

Effects of Vicarious Trauma and Building Resiliency

CENTER FOR HOPE & SAFETY

Learning Objectives

- ❑ Refresh on trauma and the effects of trauma.
 - Look at tools for how to assess and deal with your trauma responses.
- ❑ Understand important aspects of working with trauma survivors.
- ❑ Understand secondary trauma, vicarious trauma, burnout and compassion fatigue.
 - Look at tools for coping with trauma from working with survivors.
- ❑ Understand boundaries and how they support us and the people we serve.



WHAT IS TRAUMA?

SECTION 1

Section 1 Objectives

- Define trauma and types of trauma.
- Understand types of traumatic events and how they affect the brain.
- Discuss individual trauma responses.
- Look at ways to assess current headspace.

What is Trauma?

The word “**trauma**” is used to describe experiences or situations that are emotionally painful and distressing, and that overwhelm people’s ability to cope, leaving them powerless. Trauma has sometimes been defined in reference to circumstances that are **outside the realm of normal human experience**. Unfortunately, this definition doesn’t always hold true. For some groups of people, trauma can occur frequently and become part of the common human experience.

– Center for Nonviolence and Social Justice

Types of Trauma



Physical



Political and Societal



Environmental



Intergenerational



Vicarious

Traumatic Events

- Being a victim of a crime
- Domestic violence
- Sexual assault
- Death of a loved one
- Natural disaster
- Houselessness
- Events related to systemic oppression
- Events beyond a person's control

A traumatic experience causes feelings of terror, intense fear, horror, helplessness, and physical stress reactions.

The ways we cope with normal stressful events are generally not accessible during and following a traumatic event.

Extreme fear
& terror + Lack of control
(perceived) = Changes in the
brain during the
incident(s) &
immediately
following.

A Traumatic Event can Shift...

from Homeless and Housing Coalition presentation by Tim Welsh

A person's beliefs

- What does it mean to be safe?
- Who can I trust?
- Are people generally good?

Sense of self

- Who am I?
- Spiritual beliefs?
- My place in the world?

Feelings

- How do I really feel?
- How do I connect to others?



TRAUMA REACTIONS

4 common body/brain responses:

Hyperarousal – always “on,” hypervigilant.

Intrusion – re-experiencing events, flashbacks.

Dissociation – detachment.

Constriction or Avoidance – numbing.

Trauma Responses

COGNITIVE

Poor concentration
Confusion
Disorientation
Indecisiveness
Shortened attention span
Memory loss
Difficulty making decisions

EMOTIONAL

Shock
Feeling overwhelmed
Depression
Feeling lost
Fear of harm to self or loved ones
Feeling abandoned
Uncertainty of feelings
Volatile emotions

PHYSICAL

Nausea
Lightheadedness
Dizziness
Gastro-intestinal problems
Rapid heart rate
Tremors
Headaches
Grinding teeth
Poor sleep

BEHAVIORAL

Suspicion
Irritability
Argumentative
Withdrawal
Excessive silence
Inappropriate humor
Increased/decreased eating
Increased substance use

Resilience Factors:



Seeking out support friends and family.



Finding a support group.



Feeling good about one's own actions.



Having a coping strategies, in getting through situations and learning.



“Stress inoculation:” having overcome a stressful experience or incident in your past.

Intensity scale

Create for yourself a scale and what each intensity level looks like:

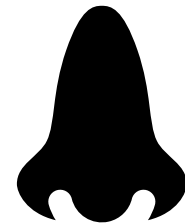
- Emotions (fear, anger, sadness, overwhelm)
- Body responses (tight chest, breathing, sweat)
- Behavioral (agitated, irritable, withdrawn)
- Cognitive (focus, difficulty thinking, indecisive)

With this knowledge, do some self-assessment and ask, “What do I need right now?”

- To breath outside without a mask for a moment.
- To get some support from a co-worker who understands.
- To move or change positions to move the stress hormones in your body.
- To get support and guidance from a supervisor.

