



Workshop

# Self Care in the realm of trauma work



WAPP

Istanbul March 20-23 2024

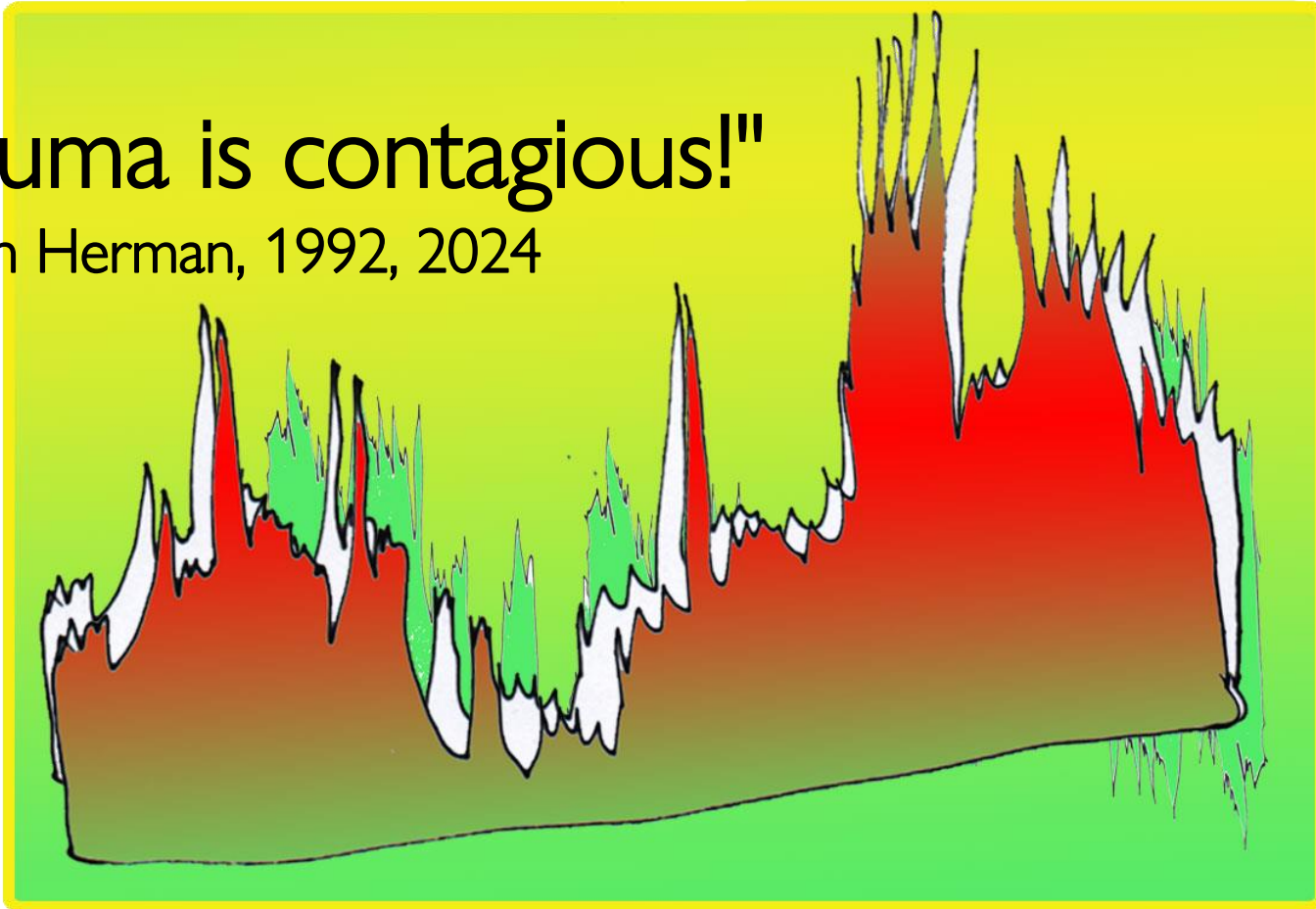
# Trauma therapy is a high-risk workplace

"Trying to help people who have been exposed to severe traumatic stress is a risky undertaking. Sooner or later, anyone who tries to navigate such terrain will find that they reach their limits or that boundaries threaten to dissolve...."

(Reddemann, 2009, p. 11)

# "Trauma is contagious!"

Judith Herman, 1992, 2024



## „The cost of caring“ (Figley)

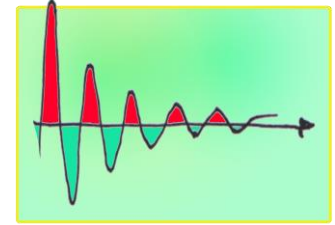
Helping professions as firefighters, paramedics, but as well therapists, psychologists, doctors, nursing staff, social workers, etc. are often directly affected themselves. They are instantaneously, at first hand confronted with the difficult fates of other people and experience a lot of other people's suffering.

