



Befriending The Tiger: Vicarious Trauma, Resilience And Self-Care On The Frontline

**Part 2
9.00am - 1.00pm AEST**

27 July 2024

Naomi Halpern, CQSW, Grad Cert Human Rights





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Befriending the Tiger:

**Vicarious trauma,
Resilience and Self-care
on the Frontline**



Part 2
27 July 2024




Naomi Halpern, COSW, Grad Cert Human Rights
E: naomi@delphicentre.com.au
W: delphicentre.com.au
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Session outline

- Opening meditation
- Reflections Part 1
- Aspects of Self – Body: Stress response, gut health, sleep hygiene
- Aspects of Self – Meaning: Bigger picture, choosing battles, reaffirming
- Self-care plan: Goal setting
- Organisation – Private practice considerations
- Buddy systems – ongoing support
- Final reflections

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**Opening
Meditation**



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What's The Big Deal About The Gut? (Enteric Nervous System – 2nd Brain)

- Contains **30 types of neurotransmitters**
- 90% of neurotransmitter **serotonin** is **produced in the gut**. Plays a key role in **mood, sleep, digestion, nausea, wound healing, bone health, blood clotting** and **sexual desire**.
- **400x more melatonin** produced in gut than brain
- When **gut microbiome** is compromised has major impact on **physical and mental health**

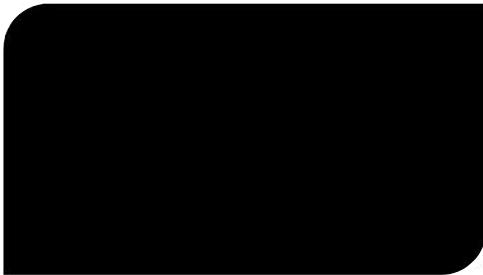


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Gut health



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Leaky Gut: Gut microbiome, physical and mental health

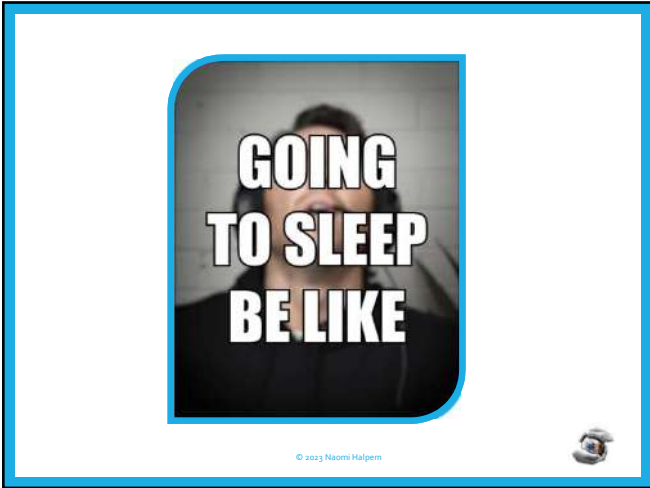
- Depression and anxiety
- Headaches, brain fog, memory loss
- Excessive fatigue
- Poor immune system
- Cravings for sugar or carbohydrates
- Chronic diarrhea, constipation, gas or bloating
- Nutritional deficiencies
- Skin rashes, acne, eczema or rosacea
- Arthritis or joint pain
- Autoimmune diseases: rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, celiac or Crohn's disease



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Sleep hygiene

- ↓ caffeine, nicotine, alcohol
- Switch off devices (min 30 mins before sleep)
- Invest in mattress and block out blinds
- Fresh air in bedroom
- Practise deep breathing
- No exercise 3 hours before sleep
- Warm (not hot) bath or shower
- Light snack / warm milk
- Magnesium - melatonin, diffuser with lavender oil

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Activate the parasympathetic nervous system

- Spend time in nature
- Get a massage
- Practice meditation
- Deep abdominal breathing from the diaphragm
- Repetitive prayer / mantra
- Focus on a word that is soothing such as calm or peace
- Play with animals or children
- Practice yoga, chi kung, or tai chi
- Exercise
- Progressive relaxation
- Do something you enjoy: gardening, cooking, surfing, reading etc.
- Gently touch your lips
- Visualisation
- Stop multitasking – focus on one thing at a time!
- Reach out to someone you trust

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Body: behaviour & action

Monitor physiological arousal

Gut health

Sleep hygiene

Take your breaks!

Exercise and play

Regular health checks

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Body reflection exercise

Do I check in with my physiological arousal and how aware am I of what my body is communicating to me?

Am I up to date with health checks and if not which one(s) is / are due?

Do I take breaks during the day most days? If not, what are the obstacles?

Do I have a regular exercise routine? How do I feel about what I am doing or not doing?

How is my diet? Are there changes it would help to make?

How am I sleeping? Do I have a good sleep hygiene practices?

