

Trauma-Informed Interviewing

The Sanctuary Caravan: Intensive Training



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Agenda

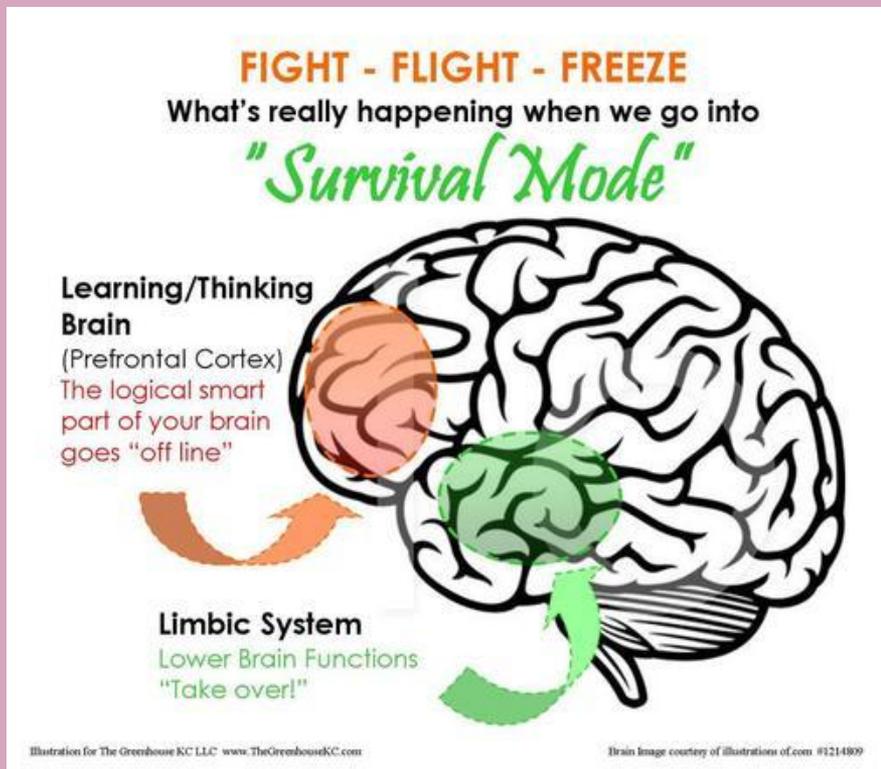
1. What is Trauma?
2. The Context of Trauma & Migration
3. Trauma-Informed Care
4. Trauma-Informed Interviewing Techniques
5. Vicarious Trauma, Burnout and Resilience

How Do We Define Trauma?



Photo: Reuters/ Kim
Kyung-Hoon

Responses to Trauma



5 TRAUMA RESPONSES

PHYSIOLOGICAL REACTIONS:
THE 5 F'S

AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

Hyperarousal, alarmed / startled.

Increases heart rate, blood pressure, breathing.

PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

Hypoarousal, dissociation.

Metabolic shutdown, numbing. Hiding behaviors.

FIGHT

Physical aggression: attacker may be smaller / weaker.

Verbal aggression, e.g., saying "no".
traumadissociation.com

FLIGHT

Running, bawking away or hiding.

If there is somewhere to escape to or hide.

FREEZE

Tonic immobility. Involuntary response.

Less chance of injury.

FLOP / FAWN

Collapse and play dead.

After freeze fails, conserves energy, wounds heal.

FRIEND

Trauma bonding (attach) / Stockholm Syndrome

Social engagement. Prolonged or infant trauma.

How Can Trauma Be Experienced?

- Primary trauma
- Secondary trauma
- Vicarious trauma
- Intergenerational trauma



Photo: Reuters/Ueslei Marcelino

Common Causes of Trauma

- Migration experiences
- Catastrophic injuries or illness
- Childhood abuse (emotional, physical, sexual)
- Severe neglect and abandonment
- Experiencing or witnessing violence
- Family separation
- Community Violence
- War, state led violence
- Physical or emotional loss of land
- Oppression or racism
- Imprisonment or detention
- Having a family member imprisoned or detained
- Sexual assault and domestic violence
- Poverty

