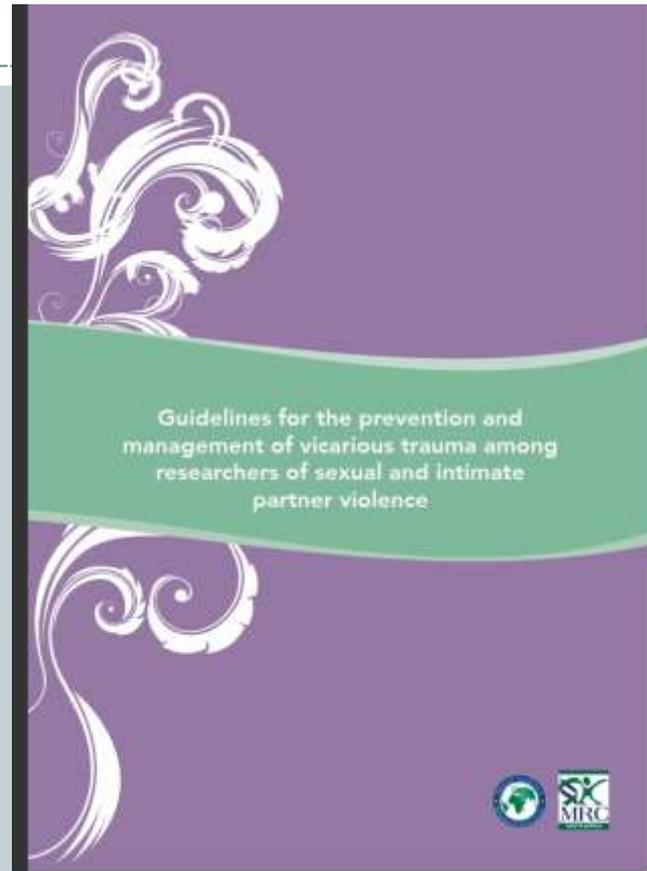


# GUIDELINES FOR THE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF VICARIOUS TRAUMA AMONG RESEARCHERS OF SEXUAL AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

SVRI, 2015



SVRI Forum 2019, Cape Town, South Africa

# Overview of the Guidelines



- Defines vicarious trauma and its impacts
- Situates vicarious trauma within a Socio-Ecological framework
- Highlights risk factors and protective factors
- Outlines strategies for preventing vicarious trauma among researchers, and responding when it occurs
- Explores the topic of ethics and vicarious trauma (research protocols)
- Defines related key terms and concepts
- Provides further reading recommendations

# What is vicarious trauma?



# Vicarious resilience (compassion satisfaction)

This concept is described by Hernandez-Wolfe, Killian, Engstrom and Gangsei (2014) as “overcoming adversity from witnessing and participating in trauma survivors’ own recovery process.”



# Risk factors



- At the organizational level
- At the project level
  - Insecurity/unsafe circumstances
  - The lack of available services
  - Working in isolation
- At the individual level
  - Empathy
  - Age and inexperience
  - Lack of training
  - Gender
  - Personal history of violence and mental health problems

# Vicarious trauma and histories of sexual violence



In a study conducted in 2011, Choi found that 80% of those working with survivors of family and sexual violence had experienced at least one traumatic event, and 70% were survivors of family violence or sexual assault.

# Vicarious trauma symptoms mentioned by Paraguayan women

- Reduced satisfaction, lack of motivation
- Lack of concentration, memory loss
- No attention to personal life and personal needs
- Irritability with family/children
- Isolation
- Problems sleeping
- Rage
- Sadness
- Withdrawal
- Anguish
- Constipation, diarrhea, gastro-intestinal problems
- Hair loss
- Anxiety, stress, panic attacks
- Lack of patience
- Uncontrollable crying
- Tension in intimate relationships
- Sense of impotence, frustration
- Feelings of guilt
- Mistrust, and distancing from men

# The ProQOL scale



- People themselves know they are suffering from the symptoms of vicarious trauma. They just may not be able to give a name to it.
- An interesting exercise: Application of the **Professional Quality of Life Scale:** Compassion Satisfaction and Fatigue Subscales.
- 50% of the Paraguayan women working with IPV survivors showed significant levels of vicarious trauma and/or burnout.

