

Surviving the Trenches: The Impact of Trauma Exposure on Corrections Professionals

Hosted by the National Reentry Resource Center and American Probation and Parole Association
with funding support from the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance

Speakers

PRESENTER

Kirsten Lewis, MEd.

Co-owner and Lead Trainer,
KSL Research, Training, and
Consultation, LLC

With an introduction by

Nathan Lowe

Research Associate,
American Probation and
Parole Association



MODERATOR

Heather Tubman-Carbone, Ph.D.:
Grantee Technical Assistance
Manager, Corrections, CSG Justice
Center

The Council of State Governments (CSG)

Justice Center

National **nonprofit, non-partisan** membership association of state government officials

Provides **practical**, non-partisan advice informed by **the best available evidence**

Engages members of **all three branches** of state government



National Reentry Resource Center (NRRC)

- Authorized by the passage of the Second Chance Act (SCA) in April 2008
- A project of the CSG Justice Center, supported by the Bureau of Justice Assistance
- Has supported more than 600 SCA grantees, including 40 state corrections agencies
- Provides individualized, intensive, and targeted technical assistance training and distance learning to support SCA grantees



Register for the monthly NRRC
newsletter at:

csgjusticecenter.org/subscribe/

Share this link with others in your
network who are interested in reentry!

American Probation and Parole Association (APPA)

- Member association representing community corrections professionals in all levels of government and in tribal agencies
- Regarded as the voice for pretrial, probation, and parole practitioners including line staff, supervisors, and administrators
- Public and private sectors in criminal and juvenile justice
- Members also include educators, volunteers, victim service providers, and interested citizens
- Provides training and technical assistance including a journal, research, information clearinghouse services, and advocacy
- Training Institute and Leadership Institute



A Force for Positive 
CHANGE.

www.appa-net.org

Agenda

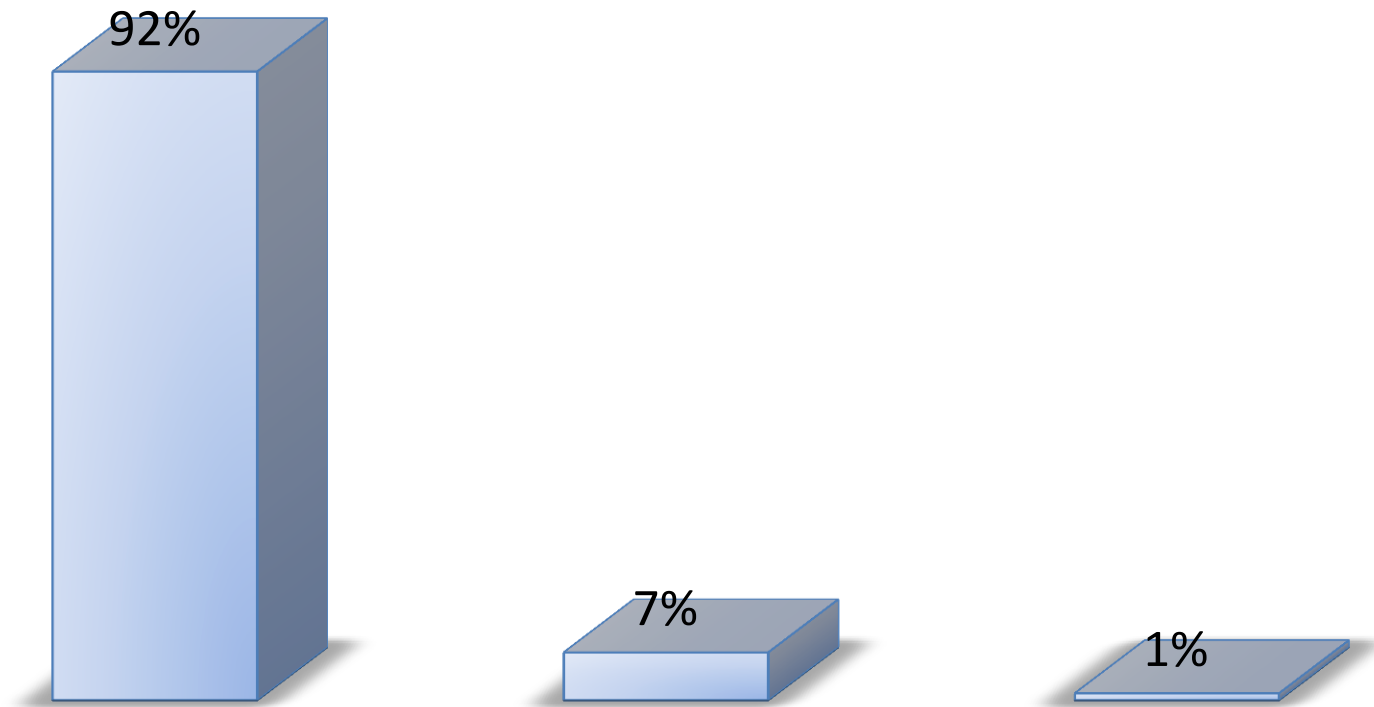
Types of Trauma

Managing Traumatic Stress

Resiliency & Redefining Stress

Q&A

Do you believe that working in the criminal justice system has changed the way you view the world?



