



# Adopting a Trauma-Informed Approach to Care in Corrections

---

Virginia DCJS Virtual Summit

June 29, 2022

# JDI's Mission

---

Just Detention International is a health and human rights organization that seeks to end sexual abuse in all forms of detention.



# JDI's Mission

---

JDI carries out its mission by:

- Working with corrections officials, rape crisis advocates, and policymakers to make detention facilities safe
- Promoting public attitudes that value the dignity and safety of people in detention
- Supporting incarcerated survivors of sexual abuse and sexual harassment



# JDI's Core Principle

---

No matter what  
crime a person  
may have  
committed,  
rape is not part  
of the penalty.

**JUST DETENTION**   
INTERNATIONAL  
RAPE IS NOT PART OF THE PENALTY

# Self Care

---

*Thoroughlypositive.com*



Physical

Spiritual

Social

# A Trauma-Informed Approach to Care

Emotional

Mental

# Potentially Traumatic Events

---

## **ABUSE**

- Emotional
- Sexual
- Physical
- Domestic Violence
- Witnessing Violence
- Bullying
- Cyberbullying
- Institutional

## **CHRONIC STRESS**

- Medical Procedures
- Poverty
- Racism
- Community Trauma
- Historical Trauma
- Family with Substance Abuse

## **LOSS**

- Death
- Abandonment
- Neglect
- Separation
- Natural Disaster
- Accidents
- Terrorism
- War

# Effects of Trauma

---

Trauma reactions are a set of normal responses to an abnormal amount of stress.



