

# Recognizing Secondary Trauma and Mitigating Its Effects

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Judge Victor Reyes(Ref.)NCJFCJ Judge-in Residence

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Hawaii State Bar Association  
9/5/2022

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# DOES OUR WORK IMPACT OUR COMMUNITY?

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HOW?

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# Free Think

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▶ What stressors are unique to the working in the Judicial system?

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## IMPACT OF THE WORK ON OUR COMMUNITY

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CHANGES THE COURSE OF PEOPLE'S LIVES

AFFECTS HOW THE COMMUNITY PERCEIVES JUSTICE

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## Questions For Ourselves

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- ▶ Do I need to be Healed?
- ▶ What Do I Need to be Healed From?
- ▶ How Do I Start and then Continue the Healing Process?

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## The Impact of Our Work on Us

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- ▶ Stress
- ▶ Empathetic Fatigue
- ▶ PTSD (Vicarious trauma, Secondary trauma)
- ▶ Personal Relationships
- ▶ Professional Relationships

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## Traumatic Cases for Judges & Court-related Professionals

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- ▶ Domestic Violence
- ▶ Sexual Assault
- ▶ Child Abuse
- ▶ Homicides
- ▶ Abductions

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## Research on Judges

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### Sample of 105 judges

- ▶ 55 males; average age 52.8; average years on bench 9.3
- ▶ 50 females; average age 47.4; average years on bench 7.5
- ▶ Judges on the bench 7 or more years of experience reported significantly more symptoms of vicarious trauma
  - ▶ 7.7% reported not trauma symptoms
  - ▶ 42.3% reported trauma symptoms

Jaffe, P.D., Christy, C.V. (2018). Abstract. In: Tamm, M.A., Justice, R.H. (2018). Vicarious Trauma in Judges: The personal challenge of dispensing justice. *Appellate Pract Forum, Court Journal*, 19.

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## International Issue UNODC Report on Judicial Well Being

- ▶ 76 % of judges and members of the judiciary do not have sufficient time to maintain optimal physical and mental well-being.
- ▶ 92 % indicate that judicial work brings them stress sometimes, frequently or always. The most common contributing factor appears to be excessive workloads. Many survey participants explain that excessive workloads are a vicious circle, where judges and other members of the judiciary are under constant stress from excessive workloads, which in turn slows them down, causes them to take longer to process the cases, and creates further backlogs.
- ▶ 89 % know of cases of judicial colleagues experiencing stress or anxiety
- ▶ [https://www.unodc.org/res/j/instdb/data/2022/exploring\\_linkages\\_between\\_judicial\\_well-being\\_and\\_judicial\\_integrity.html/Global\\_Report\\_Judicial\\_Well-being.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/res/j/instdb/data/2022/exploring_linkages_between_judicial_well-being_and_judicial_integrity.html/Global_Report_Judicial_Well-being.pdf)

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## International Issue UNODC Report on Judicial Well Being

- ▶ 69 % feel that talking about mental health or stress is a taboo when it comes to judges and members of the judiciary.
- ▶ 83 % say that the level of support available in their judiciary is not sufficient.
- ▶ 97 % think that more prominence should be given to promoting judicial well-being. Almost all survey participants believe that there is not enough awareness about the importance of judicial well-being and its impact on judicial integrity and on the perception of the judiciary. The concept of judicial well-being continues to be unheard of in many judiciaries. Moreover, even in those judiciaries that have put in place some measures aimed at promoting well-being, many participants explained the inadequacy or insufficiency of the available support and the existing stigma and stereotyping around mental health issues.
- ▶ 46 % have experienced deterioration of both mental and physical well-being as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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## JUVENILE & FAMILY COURT JOURNAL Vol. 70 Number 2 July 2019

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- An Assessment of Judges' Self-Reported Experiences of Secondary Trauma
- Judicial Educators Perspective on Trauma Education for the Judiciary
- Secondary Trauma Stress in the Courtroom: Suggestions For Preventing Vicarious Trauma Resulting From Child Sexual Abuse Imagery

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### The effect of attorneys' work with trauma-exposed clients on PTSD symptoms, depression, and functional impairment: A cross-lagged longitudinal study.

