Managing Vicarious Trauma for Trauma Workers

with Gerry Jackson

People whose work entails listening to the traumatic events that have happened to other people, children or adults, whether it is on the telephone or face to face, are very vulnerable to developing adverse reactions to their work. It is impossible to remain unaffected by hearing about the traumas of others and, indeed, such reactions are a natural occupational hazard of such work. The problem is, when people are not well supported and the reactions are not managed, they become worse and can develop into Vicarious Trauma, or Secondary Traumatic Stress, where the worker experiences many of the reactions of their clients, their view of the world becomes distorted and becomes dysfunctional, both in their work and in their life outside work.

This course is designed for people whose work entails listening to awful stories, including Adult Social Care staff working with traumatised people, telephone counsellors working for providers of Employee Assistance Programmes and others with a similar listening and caring role. The course will provide delegates with the knowledge and skills to:

A) Know what signs and symptoms to look for in themselves and their colleagues and

B) Utilise strategies and techniques to reduce the likelihood of Vicarious Trauma developing and

C) Utilise strategies and techniques to reduce the symptoms and significantly reduce the personal impact of them when they do develop

Course Content

- A definition of and the signs and symptoms of Vicarious Trauma
- Managing the impact of hearing traumatic stories
- Strategies and techniques to protect workers from the symptoms of Vicarious Trauma, including Mindfulness and practical techniques
- Team and corporate policies to support staff working with Trauma
- Psychological First Aid skills as applied to Trauma workers
- Strategies and techniques to minimise the impact of Vicarious Trauma, including Mindfulness and practical techniques
- Ensuring those in need of professional mental health care are referred appropriately
PFA is recommended in the D of H guidance for the NHS issued in 2009 ‘Planning for the psychosocial and mental health care of people affected by major incidents and disasters’. It is an evidence based approach to help people in the short and medium term after major incidents and disasters and smaller scale traumatic incidents. It is intended to minimise the distress that typically occurs after traumatic incidents and to help people develop ways of managing and coping. There is no assumption that all those involved will require professional mental health care. The majority of people are likely to experience a wide range of reactions, some of which may interfere with their lives and empathic support early on may help the recovery process.

It is a flexible and practical approach capable of being delivered in a variety of settings and in a wide range of circumstances and should be part of the strategy for caring for workers and helping them deal with symptoms.

**Vicarious Trauma**

This means that the worker’s fundamental beliefs about the world are damaged by being repeatedly exposed to traumatic material. They come to view the world as a bad place and no longer feel safe in it. The stories are absorbed by the worker and they are traumatised by the images and details of events. They then find it difficult to get rid of images or details or to let them go. They frequently find themselves experiencing typical post trauma symptoms. Except that this is not their trauma—it belongs to someone else.

People are particularly vulnerable when the are not well supported and valued in the work that they do.

**Gerry Jackson**

Is a Humanitarian Assistance and Traumatic Incident Responder. He has wide ranging experience of providing support following traumatic incidents and facilitating training and workshop groups in the NHS, commerce, industry, local authorities and emergency services both nationally and internationally. He has provided training in hospitals across the UK and is currently providing the two day course on Managing Compassion Fatigue for senior doctors for Health Education England. He is a retired Police officer with personal experience of working at the scene of traumatic incidents and disasters, including Lockerbie and the Marchioness Riverboat Disaster. His experience of supporting those affected by such incidents goes back 26 years and includes rail and aviation disasters, the terrorist attack in Algeria in 2013 and many small scale incidents.

**Access to Courses**

This training is designed to be run 'In House' on behalf of a variety of organisations whose staff may be vulnerable to Vicarious Trauma, such as telephone workers in Employee Assistance Programme providers, staff in Mental Health Trusts, Counsellors and others.

To discuss how we might tailor this training most appropriately for your needs please contact Gerry on: gerry@mgjpeoplesupport.co.uk

or telephone on 0118 973 1546 or 0781 841 0254

**Web Site** - www.mgjpeoplesupport.co.uk