Five Senses:5-4-3-2-1

Grounding activity



WORKING WITH SURVIVORS OF TRAUMA

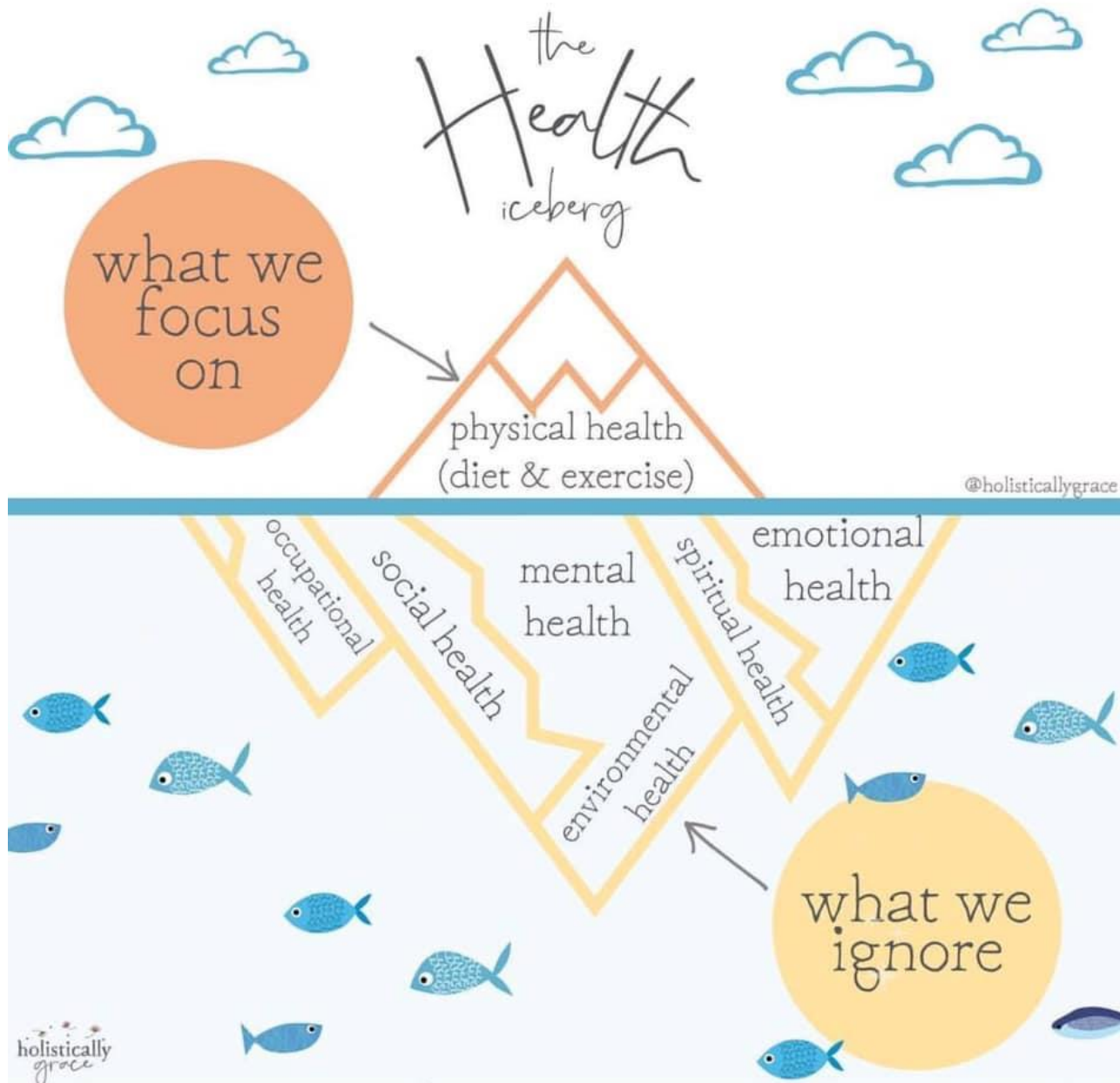
SECTION 2

Section 2 Objectives

- Look at what you can do to offer support.
- Make sure we have a holistic view of support.
- Understanding the difference between empathy and sympathy.

What can YOU do?

