



Providing Excellent and Compassionate Care to  
Our Clients, Their Families, Our Coworkers and Ourselves  
During the COVID – 19 Pandemic.

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# Session 9: Assessing and Coping With Exhaustion

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- Compassion Fatigue
- Vicarious Trauma
- Burn Out
- Trauma Exposed Response
- Warning Signs of Trauma Exposed Response

# Conflict of Interest

- However.....a few months ago I had the painful experience of having kidney stones.
- While passing those kidney stones I was given two Tylenol 3's.
- And.....I liked them.
- They should make that stuff in a six pack!!!!





# BACKDRAFT



**Fire .....Hospice Palliative Care**

**Excessive Fuel .....Multiple Patients and Family Members**

**High Temperature .....Can Not Alleviate Suffering**

**Inadequate Air .....No Time to Debrief**

**Increase Ventilation .....Time Alone**

**= *Fire Backdraft* .....= *Emotional Backdraft***



**If you see a spark, you will find it in the ashes. —*Elie Wiesel***

## BACKDRAFT

A backdraft is a dramatic event caused by a fire, resulting from rapid re-introduction of oxygen to combustion in an oxygen-depleted environment; for example, the breaking of a window or opening of a door to an enclosed space. Backdrafts present a serious threat to firefighters.

### Fire

Excessive Fuel

High Temperature

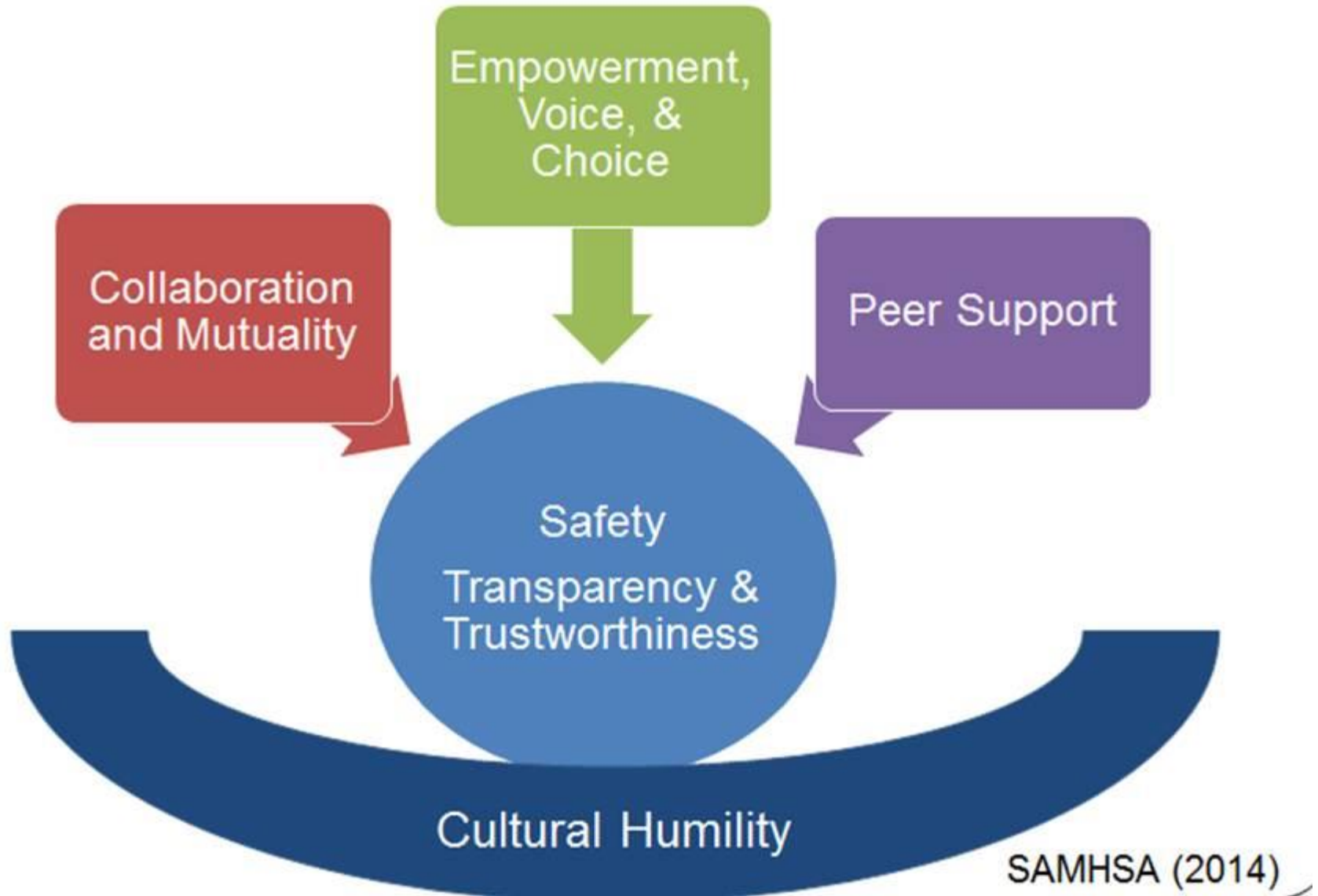
Inadequate Air

Increase Ventilation

**= Fire Backdraft**



# Trauma Informed Practice and Community



## Compassion Fatigue:

- A deep erosion of our compassion, of our ability to tolerate strong emotions/difficult stories in others
- Evident in helpers' professional and personal life
- Can also happen to caregivers (“caregiver fatigue”)

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

Rachel Naomi Remen, Kitchen Table Wisdom 1996

## Vicarious Trauma:

“Vicarious” means experiencing or feeling something by hearing about someone else’s trauma (as opposed to experiencing it firsthand).