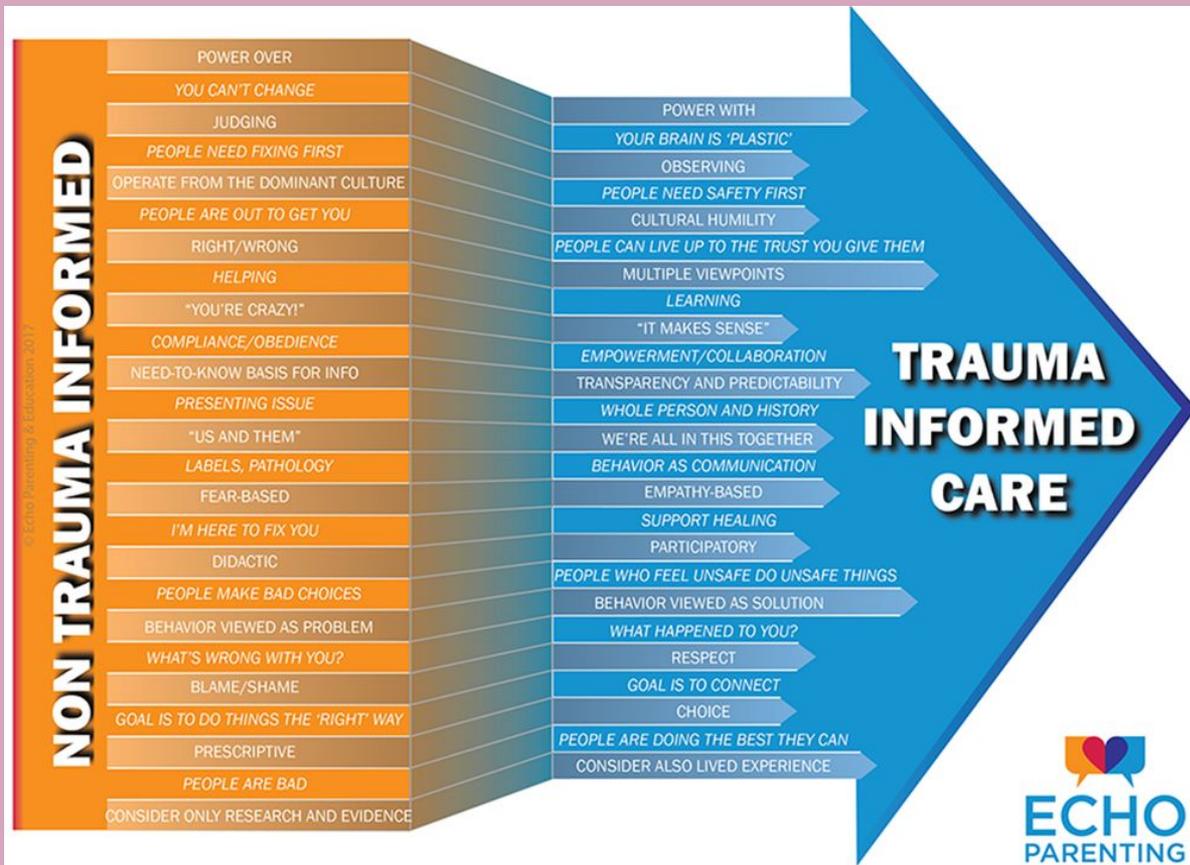
The Context: Trauma and Migration



Trauma and Migration

1. Pre-migration trauma: Events that occurred before the person migrated in home country which were a catalyst for the person to leave or flee (war, persecution etc.)
2. Traumatic events during transit to the new country: kidnapping, trafficking, rape, exploitation, robbery, physical assault etc.
3. Traumatic events experienced during the immigration process and resettlement: Family separation, detention, border crossing, hieleras, perreras, asylum interviews etc.
4. Traumatic experiences in new country: Family separation, threats of deportation, racism, “Trump Trauma”, inadequate support etc.
5. Trauma of return migration: Being detained, returning to a ‘new’ country, ‘*ni de aqui ni de alla*’, forced to learn a new language and start over

Trauma-Informed Care



What is Trauma-Informed Care?