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© Request Permissions: Levin, A., Besser, A., Albert, L., Smith, D., & Neria, Y. (2012). *Law and Human Behavior*, 36(6), 538–547. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0093993>

- ▶ The findings underscore the central role of exposure to trauma-exposed clients in predicting mental health outcomes and emphasize the need to support attorneys by managing the intensity of exposure as well as addressing emerging symptoms.

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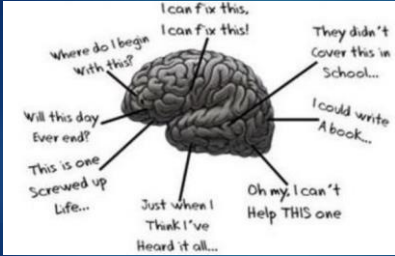
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**Occupational Hazard**

Outcome of working hard and caring: the only way to avoid any impact is to fail to engage compassionately, even empathetically, with the victims

**You are not alone**

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# Stress and Trauma

- Continuum - Trauma a more intense form of stress.
- Stress Taxes one's system, trauma overwhelms it.
- We recover from stressful events more easily.

"While it is true that all traumatic events are stressful, all stressful events are not traumatic."

-Peter Levine, *Healing Trauma*

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## Vicarious (Secondary) Trauma

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- ▶ Impact resulting from the knowledge of the traumatizing events of others.

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## Effects of Secondary Trauma

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- ▶ Physical, emotional, behavioral, cognitive, interpersonal, and spiritual
- ▶ May persist for months, sometimes years
- ▶ Parallels experience of trauma survivors
- ▶ Normal feelings and reactions
- ▶ Impacts the way you see the world

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## Factors that Influence Vulnerability

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## Common Reactions to Violence and Trauma

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### Physical

- ▶ Eating problems
- ▶ Fatigue
- ▶ Feeling sick to your stomach
- ▶ Sweating or chills
- ▶ Shock
- ▶ Dizziness
- ▶ Chest pains
- ▶ Trouble breathing

### Difficulties in Thinking

- ▶ Difficulty remembering things
- ▶ Trouble making decisions
- ▶ Confusion
- ▶ Difficulty concentrating
- ▶ "Flashbacks"
- ▶ Nightmares
- ▶ Too many thoughts at once
- ▶ Thinking about suicide

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## Common Reactions to Violence and Trauma (2)

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### Types of Feelings

- ▶ Fear
- ▶ Grief
- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Helplessness
- ▶ Anger/ Irritability
- ▶ Feeling overwhelmed
- ▶ Guilt
- ▶ Vulnerability
- ▶ Loss of common sense
- ▶ Nervousness
- ▶ Feeling not yourself

### Behaviors

- ▶ Changes in how you usually act
- ▶ Withdrawing from other people
- ▶ Clinging to other people
- ▶ Silence
- ▶ Talkativeness
- ▶ Not eating/ overeating
- ▶ Acting as if you were much younger
- ▶ Substance abuse; alcohol, drugs, food, medications
- ▶ Dangerous behaviors

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## Major Symptoms of Vicarious Trauma (3)

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### Short-Term

- ▶ Flashbacks
- ▶ Angry
- ▶ Sad, depression
- ▶ Helplessness
- ▶ Withdrawal
- ▶ Sleeplessness
- ▶ Anxiety

### Long-Term

- ▶ Cynical
- ▶ Fearful
- ▶ Loss of faith in humanity
- ▶ Alcohol abuse
- ▶ Inability to maintain intimate relationships

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### COVID-19 WORKING CONDITIONS

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- ▶ WORKING FROM HOME(SANCTUARY)
- ▶ DIFFICULTY ACCESSING INFORMATION AND SHARED DEVICES
- ▶ DIFFICULTY COMMUNICATING WITH PARTIES
- ▶ DIFFICULTY COMMUNICATING WITH COLLEAGUES
- ▶ TECHNOLOGY OPERATIONAL ISSUES
- ▶ DEALING WITH 2<sup>ND</sup>, 3<sup>RD</sup> WAVES AND BACKLOG
- ▶ ISSUES OF HEALTH AND SAFETY WHEN YOU RETURN TO WORK

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### 2010, People v. Paul Stark

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### WHAT IS WELLNESS?

