

Vicarious Trauma

Presented by:

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Live transcript/captions available at <https://www.streamtext.net/player?event=OVC>



Webinar Information



This webinar was produced by the National Criminal Justice Training Center of Fox Valley Technical College and Unified Solutions Tribal Community Development Group under cooperative agreement numbers 2018-MU-GX-K064, 2018-MU-GX-K063, and 2018-VO-GX-K002 awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this webinar are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.



Pre-Webinar Information



Participants will be muted for the duration of the webinar.

Questions and comments can be asked using the question box in the control panel.



Presentation slides, instructor bios, and corresponding resources can be found in the handouts section of the control panel.

Live transcript/captions available at <https://www.streamtext.net/player?event=OVC>



Post-Webinar Information

- At the end of the webinar, a short evaluation will appear (pop-up blocker must be turned off).
- A recording of this webinar will be available in approximately 2 weeks at www.ncjtc.org.
- A certificate of attendance will be sent within 2 weeks to participants who:
 - ✓ Attend the entire live webinar
 - ✓ Complete the evaluation

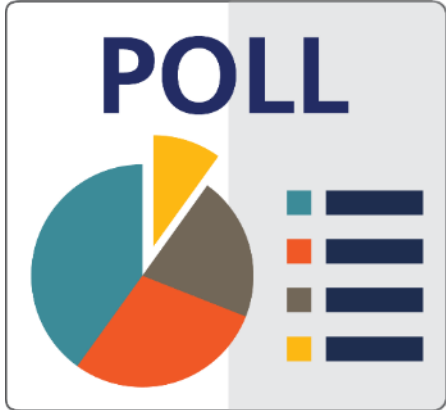
Note: Certificates will not be provided for viewing the recorded webinar.



Poll Questions

Poll questions may be asked during the webinar.

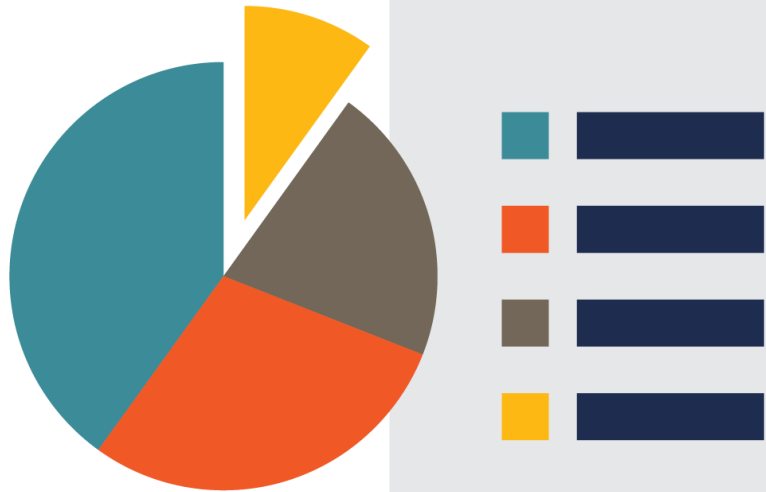
This is your time to weigh in with your thoughts.



Please respond promptly; polls are open for a short period of time.



POLL



Which of the following best describes your role?

- Victim Services / Victim Advocate
- Probation / Community Corrections
- Law Enforcement
- CAC Worker, Social Worker, Mental Health Worker
- Other



Presenters



Bonnie Clairmont

Victim Advocacy Specialist
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Learning Objectives

- Understand the impact of vicarious trauma on mental, physical, and emotional well-being.
- Discuss strategies organizational leadership may use to create a healthy work environment.
- Reflect on elements to promote staff well-being and retention.



Welcome

Content Warning: This webinar contains information, images, and discussion which may cause distress for some participants.



vicarious trauma
empathic strain
critical incident stress
indirect trauma
burnout
ptsd
secondary traumatic stress
compassion fatigue




Nature of Our Work

- Prolonged attention on disturbing and negative information.
- Crisis work often with a short term focus.
- Lack of results – don't see long term successes and disproportionately low prosecution rates.
- Addressing the frustrations from victims or victim's family about response.
- Limited or lack of resources in many of our tribal communities.
- Advocates and others may be working against resistance.



What is Vicarious Trauma?



Vicarious trauma is an *occupational challenge* for people working and volunteering in the fields of victim services, law enforcement, emergency medical services, fire services, and other allied professions, due to their continuous exposure to victims of trauma and violence.

