

Vicarious Trauma

I can't unsee what I have seen.

Now what ?

This workshop will:

- Walk participants through signs and symptoms of vicarious trauma
- Walk participants through what to expect, both physiologically and psychologically, once you have seen the unthinkable
- Discussions will focus on self-care, trauma triggers and how to manage those memories

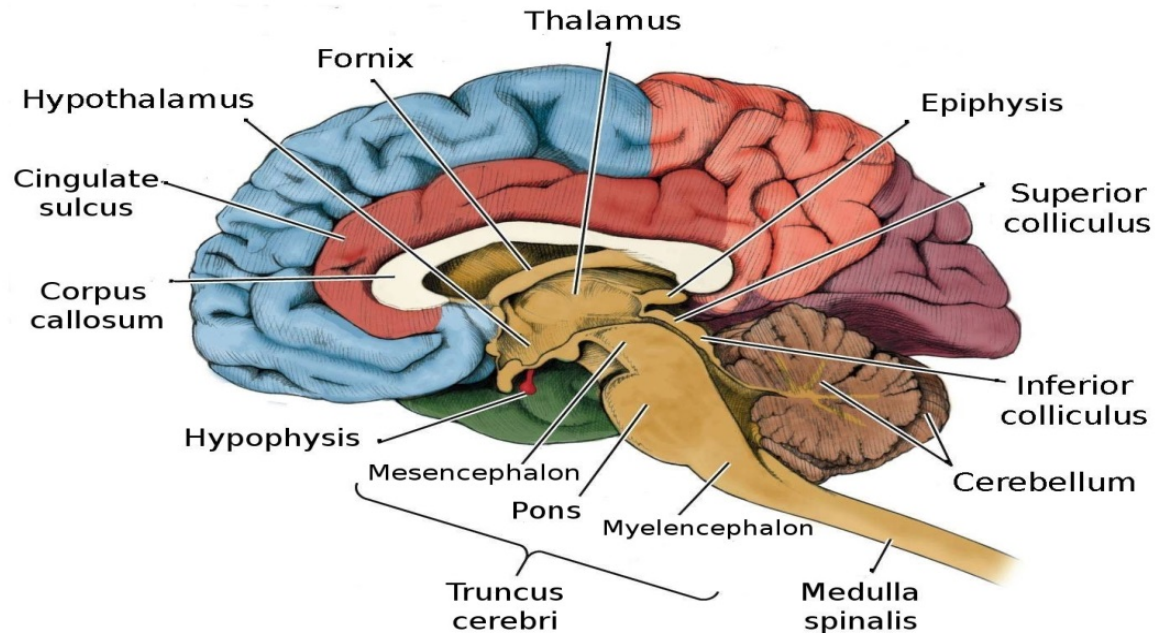


That's
awful!

Physiological Effects of Trauma

Trauma disrupts the stress-hormone system.

It plays havoc with the entire nervous system, and prevents people from processing/integrating traumatic memories into conscious mental frameworks.



Brain changes related to Trauma

Traumatic memories stay "stuck" in the brain's nonverbal, nonconscious, subcortical regions where they are not accessible to the frontal lobes which are the understanding, thinking, reasoning parts of the brain.



The frontal cortex acts as a supervisory system of processing and integrating emotional and cognitive functions.

When the brain functions the way it is supposed to we function well.

Trauma can change all that; trauma is wounding.



Trauma overwhelms the ordinary adaptations to life.

PTSD is not just an emotional response to troubling events; it is the expression of a persistent deregulation of body and brain chemistry.





The brain is assaulted by neurotransmitters and brain chemistry can be altered for decades.

With this change, arousing events can trigger flashbacks; trauma creates chaos in our brain.

The amygdala is a small, almond-shaped part of the brain and is the alarm of the brain.



It is the primitive part of the brain and interprets messages that there is danger or it is safe.

It knows nothing about reasoning or cognitive functions; it deals with feelings and emotions.