Yes

No

Unsure

N=2,906

(Lewis, 2016)

CYNICISM



- **Cynicism:** A pervasive distrust of human nature and motives

- A professional mindset
 - Officer safety

(Gilmartin, 2002)

TRAUMATIC STRESS

- Traumatic stress differs from organizational stress in a number of ways:
 1. The event is often sudden or unexpected
 2. Creates some level of distress
 3. Can overwhelm coping capacity
 4. Has the potential to alter the way one views the world
- What constitutes a traumatic event is in the eye of the beholder.



PRIMARY TRAUMATIC STRESS

JAILS AND PRISONS

- Personally experience or observe an event that poses a risk to self or others
 - Being assaulted
 - Receiving threats
 - Riots and hostage of peers
 - Intervening in violent conditions
 - Addressing suicides
 - Medical emergencies
 - Dealing with unethical conduct
 - Overseeing executions



PRIMARY TRAUMATIC STRESS

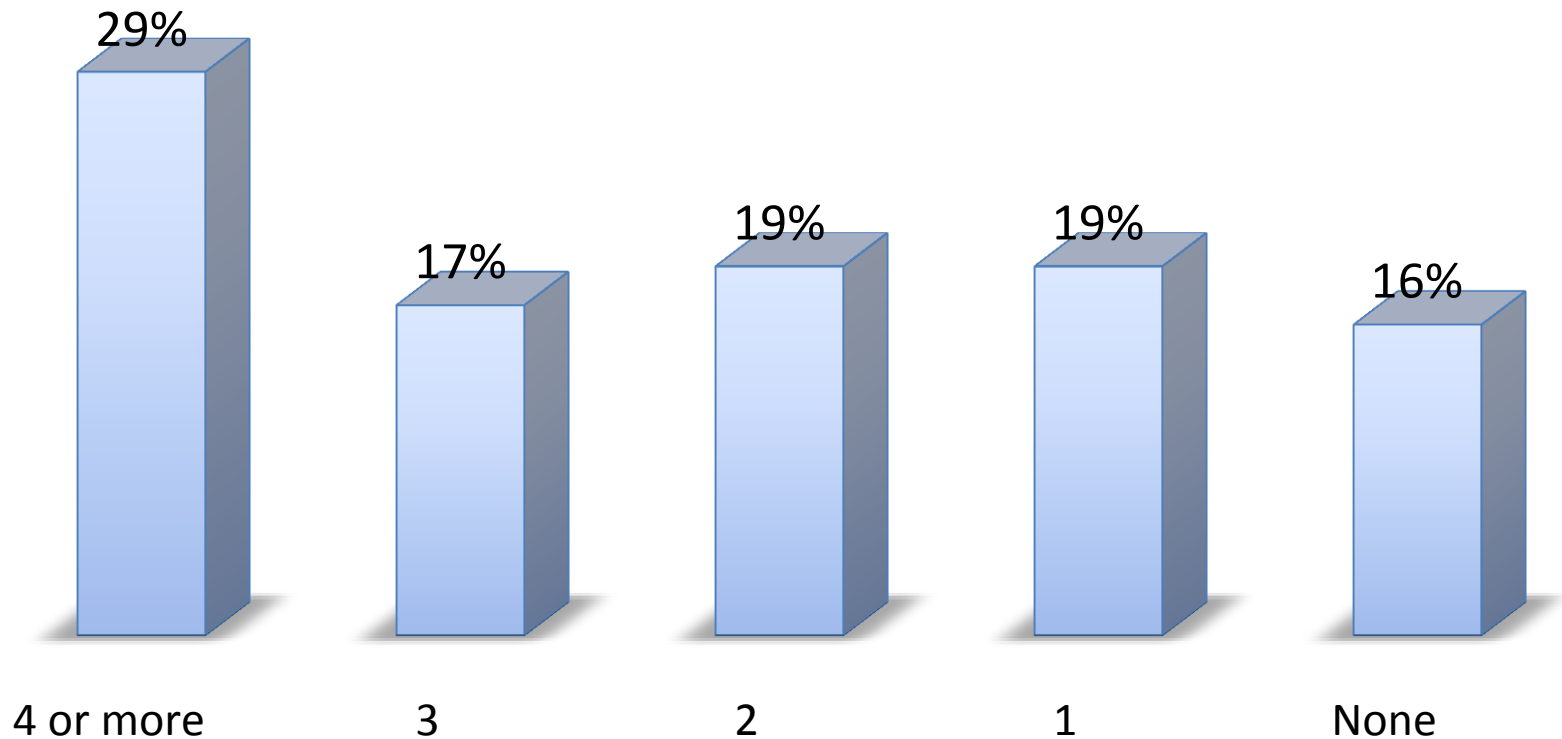
PROBATION AND PAROLE

- Personally experience or observe an event that poses a risk to self or others
 - ▶ Being assaulted
 - ▶ Receiving threats
 - ▶ Stalked by offender
 - ▶ Observing violence, death or suicide
 - ▶ Attacked by animals in the field
 - ▶ Near-misses



(Lewis, 2013)