SAMHSA's six key principles of a trauma-informed approach and trauma-specific interventions address trauma's consequences and facilitate healing

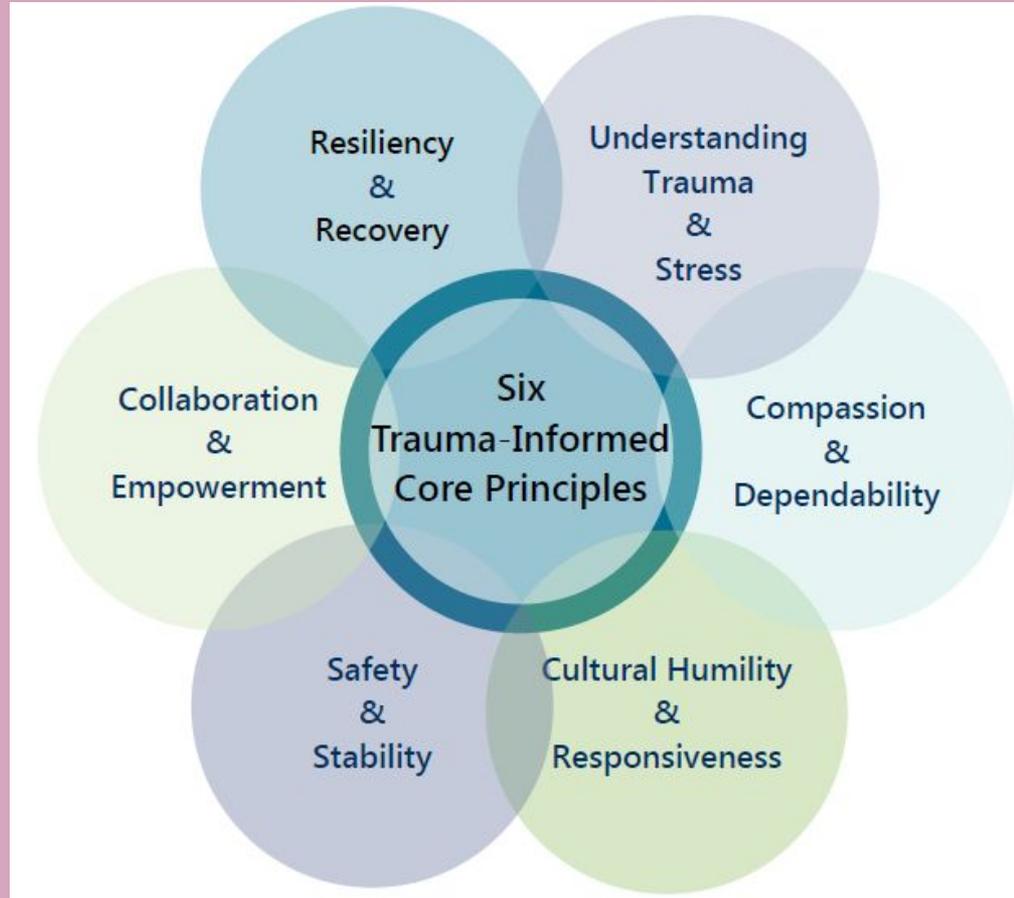
“A program, organization, or system that is trauma-informed:

1. Realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery;
2. Recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system;
3. Responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices;
4. Seeks to actively resist re-traumatization.”

Shifting from: “What’s wrong with you?” To “What happened to you?”

SAMHSA's Six Key Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness and Transparency
3. Peer support
4. Collaboration and mutuality
5. Empowerment, voice and choice
6. Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues



What is Trauma-Informed Interviewing?

Recognizes that we must work within an oppressive system that forces people to relive and retell their trauma in order to receive protection in the US

1. Realizes the impact of trauma, that verbal communication may not always be possible and that dates and details may not be linear
2. Recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in participants and accommodates the interview accordingly
3. Responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into the entire interview procedure and actively avoids re-traumatization
4. Seeks to provide a interview space that is empowering and allows people to tell their stories in a supportive space

