

Connectedness through our stories - Introduction to Vicarious Trauma: “What Is It and What Can You Do?” & Making Space in Supervision for discussing the impact of our work



9th annual
Healing the Hurt Conference
May 17, 2024

Facilitator: Sherina Davis



Trauma-informed training

- **Choice/Control**– *You choose how much/how to engage with material*
- **Resources**– *We support you to manage your responses to the material*
- **Breaks**– *We take breaks during examples to help you manage exposure*
- **Hope**– *We talk about our difficult work in a hopeful way*
- **Predictable Environment**– *We let you know what to expect (including trigger warnings)*
- **Strive to be racially and culturally responsive** – *We take into consideration racial, culture, gender and historical contexts.*

Check-In

Mental Health Check-in

HOW ARE YOU DOING TODAY?
USE AN EMOJI TO SHARE YOUR FEELINGS.



I'm...excited for the day!



I'm...feeling pretty good.



I'm...finding some ease.



I'm...making it through.



I'm...struggling with my/the current circumstances.



I'm...overwhelmed by challenging emotions & need
support.

Calm

Start with Self

**CARING FOR
MYSELF IS NOT
SELF-INDULGENCE,
IT IS SELF-
PRESERVATION
AND THAT IS
AN ACT OF
POLITICAL
WARFARE.**

AUDRE LORDE



To Stay in the Now

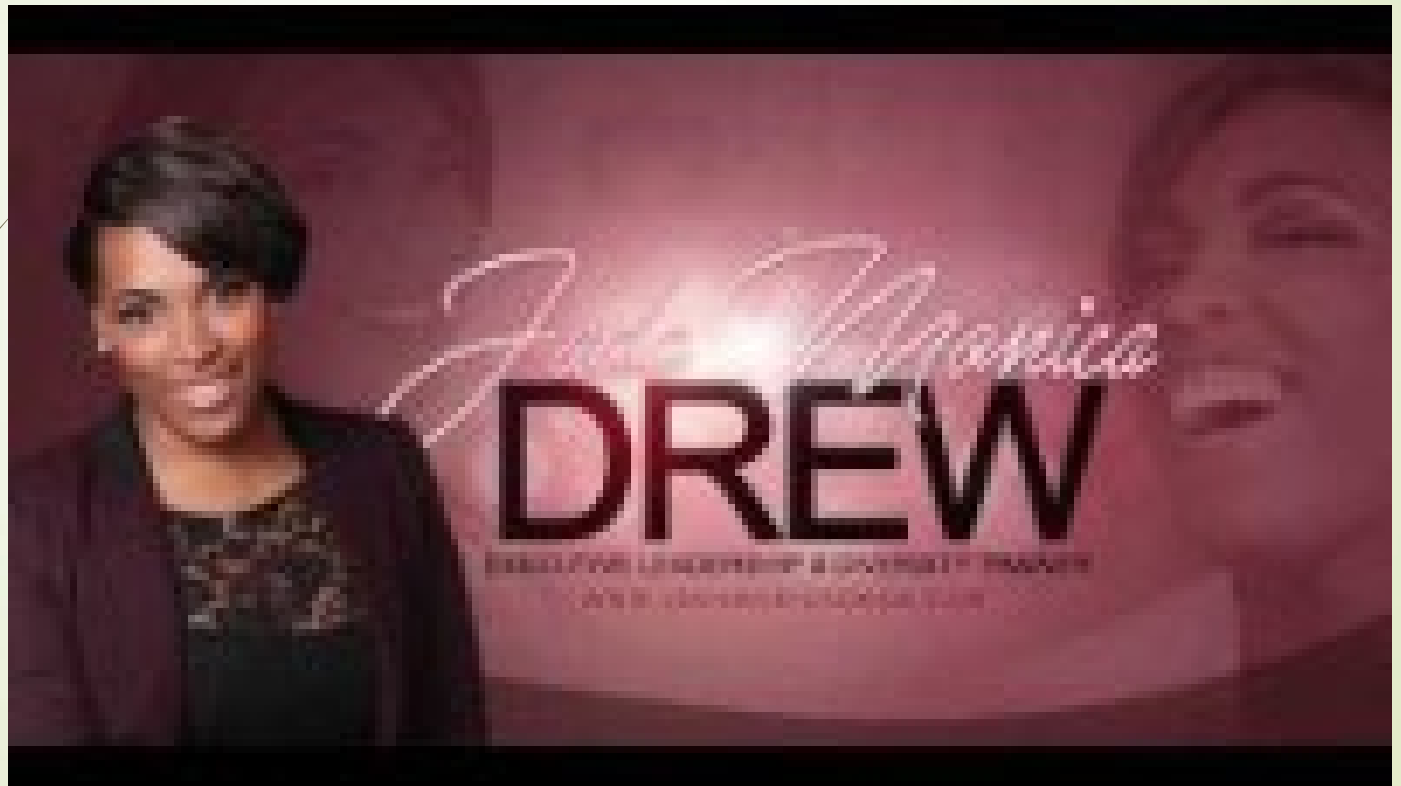




Learning Guidelines

- **Active Listening & Active Participation**
- **Be Present: Silence Internal Chatter**
- **Push Through Growing Edge**
- **No Quick Fix**
- **Trust The Process**
- **Reflection is important**
- **Intent And Impact**
- **Brave space**
- **What else?**

Brave Space vs Safe Space





Workshop Objectives

- To be reflective regarding the impact of our work
- Equip you with knowledge and tools to understand how we are impacted by the work
- Provide shared language around the connection between trauma and vicarious trauma
- Support your ability to recognize your own and your staff's vicarious trauma, and develop coping strategies
- Support your ability to recognize your own resilience and vicarious resiliency and help your staff do the same.



What lies ahead...

- Icebreaker
 - Defining Stress, Trauma and Vicarious Trauma
 - Self-reflection
 - Strategies for Managing Vicarious Trauma
 - Strategies to Support vicarious resiliency
 - Investing in Hope
- 



Education can only be
liberatory when EVERYONE
claims knowledge as a field in
which: **WE ALL Labor!**

-Bell Hooks



LABOR is Discomfort!!

**TOO OFTEN
WE ENJOY THE
COMFORT OF
OPINION
WITHOUT THE
DISCOMFORT
OF THOUGHT.**

JOHN F. KENNEDY

The Human Stress Continuum...



Positive Stress

- Short lived
- Promote growth & change
- Necessary for healthy development



Tolerable Stress

- Result of more severe, long-lasting event
- Stress response is time limited
- Impact reduced by sufficient social supports when available



Toxic Stress

- Prolonged, intense activation of the stress-response
- Complicated by pre-existing vulnerabilities
- More likely when there's an associated impact on attachment



Traumatic Stress

- Result of overwhelming event
- Impacts multiple domains
- Complicated by pre-existing vulnerabilities
- Post-event activities may provide buffer

Racial Anxiety

Definition: the heightened levels of stress and emotion that we confront when interacting with people of other races.

People of color experience concern that they will be the subject of discrimination and hostility.