- Understand trauma and oppression.
- Promote safety and trust with your boundaries.
- **Listen without judgement.**
- Walk alongside the people around you!
- Validate their emotional responses.
- **Remember: they are experiencing a NORMAL response to an ABNORMAL situation.**
- Holistic view – what else might be going on for them, even small things?
- Identify concrete needs.
- **Create a healing, supportive environment to bring them back to a sense of safety.**
- Identify sources of support – help develop that support network.
- **Believe recovery is possible!**



Holistic Support

Empathy

VS

Sympathy



Empathy vs. Sympathy by Brené Brown

Secondary & Vicarious Trauma & Burnout

Section 3

Section 3 Objectives

- Define secondary and vicarious trauma.
- Give tools and tips around self-care and coping.
- Discuss burnout and compassion fatigue and how to avoid it.

Effects of Secondary Trauma

Mimics the symptoms of primary trauma:

- Anxiety
- Hypervigilance
- Hopelessness
- Anger and cynicism
- Sleeplessness / Chronic exhaustion
- Minimizing
- Guilt
- Physical ailments
- Changes in memory
- Disruption in perception of safety, trust, and independence



SELF-CARE



Vicarious Trauma

Significant disruptions in **one's sense of meaning, connection, identity, and the world view**, as well as in ones affect, tolerance, psychological needs, beliefs about the self and others, interpersonal relationships and sense memory.

(from Compassion Fatigue by Charles Figley)

Focuses less on trauma symptoms and more on the cognitive changes that occur following ongoing exposure to others traumatic material.

On going state, cognitive changes, **changes in world view.**

Vicarious Trauma Responses

COGNITIVE

Poor concentration

Confusion

Disorientation

Indecisiveness

Shortened attention span

Memory loss

Difficulty making

decisions

EMOTIONAL

Shock

Feeling overwhelmed

Depression

Feeling lost

Fear of harm to self or loved

ones

Feeling abandoned

Volatile emotions

PHYSICAL

Nausea

Lightheadedness

Dizziness

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Poor sleep

BEHAVIORAL

Suspicion

Irritability

Argumentative

Withdrawal

Excessive silence

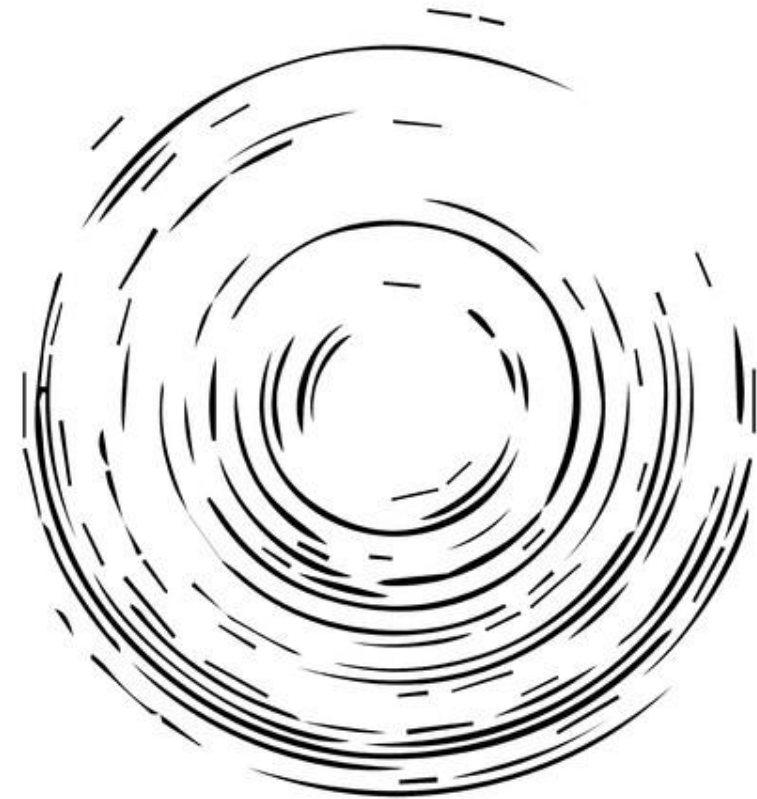
Inappropriate humor

Increased/decreased eating

Increased substance use

L.I.D. – Low Impact Disclosure

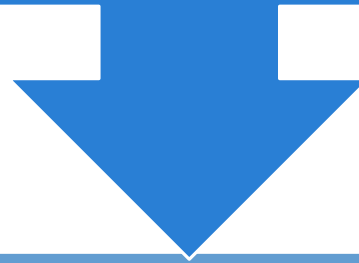
1. Increased Self-Awareness
2. Fair Warning
3. Consent
4. Low Impact Disclosure