How can they themselves process what they have experienced?

Many will be able to switch off and do not carry anything home. But others develop symptoms of trauma themselves.



# Contagious Arousal



The word contagious rightly conjures thoughts of bacterial or viral infection spreading from one person to another. The idea that psychological factors can be contagious is not as well-known.

Cortisol increase in empathic stress is modulated by social closeness and observation modality. (Engert et al. Psychoneuroendocrinology, 2014)

The contagion of stress may occur in many settings, impacting family and work dynamics. This contagion demonstrates our interconnectedness, even at a physiological level. It also represents a public health challenge not just for those under stress but also for other people in their vicinity. (Buchanan, 2023)

# Transference in the realm of trauma

- Empathic entanglement
- Projective identification
- Perpetrator transference
- „Refusal of empathy“ by the counselor
- (Reinforced by personal prejudices and intercultural misunderstandings)



# Typical countertransference attitudes

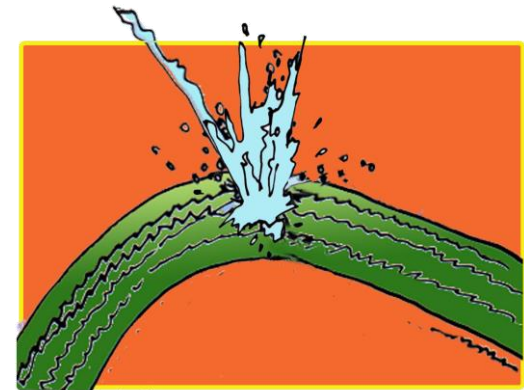
The **helper syndrome** is characterized by:



- High moral demands on oneself to be there for the client
- Idealization of clients as helpless victims
- Tendency to be self-sacrificing and to put one's own interests aside

# Secondary Traumatization

- „Contagion" in the work with traumatized persons
- Background: empathic commitment
- Secondary Trauma determines entire attitude to life
- Impact on self-image, identity, world view





# Concepts of secondary traumatization

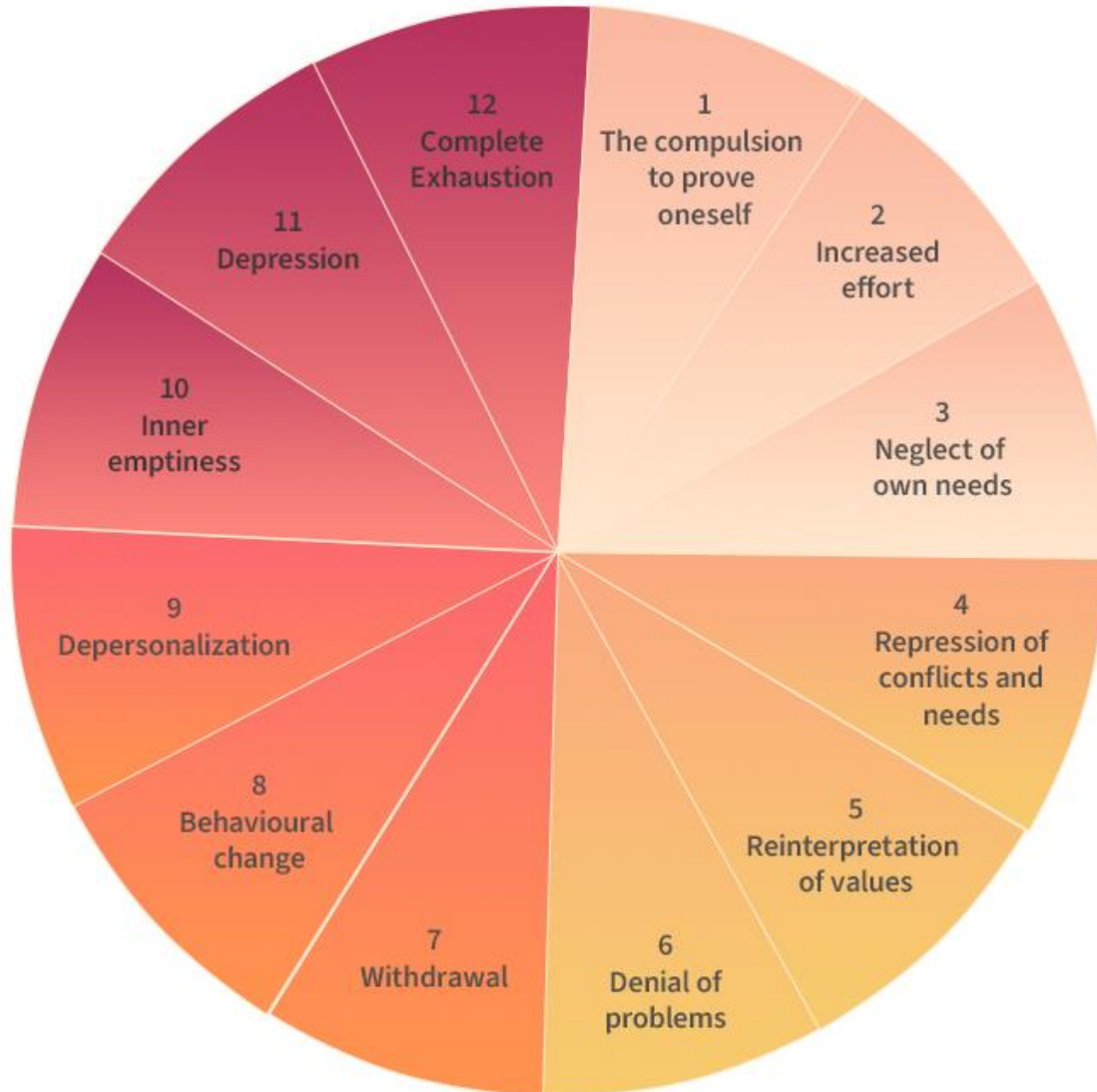
„**Compassion fatigue**“: Figley (1995) develops the image of compassion fatigue, which describes a predictable exhaustion or dysfunction, a failure of empathic empathy as a result of working with traumatized people and as a result of previous compassion stress