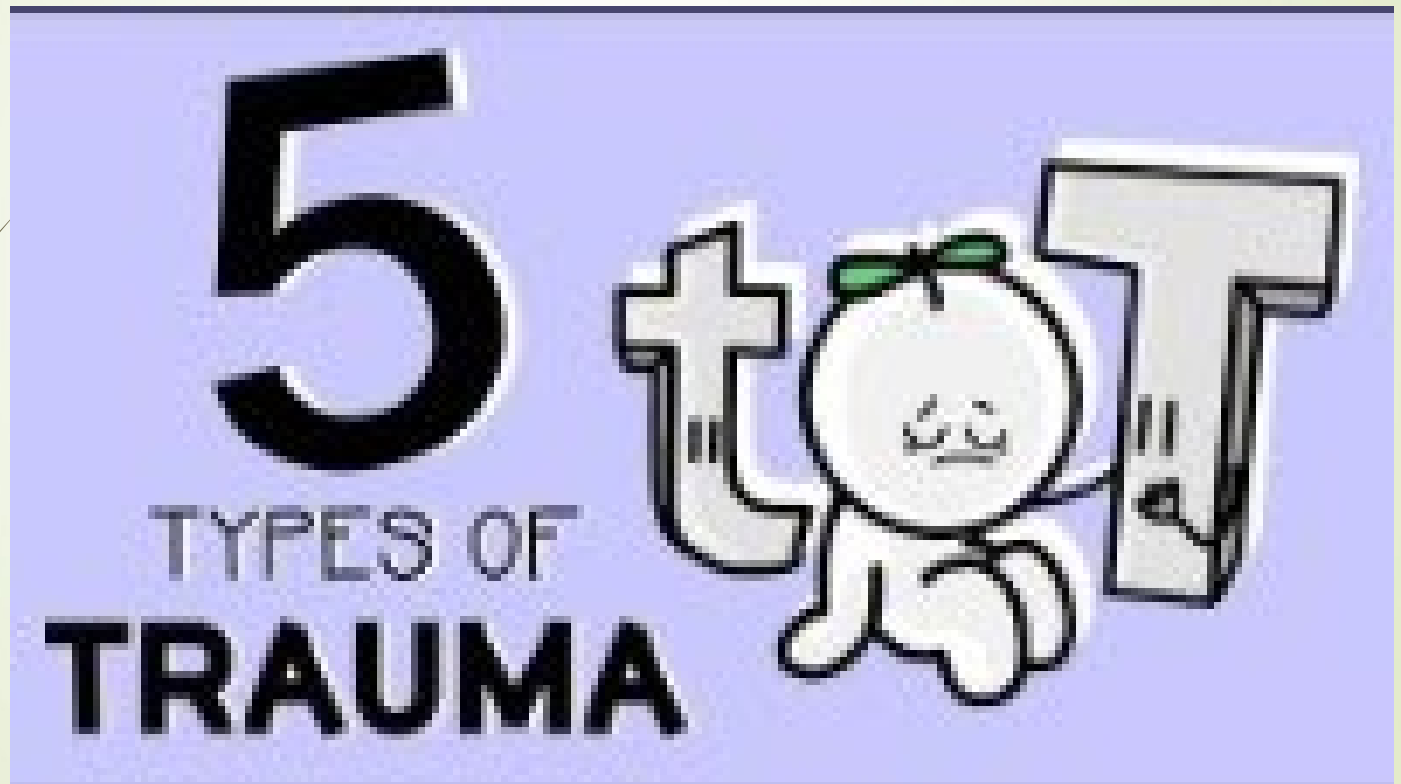
White people, meanwhile, worry that they will be assumed to be racist.