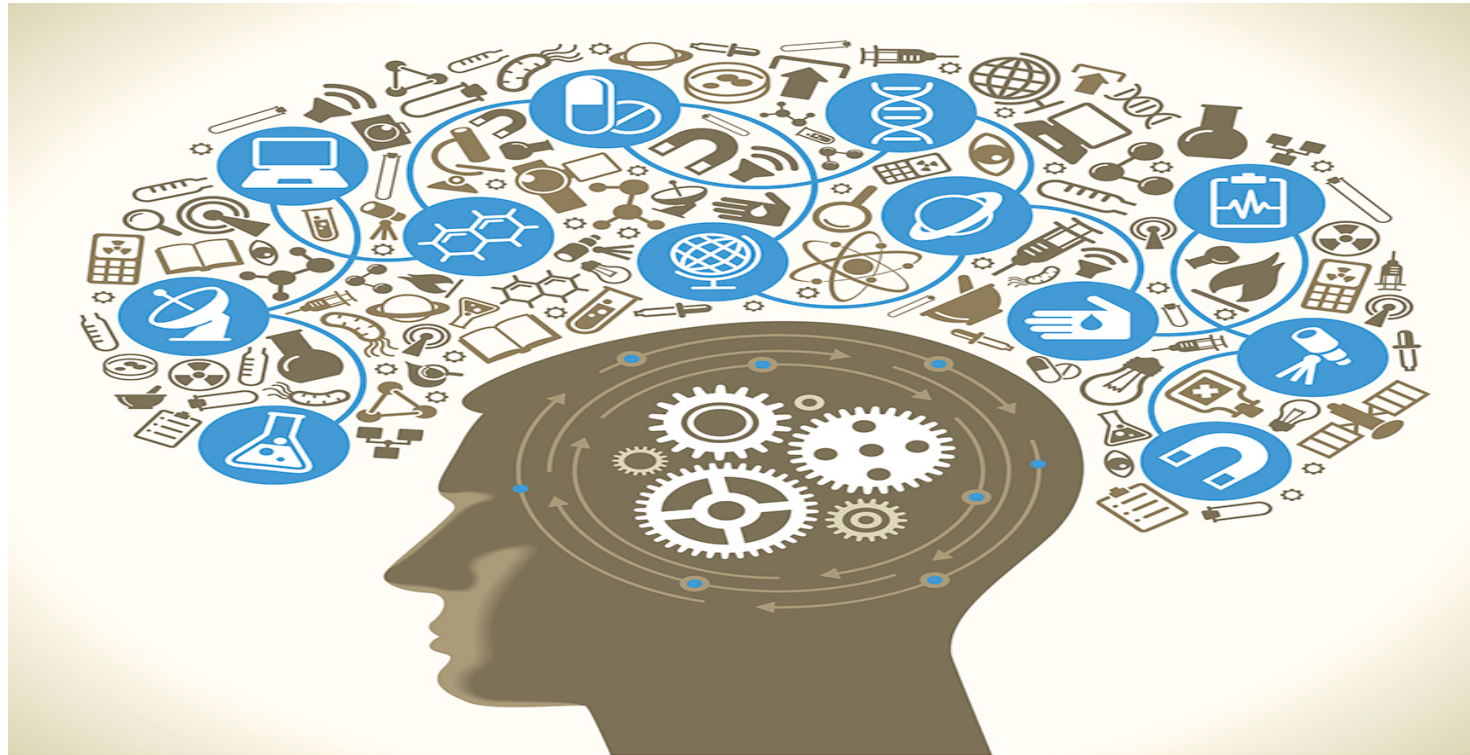
It becomes highly active during a trauma and when remembering a traumatic incident; it controls our behavior.

Or you find yourself caught between amnesia or reliving the trauma, between floods of intense, overwhelming feelings or blank numb states of no feeling.



Traumatized people are used to dissociation and not feeling their bodies; the memories cause them to shut themselves down, go numb, blank and/or frozen in order not to feel anything.



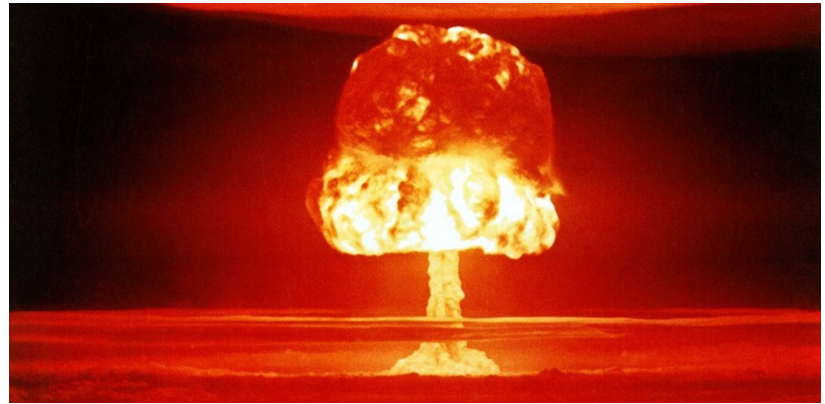


You may have vivid graphic thoughts about what happened
but no emotion.