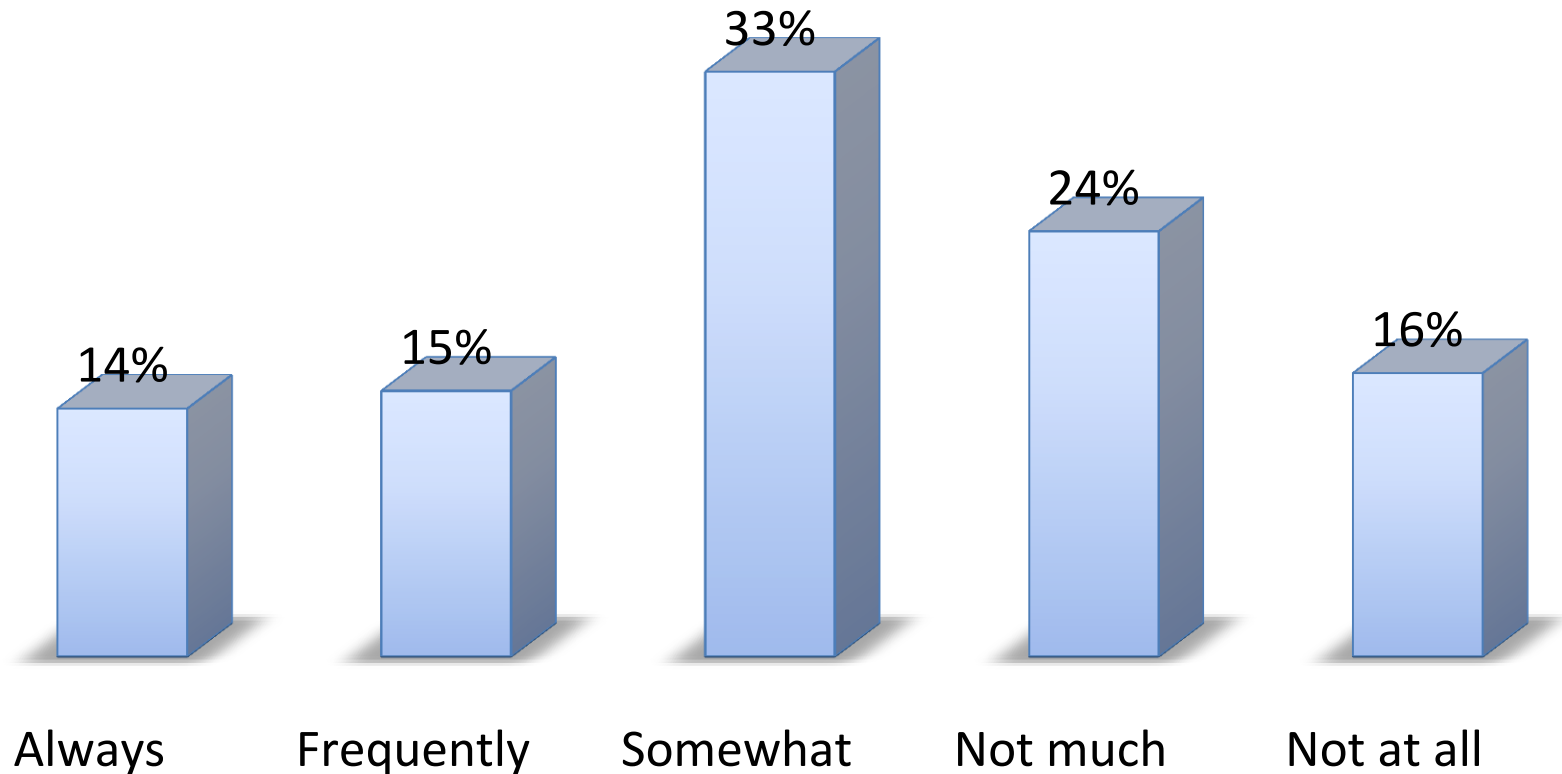
How many primary traumatic events have you experienced in your career?



N=2,513

(Lewis, 2016)

Did you feel supported by your agency during or after your primary traumatic event?



N=434

(Lewis, 2016)

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

- Headache
- Muscle tension
- Increased heart rate
- Higher blood pressure
- Fatigue
- Exhaustion



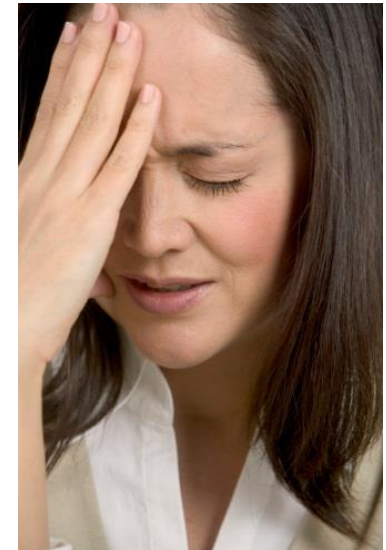
COGNITIVE SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

- Shock, disbelief, and numbness
 - Especially for unexpected events
- Intrusive imagery of the event
- Rumination
 - Trying to make sense of it
- Questioning one's world views
 - Viewing the world and the people in it as less predictable and less controllable



EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

- Anger
- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Depression
- Sadness
- Guilt



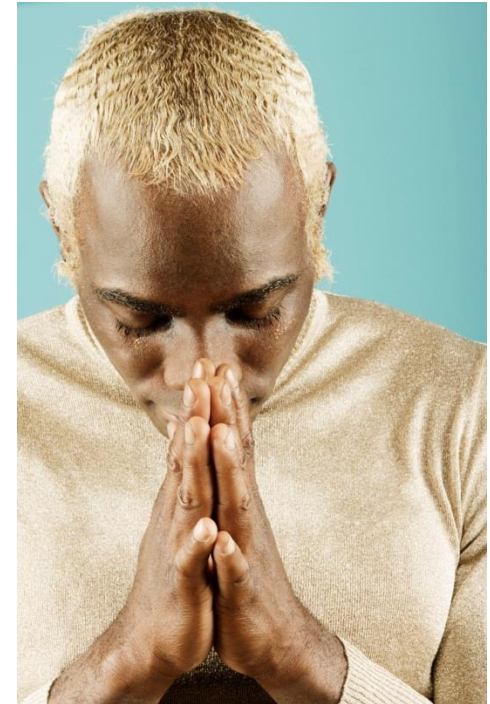
BEHAVIORAL SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