The Vicarious Trauma Toolkit
<https://vtt.ovc.ojp.gov/what-is-vicarious-trauma>



What is Vicarious Trauma?

Work-related trauma exposure can occur from such experiences as:

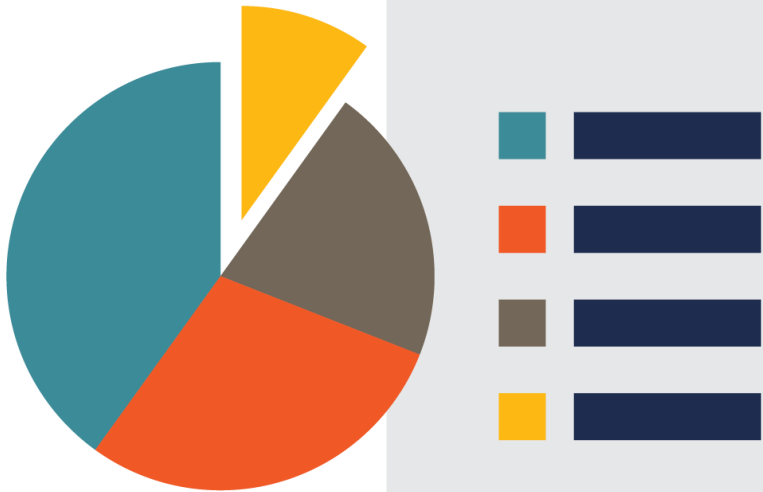
- listening to individual clients recount their victimization;
- looking at videos of exploited children;
- reviewing case files;
- hearing about or responding to the aftermath of violence and other traumatic events; and
- responding to mass violence incidents that have resulted in numerous injuries and deaths.

The Vicarious Trauma Toolkit

<https://vtt.ovc.ojp.gov/what-is-vicarious-trauma>



POLL



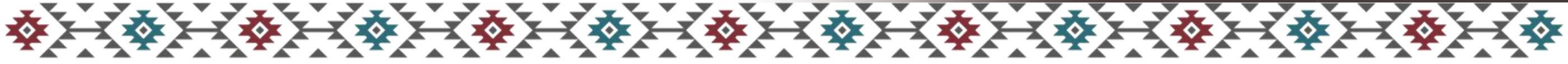
What crime areas do you primarily provide services to?
(Choose all that apply.)

- Crimes against children
- Sexual assault, trafficking, harassment, etc.
- Domestic violence, elder abuse, stalking, etc.
- Financial Crimes
- Other crimes – personal, violent, cyber, property, statutory



Costs to Individual

- Burn out, economic loss.
- Threat to our sense of safety
- Higher awareness of potential for violence
- Question the goodness of others
- Distrust in interpersonal relationships
- Flashbacks, triggers
- Adverse effects on our physical, mental, emotional health and well being



“The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet.”
(Remen, 2006)



Compounding Stressors

- Staff furloughs
- Staff and families contracted virus
- Keeping shelters safe and healthy
- Service providers working from home
- Violent crime prevalence
- Added fears for victims





Cognitive Impact

- Forgetfulness
- Trouble concentrating
- Preoccupation with victim
- Cynicism/pessimism
- Perfectionism
- Apathy
- Reduced productivity





Emotional Impact

- Anger
- Sadness
- Depression
- Hyper vigilance
- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Fears
- Suspiciousness
- Negative attitude
- Preoccupation with trauma
- Minimization, denial
- Numbness
- Suicidal thoughts





Behavioral Impact

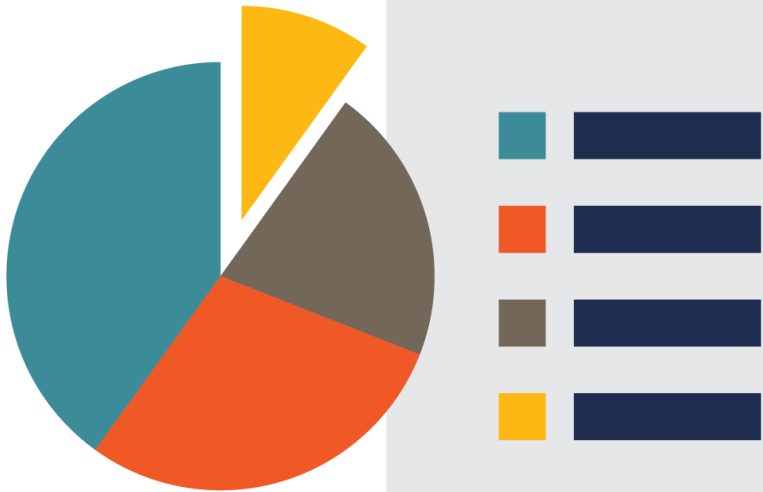
- Alcohol, drugs, other unhealthy coping behaviors
- Excessive use of leave time
- Excessive physical or unexplained illness
- Easily irritated
- Sleep or eating disturbance
- Weight loss or weight gain
- Inability to complete tasks on time
- “Sloppy” completion of paperwork
- Tardiness for meetings and work