By Françoise Mathieu, M.Ed. CCC. Compassion
Fatigue Specialist

A way to ask
for personal
support

“I went through this client interaction
and somethings came up for me. Can I
share? I’m really frustrated about
_____.”



Let the person guide about the details
they want in supporting you. Likely they
will ask questions they feel comfortable
asking as follow up. Follow their lead.

Burnout

A state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion caused by a long-term involvement in emotionally demanding situations.

- (from *Avoiding Burnout* by Ayala Pines and Elliot Aronson)

The chronic condition of perceived demands outweighing perceived resources.

Develops as a result of general occupational stress [that has not been managed].





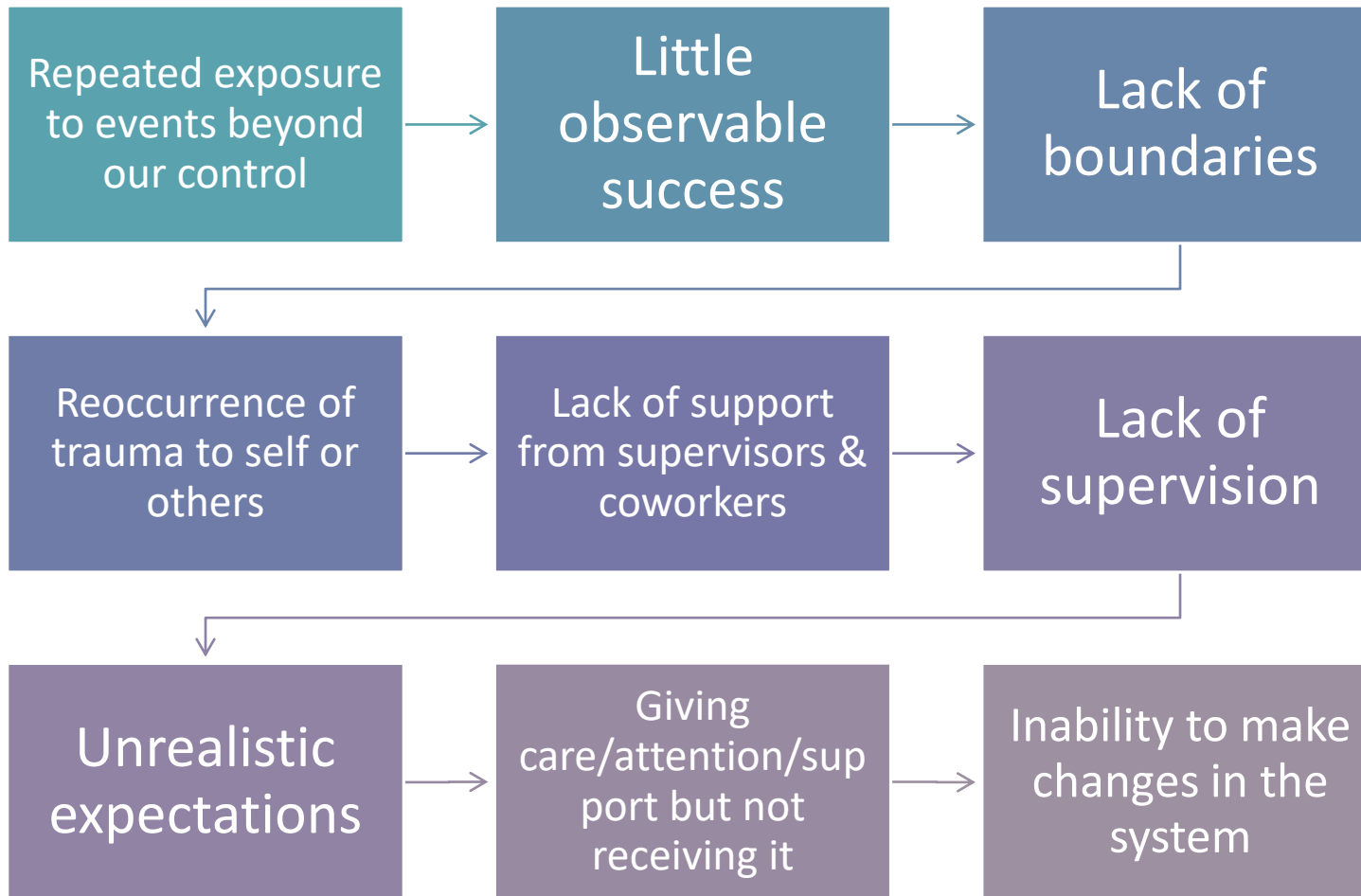
Vicarious Trauma v. Burnout

“It is important not to confuse vicarious trauma with “burnout”.

Burnout is generally something that happens over time, and as it builds up a change, such as time off or a new and sometimes different job, can take care of burnout or improve it.

Vicarious trauma, however, is a state of **tension** and **preoccupation** of the stories/trauma experiences described by clients.”

- American Counseling Association on Secondary & Vicarious Trauma



Factors contributing to Vicarious Trauma & Burnout

Spotting Compassion Fatigue & Burnout?