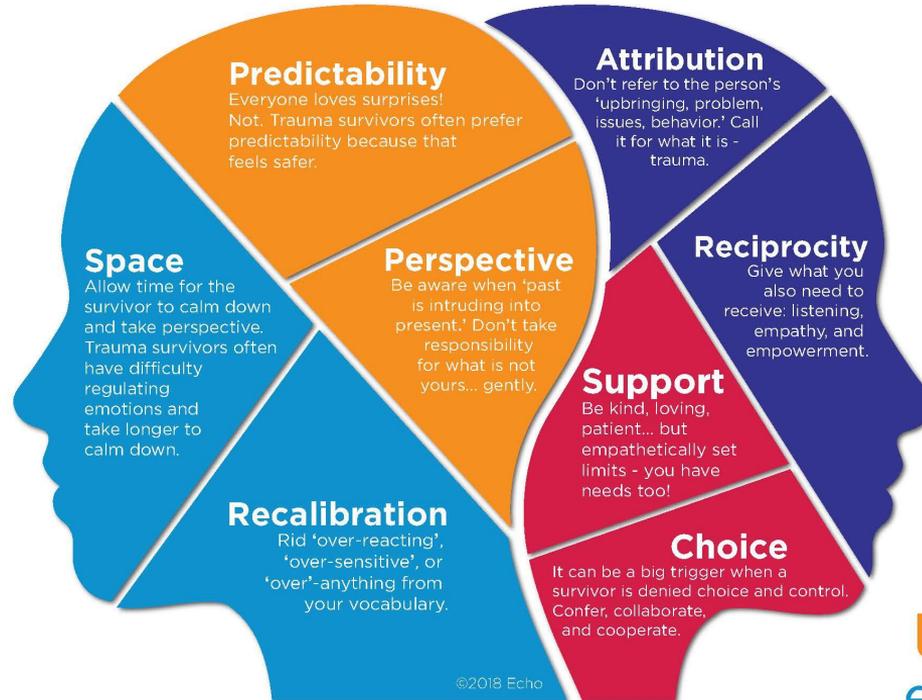
**What kind of interviews are NSC volunteers engaged in? CFI preps? I-589?
Border preps?**

How Can Trauma Potentially Impact an Interview?

- Participants might be reluctant to share or appear guarded
- Flooding of emotion or 'over sharing'
- No affect or emotion
- Interviews might take longer as memories may be difficult to recall
- Storage of memory may be disorganized & fragmented
- Memories might surface at different times
- Dates and details such as birth dates, events dates etc maybe be hard to recall
- Stories & memories may not be linear or consistent

Utilizing Trauma-Informed Interviewing Techniques

How to Support Someone Who Has Experienced Trauma



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Important Things to Consider: Cultural Humility

Privilege (perceived or real)

Cultural differences

Gender dynamics

Race and class dynamics

Nationality (being perceived as a USC, for ex)

Language barriers

White savior complex, white guilt

Starting with a Person-Centered Approach (OARS)

Open Ended Questions: Helps elicit information while encouraging people tell their own story

- What can you remember about that experience?
- What can you tell me about your relationship with your parents?

Affirmations: Strengths based, empowers and build confidence

- You have made a lot of sacrifices for your family to be here
- Thank you for sharing with me

Reflective Listening: Engages the participant, helps build trust

- Repeating or rephrasing what has been told to you
- Paraphrasing

Summary Reflections: Ensures clear communication and allows interviewer to clarify important details

- Let me see if I understand so far...
- Here is what I've heard
- Tell me if I've missed anything

Preparing for the Interview

- Go over all relevant notes you might have with you to prepare
- Figure out what the exact goal of the interview is
- Introduce yourself to the translator and other group members
- Review all relevant questions that you will be asking
- ****Have a private and quiet space available with water and tissues (if possible)****
- Be creative with space!
- Individuals should not be interviewed together, including children (IF possible and IF client feels comfortable)

Common Symptoms of Trauma and PTSD to Look Out For

Nightmares • Pesadillas

Lack of sleep • mal sueño/ Problemas de sueño

Hypervigilance • Hipervigilancia, mas atento/a que normal

Dissociation • Disociación, alejarse de la realidad

Flashbacks • Recuerdos/memorias involuntarias, el sentido de estar en el momento de nuevo

Emotional dysregulation • Desregulación emocional

Distorted memory • Recuerdos equivocados o distorsionados

Lack of trust • falta de confianza/Desconfianza

Inability to form relationships • Dificultades para establecer relaciones/conexiones

