HANDOUT 19.3 SIGNS OF STRESS, VICARIOUS TRAUMA, BURN-OUT

**Signs of Cumulative Stress**

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| Physical | Emotional | Behavioral | Cognitive | Spiritual/Philosophical |
| Extended fatigue  Frequent psychical complaints  Sleep disorders  Appetite changes | Anxiety  Feeling alienated from others  Desire to be alone  Negativism/cynicism  Suspiciousness/paranoia  Depression/chronic sadness  Feeling pressured /overwhelmed  Diminished pleasure | Irritability  Anger displacement, blaming others  Reluctance to start/finish projects  Social withdrawal  Absenteeism  Unwillingness/refusal to take leave  Substance abuse, self-medication  Disregard for safety/risky behaviour | Tired of thinking  Obsessive thinking  Difficulty concentrating  Increased distractibility/ loss of interest  Problems with decisions/ priorities  Feeling indispensable/ obsessions  Diminished tolerance for ambiguity  Constricted thoughts  Rigid, inflexible thinking | Doubting value system/religious belief  Questioning major life areas (Profession, employment, lifestyle)  Feeling threatened and victimised  Disillusionment  Self-preoccupation |

**Signs of Critical Incident Stress**

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| Physical | Emotional | Behavioral | Cognitive | Spiritual/Philosophical |
| Sleep disturbances  Nightmares  Aches and pains  Nausea, gastro – intestinal distress  Appetite and digestive changes  Sweating, shivering  Faintness, dizziness  Muscle tremors/weakness  Elevated heartbeat, respiration  Uncoordinated movements  Extreme and/or persistent fatigue  Headaches  Lowered resistance to colds and infections | Rapidly shifting emotions  Numbness  Guilt/survivor guilt  Exhilaration, survivor joy  Anger, sadness  Helplessness/feeling overwhelmed  Detachment, feeling unreal  Disorientation  Feeling out of control  Mood swings, feeling unstable  Anxiety, fear of recurrence  Depression, grief  Irritability, hostility  Self-blame, shame  Fragility, feeling vulnerable | Startle reaction/ restlessness  Sleep and appetite disorders  Difficulty expressing oneself  Constant talking about the  event  Arguments  Withdrawal  Excessive dark humour  Slowed reactions/accident  proneness  Inability to rest or to let go  Avoiding reminders of the event  Social relational disorders  Difficulty connecting with “outsiders”  Lowered activity level  Increased use of alcohol, drugs | Difficulty concentrating  Racing, circular thoughts  Slowed thinking  Memory problems  Confusion  Impaired problem-solving  Difficulty making decisions  Intrusive images/memories  Loss of perspective  Reactivation of previous traumatic events  Preoccupation with an event | Profound loss of trust  “Why me” struggle  Increased cynicism  Loss of self confidence  Loss of purpose  Renewed faith in a higher being  Profound existential questioning  Loss of belief in co-operative spirit of mankind |

Adapted from *Prevention of Professional Burn-out with Care Workers: Self-Care and Organizational Care,* Admira, 2005

**Signs of Vicarious Trauma**

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| **Physical** | **Emotional** | **Behavioral** | **Cognitive** |
| * Sleep disturbances | * Anxiety * Startle response * Denial or numbing * Depression * Reawakening of own past trauma | * Social withdrawal * Addiction (alcohol, drugs, gambling, etc.) | * Nightmares * Polarized thinking * Entrenched cynicism * Obsession with bad people or things |

Concern Worldwide, 2012

**Signs of Burnout**

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| **Physical** | **Emotional** | **Behavioral** | **Attitudinal** |
| * Loss of energy, chronic fatigue * Frequent and prolonged colds * Headaches * Sleep problems * Ulcers, gastro-intestinal disorders * Weight loss or gain * Flare-up of pre-existing medical disorder * Injuries from high-risk behavior * Muscular pain * Increase premenstrual syndrome | * Depression * Helplessness * Feeling trapped * Irritability/anger * Frustration * Fear of “going crazy” * Over-reactions/ under-reactions | * Absenteeism * Increased consumption (caffeine, tobacco, alcohol, drugs) * Tardiness * Difficulty expressing oneself verbally or in writing * Accident prone * Poor performance/reduced effectiveness * Disrespect * Over-activity/underactivity * Decrease in quality of services * Unwillingness to take leave * Risk-taking | * Disillusionment * Low morale * Focus on “failures” * Loss of emotional meaning of work * Distrust * Cynicism towards colleagues and organization; receivers of service; about self and own role |

UNHCR, 2001