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- ▶ NOT A BUZZWORD, WAY OF LIFE
- ▶ HAS TO BE EMBODIED
- ▶ PHYSICAL
- ▶ MENTAL/EMOTIONAL
- ▶ SPIRITUAL

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## Coping & Preventative Strategies

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- ▶ Primary Prevention: before it starts
- ▶ Secondary Prevention: early identification
- ▶ Tertiary Prevention: treatment

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**Avoiding or eliminating VT is not the goal:**  
 The only way to do that is not to connect and not to care

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The Solution is  
**NOI**  
 to  
 Turn Off  
 Empathy

**Identifying and taking care of yourself as a person exposed to traumatic stressors is the goal:**

- Being aware of the material that triggers you;
- Finding someone to debrief with;
- Consider therapy if symptoms are persistent;
- Nature, spiritual connection, find meaning and gratitude.
- Maintain compassion for ourselves and others as an antidote to despair or burnout.

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## The ABC's of Successful Coping

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- ▶ Awareness of needs, limits, emotions, and resources
- ▶ Balance amongst activities of work, play, and rest
- ▶ Connection to oneself, others, and something larger

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## Reflections on Effective Coping Strategies

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- ▶ What strategies work for you?
- ▶ What ideas have you learned from others?
- ▶ How do you help colleagues who aren't reaching out for support but need help?
- ▶ What advice would you give new court staff when they are starting out?

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## Secondary Trauma Stress in the Courtroom, Pg. 74

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- ◆ Mental Health Days;
- ◆ Training and Workshops to develop awareness around risk of doing the work(viewing images);
- ◆ Training on signs and symptoms of Secondary Traumatic Stress(STS) and healthy coping skills;
- ◆ Collegial Support;
- ◆ Informal Network of Support if Institutional one not available.

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## Nutrition

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- ▶ Eat regularly and hydrate.
- ▶ Limit consumption of caffeine as that can increase your overall stress level.
- ▶ Extreme stress may lead to increased use of alcohol, cigarettes, and/ or sleeping pills which can create even more agitation/ problems.

## Rest and Relaxation

- ▶ Maintain a regular schedule that allows for adequate amounts of sleep and relaxing, stress-reducing activities.
- ▶ Practice relaxation techniques such as meditation, deep breathing exercises.

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## Rest and Relaxation

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- ▶ Other strategies that can help:
  - ▶ Listening to music
  - ▶ Reading
  - ▶ Going to religious services
  - ▶ Sitting in the park
  - ▶ Playing with your children
  - ▶ Spending time with animals

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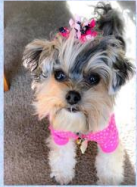
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## Molly

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## Intention Setting

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Intention setting helps us to align actions, words, thoughts, habits and attitudes with our values.

By setting intentions at the beginning of the day, you begin to notice the choice points throughout the day, allowing you to be more "present" to the moment and to align with your intention and make adaptive choices.

What is your intention for the day? What do you notice in your body and the quality of your attention when you set an intention or when you keep the intention you set?

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### Why do we have 2 nostrils.....

**RIGHT**  
PINGALA -Surya Nadi

- > Left brain hemisphere (logic, Analysis, Maths, Science, Physics,
- > Sympathetic Nervous system (Fight and Flight mode)
- > Physical Activity (Sports, PE)
- > Helps digestion
- > increases energy
- > Activates mind

**LEFT**  
IDA - Chandra Nadi

- > Right brain hemisphere (creativity, art, languages, dance, music)
- > Parasympathetic Nervous System (Rest and Digest mode)
- > Calming activity
- > Cooling effect - Anger Reduction
- > Good time to relax, low metabolism rate
- > For prayers, chanting

wellness space

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### Conscious Breath

1. Deep breathing (3 Part Breath) – Releases endorphins
2. Left Nostril Breathing – Calming, cooling
3. Right Nostril Breathing – Energizing, warming
4. Alternate Nostril Breathing – Balancing hemispheres of the brain, integrating, wellbeing, stress reliever

*The single most effective relaxation technique I know is conscious regulation of breath*

~ Dr. Andrew Weil

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### BREATH WORK

We begin with 3 deep cleansing breaths through the nose, allowing the exhale to balance in length with the inhale.