# How can vicarious trauma be prevented and managed?



# Protective factors

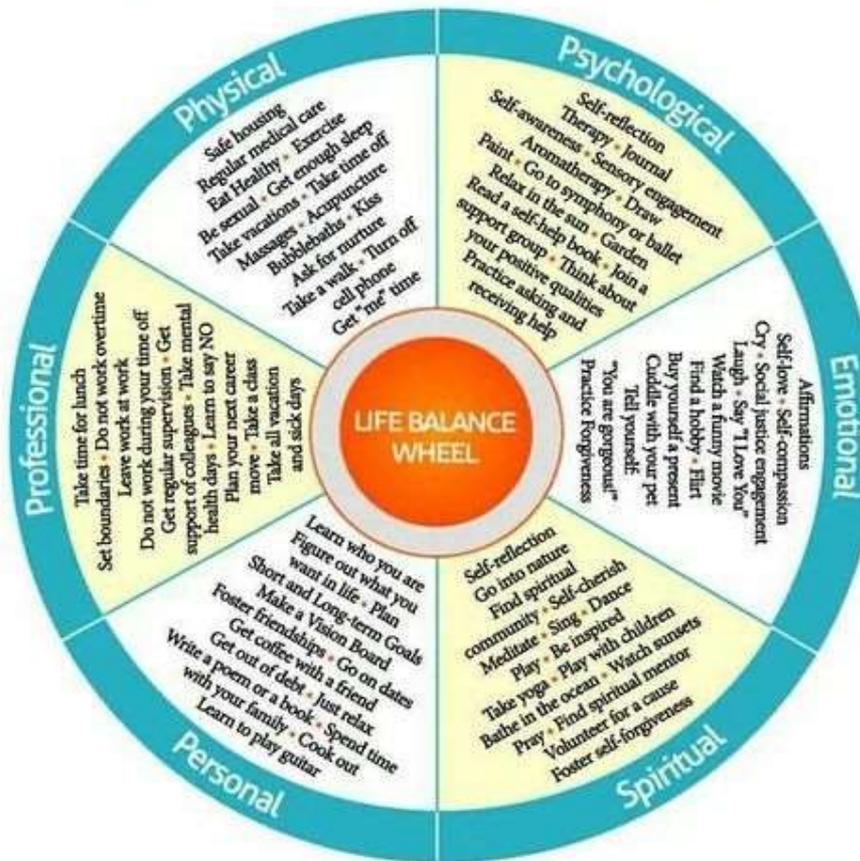


- *Self-care practices*: psychological, emotional, physical and spiritual.
- Recognize and manage vicarious trauma at the *project level*.
- Adopt *institutional best practices* to minimize vicarious trauma and manage it when it occurs.