- Decreased or excessive eating
- Alcohol / drug use
- Hyper-startle
- 1000-yard stare
- Sleep disturbance
- Withdrawal
- Family discord
- Crying spells
- Hyper-vigilance
- Violence



SPIRITUAL SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

- Anger at God or spiritual equivalent
- Question world view
- Withdrawal from faith-based community
- Cessation of faith-related practices



THREE EXAMPLES



- Nightmares, fearful thoughts, intrusive images, and suspicion of the motives of others
- All of these people spend a significant part of their work day listening to or reading about accounts of victimization

(McCann and Pearlman, 1990)

SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS

“Compassion Fatigue”

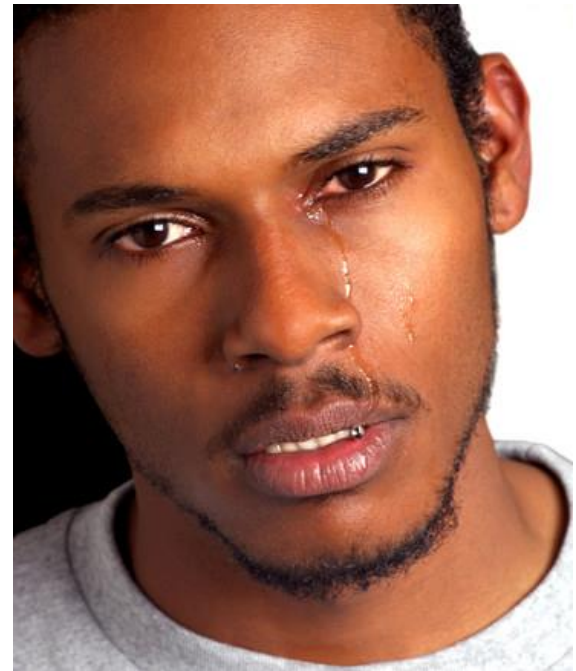
- Professionals begin to experience trauma symptoms themselves due to their secondary exposure to human suffering. These include:
 - Hyper-vigilance
 - Intrusive thoughts
 - Feeling detached and numb
 - Difficulty falling or staying asleep
 - Irritability or outbursts of anger
 - Difficulty concentrating



(Figley, 1995)

“Those who work with offenders are called upon to bear witness to the crime.”

