What are 3 tangible changes I can make to reduce my stress level at work?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What are the 3 boundaries I need to draw to reduce my stress level at work?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What are three ways I can transition from my professional role and the stressors of the job to my home life?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How can I engage in self-care or self-soothing outside of work?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

List 3 to 5 healthy activities or hobbies I enjoy outside of work?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Remember, addressing vicarious trauma is a journey. Use this action plan to guide your reflections and take proactive steps toward healing and resilience. Stay committed to your well-being and reach out for support when needed.