“Vicarious trauma” occurs because of the elevated levels of exhaustion from:

- the cumulative,
- repeated,
- persuasive,
- long term stress of exposure
- to stories of violence or trauma.



# Vicarious Trauma

What are the signs and symptoms of vicarious trauma?

Vicarious trauma may manifest in a number of domains,  
including (but not limited to)  
physical,  
psychosocial,  
spiritual and/or  
worldview.

## Burnout

**Burnout** is a term that has been used since the early 1980s describe the physical and emotional exhaustion that workers can experience when they have low job satisfaction and feel powerless and overwhelmed at work.

- Exhaustion of physical or emotional strength or motivation usually as a result of prolonged stress.
- However, burnout does not necessarily mean that our view of the world has been damaged, or that we have lost the ability to feel compassion for others.

### COVID-19 Burnout:

- PPE supply – wearing PPE – different messaging about PPE
- Lack of contact with co-workers – working on the kitchen table.
- Fear of infection – fear of second wave - +++ media reporting.
- Changing protocols and directives.
- I need a haircut.

## Trauma Exposure Response

- When a change has taken place inside of a person as a result of exposure to the suffering of other living beings on the planet.



# 16 Warning signs of Trauma exposure response

Laura van Dernoot Lipsky (2009) 'Trauma Stewardship'

1. Feeling helpless and hopeless
2. A sense that one can never do enough
3. Hypervigilance
4. Diminished creativity
5. Inability to embrace complexity
6. Minimizing
7. Chronic exhaustion/physical ailments
8. Inability to listen/deliberate avoidance
9. Dissociative moments
10. Sense of persecution
11. Guilt
12. Fear
13. Anger and Cynicism
14. Inability to empathize/numbing
15. Addictions
16. Grandiosity: an inflated sense of the importance of one's work

[www.cambridgesupervisiontraining.com](http://www.cambridgesupervisiontraining.com) Anthea Millar