-Judith Herman, 1992



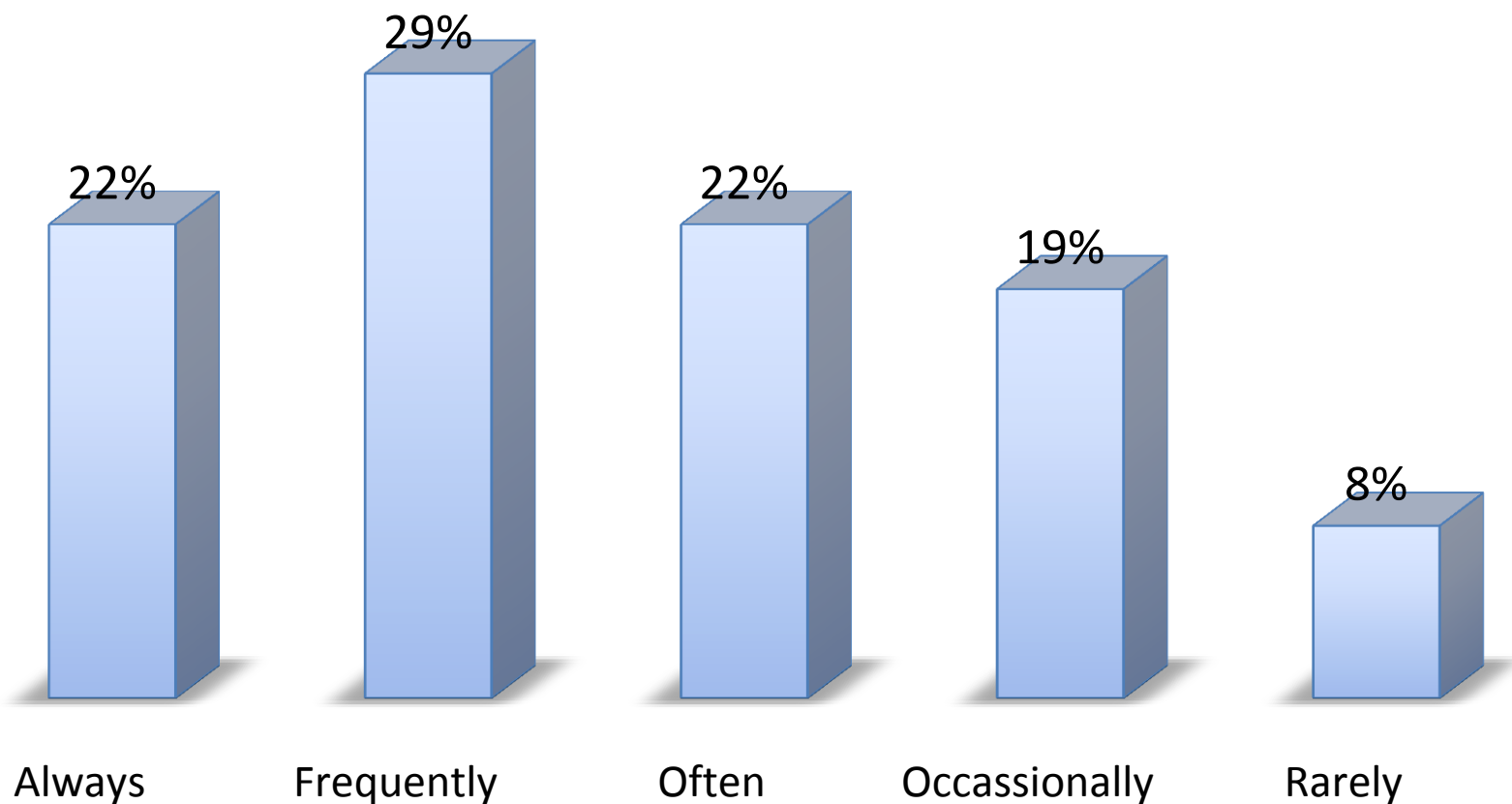
WORKING WITH JUSTICE INVOLVED INDIVIDUALS

Staff are exposed to disturbing aspects of human behavior via

- Observation
- Police reports
- Pre-sentence Investigations
- Criminal history
- Assessment interviews
- Victim contacts
- Collateral accounts
- Living environments



In the course of your day, how often are you exposed to traumatic material?

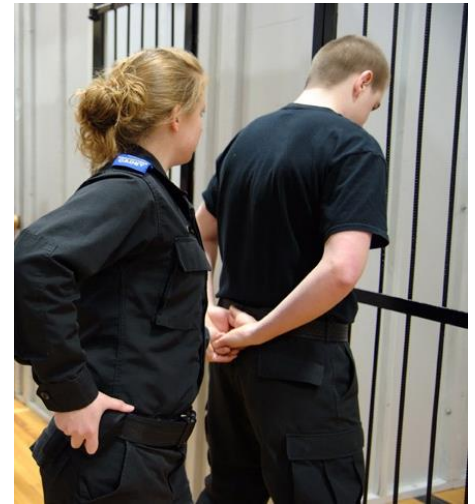


N=2,373

(Lewis, 2016)