Crime Victim Services Goes Beyond Immediate Impacts



POLL

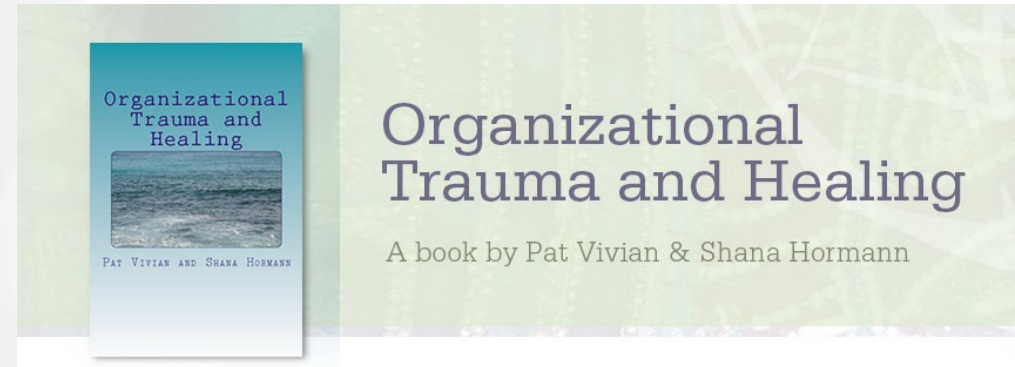


In what ways do you see vicarious trauma affecting your organization?
(Choose all that apply.)

- High staff turnover & low retention rates
- Lack of trust that may thwart teamwork
- Low staff morale impacts productivity, creativity
- Staff may lose empathic responses; dissatisfied clients may impact credibility
- Grievances filed by staff, clients; agency culture becomes toxic



Organizational Trauma



Organizations that help traumatized clients
can become traumatized themselves.

Agree? Disagree?





Organizational Trauma

- Training and education
- Support and supervision
- Employee control and input
- Communication
- Work environment

HANDOUT:
The Organizational Self-Care Checklist



Shifting Organizational Culture

- Create a group culture based in indigenous traditions
- “Healers often need healing.”
- Balance task focus with process, relationship, and kinship focus
- Make medicines for healing accessible to staff
- Discuss prevention/safety strategies



<https://www.healthline.com/health/benefits-of-burning-sage>



Shifting Organizational Culture

- Allow people to express feelings of distress, grief, loss, frustration
- Be vigilant and observant for staff who may be showing signs
- Encourage and support practices of traditional values – helping, honoring, taking courage
- Create support structures/resources within the workplace
- Put value on socializing, fun, humor, relaxation time as a group





Build Strategies & Policies to Create Healthy Work Environments

- Include in organizational mission statement value placed on staff safety and wellness.
- Exercise ethical duty to train staff on what is vicarious trauma, what the organization is doing to prevent VT and promote healthy work environment.
- Create an organizational culture at all levels.
- Provide opportunities to debrief after critical incidents or during staff meetings.





Build Strategies & Policies to Create Healthy Work Environments

- Bring in facilitator to discuss self care techniques.
- Refer to mental health therapy resource as appropriate.
- Build in time to socialize during staff retreats.
- Understand the nature of crisis, victim service work and acknowledge within performance evaluations.