*Photo credit: Jason Reed, Reuters*





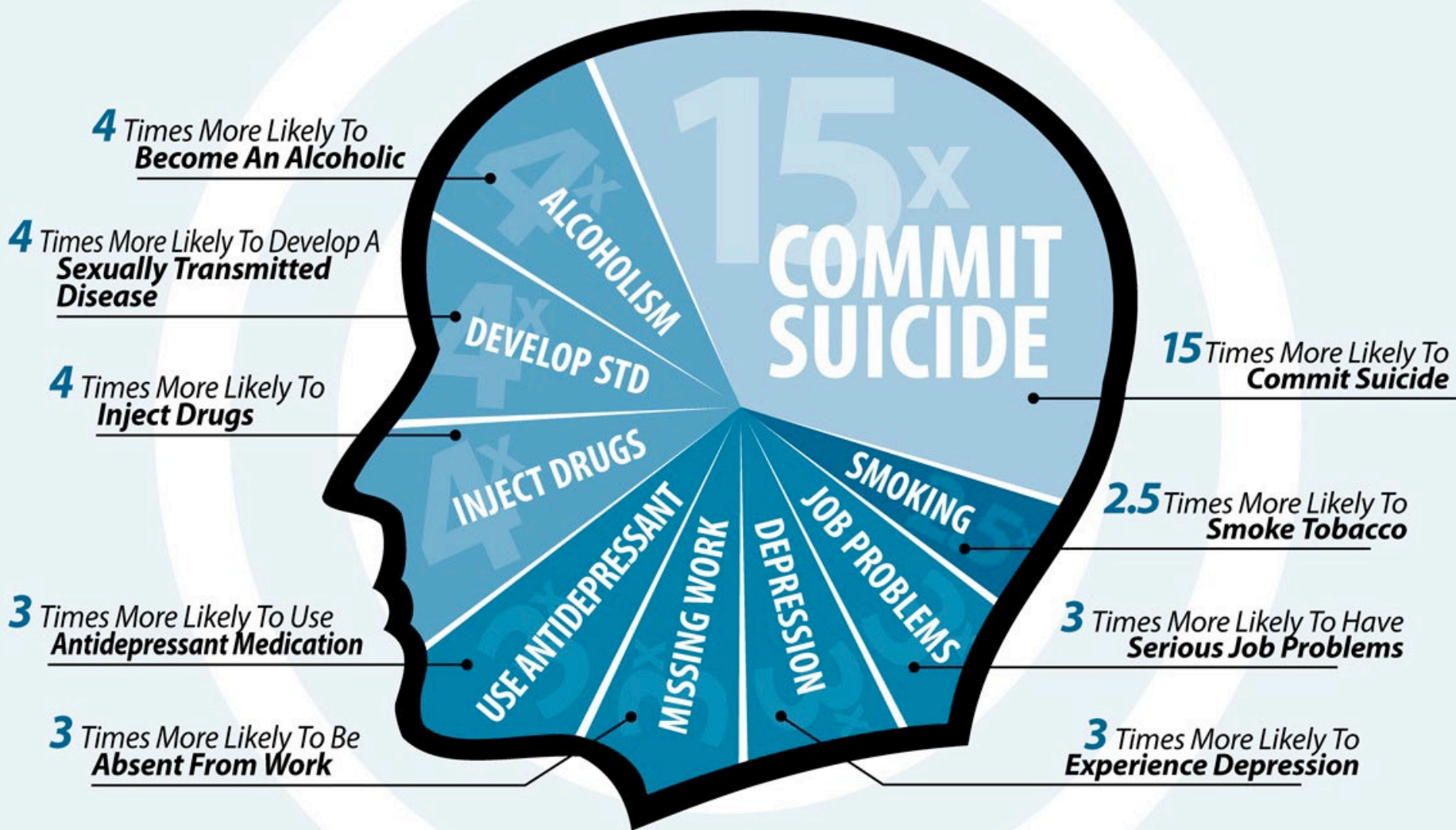
# Complex Trauma

---

- Prolonged exposure to abuse
- Trafficking
- Historical trauma
- Multiple incidents of trauma
- Developmental trauma
- Emotional trauma over which a victim has little or no control and from which there is little or no hope of escape



# PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED TRAUMA ARE:



# Trauma and the Brain

---

- Threat or terror combined with lack of control leads to changes in the brain
- New and lasting neural networks are created
- Survivors constantly assess for safety or threat
- Trauma reactions are involuntary and automatic