“**Vicarious traumatization**“ Pearlman and Saakvitne (1995) describe the process through which the therapist’s inner experience is negatively transformed through empathic engagement with clients’ trauma material as vicarious traumatization.



Strains

# The Burnout Clock



# STS in the DSM 5

- Previously called Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS), secondary exposure to trauma is now considered a valid DSM-5 Criterion A stressor for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale (STSS):  
The STSS is a self-report inventory designed to assess the frequency of STS symptoms in professional caregivers. Respondents indicate on a 5-point Likert scale how often they experienced each of the 17 STS symptoms during the last week

# What is helpful?

- Attachment
- Community
- Expertise, knowledge
- Team as a source of strength
- Self-reflection



# And what do you do for self care?



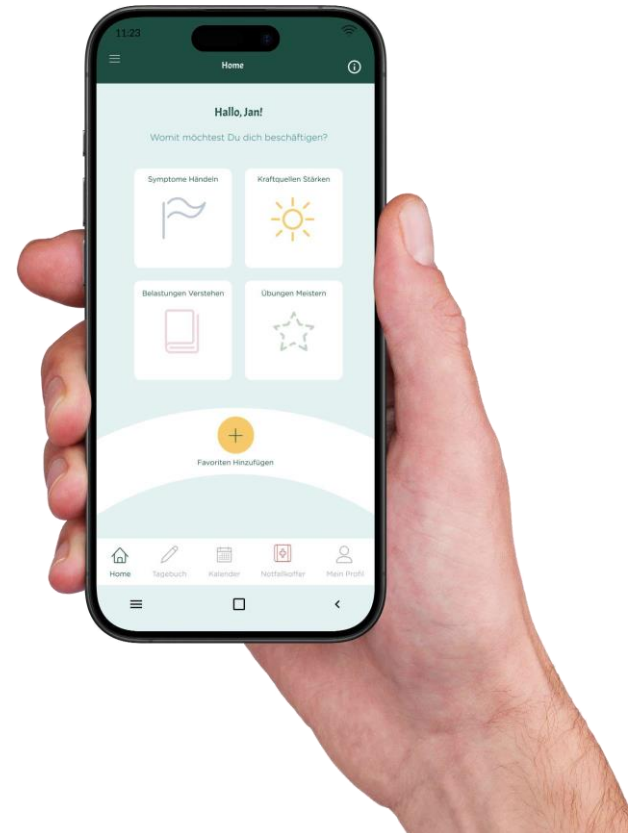
# Strategies for dealing with occupational stress

- Perceiving one's own state of mind
- Reflection on professional role, boundaries
- After serious cases, distancing rituals
- Allow yourself to feel, provide relief
- End the workday in peace, possibly with a small ritual
- Designing the way home as a time of transition
- Techniques for dealing with work thoughts at home



# Trauma Treatment Training

- Mind Aid App
- E-Learning
- Diray
- Online Supervision
- Online Self-Experience







# Our partners





Feel free to contact us for cooperation and partnerships!

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