Bring awareness back to the breath many times throughout the day.

Allow the breath to be an anchor.

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## Grounding

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Grounding helps us to stabilize attention and bio-physiological processes, no matter where you are.

Begin by bringing weight into your feet, feeling the the heels, balls and toes of your feet and your contact with the ground.

Imagine that just like a tree, you have roots that reach far into the earth. Bring weight into your sit bones.

First the left, then the right, and the balance between them.

Allow your attention to settle into your feet and seat. Feel the calm. Remember these are your anchors and you can return at any time when needed.

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## Sanctuary

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Creating a felt sense of safety is essential to the mind/body/brain's ability to restore the self-regulatory capacity of the nervous system.

Sanctuary evokes a sense of well being that naturally occurs in a beautiful and calm healing environment, paralleling the neural mechanisms for secure attachment

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## Sanctuary

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Sanctuary includes a sense of connection to others who care about our protection and nurturance.

Imagine your Sanctuary.

Feel it with all your senses. Notice how your body feels and how you breathe.

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### DAILY PRACTICES

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Practice gratitude	Meditate and Breathe
REST & Stay Positive	
Exercise and Stretch	Be Creative

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### Support Systems and Social Contacts

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- ▶ Talking about your own reactions to a violent event does help:
  - ▶ Choose people you trust and people who will really listen to how you feel.
  - ▶ Supportive listeners may be friends, family, clergy members, teachers, self-help groups, or professional counsellors.
  - ▶ Judicial (Court) Assistance Programs
  - ▶ Isolating yourself from those who know and care about you may make matters worse.

Adapted material from Cambridge Hospital, Massachusetts

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### Social Contacts

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- ▶ Keep in contact with your family, friends, and co-workers, and others who have gone through similar experiences.
- ▶ Children may need the attention and close, physical contact of their parents and other relatives.

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## Support to Others

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- ▶ Offer support to others – can help in recovering from the emotional impact of violence.
- ▶ Support peers, mentor new colleagues; build in mechanisms for addressing the issue.
- ▶ Participate in special events, rituals, or community activities which honor victims or offer support to their loved ones such as:
  - ▶ Community discussion and support groups,
  - ▶ Public ceremonies or memorials, and
  - ▶ Domestic violence death review committee.

Adapted material from Cambridge Hospital, Massachusetts

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## Preventing Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder

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- ▶ **Professional Strategies**
  - ▶ Balance
  - ▶ Boundaries/ limit setting
  - ▶ Getting support/ help
  - ▶ Plans for coping
  - ▶ Professional training
  - ▶ Evaluation of own healing
  - ▶ Replenishment

J. Yassan, 1992

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## Prevention Strategies

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- ▶ "The first day on the job, ensure that coping strategies are in place."
- ▶ Peer support
- ▶ Limit work hours
- ▶ Humor
- ▶ Don't take work home.
- ▶ Find alternative community groups involved with young people.

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**REFLECTION ON EFFECTIVE COPING TECHNIQUES**

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- ▶ WHAT STRATEGIES WORK FOR YOU?
- ▶ WHAT IDEAS HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM OTHERS?
- ▶ HOW DO YOU HELP COLLEAGUES WHO AREN'T REACHING OUT FOR SUPPORT BUT NEED HELP
- ▶ WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE PEOPLE IF YOU SAW THEY WERE STRESSED?

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**Make a Commitment to Yourself**

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NCJFCJ Judicial Wellness Initiative  
<https://www.ncjfcj.org/judicial-wellness-initiative>

**Start NOW!**

[vreyes@ncjfcj.org](mailto:vreyes@ncjfcj.org) Judge Victor Reyes  
[Wellness4judiciary@gmail.com](mailto:Wellness4judiciary@gmail.com) Jen Donovan

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