## Trauma Stewardship

“Trauma stewardship explores how humans are impacted by **exposure** to the suffering, hardship,

crisis and **trauma** of humans,

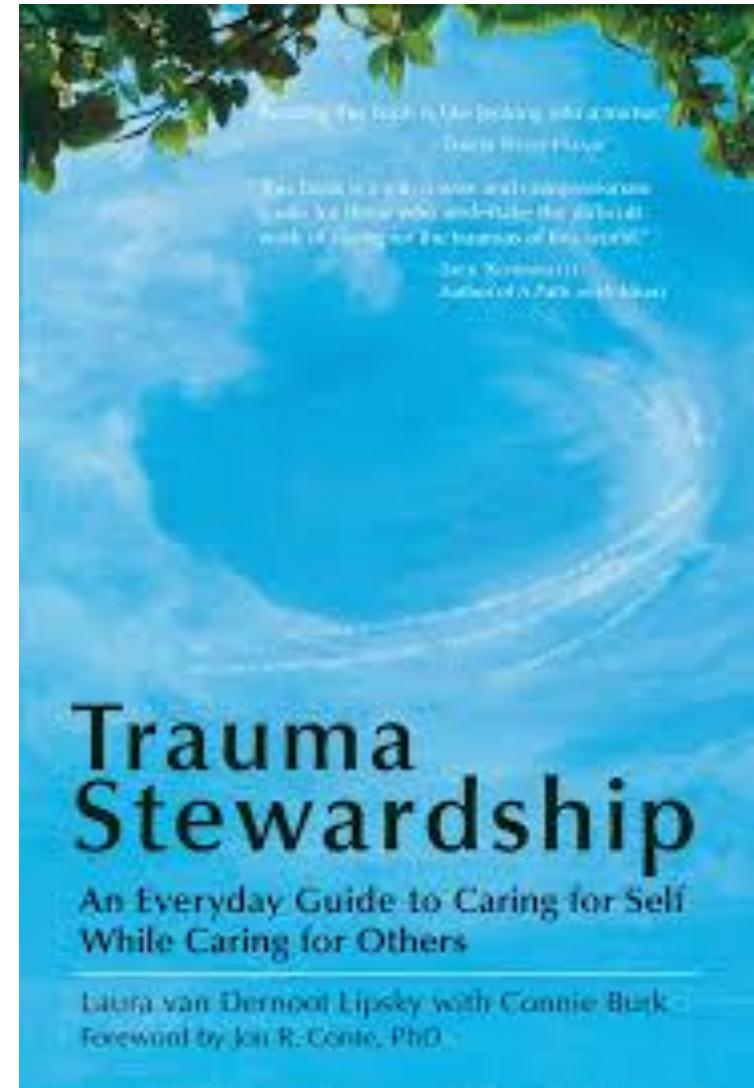
other living beings and the planet itself. ...

