# REKINDLING from BURNOUT

This guide is to give you a peek inside the covers of *Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others*. We've pulled out some quotes to exemplify key concepts of the book.

We also recommend checking out <u>Laura van Dernoot Lipsky's TED Talk</u>, where the author speaks about the toll of our work and recognizing the importance of presence. -Abby, <u>Lawrence</u> and the Rekindling Team

#### A Guide to Trauma Stewardship

"This book is written for anyone who is doing work with an intention to make the world more sustainable and hopeful - all in all, a better place - and who, through this work, is exposed to the hardship, pain, crisis, trauma, or suffering of other living beings or the planet itself." (7)

# What is Secondary Trauma?

Also known as:
Trauma exposure response
Vicarious trauma
Compassion fatigue
Empathic strain
...all leading to Burnout!

"My work had transformed the way I engaged with the world...I had absorbed and accumulated trauma to the point that it had become part of me, and my view of the world had changed." (1)

"All kinds of work-related stress, emotional or behavioral responses to the demands of the workplace, and other work-related conditions are also fluffed off as "secondary trauma." (Jon R Conte, PhD, xi)

We are not really talking about the little stresses and navigations of everyday interpersonal interactions (though they can be stressful indeed!). We are talking about the suffering we may bear witness to in our work, and the ways in which our bodies and our psyches absorb and react to that suffering.



#### What is Trauma Stewardship?

"Trauma stewardship refers to the entire conversation about how we come to do this work (for us, library work!), how we are affected by it, and how we make sense of and learn from our experiences...We know that as stewards, we create a space for and honor others' hardship and suffering, and yet we do not assume their pain as our own. We care for others to the best of our ability without taking on their paths as our paths...We develop and maintain a long-term strategy that enables us to remain whole and helpful to others and our surroundings even amid great challenges." (6)

#### **Personal Dynamics**

- "The practice of trauma stewardship demands such a high level of consciousness from us...we want to 'present' with ourselves, an activity that is this book we can consider synonymous with being 'mindful.'" (12)
- "The more personal our connection to our work, the greater the gifts we bring
  to it...at the same time, the more we identify with the type of trauma we're
  exposed to, the greater its impact on us may be...To be an effective trauma
  steward, it is important to know where our own self ends and another's self
  begins." (20-21)
- "Evaluating our trauma exposure response is critical, because how we are impacted by our work in the present directly affects our work in the future."
   (42)

# **Organizational Tendencies**

• "Our ability to be effective trauma stewards is directly influenced by the organization we work for...at the same time, we must recognize the role we play in shaping our organization." (16-17)

#### **Societal Forces**

- "Rooting our concept of trauma stewardship in a larger framework of systematic oppression and liberation theory is extremely important." (28)
- "Without a sense of the big picture, it is impossible to have any meaningful conversation about what we want to do collectively to improve the circumstances of our lives and work." (27)

# What is Trauma Exposure Response?

"...the transformation that takes place within us as a result of exposure to the suffering of other living beings or the planet...the ways in which the world looks and feels like a different place to you as a result of your doing your work." (41)

# The Sixteen Trauma Exposure Responses:

# Feeling helpless and hopeless (48-51)

- "The positive may be eclipsed and the negative exalted."
- "Workers who feel they are not functioning well in a specific trauma-related situation may imagine that they will experience the same difficulties in all similar situations. A person with such an attitude is likely to experience a greater sense of helplessness than someone who understands each situation to be a specific instance and not an indicator of future coping capacity."



#### A sense that one can never do enough (59-64)

- "The larger oppression model argues that this line of socialization leads to further oppression within and between groups, and leaves individuals with a deep, lingering sense of not being enough...ever,"
- "[This] can confuse our ability to be honest about how we're actually doing, day to day."

# Hypervigilance (64-67)

"Having a trauma exposure response can make us feel like we're always 'on,'
even during times when there is absolutely nothing that can or should be
done"

#### **Diminished creativity** (67-69)

- "You may find that you're bored with what you're doing and can't remember a time when you felt creative."
- "Diminished creativity as a trauma exposure response may help explain the stagnant conditions in many of our fields of practice."

# **Inability to embrace complexity** (70-73)

- "You crave clear signs of good and bad and right and wrong, and you feel an urgent need to choose sides."
- "Workers may escalate a volatile situation by making assumptions, passing judgment, talking about things they are not sure of, or engaging in...shortsighted behaviors."

# Minimizing (78-80)

- "Minimizing occurs when we trivialize a current situation by comparing it with another situation we regard as more dire."
- "It takes only one extreme situation to get us started on minimizing everything else."
- "This phenomenon is frequently a factor in creating a negative organizational culture. If only the most extreme cases deserve attention or get respect, then it behooves us to experience and express things in the most extreme way."

# Chronic exhaustion/physical ailments (81-84)

- "As exposure accrues, our bodies and minds will require extra attention in order to become fully rested and refreshed."
- "Listening to our bodies is a direct way to gain insight."

# Inability to listen/deliberate avoidance (90-91)

 "Avoidance often shows up in people's personal lives...many people start feeling overwhelmed by their personal lives and lose energy for those things that once brought them joy."