Energy loss

Exhaustion

Depression

Loss of empathy

Pessimism

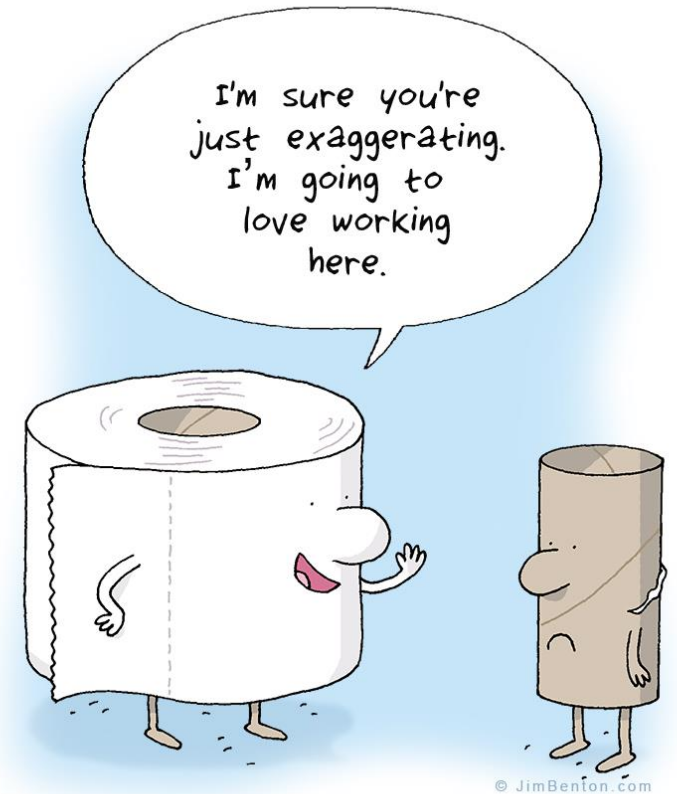
Cynicism

Anxiety

Antisocial attitude

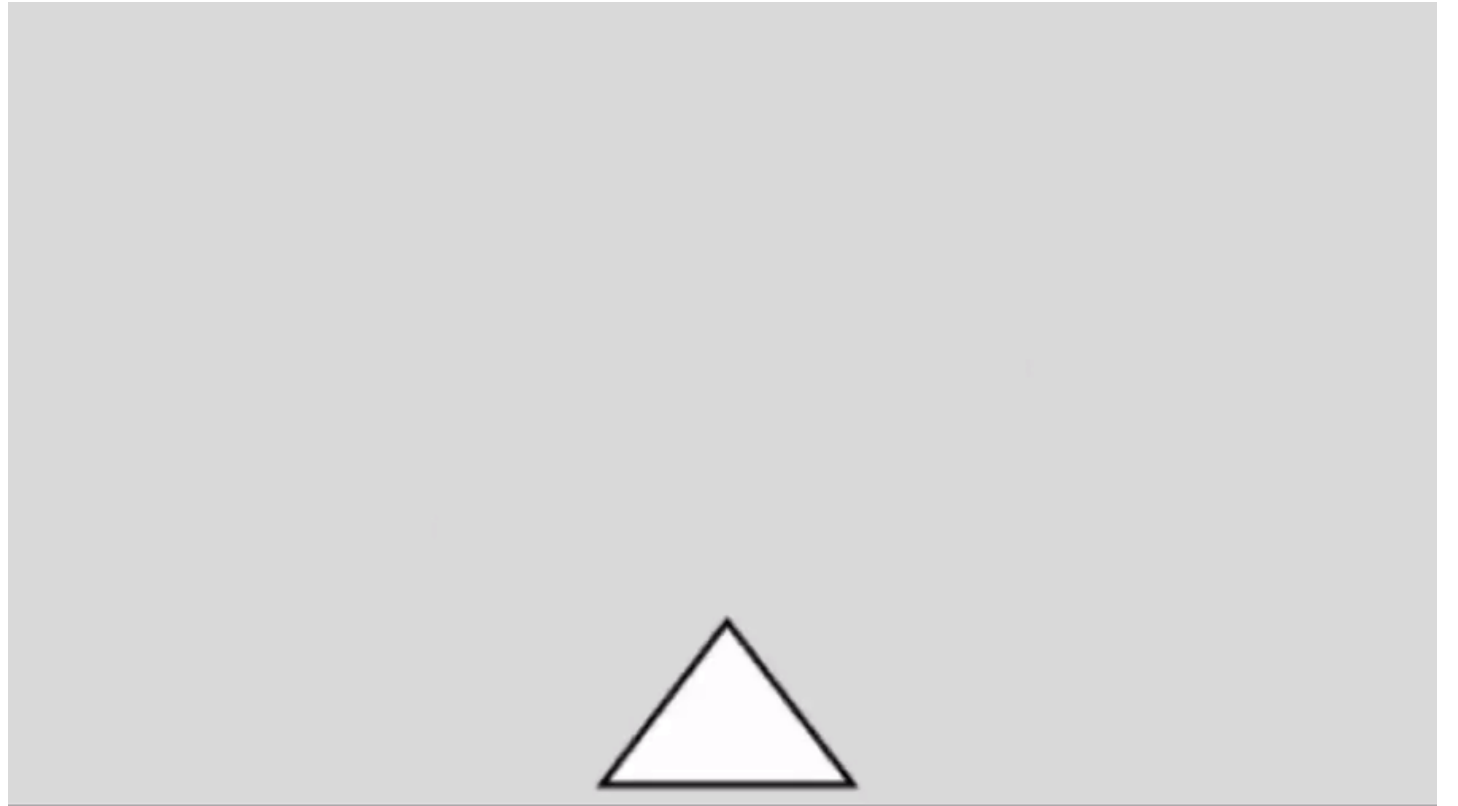
Feelings of impotence

Substance abuse



Healthy Practices & Coping