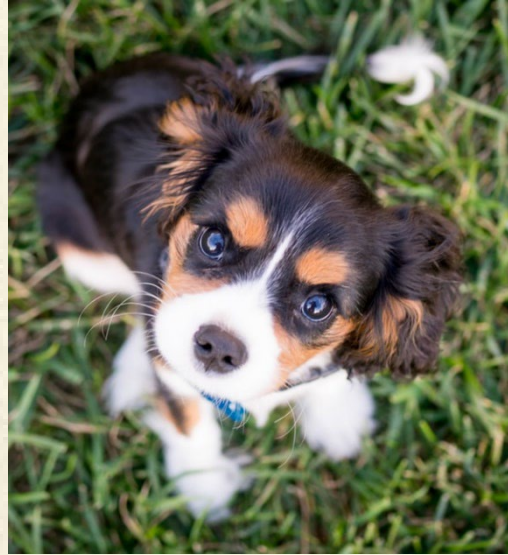
# Three Parts of the Brain

---

**Survival Brain**



**Limbic System**

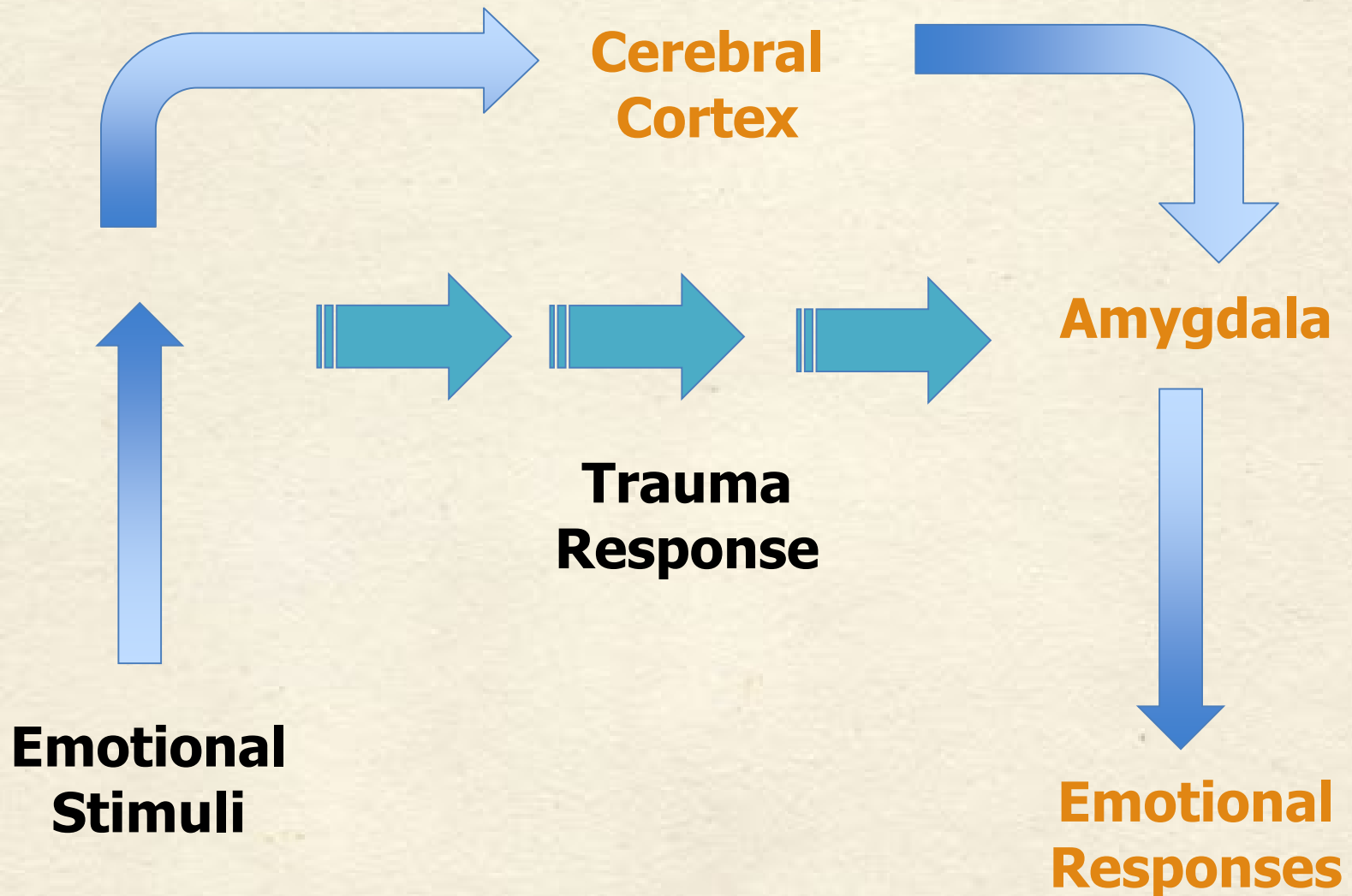


**Cerebral Cortex**



# Traumatic Events & the Brain

---



# Fight, Flight, Freeze

---



# Trauma and Memory

---

## Central details include:

- How the survivor coped and survived
- Recollection of feelings and internal reactions

*Not vulnerable to change over time.*



# Trauma and Memory

---

## Peripheral Details

- Secondary to the survivor
- Not perceived as core to survival
- Who, what, when, where, why

*Vulnerable to change over time.*





# Detecting and Responding to Trauma



# Trauma-Informed Approach

---

“A program, organization, or system that is **trauma-informed**: It responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into its policies, procedures, and practices; and seeks to actively resist re-traumatization.”



Art by Scott, survivor of sexual abuse in detention

SAMHSA, April 27, 2018



# How You Can Help

---

## Power to Help With Healing

Research suggests that the reactions of the first few people a survivor tells after a sexual abuse incident have the greatest impact on her or his healing.