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4 aspects of Self

MEANING
purpose
existential crisis

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Meaning: Purpose and Vision



-  Remind yourself of reasons you do the work you do
-  Reaffirm your commitment to your work
-  Choose your battles
-  Focus on the bigger picture

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Vicarious Post-traumatic Growth or Vicarious Resilience




- Positive transformation in one's worldview and spirituality in response to helping others live through trauma.
- Deeper understanding of the world, suffering and humanity's capacity to overcome adversity, renewed or enriched spirituality, greater value and appreciation of relationships, compassion, understanding of various cultures, fulfilment, sense of purpose, meaning and pleasure.

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Meaning and purpose reflection exercise



Has my world view been impacted by my work and if so, how has it changed?

Am I feeling less safe, more cautious or suspicious of others or institutions because of my work?

Do I feel less joyful or hopeful in my own life and for the world in general?

Why or how did it come about that I do this work? What motivated and inspired me?

Are these reasons still valid? What will help me reaffirm my commitment and sense of meaning and purpose?

In what ways do I feel inspired and hopeful about my work?


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7 self exploration exercises


1. Burnout-Compassion fatigue and Vicarious trauma self assessment
2. Victim-Rescuer-Persecutor triangle reflection
3. Risk & Resiliency Factors
4. Mind reflection
5. Emotion reflection
6. Body reflection
7. Meaning reflection

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4 steps self-care plan



- 1. Stress profile**
- 2. Select aspect of Self**
- 3. Set goal**
- 4. Review**

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Your stress profile



Stress factors

Signs of stress

What is your stress profile?

Helpful strategies

Unhelpful strategies

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4 Aspects of Self



-  Mind
-  Emotion
-  Body
-  Meaning

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Developing a self-care plan



Relevant – Meaningful to you

- Why have you selected this area as the aspect of Self that would most make a difference to focus on at this point?
- Your plan doesn't need to be work related / focussed. Supporting ourselves / making changes in other areas of our lives may be more relevant.

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Respect Where You're At

- 3rd **Comfortable**
change with ease 
- 2nd **Uncomfortable BUT Ready**
GREATEST GROWTH 
- 1st **Timing Not Right**
not ready / time yet 

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'Know thyself' Aim to make small concrete steps that can be built upon


Ask yourself "What is possible that I might ..."

Do: Procrastinate, avoid etc.

Think: It's too hard, I'm not up to it etc.

Feel: Anxious, insecure, too overwhelmed etc.

What is a small, concrete, manageable step I can take (in the next week)?

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Self-Care goal - exercise

I want to... *develop healthy sleep patterns*

Because *it will improve my energy, mood, physical health and functioning in all aspects of my life*

The steps I need to take are... *switch off devices one hour before bed and do something relaxing*

Keeping a journal of my sleep routines and patterns for 1 week and then review can help me to do this.

Review date:

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Regular Review of your plan

- Acknowledge success / progress
- Keep momentum and inspiration
- Readjust and learn - troubleshoot
- Predetermined review dates at regular intervals



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Resistance to change

- Normal and healthy
- Resistance is communication
- Pacing – too fast or slow?
- Fear – what of?
- What are the pros and cons?
- Is it the right or best focus?
- Work with resistance - don't push against it



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“Neurons that fire together wire together”

Donald Hobb (1904-1985)



- To feel better, we need to **do what we don't feel like doing** so that in time we actually feel like doing it and establish a new habit.
- Rewiring the brain (and enhancing health) means **getting out of our comfort zone** (incrementally) and **exposing ourselves to situations that may provoke anxiety but are safe**, will lead to feeling calm and positive when in the same situation later.
- Be prepared to **feel worse before you feel better!**

Dr. John Arden, (2015) Brain2Brain

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SO WHERE
TO FROM
HERE?

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Private Practice

- Be your own boss
- Make your own schedule
- More autonomy
- AND
- Hold more responsibility and liability
- Isolation
- Balancing clinical and business aspects
- Marketing your practice
- Managing taxes and finances
- Bringing on new associates or administrative staff



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Private practice

- Look at the terms and conditions you set for self-employment as you would if employed by an organisation


Occupational Health and Safety – risk factors

- Hours
- Wages
- Leave
- Sick leave
- Supervision
- Professional development



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Buddy System

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Setting up a Buddy network



Decide the **framework** - the purpose of the connecting **and** your obligations or commitments to each other.

Set the **expectations** - the rights / responsibilities of each person in the network (even if its only two). Establish the specific tasks and expectations.

Buddying is an **addition** not alternative to supervision and its not peer supervision / consultation.

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Connecting

- How?
- Frequency?
- Format?
- Make it meaningful
- Rotate roles
- Set themes



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Explore and reflect on

A high impact moment of **stress/challenge**

A moment of highest or lowest **emotional intensity**

A moment that was **inspiring** or **poignant**

One thing **someone else did** that **made a difference**

One thing **you did** that **made a difference**

A **core value** you are striving to uphold

One thing you **choose to do** going forward



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If signs and symptoms persist

If you find strategies for self-care are not helping, things feel like they are getting worse, not better, please reach out for support.



