

A Self - Assessment Tool

This tool is based on an original assessment tool developed by Stamm and Figley (Stamm, at pp.18 - 19; Figley, at pp.13 -14), and offered by them for use with mental health caregivers. The viability of using this modified tool to assess vicarious trauma with lawyers is still under assessment. It is recommended that this tool only be used as a self-assessment guide for lawyers who wish to consider their personal susceptibility to vicarious trauma. No mental health diagnosis should be made on the basis of this tool. If a lawyer has a mental health concern as a result of considering the elements of this self-assessment tool, the lawyer should consult further with a qualified mental health practitioner.

Charles Figley has said that caring deeply about others makes us emotionally vulnerable to the catastrophes that affect them. Compassion has both positive and negative aspects that may manifest themselves in your personal functioning, your work, and in your relationships with others through your work - including clients, co-workers, and adversaries. This self-test assists you in assessing your own level of stress from vicarious trauma. Try to use this tool at least monthly, as well as at the conclusion of any major piece of litigation involving death or alleged violence. Retain past tests to permit you to compare total scores as well as specific answers from test to test.

Name:

Date of Assessment:

Assign a number between 1 and 5 that comes closest to your existing feeling about yourself and your work, with 1 being rarely/never, to 5 being very often/always

Personal Satisfaction Scale

1. _____ I am happy.
2. _____ I am satisfied with my life.
3. _____ I have beliefs that sustain me and endorse the value of the work I am doing.
4. _____ I learn new things from my clients.
5. _____ I feel connected to others
6. _____ I have a good balance between work, personal relationships, and free time
7. _____ I enjoy the company of some of the people I help.
8. _____ I enjoy my work.
9. _____ I have the tools and resources to do the job I have to do for my clients.
10. _____ I have good peer support when I need to work through a problem or issue in my practise
11. _____ I feel invigorated by helping a client
12. _____ I feel joy as a result of helping a client
13. _____ I have thoughts that I am a success as a helper of my clients
14. _____ I enjoy my peers and co-workers
15. _____ I can rely on my peers and co-workers for support and understanding
16. _____ I have confidence in the skills of my co-workers
17. _____ I trust my co-workers
18. _____ I am able to keep up with new developments in the law for the benefit of my clients
19. _____ I am able to keep up with new methods for better serving clients
20. _____ I feel that my co-workers have confidence in me as a person
21. _____ I feel that my co-workers have confidence in my skills as a lawyer
22. _____ I plan to do this kind of work for a long time to come.

Minimum/Maximum scores: 22/110. Over 95: extremely high potential for work satisfaction; 85 - 95: high potential for work satisfaction; 75 - 85: good potential for work satisfaction; 55 - 75: some potential for work satisfaction; Below 55: Irregular and inconsistent potential for work satisfaction

How you feel about how you do your work

23. _____ I am a sensitive person
24. _____ I think that I need more close friends (people that know me and are supportive of me)
25. _____ I think that there is no one whom I can trust to talk to about my highly stressful experiences and who will understand my kinds of stress.
26. _____ I work too hard for my own good
27. _____ I have felt on edge about professional matters, and have attributed this to work with one or two specific clients
28. _____ I wish I could avoid working with some clients
29. _____ I have felt that my clients dislike me personally and that I need to change that
30. _____ I have felt weak, tired, and run down as a result of my work
31. _____ I have felt depressed as a result of my work
32. _____ I am unsuccessful in separating work from personal life
33. _____ I feel little compassion for or confidence in the skills of my co-workers
34. _____ I feel I am working more for the money than for personal fulfillment
35. _____ I have thoughts that I am a failure in my work
36. _____ I have a sense of worthlessness, disillusionment, or resentment associated with my work
37. _____ I feel that I am distracted by bureaucratic and unimportant tasks of practise and that my skills and work would be better applied to direct client care.
38. _____ I feel that I am not on the path to achieving my life goals
39. _____ I plan to do this kind of work but in different practise circumstances

Risk of Burnout scale: Minimum/Maximum scores: 17/85. 34 or less: low risk for burnout; 35 - 51: moderate risk for burnout; 52 - 68: high risk for burnout; Over 68: extremely high risk for burnout

How you feel about yourself and your work because of your clients

- 40._____ I force myself to avoid certain thoughts or feelings or ideas that remind me of a disturbing experience
- 41._____ I find myself avoiding certain activity or situations because they remind me of a disturbing experience
- 42._____ I have gaps in my memory about disturbing events
- 43._____ I feel estranged from others (clients, co-workers, family, family equivalents)
- 44._____ I have difficulty falling or staying asleep
- 45._____ I have outbursts of anger or frustration, and experience irritability, with little provocation
- 46._____ I startle easily
- 47._____ While working with a client I thought (even momentarily) about violence as a solution to his/her interpersonal difficulty
- 48._____ I have had flashbacks and other intrusive recollections connected to my clients
- 49._____ I have had first-hand experience with traumatic events in my adult life
- 50._____ I have had first-hand experience with traumatic events in my childhood
- 51._____ I have had to "work through" an event in my life that I believed to be traumatic
- 52._____ I am disturbed by something a client has said or done to me, and wonder whether it will be repeated by other clients
- 53._____ I experience dreams or intrusive thoughts that are similar to those of a client
- 54._____ I have experienced intrusive thoughts of a session with a particularly difficult or troubling client
- 55._____ I have involuntarily recalled traumatic personal experiences while assisting a client
- 56._____ I am preoccupied with more than one client
- 57._____ I am losing sleep over a client's traumatic experiences
- 58._____ I have been concerned that I might have been infected by the traumatic stress or experiences of my clients

- 59._____ I remind myself to be less concerned about the well-being of my clients
- 60._____ I have felt trapped in my work with these clients
- 61._____ I have felt a sense of hopelessness about my professional work when working with my client
- 62._____ I have put myself or others in danger for the purpose of working with a client
- 63._____ I have thoughts that I need to demonstrate and prove my skills to others
- 64._____ I have thoughts that I have no control over the results of my work
- 65._____ I am planning to leave this kind of work.

"Risk of vicarious traumatization manifesting itself in a disorder" scale. Any level of risk may manifest itself in a relationship upset or distraction with the client: Minimum/Maximum scores: 26/130. Under 26: low risk of vicarious traumatization; 26 - 52: moderate risk of vicarious traumatization; Over 52: likely risk of vicarious traumatization manifesting itself in reduced client service and high risk of developing into a disorder if uncorrected.