# Trauma-Informed Principles

---

**Safety:** Explaining why and how things get done

**Trustworthiness:** Follow through; appropriate boundaries

**Choice:** Emphasize choice whenever possible; informed consent always

**Collaboration:** Solicit input; acknowledge partnerships

**Empowerment:** Strengths-based learning



# Trauma-Informed Care in Confinement

---

## Goals of trauma-informed care include:

- Educate staff on how to better recognize signs of trauma and respond with appropriate interventions
- Improve staff-prisoner interactions and communication
- Balance the safety and security of the facility with bodily integrity and reasonable privacy of the prisoners
- Minimize the risk of re-traumatization



# Benefits of Trauma-Informed Care for Facilities

---

- More effective behavior management
- Safer facilities, increased job satisfaction
- Reductions in:
  - mental health costs (*incl.* housing)
  - staff turnover
  - critical incidents
  - use of restrictive housing and restraints

Adapted from Randy Shively & Linda James, "Trauma Informed Principles in Correctional Care: Understanding Gender Differences," *American Corrections Today*, American Correctional Association, May/June 2020, pg. 61 (*available at* <https://user-3imepyw.cld.bz/Corrections-Today-May-June-2020-Vol-82-No-3>; accessed on June 3, 2020).



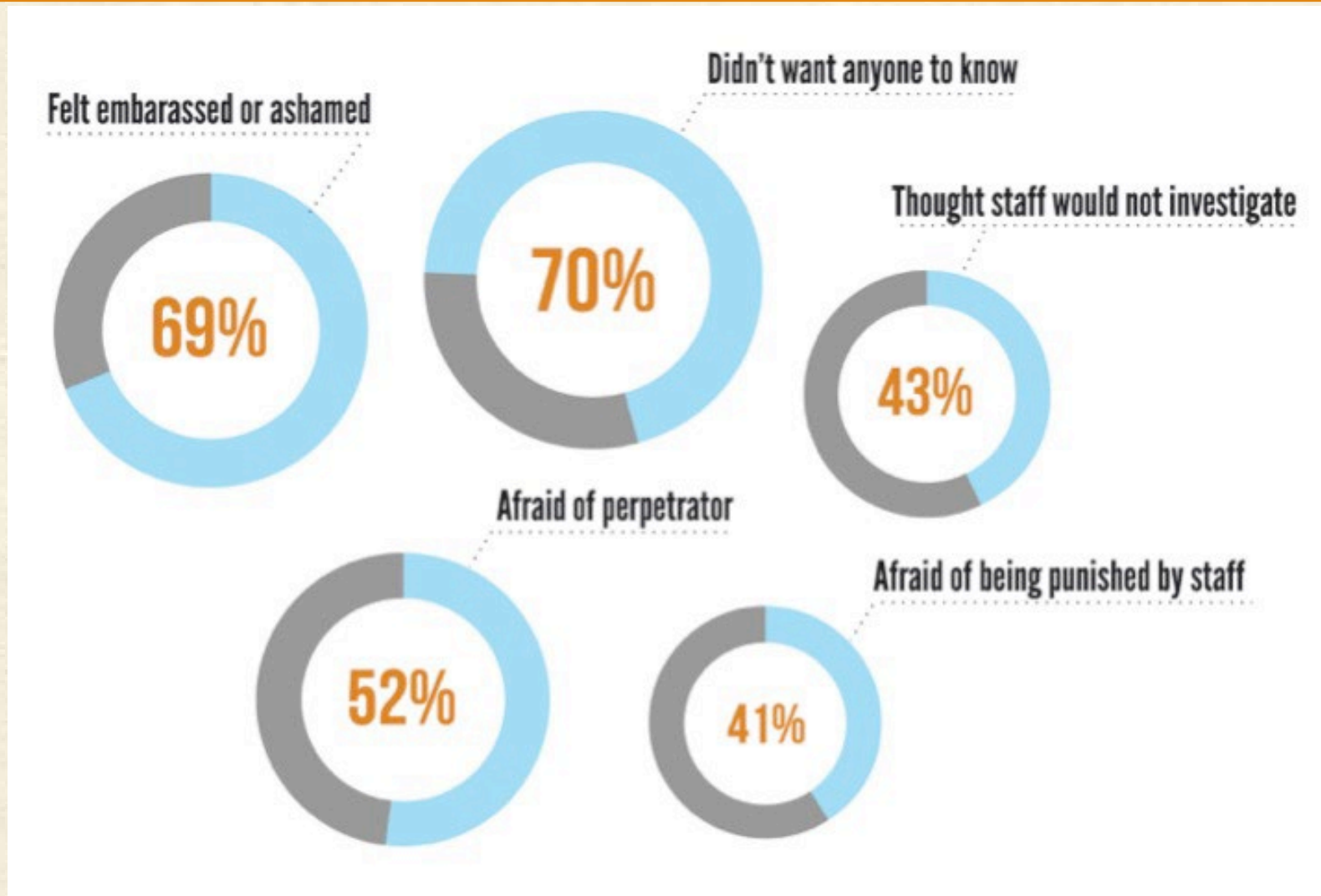


**What kinds of reactions do  
you think incarcerated  
survivors get when they  
ask for help?**





# Why Don't Survivors Tell?



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Sexual Victimization Reported By Former State Prisoners, 2008," May 12, 2012.