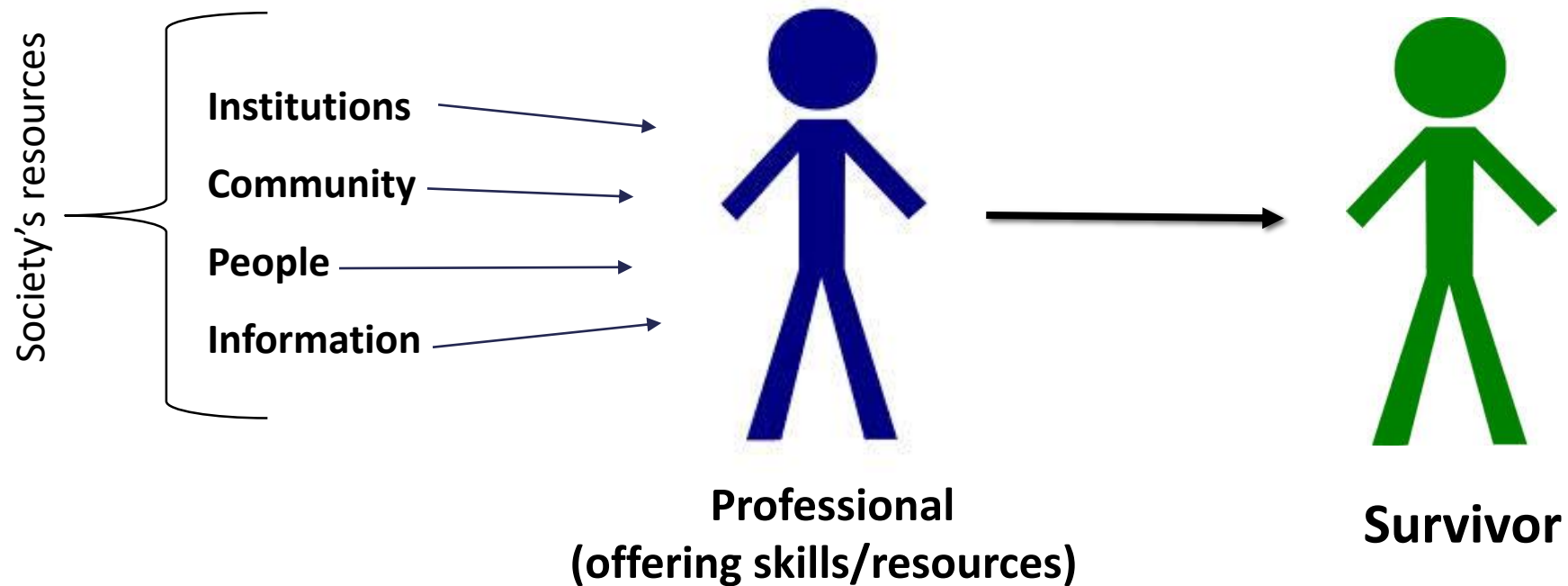
Breathing



Healthy Practices

- Set limits on interactions
- Stay within established role
- Remember your involvement is temporary
- Empower, encourage self-reliance /independence
- Check in with yourself!