In each case, they are finding a way

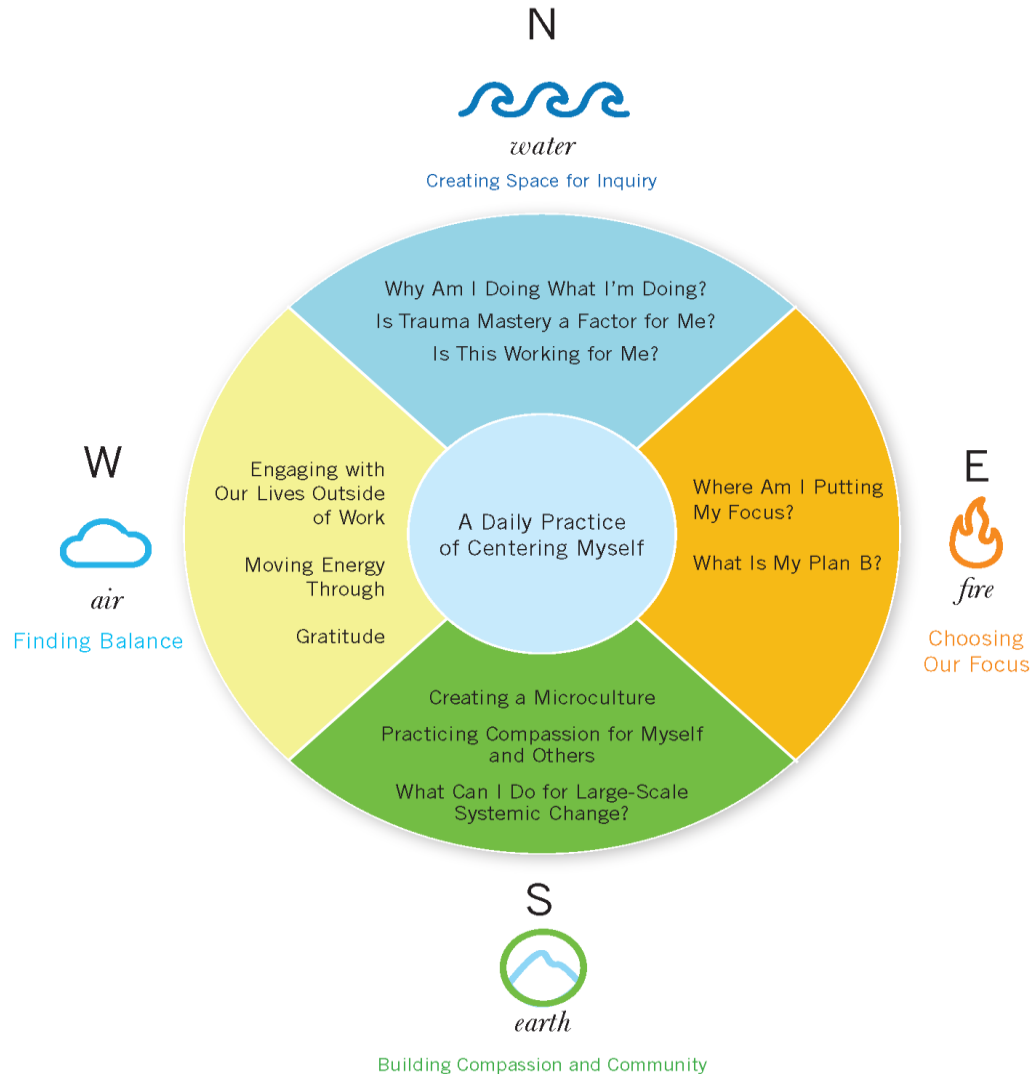
to release what has built up in their body –

they are able to recover

from the **trauma response**.