# **Dissociative moments** (91-93)

 "Can happen when a person experiences intrusive or overwhelming feelings...you realize that you have not heard the last five sentences, or maybe you failed to track the behavior in front of you"

#### Sense of persecution (93-95)

- "We become convinced that others are responsible for our well-being and that we lack the personal agency to transform our circumstances."
- "...a state in which individuals, and eventually organizations, begin to thrive on choosing to remain powerless in the face of adversity."



#### Guilt (95-98)

- "...can undermine the possibility for authentic connection between people."
- "Workers get caught up in their discomfort about the disparity between their lives and the lives of those they serve."

#### Fear (99-101)

- "...fear of intense feelings, of personal vulnerability, or of potential victimization."
- "...we may not know how to process it, and thus it occupies space inside us."
- "Fear is a natural and healthy response...the physical price we pay for distancing ourselves from this natural response may be very costly."

#### Anger and cynicism (101-104)

- "Anger is complicated because the majority of people in our society have not been raised with good information or skills for managing it."
- "Do we know how to work with our anger and resolve it in a productive way that does no harm and instead results in creativity and positive change?"

#### Inability to empathize/numbness (104-108)

 "...often happens as a result of one's system being overwhelmed with incoming stimuli."

# **Addictions** (108-111)

 "For some people, this tendency to numb out--whether by rushing home to drink or plugging into another violent video game or simply cultivating the ability to ignore your body's aches and pains -- can graduate to addiction."

#### Grandiosity, an inflated sense of importance related to one's work (111-113)

 "When work becomes the center of our identity, it may be because it feeds our sense of grandiosity...many people get hooked on involvement in others' lives: solving their problems, becoming a powerful figure for them, getting increasingly attached to the feeling of being needed and useful."

# Profile: Deadria Boyland (124-129)

- "There are a couple of things that I recognize as manager. I recognize when we have a high needs environment...I ask [my staff] how they're doing and feeling and ask if they want to talk."
- "I have to be a leader. I have to practice what I preach. I can't say these things to them and ask them to follow a plan and hold them accountable if I'm not doing it myself."
- "I think I'm here because I have figured out how to do the job and also to be of support to other. I'm driven to help others do this work and be successful at it. By successful, I mean doing it and being healthy."

# Opening up to Inquiry and Self-Care

- "As we map our trauma exposure response, we can shift into a more active phase of our journey." (117)
- "You can begin by acknowledging that your stresses are genuine and you are looking for healthier ways to deal with them." (121)



- "More than anything else, what we need in order to practice trauma stewardship is knowledge of our own lives – what we feel, value, and experience, and what we need to do to take care of ourselves." (116)
- "I encourage you to ask yourself if what you are doing in your life is working for you on all levels of your being. Does it edify you? Do you use it to escape your life? Does it bring you joy? Does it support your ego?" (120)
- "We know that the people...we're working with have a long road ahead of them. We know that our physical health requires daily maintenance...And yet when it comes to caring for ourselves...we often choose to believe that...we are entitled to a...less involved role in our own well-being." (123)
- "How do we care well enough for ourselves to reconcile all that we are witnessing?" (122)

#### **Coming into the Present Moment**

- "There are a number of reasons why being in the present moment is helpful in trauma stewardship. One is that until we slow down enough to honestly feel how we are doing, we can't assess our current state and what we need...The 'felt sense' is what tells you where you are and how you feel, moment by moment." (130)
- "Hyperintellectualism occurs when we seek to abandon the felt sense altogether. We may attempt to move out of our bodies, hearts and spirits to live only in our heads." (131)
- "As we deepen our ability to make contact with our inner selves, we slowly build our capacity for self-diagnosis and self-healing." (132)
- "Many of us who work in helping professions are used to operating at a sprint, so coming into the present moment may feel like a powerful contradiction."
   (134)
- "There are innumerable ways to return to stillness, including such centering acts as breathing, meditation, mindful movement, and prayer." (134)

#### The Five Directions

- "The Five Directions offer a description of the world and a set of instructions
  for making our way through it...Honoring traditions from around the globe, we
  allow each of these directions to assist us in returning to the place where our
  greatest hope for understanding, peace, health, fulfillment, and joy exists:
  within ourselves." (145)
- "By moving among the directions and their elements, we are able to create, and most important, maintain, a daily practice through which we become centered. When we are centered, we are in the fifth direction." (146)
- "We may feel overwhelmed, bombarded, off our game, and at a loss, sometimes several times each day. The Five Directions can guide us the regain calm - to once again remember wo we are, where we're headed, and what we need." (146)



# Profile: Zaid Hassan (161-166)

- "My ancestors' and parents' history is part of my personal history, and everyday I realize how much it has shaped the work I do."
- "If we want people working with empathy and care and to do this well, we have to build practices around health and trauma...how do we embody in the space and in ourselves what we are doing? The problematic paradigms we work with manifest themselves in the physical space all the time."
- "Understandably, people in the center of trauma feel there is nothing more urgent, and in one sense there isn't. But every conversation is about saving the world...I had to realize that the world didn't end because I wasn't there."
- "I realize now that the work is about creating or opening a space and keeping it empty. What skills does it take to hold a space open so that the wisdom that is already there can come out?"

