



# Trauma Notification Training



## Are you ready to provide a Trauma Notification?

*Telling someone that their loved one has died is one of the hardest things to do. There is a realization that lives may be changed forever. It may even be more difficult to realize that you, the messenger, have a role in making the notification and impacting their lives.*

*This guidance has been developed to help you after making a trauma notification.*

### Preventative Strategies

- **Wellness**
  - Incorporating physical activity enhances mood, stress reduction, self-concept and a higher quality of life. <sup>1</sup>
- **Self-Care**
  - Staying in the moment can increase one's resilience and can lead to a decrease in disruptions in intrusive thoughts. <sup>2,3</sup>
- **Peer Support**
  - Regular contact with family and friends as well as maintaining professional connections can minimize effects of vicarious trauma. <sup>4</sup>

#### Ideal candidates making trauma notifications have the following characteristics:

- Empathy
- Compassion
- Patience
- Flexibility

When you are called to do a trauma notification, assess if you are fully trained and in a current state to provide an appropriate trauma notification.

### Signs & Symptoms of Stress of Vicarious Trauma

There are physical, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual signs of stress. <sup>5,6,7</sup>

#### **Physical:**

- Headaches
- Stomach or joint pain
- Fatigue
- Impaired Immune Response

#### **Behavioral:**

- Difficulty separating work from personal life
- Use or abuse of drugs or alcohol
- Irritability, anger, or violent outbursts
- Absenteeism
- Working too hard with few breaks

#### **Emotional:**

- Distancing from others
- Difficulty sleeping
- Feeling weak, tired, overwhelmed by work
- Feeling trapped by work

#### **Spiritual:**

- Existential questions or crises
- Strengthening or weakening of religious/spiritual faith
- Spiritual crisis

# Recommendations

- Trauma training and educating can decrease stress.
- Interacting with peers to share experiences have a profound effect on mitigating stress and offers social support and normalization of trauma experiences. This could lead to sharing potential coping resources.<sup>8</sup>
- A trauma informed therapist can help put things into perspective and help identify coping skills. They can also provide an awareness of the widespread impact of trauma on life experiences and relationships.

# Resources

## [AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION \(www.apa.org/topics/resilience\)](http://www.apa.org/topics/resilience)

A roadmap for adapting to life-changing situations and emerging even stronger than before.

## [MAYO CLINIC \(www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/consumer-health/in-depth/mindfulness-exercises/art-20046356\)](http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/consumer-health/in-depth/mindfulness-exercises/art-20046356)

Mindfulness exercises and their benefits.

## [NATIONAL POLICE SUICIDE FOUNDATION \(www.psf.org\)](http://www.psf.org)

Offers peer support providing both pro-active and post-event training and support as well as educational seminars, policy and protocol suggestions and a huge network of communication and resources to survivors and agencies.

## [PSYCHOLOGY TODAY \(www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists\)](http://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists)

An extensive directory of the therapists, psychologists and counselors that can be filtered by city

## [TRAUMA STEWARDSHIP INSITUTE \(www.traumastewardship.com\)](http://www.traumastewardship.com)

Raising awareness of and responding to the cumulative toll on those who are exposed to the suffering, hardship, crisis, or trauma of humans, living beings, or the planet itself.

## [UNIVERSITY OF BUFFALO \(www.socialwork.buffalo.edu/resources/self-care-starter-kit.html\)](http://www.socialwork.buffalo.edu/resources/self-care-starter-kit.html)

Self-care starter kit that has useful resources for professionals

*These resources may be helpful, but please note that the FBI does not endorse these organizations.*

# References

- 1 Berger, B. (1996). Psychological benefits of an active lifestyle: what we know and what we need to know. *Quest*, 330-353.
- 2 Jacob, C.J., Holozier, R. (2016). The role of mindfulness in reducing trauma counselors' vicarious traumatization. *Journal of the Pennsylvania Counseling Association (15)*, 31-38.
- 3 Duerr, M. (2009). The use of meditation and mindfulness practices to support military care providers: a prospectus. Northampton, MA: Center for Contemplative Mind in Society.
- 4 Hesse, A. R. (2002). Secondary trauma: how working with trauma survivors affects therapists. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 30(3), 293-309.
- 5 Stamm, B.H., Figley, C.R. (2009). Advances in the theory of compassion satisfaction and fatigue and its measurement with the ProQOL 5. Presented at the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies Annual Conference. Atlanta, GA.
- 6 Saakvitne, K.W., Pearlman, L.A. (1996). *Transforming the pain: a workbook on vicarious traumatization*. New York: NY: Norton.
- 7 Baker, E. (2003). *Caring for ourselves: a therapist's guide to personal and professional wellbeing*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.