What is Trauma?



Types of Trauma



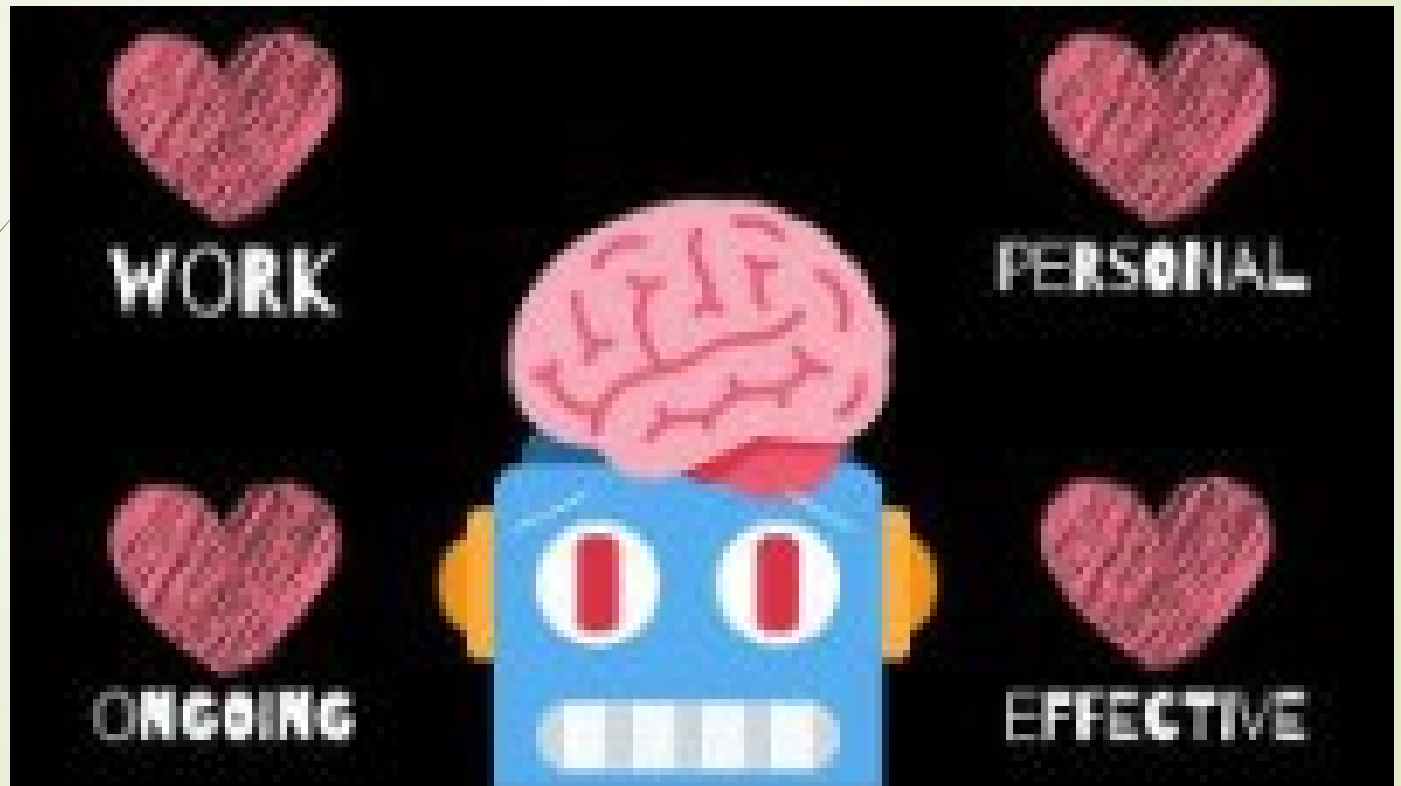
What is vicarious trauma?