"I'm not saying she's here at the moment. I just think that it also might be helpful to see a therapist."

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Thoughts to close with



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*Thank you
&
Take
Self-Care!*

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Body Refection Exercise



Do I regularly check in with my physiological arousal and how aware am I of what my body is communicating to me?

Am I up to date with health checks and if not which one(s) is / are due?

Do I take breaks during the day most days? If not, what are the obstacles?

Do I have a regular exercise routine? How do I feel about what I am doing or not doing?

How is my diet? Are there changes it would help to make?

How am I sleeping? Do I have a good sleep hygiene practices?



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Meaning Reflection Exercise

Has my world view been impacted by my work and if so, how has it changed?

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Do I feel less joyful or hopeful in my own life and for the world in general?

Why or how did it come about that I do this work? What motivated and inspired me to do this work?

Are these reasons still valid? What will help me reaffirm my commitment and sense of meaning and purpose?

In what ways do I feel inspired and hopeful about my work?



Stress Profile



Stress Factors

Signs of Stress

Unhelpful Stress Management Strategies

Helpful Stress Management Strategies



Self-Care Goal



Date goal set: _____ Goal review date: _____
(Review date is to review progress not expected date for goal completion)

I want to... (*what I want to do, not do, change or be different*)

Because... (*how my life, relationships, work, wellbeing will improve if I achieve my goal*)

The steps I need to take are... (*what will help me move toward achieving my goal*)

.....

(actions I can take to assist me to achieve this goal) can help me move toward achieving this goal.

From: Saakvitne, K.W., & Pearlman, L. A., and the Staff of the Traumatic Stress Institute (1966). Transforming Pain: A workbook on vicarious traumatization for professionals who work with traumatized clients. New York: W.W. Norton.

Self-Care Checklist

Rate how often and how well you are taking care of yourself these days by filling in the following checklist. When you are finished, look for patterns in your responses. Are you more active in some areas of self-care but ignore others? Are there items on the list that make you think, "I would never do that"? Listen to your inner responses, your internal dialogue about self-care and making yourself the priority.

Rate the following areas in frequency

- 5 = Frequently
- 4 = Occasionally
- 3 = Rarely
- 2 = Never
- 1 = It never occurred to me

Physical Self-Care

- Eat regularly (e.g., breakfast, lunch, and dinner)
- Eat healthily
- Exercise
- Get regular medical care for prevention
- Get medical care when needed
- Take time off when sick
- Get massages
- Dance, swim, walk, run, play sports, sing, or do some other physical activity that is fun
- Take time to be sexual - with yourself, with a partner
- Get enough sleep
- Wear clothes you like
- Take vacations
- Take day trips or mini-vacations
- Make time away from telephones
- Other:

Psychological Self-Care

- Make time for self-reflection
- Have your own personal psychotherapy
- Write in a journal
- Read literature that is unrelated to work
- Do something at which you are not expert or in charge
- Decrease stress in your life
- Notice your inner experience - listen to your thoughts, judgements, beliefs, attitude and feelings
- Let others know different aspects of you
- Engage your intelligence in a new area, e.g., go to an art museum, history exhibit, sports event, auction, theatre performance
- Practice receiving from others
- Be curious
- Say no to extra responsibilities
- Other:

Emotional Self-Care

- Spend time with others whose company you enjoy
- Stay in contact with important people in your life
- Give yourself affirmations, praise yourself
- Love yourself
- Reread favourite books, re-view favourite movies
- Identify comforting activities, objects, people, relationships, places and seek them out
- Allow yourself to cry
- Find things that make you laugh
- Express your outrage in social action, letters, donations, marches, protests

Play with children

Other:

Spiritual Self-Care

Make time for reflection

Spend time with nature

Find a spiritual connection or community

Be open to inspiration

Cherish your optimism and hope

Be aware of nonmaterial aspects of life

Try at times not to be in charge or the expert

Be open to not knowing

Identify what is meaningful to you and notice its place in your life

Meditate

Pray

Sing

Spend time with children

Have experiences of awe

Contribute to causes in which you believe

Read inspirational literature (talks, music, etc.)

Other:

Workplace or Professional Self-Care

Take a break during the workday (e.g., lunch)

Take time to chat with co-workers

Make quiet time to complete tasks

Identify projects or tasks that are exciting and rewarding

- ___ Set limits with clients and colleagues
- ___ Balance your caseload so no one day or part of a day is “too much”
- ___ Arrange your work space so it is comfortable and comforting
- ___ Get regular supervision or consultation
- ___ Negotiate for your needs (benefits, pay raise)
- ___ Have a peer support group
- ___ Develop a non-trauma area of professional interest
- ___ Other:

Balance

- ___ Strive for balance *within* your work-life and workday
- ___ Strive for balance *among* work, family, relationships, play and rest