# Joe's Story

---



# Promoting a Reporting Culture

---

**What is a  
*Reporting Culture?***



# Promoting a Reporting Culture

---

## Reporting Improves Facility Safety!

- Unfortunately, sexual abuse is underreported
- Determining the validity of a report is the investigator's role only



Image source: pixton.com



# The Role of Victim Advocates



**“If I had an advocate, it would have saved me so much grief. It would have helped me through that traumatic event immensely.**

**Going through it alone, I didn’t know who I could trust and who I could talk to about it — which appeared to be nobody.”**

— Frank Mendoza, prisoner rape survivor and member of JDI’s Survivor Council



# Reality for Incarcerated Survivors

- Little control over body or environment
- Isolation and limited access to support system
- Retaliation
- Ongoing contact with perpetrator(s)
- Increased likelihood of re-victimization



Cecilia, survivor of sexual abuse in a men's jail

# What Are Incarcerated Survivors Seeking?

---

- General emotional support
- Crisis counseling
- Coping skills
- Help for ongoing abuse
- Institutional advocacy
- Resources
- Support around suicidal ideation



<http://www.pcprisonministry.com>





# Role of the Advocate

---

- Believe
- Empower
- Safety Plan
- Provide coping skills
- Normalize trauma responses



# Services Advocates Provide

---

- Forensic exams
- Investigatory interviews
- Confidential correspondence
- Confidential phone calls
- In-person services
- Emotional support



Photo credit: California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation



# Additional Victim Services

---

Examples of beneficial services:

- In-person counseling
- Group counseling
- Art therapy



Art created by women at CIW



# Blooming Within These Walls

---



Photo Credit: JDI



Photo Credit: JDI



# From #MeToo to #PrisonersToo

---



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4cOizEu3zk>



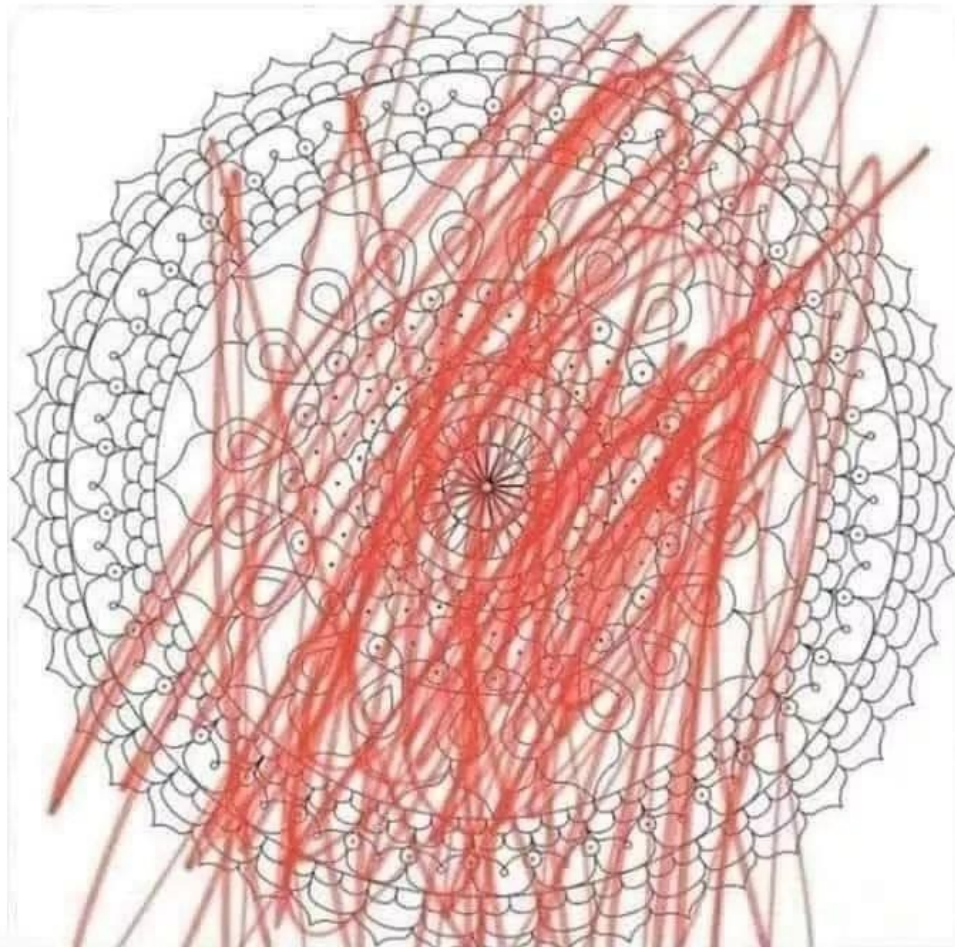
# Cultural Transformation

---



# Vicarious Trauma

**I have started coloring to manage my stress and anxiety.**



# Vicarious & Secondary 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.”

“While individuals respond to vicarious trauma in a number of ways, *a change in their world-view is considered inevitable...*”





# Signs of Vicarious Trauma

---

## Signs can include:

- Tendency to think in “black & white”
- Devalue trauma (well that wasn’t THAT bad compared to...)
- Avoidance (not noticing or giving space to your feelings)
- Numbness or inability to empathize



# Signs Continued

---

## **Additional signs can include:**

- Guilt, fear, cynicism
- Physical ailments (illness, pain, fatigue)
- Addictions (food, drugs/alcohol, shopping, gaming, exercise, social media, the internet, porn, etc.)