VICARIOUS
indirect

TRAUMA
wound

**We are wounded through our
connection to the wounds of our
clients.**



What is Vicarious Trauma?


VT happens when we accumulate and carry the stories of trauma—including images, sounds, details—that we hear and witness, which then impact our bodies, minds, and our worldview.

- adapted from the Joyful Heart Foundation



Who can experience VT?



- Anyone who, in the course of their work:
 - Engages with or is responsible for trauma survivors
 - Hears about/discusses stories of trauma
 - Learns details about client experiences
- 

Types of Vicarious Trauma

Acute VT

- Response to a **specific story/details** that feels new in some way
- Similar to **immediate response** of trauma victims (intrusive thoughts, nightmares, hyperarousal)

Cumulative VT

- Response to **many stories/details** over time, not a specific story/details
- Similar to **response of survivors to repeated trauma** (changes in frame of reference, worldview, difficulty managing emotions)

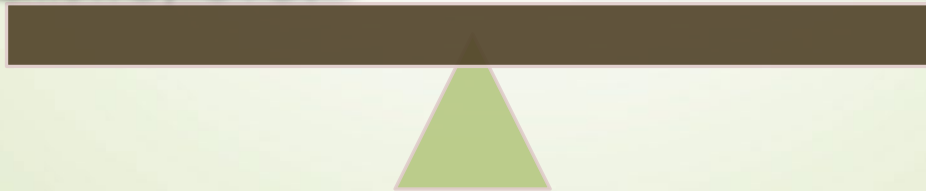
Is it Burnout... or Vicarious Trauma... or Both?

Burnout

Burnout can occur in any kind of workplace, when resources are limited, workloads feel unmanageable, expectations feel unrealistic, etc.

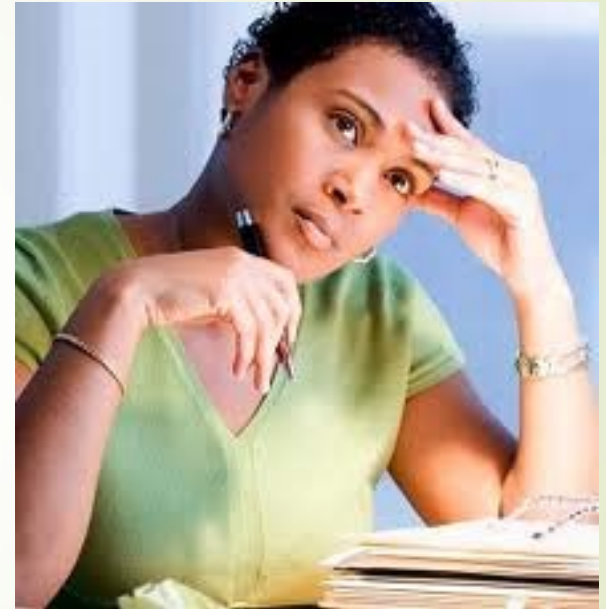
Vicarious Trauma

Vicarious trauma, on the other hand, is a unique, and is an inevitable effect of working with trauma survivors.