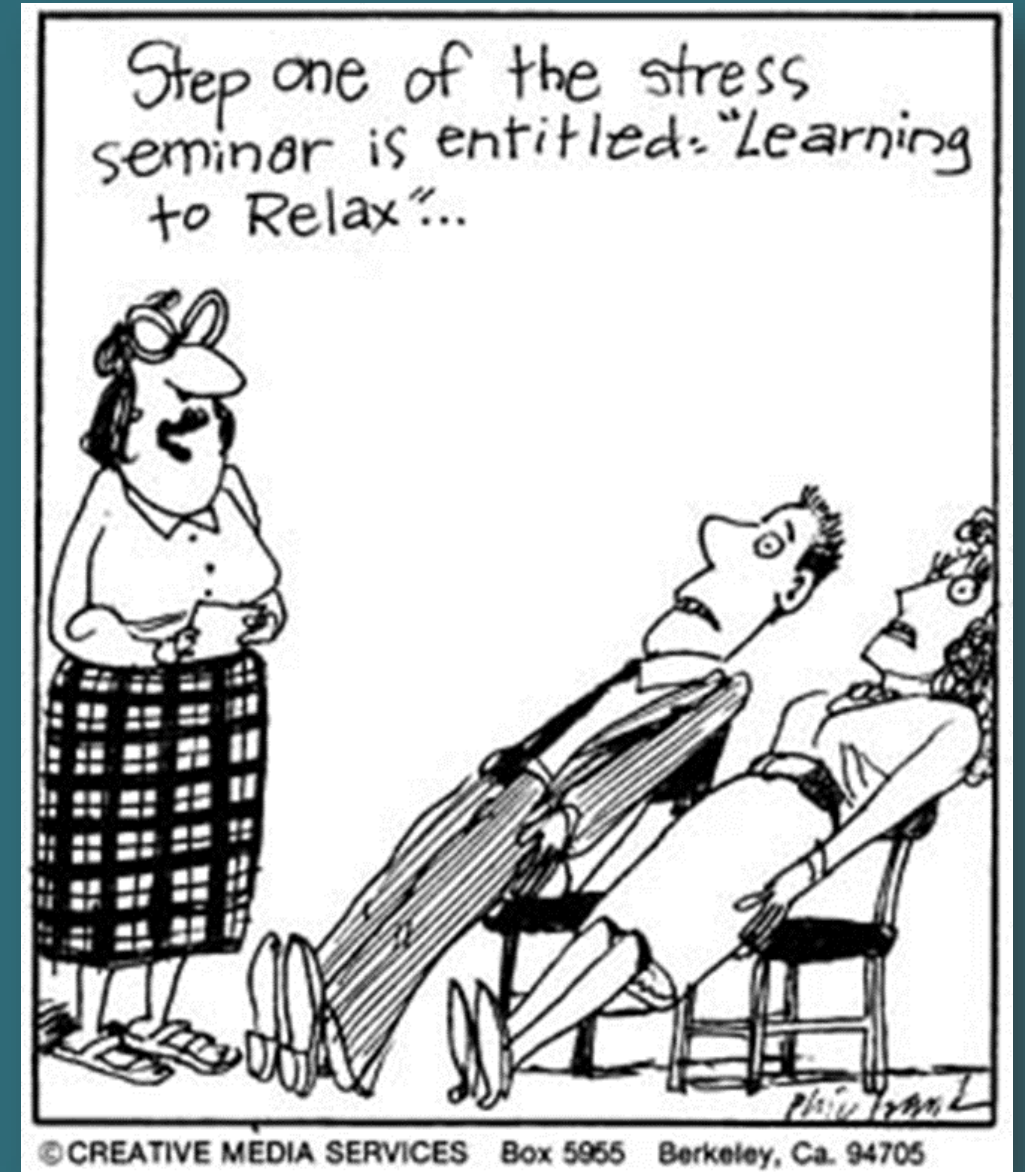
THE VICARIOUS TRAUMA TOOLKIT

<https://ovc.ojp.gov/program/vtt/introduction>



Step #1 of the Stress Seminar...

Let's have some FUN as
we go along!



A silhouette of a person standing on a beach at sunset, with their arms outstretched and head tilted back, looking up at the sky. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The ocean is visible in the background.

Good News: Mentally Strong Employees

The ability to cope with life stress is a skill.
It's something that can be lost.
It can also be relearned!




Nowhere in our job description does it say,

**“Give up the potential for living a joyful,
meaningful and satisfying life,
both at home and work.”**

Our work can be so stressful that, if we don't learn how to stay proactive about our wellness,

- We'll start to break down.
- We'll stop caring about our chosen career.
- We might even actively hate it.