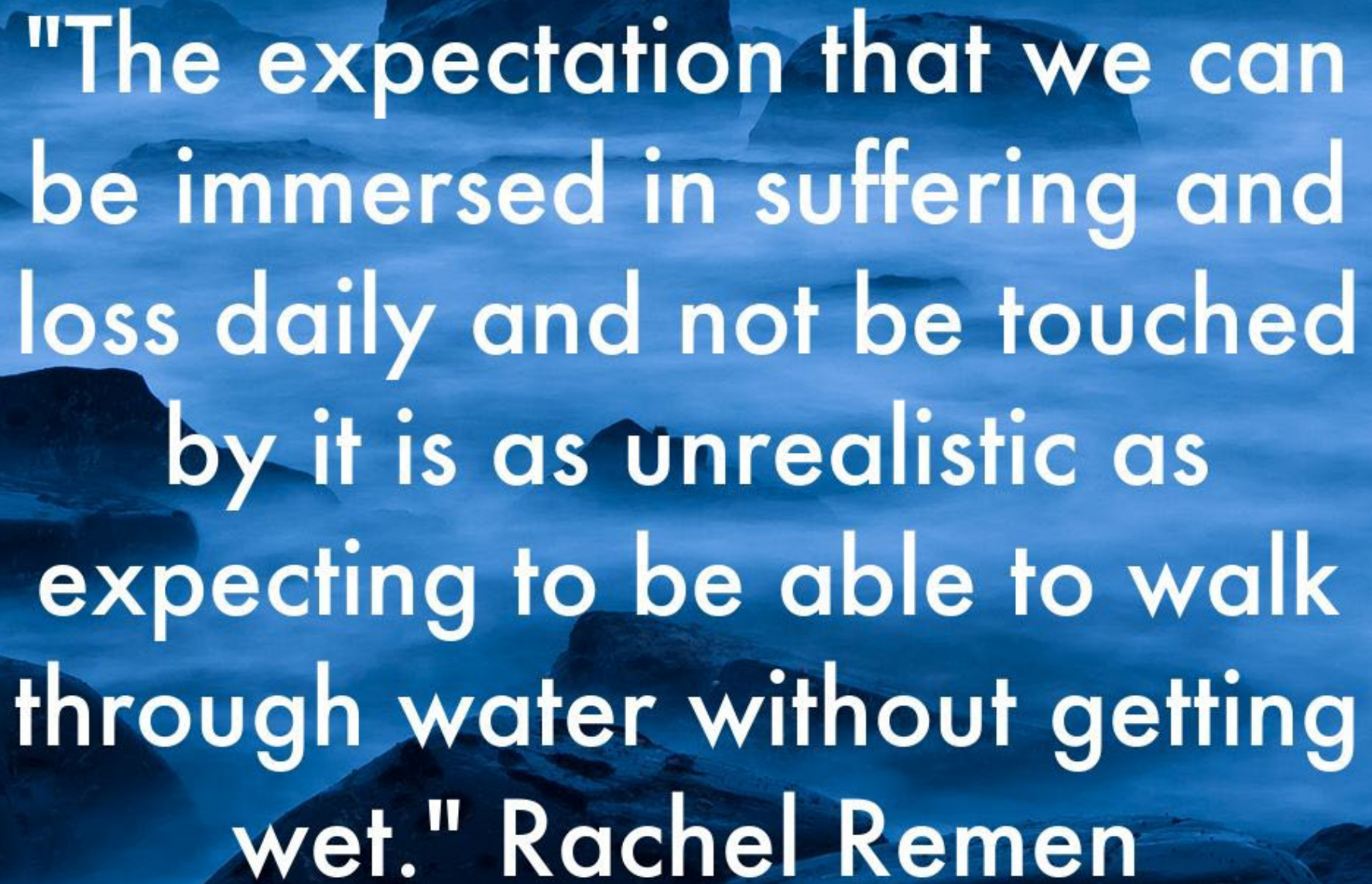
# Ways to Address Vicarious Trauma

---

- Establish work and personal life balance
- Don't ignore the signs
- Ask for help when needed
- Develop healthy practices (food, exercise, sleep, connecting with loved ones, hobbies)
- Take advantage of workplace benefits (time off, employee assistance programs)

**SO YOU MEAN TO TELL ME  
A STRESS BALL ISN'T FOR  
THROWING AT PEOPLE WHO  
STRESS YOU OUT?**





"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." Rachel Remen

# Questions & Answers

---

**K**♥

This facility must give you information about your right to be free from sexual abuse and sexual harassment, how to make a report, and how to get help.

♥**K**

5♥

You deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

♥5

8♥

Staff at this facility should act professionally. They shouldn't tell you about their personal lives, pick favorites, or break the rules for you.

♥8

9♥

You can always ask for help if someone threatens you or makes you feel uncomfortable.

♥6