Your Own VT

- Please complete the self-assessment (Professional Quality of Life Scale).
- This is private and we will not ask you to share specific responses.



Coping With VT: Common



Checking Out:

Substances
Dissociation
Forgetting
Denial
Distraction
Stoicism

Turning Inward:

Self harm
Suicidality
Self-Blame
Self-Doubt
Shame
Isolation

Turning Outward:

Aggression
Rage
Judging/not
believing/
blaming
clients
Revenge

Managing Danger:

Avoidance
Hypervigilance
Delaying
documentatio
n
Call out sick
frequently

My Resources Reflection



ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY BILLORE

- Using the worksheet, take a few minutes to reflect on your internal and external resources.
- Fill in the boxes with words, pictures, or symbols.

Strategies for Managing Stress and VT



Self care strategies



Reducing isolation—
connecting to others



On the job strategies

Managing Stress & Acute VT: Spotlight on Grounding

Adapted from Najavits, L. (2002).



Mental
Grounding



Physical
Grounding



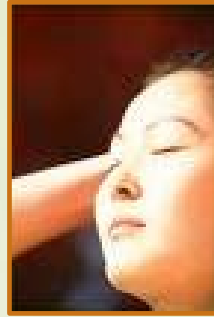
Soothing
Grounding

Managing Stress & Acute VT: Spotlight on Visualization

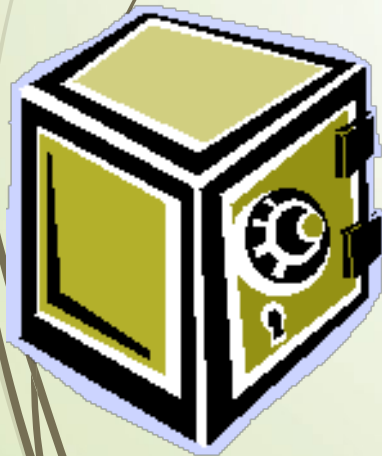
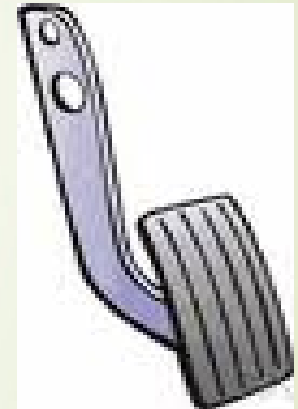
Adapted from Vermilyea, E. (2000).



Gauge



Regulator



Container

Managing Cumulative Vicarious Trauma: Reframing the Change and Making Meaning

Vicarious Trauma

Resilience

Growth




Resilience
Growth

Resilience
Growth

Vicarious Trauma
Resilience
Growth

Managing Cumulative VT-Options



- Transformation strategies:
 - reframing the change
 - making meaning
 - Taking action
- 

Reframing the change:

Perspectives that may help transform VT

- This transformation means better client work
- This transformation means you have joined a group of people who see the world differently and are working to make it better
- This transformation means a balanced view of the world