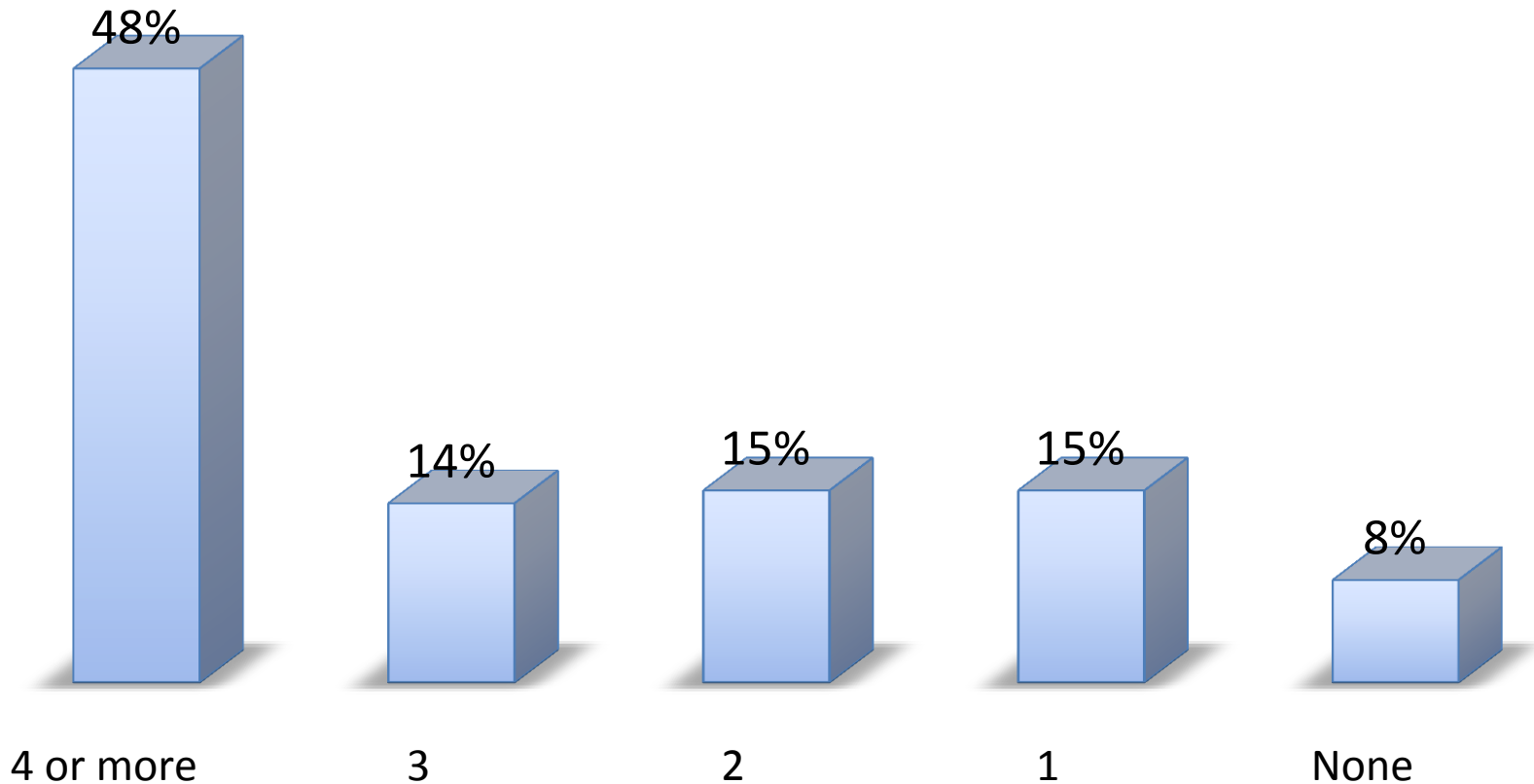
SECONDARY TRAUMATIC EVENTS

- Officers experience traumatic stress as a result of their secondary exposure to violence, injury, and death
 - Offender suicide
 - Violent recidivism involving death
 - Violent recidivism involving child victims
 - Sexual recidivism
 - Violent death of offender
 - Line of duty violence, injury, or death of a co-worker
 - Violent death of offender
 - Delivering death notifications



(Lewis, 2013)

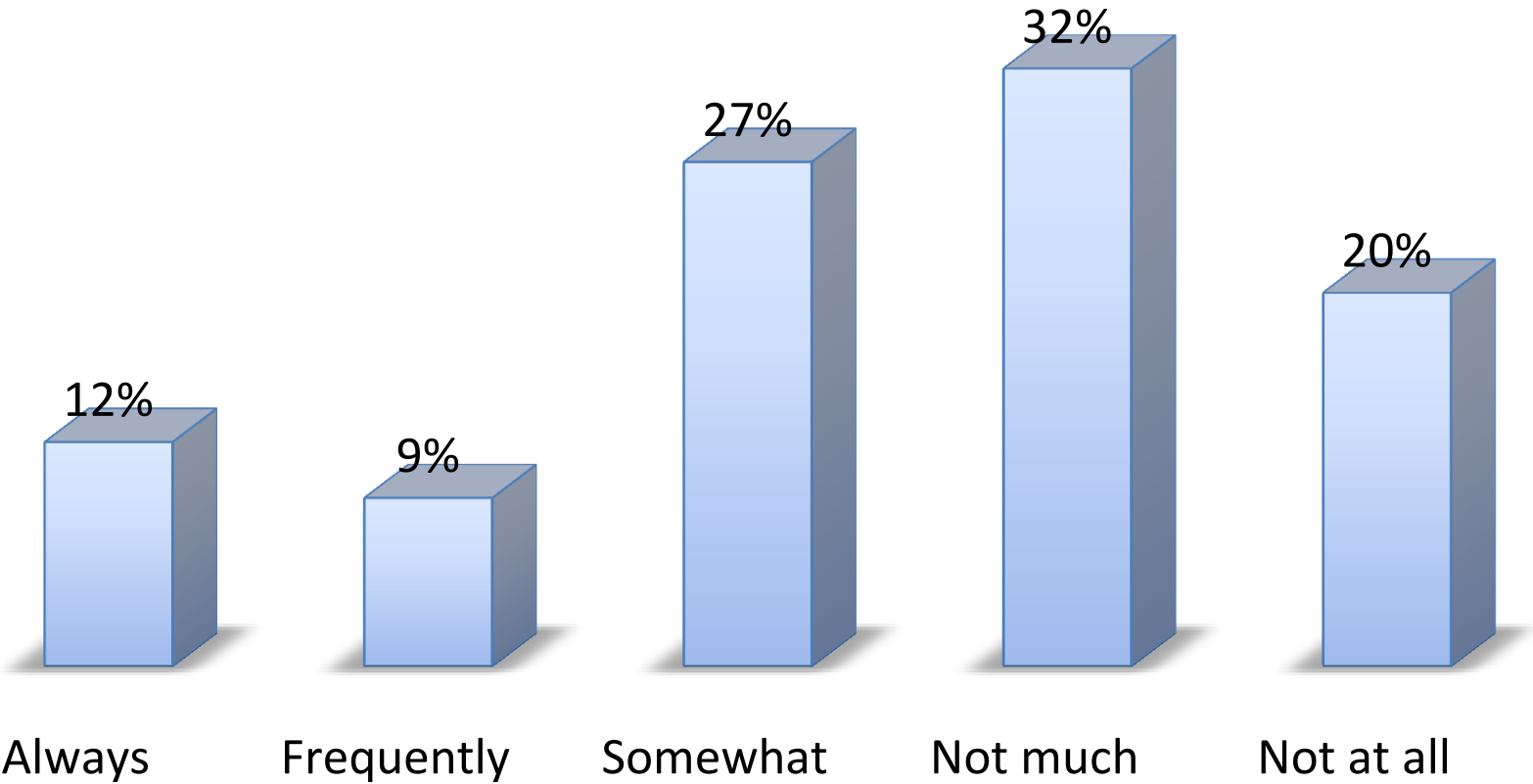
How many secondary traumatic events have you experienced in your career?



(Lewis, 2016)

N=2,766

Did you feel supported by your agency during or after your secondary traumatic event?