Or you may experience intense emotions but without the
thoughts or actual memories

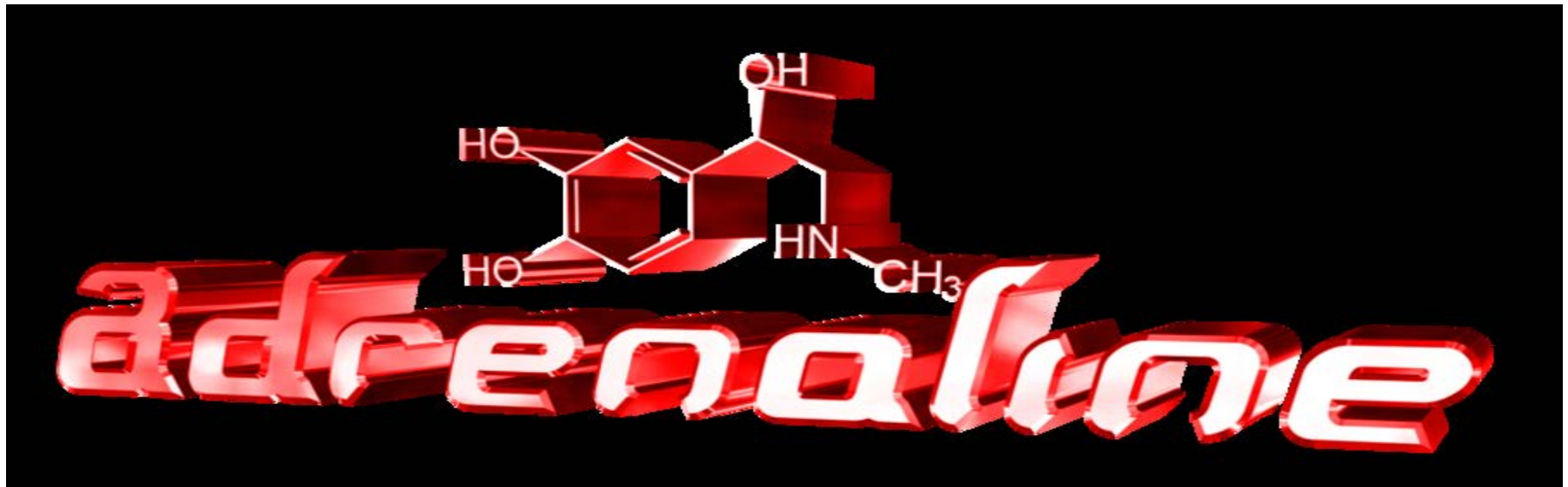
The frontal cortex ability is decreased.

There may be less ability to do left-brain functions; it can't distinguish a real threat from a false threat.



Intense stress or trauma is accompanied by the release of hormones.

A nerve running out of the brain to the adrenal glands triggers adrenaline and noradrenaline secretions.



Adrenaline and noradrenaline surge through the blood stream causing the heart to beat faster and prime the body for an emergency.

This flood of hormones produces the "fight or flight" response in most people.



This causes the heart to continue to beat faster, but also signals various parts of the brain to supercharge that intense emotional memory.

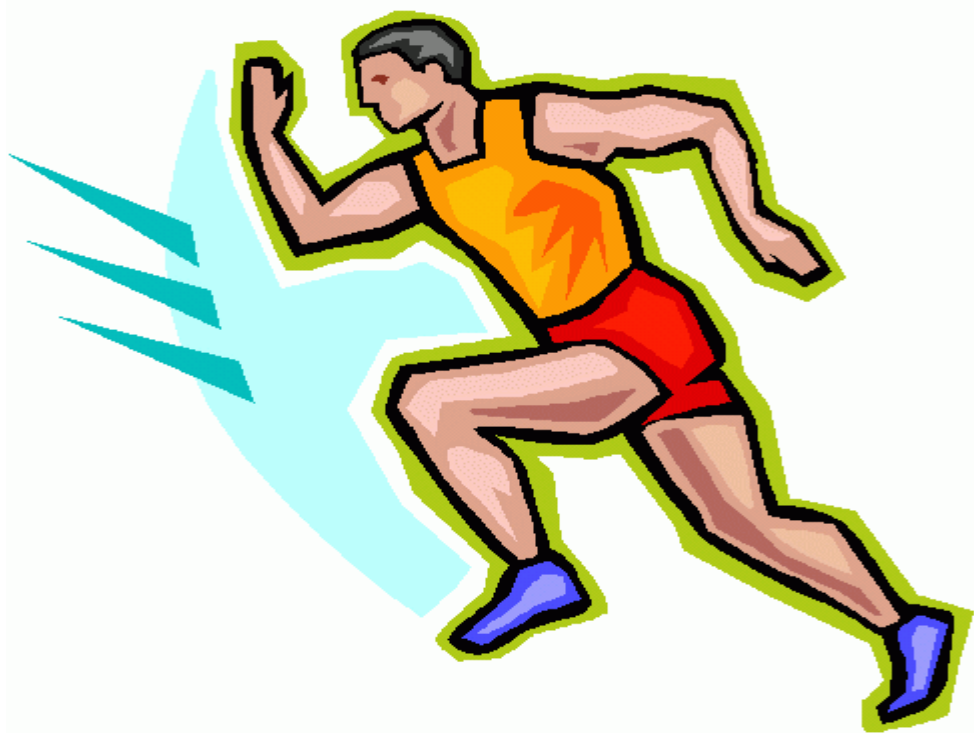
These hormones assist the individual to mobilize in the event of emergency.