# The *five* Directions

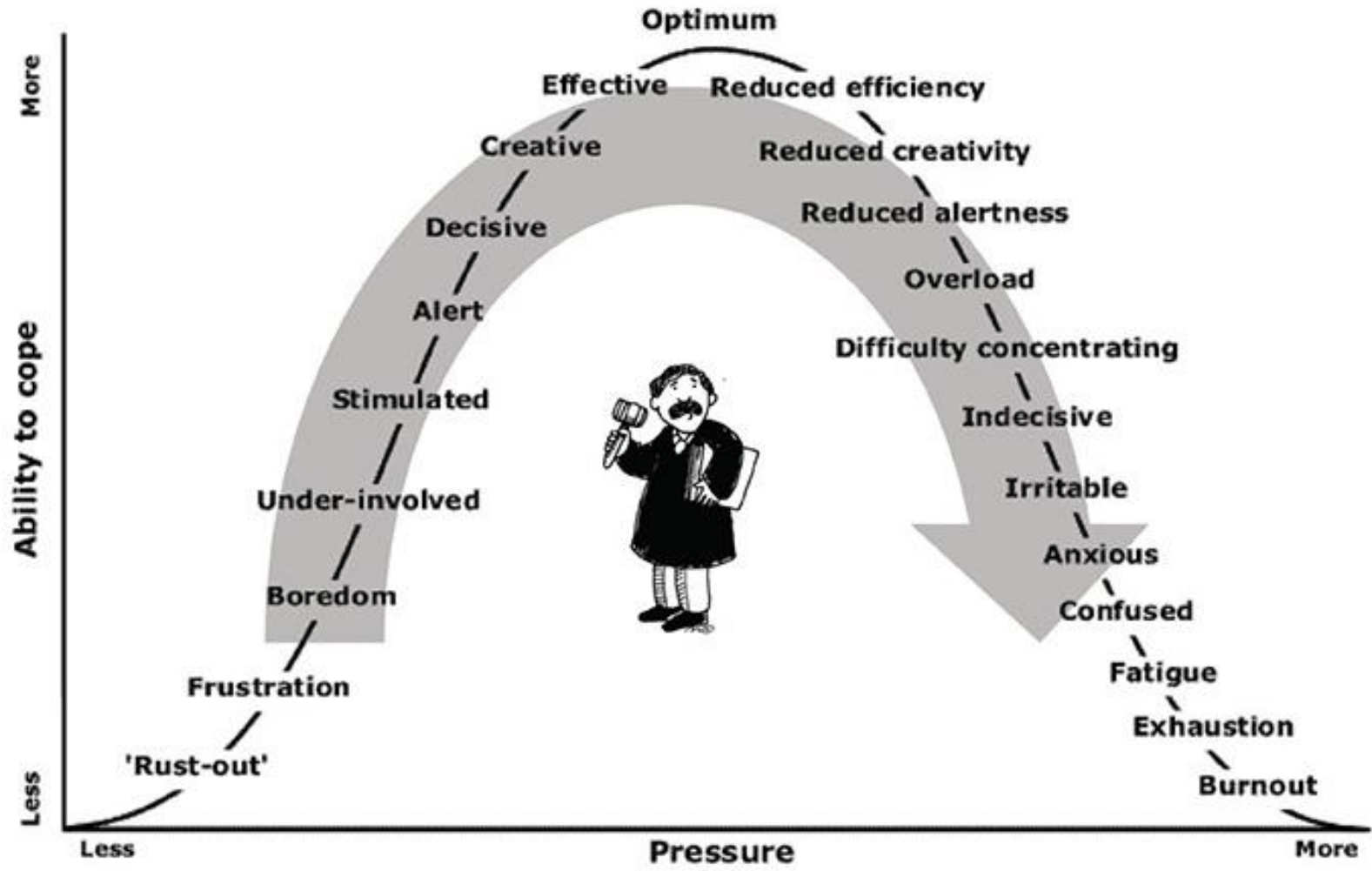


## *Trauma Stewardship*

A daily practice through which individuals, organizations, and societies tend to the hardship, pain, or trauma experienced by humans, other living beings, or our planet itself. By developing the deep sense of awareness needed to care for ourselves while caring for others and the world around us, we can greatly enhance our potential to work for change, ethically and with integrity, for generations to come.



# Yerkes-Dodson Law: Too Much/Little = Stress



# Hyper Arousal Will Be Our Biggest Enemy

Hyper Arousal – **sets off** – Chemical Reaction – **engages** – Fight, Flight or Freeze

**4 X 4 Breathing Technique** to stay out of the fight or flight response.

This is the technique:

**Step One:** Take a breath in through your nose to the count of four.

**Step Two:** Hold that breath for the count of four.

**Step Three:** Breath out through your mouth to the count of four.

**Step Four:** At the end of breathing out, hold your breath to the count of four.



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When a person is going off shift say to them:

1. What was most difficult about your shift?
2. Is there anything I can do to make things easier?
3. Thank you for being here today.

## For those working directly with People Suffering from COVID – 19:

- Keep talking to your team. Make talking your self medication tool.
- It is normal to have fears about the virus – give those fears a voice.
- If a “shake – rattle and roll body reaction” comes on...don’t stop it.....let it come.
- We must share our vulnerability – which in turns makes us stronger.
- Knowledge is power which breaks down fear.
- This is going to be a marathon – talking will be our power drink.
- Having a darn good cry is healthy – let it come.
- Rely on us old farts.....we might be to high risk to do front line work, but we can support you.

“Let us not underestimate how hard it is to be compassionate. Compassion is hard because it requires the inner disposition to go with others to places where they are weak, vulnerable, lonely, and broken.

But this is not our spontaneous response to suffering. What we desire most is to do away with suffering by fleeing from it or finding a quick cure for it.

And so we ignore our greatest gift...  
our ability to be there, to listen and to enter into solidarity  
with those who suffer.”

— [Henri J.M. Nouwen](#)