N=424

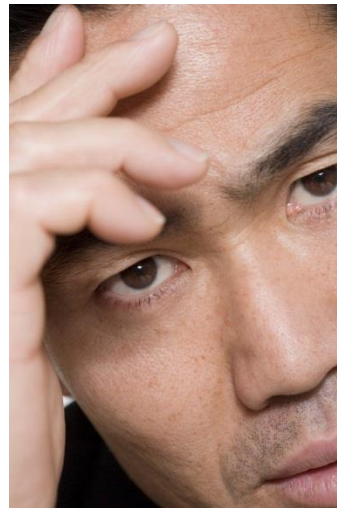
(Lewis, 2016)

SECONDARY TRAUMA SYMPTOMS

Which symptoms of secondary trauma have you experienced in the past two months?

(Click all that apply)

- Loss of trust
- Loss of innocence
- Lower concentration
- Preoccupation with trauma
- Hyper-vigilance
- Sleep disturbances
- Chronic exhaustion
- Feeling detached/numb
- Avoidant behaviors
- Increased anger, disgust, sadness, and/or distress



(Salston & Figley, 2003)

SECONDARY TRAUMA SYMPTOMS

1. Loss of trust (63%)
2. Sleep disturbances (55%)
3. Increased anger, disgust, sadness, and/or distress (54%)
4. Lower concentration (50%)
5. Hyper-vigilance (43%)
6. Chronic exhaustion (42%)
7. Avoidant behavior(s) (42%)
8. Feeling detached or numb (42%)
9. Loss of innocence (29%)
10. Preoccupation with trauma (28%)



(N= 1,298)



(Lewis, 2016)

VICARIOUS TRAUMA

- Exposure to someone else's trauma can cause people to vicariously experience a change in their own world view
 - Beliefs about humanity
 - Views of the world (safety)
 - Chronic suspicion
 - Cynicism
 - Loss of empathy



(Pearlman & Mac Ian, 1995)

Hiking in the Caribbean



On the Cliff of Awakening

(Laura van Dernoot Lipsky, 2009)

VICARIOUS TRAUMA SYMPTOMS

Which symptoms of vicarious trauma have you experienced in the past two months?

(Click all that apply)



- Increased cynicism
- Chronic suspicion of others

- Interpersonal relationship problems
 - Distorted world view
 - Question spirituality
 - Less tolerant
 - Loss of empathy
 - Feeling desensitized
 - Intrusive thoughts
 - Intrusive imagery
- (Steed & Downing, 1998)

VICARIOUS TRAUMA SYMPTOMS

1. Increased cynicism (72%)
2. Chronic suspicion of others (70%)
3. Less tolerant (70%)
4. Feeling desensitized (64%)
5. Distorted world view (58%)
6. Loss of empathy (56%)
7. Intrusive thoughts (41%)
8. Interpersonal problems (41%)
9. Intrusive imagery (32%)
10. Question spirituality (22%)



N = 1,285

(Lewis, 2016)

SANCTUARY TRAUMA

- Turning to someone (or an agency) from whom one expects support after a traumatic event but instead receives judgement and/or indifference
 - Minimized
 - Shamed
 - Blamed
 - Ignored
 - Turned away
- A form of re-traumatization that can be as devastating as the original trauma



AGENDA

Types of Trauma

Managing Traumatic Stress

Resiliency & Redefining Stress

Q&A

THE STARTING POINT

- “The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet.”

–Rachel Naomi Remen



- “Removing the judgments and inhuman expectations are precursors to healing.”

–Laura van Dernoot Lipsky



UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS

- Reactions to trauma exposure are adaptive and protective
- Conscious awareness = conscious choice
- Create a work culture that promotes healthy coping, awareness, and self-care practices
 - Addressing job impact is paramount to sustaining the highest quality of professionalism



(Leonhardt & Vogt, 2011; Lipsky, 2009)

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

- Psychological inoculation
 - Mentally prepared, psychological body armor
- Normalize stress reactions
 - Prevents belief of being the only one impacted
 - Early recognition = early intervention
- Healthy Coping
 - Self-awareness
 - Wellness dimensions
 - Stress-reducing strategies



PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMS

- Peer support programs can be very beneficial for professions that:
 1. Are specially trained and/or educated
 2. Possess a unique culture
 3. Extend minimal trust to those outside the profession
 4. Are reluctant to use external resources to manage stress



(Everly & Mitchell, 2000)

PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMS

- Must meet the needs of employees
 - Focus on secondary and vicarious trauma
- Address the stigma of support services
 - Acknowledging impact is not a sign of weakness, it is a mark of professional integrity
- The offer of peer support services should be procedural following incidents associated with high stress
 - May catch employees who otherwise would not request services on their own and/or may not recognize they need support



AGENDA

Types of Trauma

Managing Traumatic Stress

Resiliency & Redefining Stress

Q&A

COMPREHENSIVE SOLDIER FITNESS PROGRAM

- ▶ In 2009, the US Army began a \$145 million initiative to increase resilience
- Fitness was increased to include:
 1. Physical fitness
 2. Emotional fitness
 3. Family fitness
 4. Social fitness
 5. Spiritual fitness



(Seligman, 2011)

RESILIENCE

Which factors of resilience do you believe are currently strong in your life?