Positive Aspects of Working in Trauma Related Professions

Many Victim Service Providers are strengthened and energized by the work that they do ***when trauma responses are acknowledged and processed.***



Five Core Elements of Resilience

- Self-knowledge and insight
- Sense of hope
- Healthy coping
- Strong relationships
- Personal perspective and meaning



Strong (Workplace) Relationships

We often emphasize the importance of building wellness in those we respond to. However, we sometimes overlook the need to develop resiliency wellness in ourselves.

If we are unable to cope with the difficult situations inherent in our work, we are susceptible to burnout. To go beyond surviving, then, we providers must learn how to build our own individual resiliency.

It is the ethical responsibility of the organization to create an environment that supports and encourages this critical strength.

A key factor in employee retention: Knowing supervisor/administration has your back.

Flex schedules? Debriefs? On-site Yoga? *What else? Ideas?*





Strong (Workplace) Relationships

Do you foster strong relationships within the workplace?

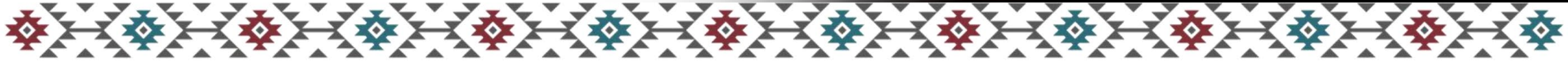
It takes how many positives to balance out 1 negative in building/maintaining relationships?

Speaking of Communication.... Just how much *does* it affect your life, family, health, and self-image?



Personal Perspective and Meaning

- Personal points of view – weighing the costs, losses, and benefits associated with trauma work
- Morality and integrity
- Spirituality
- Coherent life meaning



Strategies To Develop Personal Perspective and Meaning

- Assess your personal values
- Integrate new understanding in your work
- Assess your perspective of suffering
- Question old beliefs
- Foster altruism
- Engage in social activism
- Include values in assessment of victims' strengths
- Discard activities that are not coherent with values



Dolores Subia BigFoot, PhD



There is the eternal belief among Indigenous peoples that each walk a sacred path occupied by both faith & reasoning.

That there is a purpose ...

That there is order & understanding...
why we are here & where we are going

We also realize that we do not walk this path alone;
we have many relatives that walk with us.

Families are an essential feature of this sacred path.



We Have A Duty To Respond To Our Own Spiritual Needs

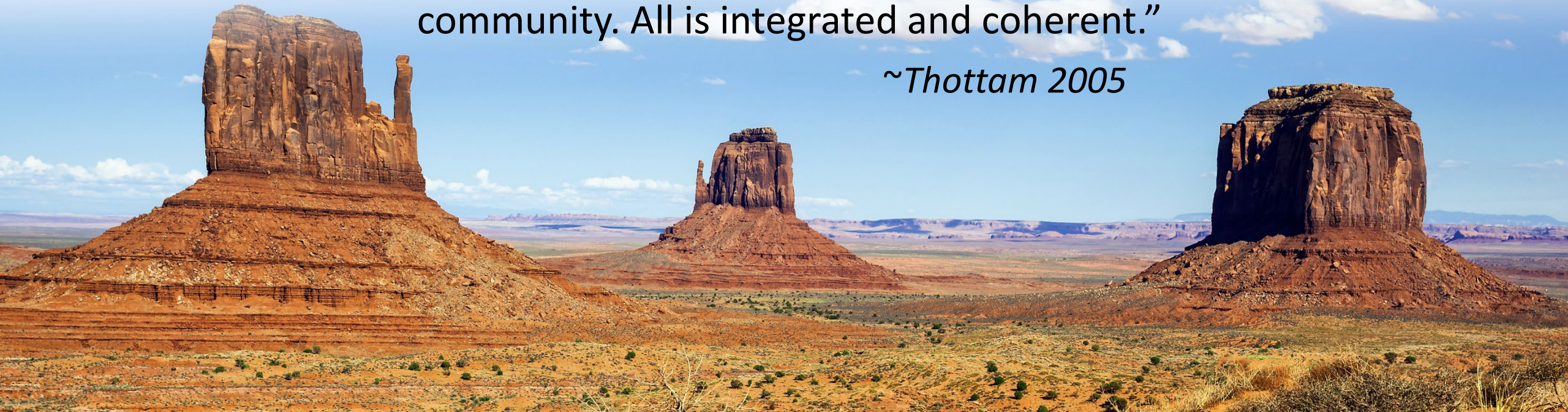
Thank you for your respectful attention and caring for all those you serve. It is important to remember that each of us approaches the Creator in many different ways and it is often thought to be our *spiritual life* that is most in need of healing when we experience trauma.