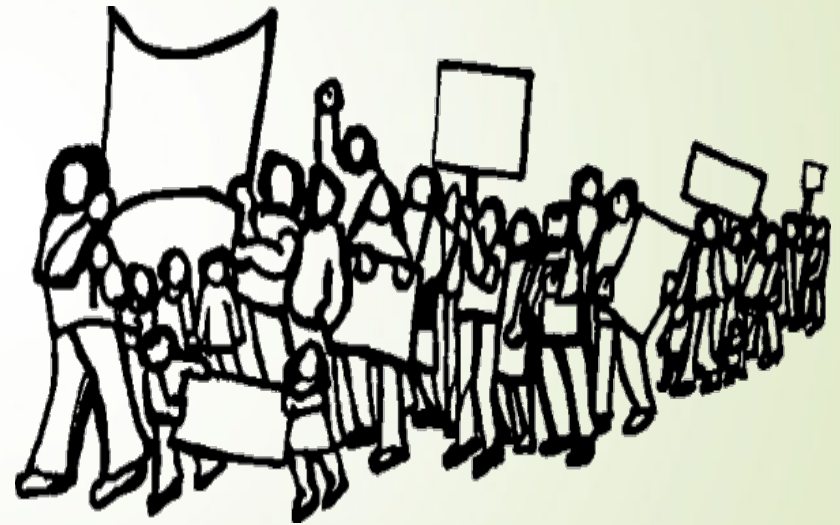
Options for Making Meaning

- Examining what brings you to this work, why it's important
- Thinking about the rewards of the work—what you get out of it
- Shifting negative thinking, finding hope about your work
- Thinking about your work as one piece of a larger whole in the client's support system
- The importance of knowing and feeling that you are *choosing* to do this work

Managing Cumulative Vicarious Trauma: Taking Action

Participating in something larger

- Activism
- Creativity
- Community building activities
- *Other ideas?*





Resilience...

Definition: The dynamic developmental process of adapting well despite the context of trauma, severe adversity, tragedy, threats or chronic stress.

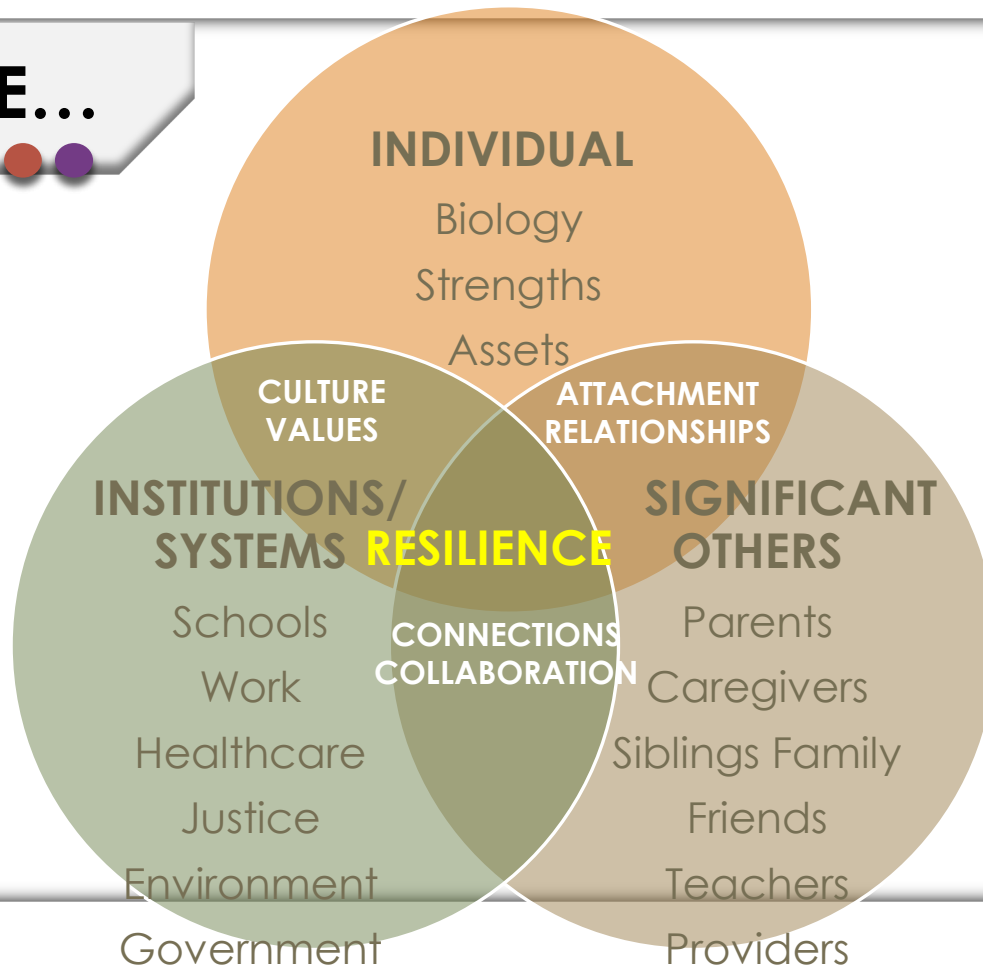
RESILIENCE IS...