(Click all that apply)

- There are a number of evidence-based protective factors that contribute to resilience:



Optimism

Problem solving

Personal awareness

Strong social support

Sense of meaning

Self-efficacy

Cognitive flexibility

Empathy

Spirituality

Comfort with emotion

(Reivich, & Seligman, 2011)

RESILIENCE

1. Problem solving (77%)
2. Personal awareness (67%)
3. Optimism (53%)
4. Sense of meaning (52%)
5. Empathy (52%)
6. Strong social support (52%)
7. Comfort with emotion (46%)
8. Cognitive flexibility (45%)
9. Self-efficacy (45%)
10. Spirituality (43%)

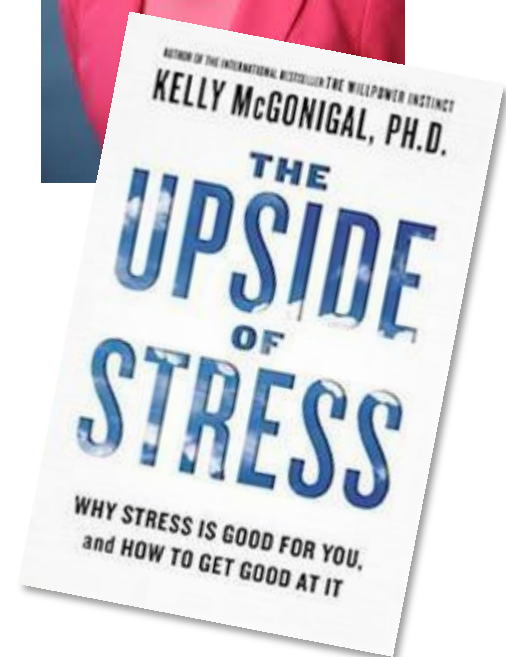


N = 528

(Lewis, 2016)

REDEFINING STRESS

- Stress is what arises when something we care about is at stake
 - Includes thoughts, emotions, and physical reactions
- Stress and meaning are inextricably linked
 - We don't stress over things we don't care about
 - We can't create a meaningful life without experiencing some stress



(McGonigal, 2015 pp. xxi & xxii)

HONOR YOUR SERVICE

You may never know the number of lives you have impacted through your work, but know this...

You make our world a better place!



AGENDA

Types of Trauma

Managing Traumatic Stress

Resiliency & Redefining Stress

Q&A

Q & A

KSL Research, Training, & Consultation, LLC

Kirsten Lewis, MEd, Co-owner and Lead Trainer

(602) 525-1989 / kirsten.lewis@kslresearch.org

Website: kslresearch.org

American Probation and Parole Association

Nathan Lowe, Research Associate

nlowe@csg.org

CSG Justice Center, National Reentry Resource Center

Heather Tubman-Carbone, Ph.D.,
Grantee Technical Assistance
Manager, Corrections

htubman-carbone@csg.org

REFERENCES

- Everly, G., & Mitchell, J. (2000). The debriefing “controversy” and crisis intervention: A review of lexical and substantive issues. *International Journal of Emergency Mental Health, 2(4)*, 211-225.
- Figley, C. R. (1995). Compassion fatigue as secondary traumatic stress disorder: An overview. In Figley, C. R. (Ed.), *Compassion fatigue: Coping with secondary traumatic stress disorder in those who treat the traumatized* (pp. 1-20). New York, NY: Brunner/Mazel.
- Gilmartin, K. M. (2002). *Emotional survival for law enforcement: A Guide for officers and their families*. Tucson, AZ: E-S Press.
- Herman, J. (1992). *Trauma and recovery*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

REFERENCES

- Leonhardt, J., & Vogt, J. (2011). Critical incident stress and the prevention of psychological trauma in air traffic controllers. In Tehrani, N. (Ed). *Managing Trauma in the Workplace (117-138)*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lewis, K., Lewis, L., & Garby, T. (2013). Surviving the Trenches: The Personal Impact of the Job on Probation Officers. *American Journal of Criminal Justice, 38(1)*, 67-84.
- Lewis, K. (2016). *Surviving the trenches: The impact of trauma exposure on corrections professionals*. A Webinar hosted by the National Reentry Resource Center and the American Probation and Parole Association on February, 17, 2016.
- Lipsky, L. V. D., & Burk, C. (2009). *Trauma stewardship: An everyday guide to caring for self while caring for others*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

REFERENCES

- McCann, L., & Pearlman, L. A. (1990). Vicarious traumatization: A framework for understanding the psychological effects of working with victims. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 3*, 131-149.
- McGonigal, K. (2015). *The upside of stress: Why stress is good for you, and how to get good at it*. New York, NY: Penguin Random House.
- Pearlman, L. A., & Mac Ian, P. S. (1995). Vicarious traumatization: An empirical study of the effects of trauma work on trauma therapists. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 26*, 558-565.
- Reivich, K. J., & Seligman, M. P. (2011). Master Resilience Training in the U.S. Army. *American Psychologist, 66* (1), 25-34.
- Remen, R. (1996). *Kitchen table wisdom*. New York, NY: Riverhead Books.

REFERENCES

- Salston, M. & Figley, C. (2003). Secondary traumatic stress effects of working with survivors of criminal victimization. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 16(2)*, 167-174.
- Seligman, M. & Fowler, R. (2011). Comprehensive Soldier Fitness and the future of psychology. *American Psychologist Special Issue: Comprehensive Soldier Fitness, 66(1)*, 82-86.
- Steed, L. G. & Downing, R. (1998). A phenomenological study of vicarious traumatisation amongst psychologists and professional counselors working in the field of sexual abuse/assault. *The Australasian Journal of Disaster and Trauma Studies, 1998-2*.