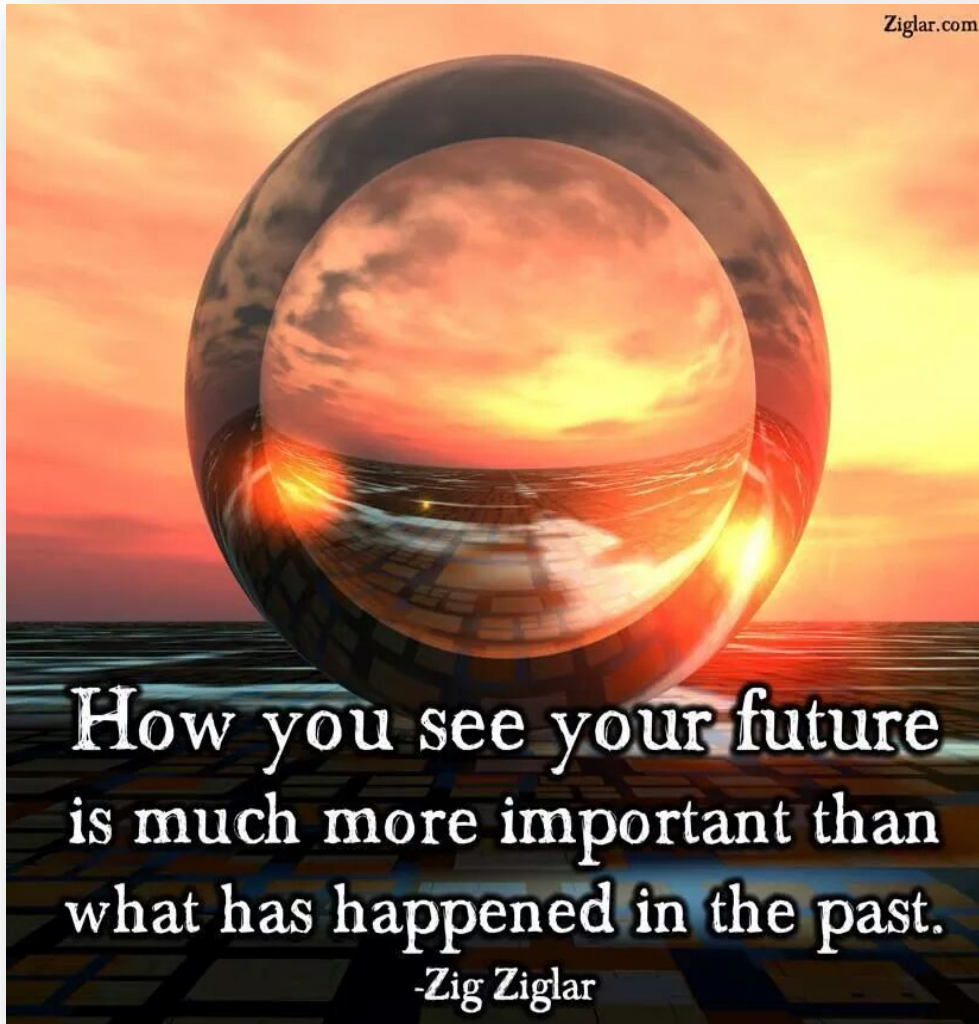


Correlation between resilience and work that persons find meaningful

“In the best circumstances, the work becomes an extension of what you naturally want to do. That way you are the same person at home, at work, and in the community. All is integrated and coherent.”

~Thottam 2005





With thoughtful self-assessment you may realize that the way you are doing things or expressing yourself no longer fits with your current values.

Two Options:

- ✓ Work with your supervisor/program to change aspects of your work
- ✓ Look for employment somewhere else



Positive Aspects of Working in the Trauma Field

Many providers are strengthened and energized by the work that they do when trauma responses are acknowledged and processed.

Compassion SATISFACTION is INCREASED,
Compassion Fatigue is decreased!

“I went to work every day, love my job and couldn’t believe that they paid me for it.
It’s the kind of work that touches your soul.”