They also sweep through the body, return to the brain, and trigger the release of more equally powerful hormones (cortisol, epinephrine and norepinephrine, oxytocin, vasopressin and opioids).



When a trauma hits, up to 70% of our brain-bound oxygen is diverted into our muscles to propel us somewhere else.



But for a few individuals, it produces a "freeze" mode.

In this instant, all those hormones are rushing through the body and have no appropriate physical response.

The stress has paralyzed the victim. (1)





Psychological signs of being overwhelmed

- Difficulty managing emotions
- Difficulty accepting /feeling okay about you (esteem issues)
- Difficulty making good decisions (or any decisions)



- Problems managing boundaries between you and others (taking on too much, problems leaving work at work, trying to step in/control other's lives).
- Over sharing



- Problems in relationships
- Physical problems (headaches, fatigue, stomach problems, illness, pains, accidents)
- Difficulty feeling connected to what is happening around/in you
- Loss of meaning/hope

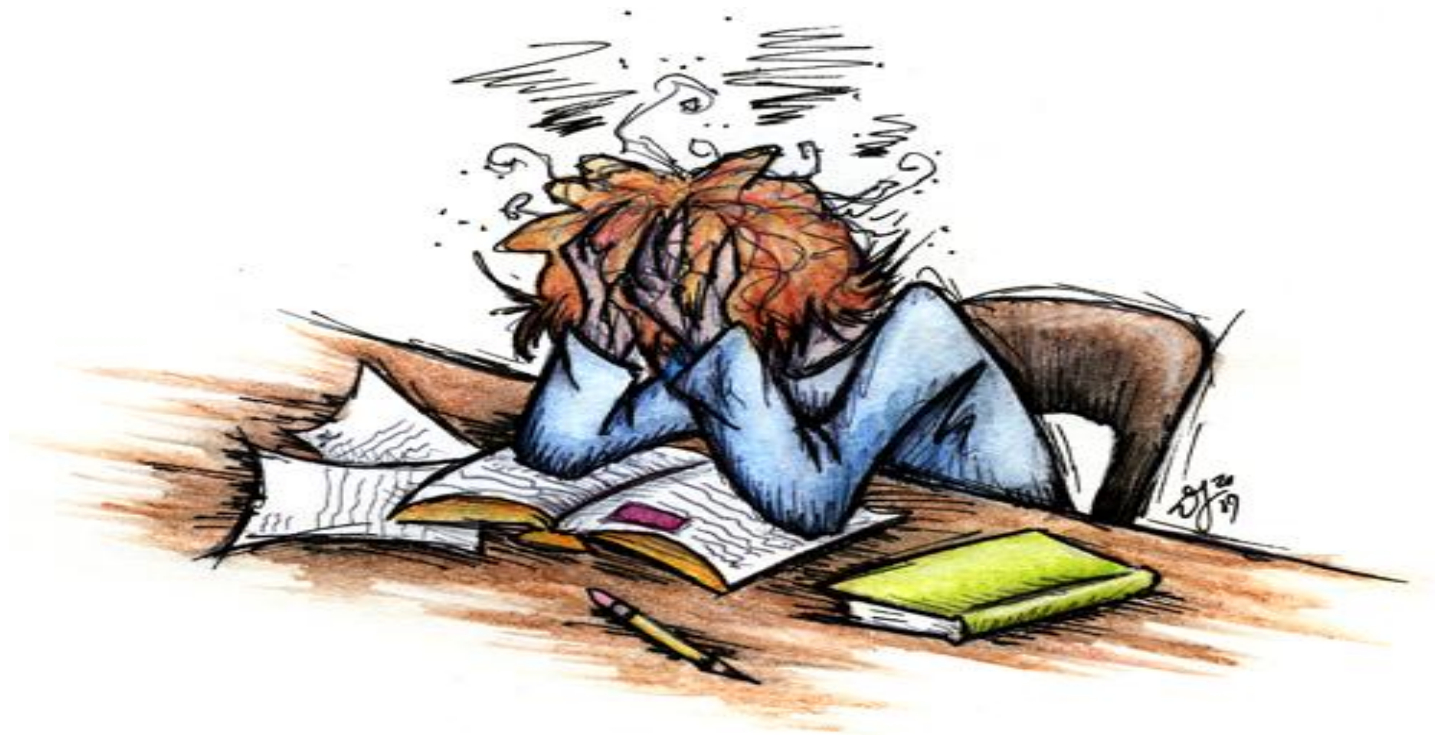


Vicarious Trauma/Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)/Compassion Fatigue

- Engaging empathically with another's trauma carries risks
- It can effect the transformation of the helper's inner experience

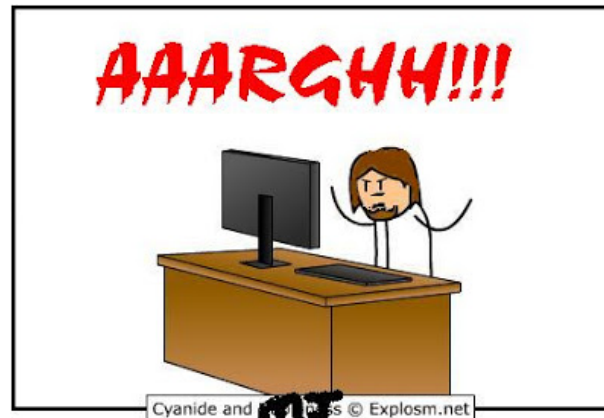


- It is an accumulative process
- It is an occupational hazard
- It can lead to burnout



Psychological Signs of STS or Vicarious Trauma

- Quick to anger/cry and irritability
- Cynicism and loss of idealism
- Disgust