- Common/Universal
- Teachable and learnable
- Promoted with others
- Varied by domain
- Changing over time
- Multi-level (i.e. biological, familial, communal, societal)

RESILIENCE IS NOT:

- An individual trait
- Fixed/Permanent
- A shield

RESILIENCE...



Belonging supports Resilience



Cultivating a culture of inclusion supports Resilience



My Strategies



- Please complete the worksheet, Self-Care Assessment.
- We will ask you to share with a partner or two to discuss one strategy you use or intend to use.

Trauma-Informed Supervision



Obstacles to safe VT discussions	Ways to address obstacles and increase safety for VT discussions
<p>Taboo, stigmatized—no one talks about VT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debunk negative VT myths • Discuss VT as an inevitable part of our work • Discuss VT in group meetings • Talk openly about your own VT and how you manage it
<p>Feels too intrusive or intimate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open the door, let supervisee walk in • Build trust over time • Bring up in response to specific cues, not as a general supervision topic
<p>Supervisor concerns about boundaries and what disclosures might result from asking</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on how VT is impacting the staff person's work • Frame VT discussions in the job context • Continue to hold staff accountable for performance • Be familiar with your role

It can be helpful when supervisors...

- Share information about VT and strategies for managing it
- Help worker identify whether VT is happening and identify which elements of VT are occurring
- Help worker identify potential techniques for managing VT
- Identify ways worker can still do the job

It's not the supervisor's responsibility to...

- Process or uncover the roots of the worker's vulnerability to VT (e.g. past or current traumatic experiences)
- Take over for worker when worker is struggling with VT
- Fix the VT

Things that can co-exist





Investing in Well Being

10 SMALL STEPS FOR MENTAL HEALTH

1

Write
out your
feelings

2

Connect
with a
loved one

3

Move
your body

4

Start a
meditation
practice

5

Get into
nature

6

Play with
a **new**
hobby

7

Eat a
balanced
meal

8

Make a
gratitude
list

9

Prioritize
sleep &
rest

10

Get **support**
from
professionals

Calm



BREATHE
Deeply.

ReMember

Love is like
honey, it always
helps to heal.

Melony
McGant

Melony
McGant

Action



- What is one idea or strategy you intend to use to make Space to discuss the impact of our work in your program?



Questions/Comments? Or
Anything Else That Came Up For
You?

Ray of Sunshine



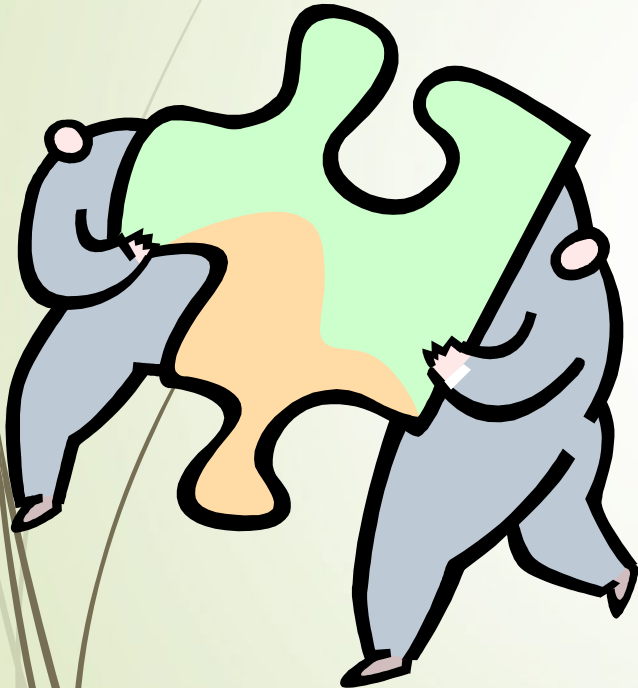


Closing

THANK YOU!

Sherina Davis

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bit.ly/HTH24WorkshopSurvey

Thank you for joining us.
We appreciate and value your
feedback!

Please take a moment to respond to our anonymous general
evaluation by scanning the QR code, or visiting the link below:

Training Survey Information:

Training Title: Building Resilience: Crafting Trauma-Informed
Programs for Youth Empowerment

Facilitator: Sherina Davis