- Kim Spoonhower, OVS Retired



Resources

- ✓ Vicarious Trauma Toolkit (OVC)
- ✓ Assessment & Resiliency Plan Worksheets
- ✓ Resilience Strategies Worksheet
- ✓ Organizational Self-Care Checklist
- ✓ Reading List



Questions



Presenter Contact



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Training & Technical Assistance



Information about upcoming webinars, on-demand trainings, resources for OVC Grantees and more:

ncjtc.org/OVC



Information about available training and technical assistance, resources for OVC Grantees and more:

<https://www.unified-solutions.org/>



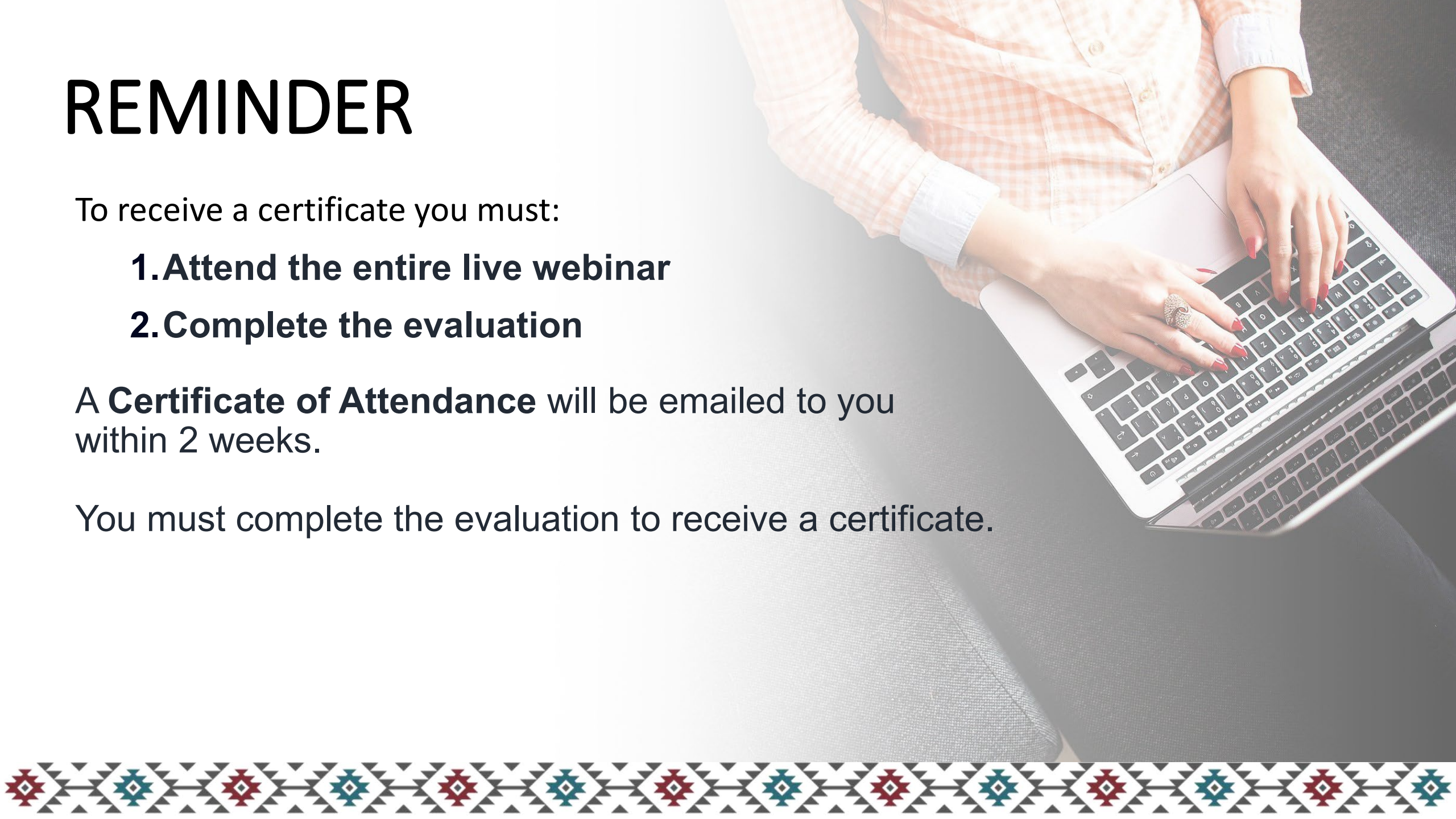
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Thank you!



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