Tips for Working with Interpreters

In Person & Over the Phone

- Maintain eye contact with participant & avoid speaking directly to interpreter
- Ask interpreter not to summarize
- Be mindful of potential cultural issues that might arise
- Let the interpreter know ahead of time that you might be discussing traumatic material
- Speak slowly and pause frequently
- If possible, meet or call interpreter ahead of time
- Avoid speaking in your native language with interpreter in front of the client

Building Rapport & Establishing Safety

Taking an extra five minutes in the beginning of an interview will help establish safety with the participant

- How old are your children?
- How are you feeling?
- Did you get something to eat before our interview today?

This will allow the participant to feel more comfortable to share and you→ will ultimately help the case more

We can still gather facts effectively and quickly, without re-traumatizing

Consistency and reliability are some of the most important factors in creating a relationship with individuals who have experienced trauma

Opening the Interview: Establishing Safety

- Check in *before* starting interview about potential gender dynamics
- If conversation is in Spanish: Use “usted” until told otherwise
- Let client know from the beginning how much time you have and that they can take a break at any point
- Introductions – include your role in this context, the interpreter’s role if applicable, and information about the purpose of the meeting
- Informed Consent, limits to confidentiality
 - Inform people that their stories will be shared with other volunteers/sanctuary staff
 - We will never share any information with the government or their government
- Exhibit empathy and warmth
- Be aware of your own posture and facial expressions in your interactions (mimic posture)
- Do not make promises you cannot keep or use phrases like “I understand”

Establishing Safety Cont.

If writing/note taking while interviewing:

- Ask permission first to take notes
- Try and explain what you are writing when possible
- Try to take breaks and maintain eye contact as much as possible
- Do not hide behind a computer!

In Interview Settings (if working in a closed room with a participant)

- Always have tissues ready and offer water
- Close doors slowly and avoid loud noises
- Offer for them to enter the room first and choose their seat
- Ensure that they feel they can pause and ask questions at any point

During the Conversation

- Give a 'menu' of options
- Don't ask about information that's not relevant!
- If questions arise during interview try to communicate in participant's language so they understand what is going on
- Introduce each new section: "now I'd like to ask you about..."
- Explain your reason for asking about traumatic events
- Don't rush, pace according to client's comfort- "Would you like to pause?"
- Use other forms of communication to demonstrate and construct timelines
- Remind people that they have a RIGHT to seek asylum, they are not criminals
- Provide breathing techniques if client is in stress (inhala, exhala)

Deep Breathing, Mindfulness and Grounding



Trauma-Informed Phrases and Reminders

Don't hesitate to use simple reminders, THEY REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- Lo que le pasó no fue su culpa ● What happened to you was not your fault
- Usted no se esta 'volviendo loca' ● You are not 'going crazy'
- Lo que usted está experimentando es una reacción normal al trauma ● What you're experiencing is part of a normal response to trauma
- No está sola ● You are not alone
- Le creo y no le juzgo ● I believe you and I don't judge you
- Le escucho para que pueda contar su historia ● I'll listen to you so you can tell your story
- Lo que pasó no fue su culpa ● What happened to you was not your fault
- Ha hecho mucho para asegurar la seguridad de su familia ● You have done so much to help make sure your family is safe
- Siento mucho que esto le haya pasado ● I'm sorry this happened to you
- Tiene el derecho de... ● You have the right to...

Trauma-Informed Phrases in Spanish

English Phrases	Spanish Phrases
<i>Please let me know if you ever need a break</i>	<i>Por favor dígame si necesita tomar una pausa</i>
<i>Let's take a break. Is there something that you can do in this moment that would help you to feel more calm before we continue?</i>	<i>Podemos tomar un respiro. Hay algo en este momento que puede hacer para ayudarlo a calmarse un poco, antes de continuar?</i>
<i>Talking about painful memories might make you feel like you are reliving the event again.</i>	<i>Hablando sobre recuerdos dolorosos puede hacerla sentir que los está volviendo a vivir.</i>
<i>Thank you for sharing, I know that this must be hard.</i>	<i>Gracias por compartir, sé que puede ser difícil hablar sobre esto</i>
<i>I am sorry to hear that</i>	<i>Lamento oír eso</i>
<i>I can imagine how scared / anxious / angry / frustrated/ depressed / guilty / lonely / sad / worried you felt</i>	<i>Puedo imaginar como de asustada / ansiosa / enojada/ frustrada/ deprimida / culpable / sola/ triste / preocupada se sintió</i>

