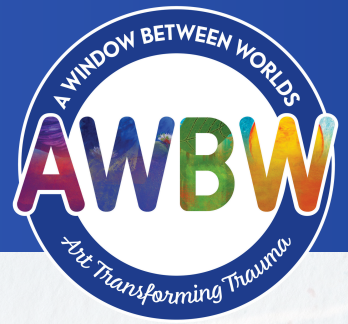


# Protecting Staff from the Hazards of Vicarious Trauma



People who work in construction have to wear a bright yellow vest and a sturdy construction hat to protect them. The safety hazards are a known condition of the job and so there are structures put in place to protect construction workers from harm. Similarly in the nonprofit world we are exposed to trauma as part of our day to day work - and so we need our own bright yellow vests and hard hats.

## Supporting Trauma Workers

Supporting workers experiencing secondary trauma may be complex, but solutions and inroads can be made. **Here are some ideas to get you started:**

- Shift the Trauma Informed Care (TIC) lens onto your staff team. Use the same rigorous analysis that was given to providing TIC to your clients to look at policies, practices, and supports for staff.
- Identify some "hard hats." Generous sick time, vacation time, and Employee Assistance Programs are a great start but they are just the beginning.
  - Create safe spaces for staff to bring their humanness to work - whether that's through personal check-ins, shout outs, etc - build a team culture that supports authenticity and vulnerability.
  - Normalize conversations around secondary trauma. Avoid letting staff believe that this is an individual problem. Talk about it openly, and come up with strategies to support each other as a team when staff are being impacted.
  - Discuss personal self-care while also providing care during work hours. Provide restorative, healing practices on an ongoing basis - art, dance, yoga, meditation, playing games, etc. If you can afford to bring in experts, great. If you can't, what can employees share with each other? How can these practices be built into team meetings, team building events, etc? Even with little to no budget these practices can be built into your day.
  - Model self-care and acknowledge the impact of trauma at every level of the hierarchy. Managers must stop working during their time off if they want staff to feel they can also not work during time off. Salaried does not mean you are always on the clock. Set healthy boundaries about being completely off the clock.
  - Check-in with staff regularly during one-on-ones about how they are being impacted, how the organization can support them, and making sure staff feel safe to share honestly, as well as get support and tap into the resources that are available.