- Nightmares and sleep problems
- Fear or intrusive thoughts of trauma events



- Despair or survivor guilt
- Feeling numb or easily startled
- Hopelessness
- Increased sensitivity to violence



Behavior/relationship signs of STS/ or VT

- Problems setting boundaries and separating work from home
- Having no “me” time
- No energy for self
- Increased conflict in relationships
- Social withdrawal
- Decreased interest in pleasurable activities



Take a deep breath



“Now what?”, you ask

- What are some things you do during your work day to take care of yourself?
- What are some things you do for self-care outside of work?



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How do you manage stress?

- Eating salty snacks?
- Binge watching the Hallmark Channel?
- Shopping therapy?
- Drinking heavily?



What Self-Care Looks Like

- Acknowledge stress and vicarious trauma
- Get support
- Give support
- Attend to inner experience
- Develop and use coping skills
- Practice daily self-care strategies
- Breathe
- Laugh



Physical Well-Being at Home and at Work

Name some physical activities or practices you enjoy



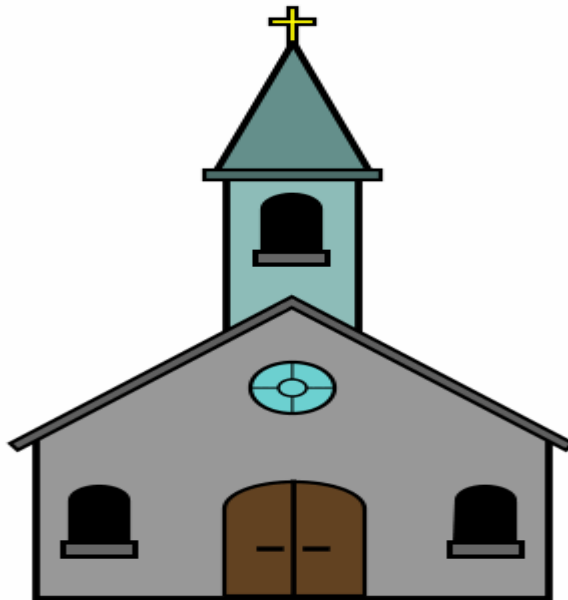
Mental Well-Being at Home and at Work

**NAME SOME MENTAL ACTIVITIES OR
PRACTICES YOU ENJOY**



Spiritual Well-Being at Home and Work

Name some spiritual activities or practices you enjoy



Social Well-Being at Home and Work

**Name some social activities or
practices you enjoy**



Breathe



Scott Magoon

References

(1) How Trauma Impacts the Brain

Talking Points from seminar for Rachel's Vineyard Ministries; Theresa Burke, PhD