Being an advocate or professional is different from a friend



Building a support network

Know your people!

At work

At home

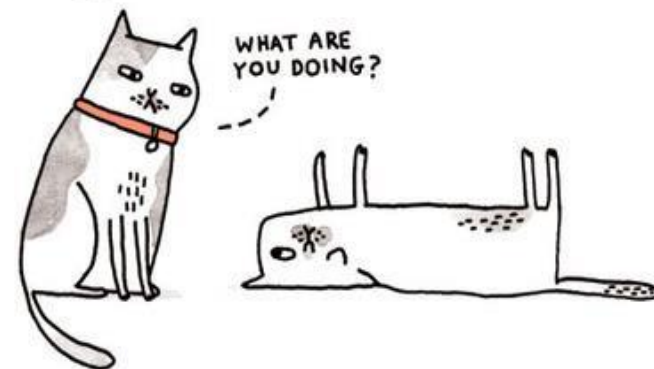
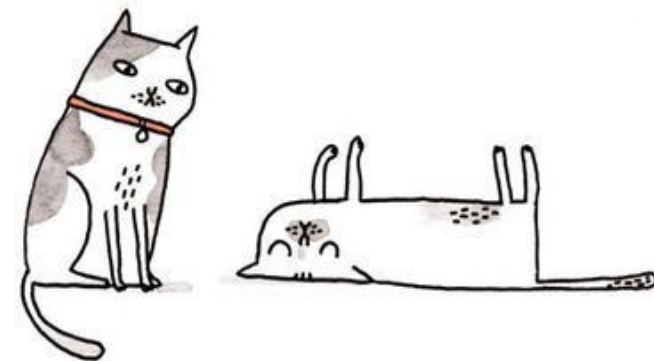
Friends

Therapists

Hobbies



What do you do to relax?



End