# Self-care

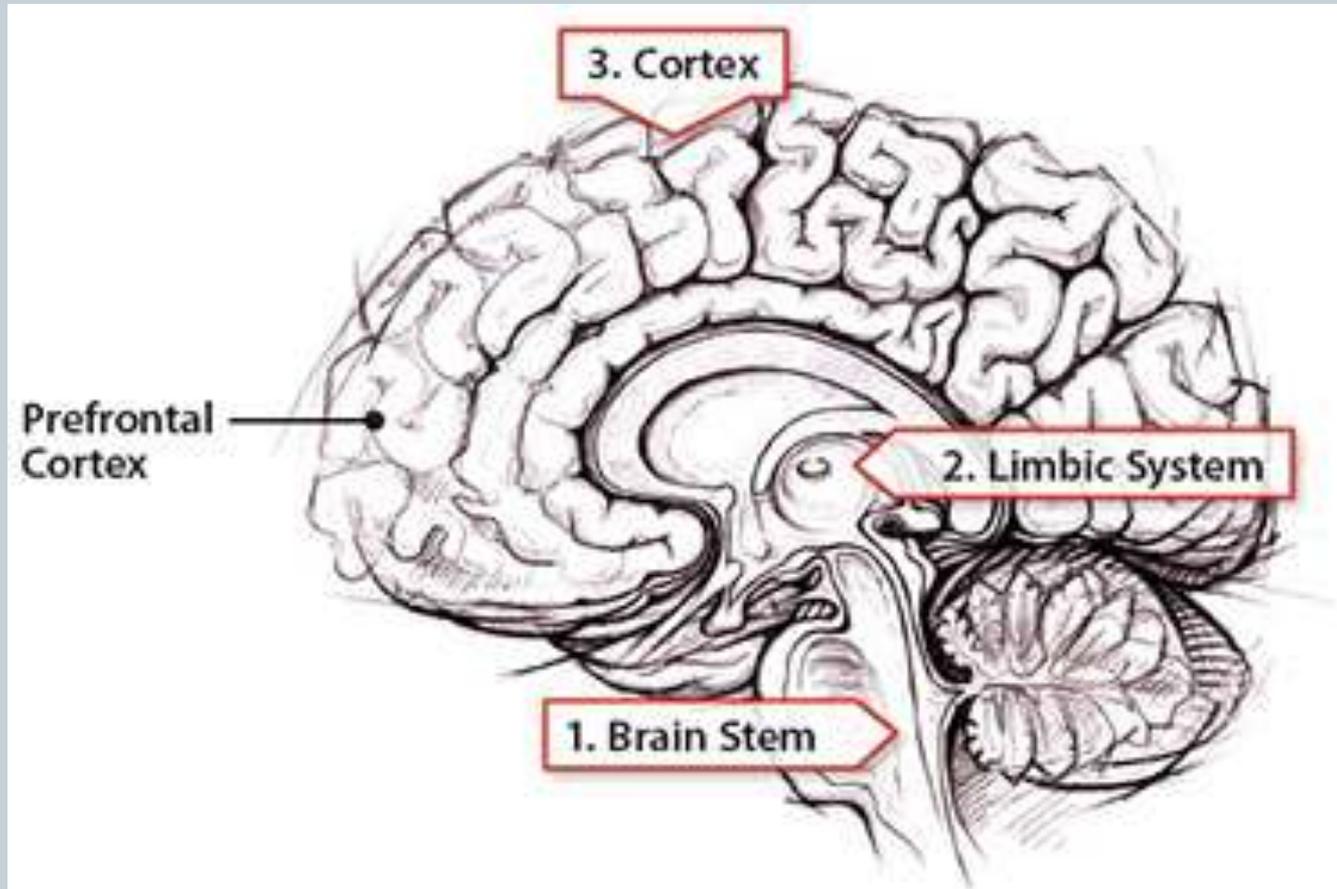
## SIX DIMENSIONS OF VICARIOUS TRAUMA FREE LIFE



Dedicated to all trauma professionals worldwide.

[www.OlgaPhoenix.com](http://www.OlgaPhoenix.com)

# How trauma is processed in the brain



# Self-care: the body-mind relationship



# Lack of institutional care: a key impediment to self-care



# Institutional/project level care

- Create a culture that “normalizes” vicarious trauma as a real risk among SV researchers and offer ways to address it.
- Coordinators/supervisors should be aware of the signs of vicarious trauma and burnout, and know what to do.
- Create an environment that fosters team interaction and spaces for debriefing.
- Incorporate researcher safety into project designs, and allocate resources within research protocols to minimize the risk of vicarious trauma, and to respond when it occurs.
- Vary and balance the workload; rotate job responsibilities; reduce time hearing victim stories; cap the number of interviews conducted.
- Devise strategies for returning to balance.
- Promote self-care and allow flexible schedules.



# Resources/studies about vicarious trauma

Strengthening health systems to respond to women subjected to intimate partner violence or sexual violence

A manual for health managers



Secondary traumatic stress and self-care inextricably linked

Allessia P. Owens-King

Creative Tools for Transforming Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Traumatization

## THE COMPASSION FATIGUE WORKBOOK



CHAPTER

Françoise Mathieu



## A Gecko's Guide to Building Resiliency in Child Abuse Staff & Volunteers

A handbook for organizations developed by

The University of Texas at Austin  
Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

### Vicarious Trauma Coping and Self-Care Practices Among Trauma Therapists.

Annette Zaccari  
Walden University

Walden University  
**ScholarWorks**  
Masters and Doctoral Studies  
Collection