# First Direction: North, Inquiry Why am I doing what I'm doing?

- It is difficult to be fully aware of what we are doing if we are oblivious to what motivates us to do it. (147)
- ★ Try This: Write your answer down to the question above as an intention you can return to, talk it out with someone you trust, or think your answer to yourself. "Remind yourself, gently, that you are making a choice to do this work. Take a deep breath' breathe in both responsibility and the freedom in this acknowledgment." (150)

#### **Trauma Mastery**

For many survivors of trauma, our lack of control over a traumatic incident is
one of the most terrifying and unnerving things about it...What humans often
do to reconcile this lack of control is to create and re-create situations as
similar to the traumatic incident as possible...We tell ourselves that this time
there will be a different outcome. (156)

#### Is This Working for Me?

- I have heard many people say that they embrace their work in part because it reinforces a [negative] worldview they have clung to over time...The echo effect is compelling, but it often reinforces pain and negativity. (168)
- On the other hand, work provides many people with a means to fix what they see as broken in the world. It can be a relief to find likeminded colleagues who will work toward a shared goal, especially when that goal involves rectifying injustice. (169)
- ★ Try This: "Brainstorm five ways in which you think what you are doing is working for you...Assess to what degree those ways are or are not in your best interest or in the best interest of the people you serve." (171)

# Second Direction: East, Choosing Our Focus Where Am I Putting My Focus? Reframing

- "It is always up to us where we place our focus." (173)
- "Reframing may take different forms...Sometimes it means concentrating on what's in front of you, and sometimes it means stepping back." (174)



# Resourcing

- "You can regroup by remembering...moments, places, and experiences that engage your parasympathetic nervous system...[that bring] you peaceful and joyful sensations." (174)
- "Remind yourself that you can come back to a place of homeostasis." (175)
- ★ Try this: "Think of a challenging work situation. Write down three things that make it challenging, and three things that you appreciate about it. Look at your lists and ask yourself, 'Where am I more likely to focus and why?'" (176)

#### What Is My Plan B?

- "Having a plan B reminds us that what we do is an act of free will. Plan B could involve a career change, a new place to live, a fresh approach to our current work, or a different life altogether." (180)
- "When you share dreams with colleagues and loved ones, their attention may remind you that life is filled with possibilities." (181)
- ★ Try this: "Ask yourself, 'If I weren't doing this work, what would I love to do?'...Generate a list of five things you can do over the next five weeks to help you get closer to realizing your plan B." (183)

# Third Direction: South, Building Compassion and Community Creating a Microculture [Community]

- "Our chosen group may nurture us by emphasizing a different set of values than the culture at large." (184)
- "Our microculture should support us in two ways: by showering us with encouragement and by holding us accountable. (185)

# **Practicing Compassion for Myself and Others**

"Maintaining and cultivating compassion for oneself and others is a necessary
part of trauma stewardship. It keeps us connect to our most loving values, from
which our best selves can shine through." (196)

#### What Can I Do for Large-Scale Systemic Change?

- "We start with ourselves, and then extend our compassion to those who are close to us, and finally extend it to people all over the world." (200)
- ★ Try this: "Think of an area where you are part of the dominant group (race, class, sexual identity, or another area.) Generate a list of four ways that you could be an ally to someone. Dedicate one action per week to using your privilege for good."

# Fourth Direction: West, Finding Balance Engaging with Our Lives Outside of Work

- "What moments can you reclaim to attend to your inner well-being?" (209)
- "Decide that being a martyr in the workplace is a thing of the past." (211)
- "When you go away from work, really leave." (212)

# **Moving Energy Through**

• "We can't get mired in one overstressed state. We need to keep our internal energy moving, like the wind." (213)



• "Ways of moving energy through include working out, writing, singing, chanting, dancing, martial arts, walking, and laughing, just as long as these activities are done with mindfulness." (217)

#### Gratitude

- "Locating something to be thankful for at all times is an essential part of trauma stewardship." (223)
- ★ Try this: "At both the beginning and the end of your workday, take a distinct moment to think of one thing you are grateful for." (226)

#### Fifth Direction: A Daily Practice of Centering Ourselves (227-243)

- Create an intention for your day
- Cultivate moments of mindfulness
- ★ Try this: "When your day begins, close your eyes, take several deep breaths, and ask yourself, 'What is my intention today?"
- **★ Try this**: At the end of your day, before sleep overtakes you, ask yourself 'What can I put down? What am I ready to be done with? What don't I need to carry with me for another day?' Put it down, and don't pick it up again the next day.
- ★ **Try this**: Designate a day of rest. Whether you identify it as Shabbat or the Sabbath or simply the day off, designate a weekly day of non-obligation for yourself.
- ★ Try this: In addition to your day of rest, allot some time for yourself each day when you don't obligate yourself to anything, but instead give yourself total freedom to delight in one of your favorite states of being. Be present with this for however long you are able. Notice how you feel when you free yourself from obligation and allow yourself to be centered within."

Van Dernoot Lipsky, Laura. *Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2009.