Example Intro Guide

Ejemplo de un guión para utilizar en una entrevista de asilo:

Hola mi nombre es _____. Como mencionaron, estamos aquí para ayudarle durante su caso. Le voy a hacer algunas preguntas para ayudarle a prepararse para su entrevista. La información que obtenga hoy la compartiré con los otros ayudantes y las otras abogadas que son parte del equipo para que ellos/as puedan ayudarle también. Nunca compartiremos su información con el gobierno o los medios al menos que usted nos dé permiso. Sé que a veces es difícil compartir detalles de recuerdos dolorosos que hayan sucedido. Si en algún momento quieres pausar, está bien tomar un momento para respirar. Le agradezco desde antes por compartir su historia.

Closing the Conversation

- Ask if there is anything else they wish to tell you or that they want you to know or understand
 - Anything at all that they haven't been asked about that they think would be relevant
- Provide information about the next steps in the process with NSC
- Validate and normalize emotions that may have come up in interview
- Explain exactly how NSC will be able to provide support throughout their application process
- “Thank you for taking the time to share with me. I know it was not easy”
- Be mindful about initiating physical contact (hug or handshake goodbye)

Resilience



Photo: Reuters/Ueslei
Marcelino

Brutally Honest Optimism

Optimism reduces our sense of helplessness when things feel out of control. It also allows motivates us to take constructive action. However this is not the Pollyanna, unicorns and rainbows, "everything's going to be okay" brand of optimism - it is tempered by the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of our current reality.

Perception of Control Over Events

What makes an experience traumatic is that we were not able to control the circumstances that led to us being harmed in some way. Recovery is about regaining control through primary control (taking action to change a situation) or secondary control (changing our orientation to a situation).

4 Factors Leading to Post-Traumatic Growth

Coping Style

What is your coping style? Do you immediately start problem-solving (active coping) or do you escape into a fantasy world (avoidance coping)? Both approaches can be helpful, but in the long term, avoidance turns into denial, which prevents you from ever truly living in the present because you are so busy stuffing down your past. The best predictor of post-traumatic growth is 'acceptance and positive reinterpretation' - a coping style characterized by optimism and humor.

Strong Sense of Self

Having a strong sense of self depends on having a purpose in life, high self-esteem, and being able to create a coherent narrative. Without being able to make sense of our story, we cannot integrate it, learn from it, or get a distance from it. A coherent narrative prevents us from unconsciously repeating the lack of connection we experienced with our parents in our relationship with our own children.

Post-Traumatic Growth



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5 Domains of Post-Traumatic Growth

Personal Strength

- Stronger for the experience
- Better able to handle blows
- More wisdom and maturity

Closer Relationships

- Strengthened social ties - can rely on people
- Help craft trauma narratives that contribute to meaning
- Sense of belonging
- Unity

Greater Appreciation for Life

- Greater gratitude, hope, kindness, leadership, love, spirituality, and teamwork

New Possibilities

- Reprioritize values and time commitments
- Accomplish goals that would have been delayed
- More understanding of friends and family

Spiritual Development

- Readjust spiritual beliefs to encompass trauma, or
- Revise spiritual beliefs altogether

Vicarious Trauma and Burnout

“Vicarious trauma is the emotional residue of exposure that counselors have from working with people as they are hearing their trauma stories and become witnesses to the pain, fear, and terror that trauma survivors have endured.” American Counseling Association

How can this manifest as New Sanctuary Volunteers?

- Avoidance (professional and personal)
- Cynicism; “this case will never win” or “there is no asylum claim here”
- The desire to repeat to others about the trauma heard during interviews
- Hypervigilance
- Physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual exhaustion
- Anger/rage
- Numbing: “I have heard it all”

How Can We Avoid Burnout &
Vicarious Trauma?

What Does Wellness Mean to
You?



Thank you!

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