



# Vicarious Trauma Lunch and Learn

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# Quiet time



Let's just sit silently for a minute or so to let ourselves unwind, relax, and turn our attention to where we are now.

# Aims of the day

- Practice some relaxation techniques
- Explore what vicarious trauma is
- And how it might affect you
- How to identify the signs of vicarious trauma
- Explore how we can take better care of ourselves
- Explore how we can build resilience
- Provide some resources
- Close the session with a mindful exercise.

# What is Vicarious Trauma?

- Vicarious derives from Latin, meaning “take the place of another”
- Trauma comes from the Greek word for “wound”.
- Vicarious trauma is exposure to someone else’s trauma.

Finding something traumatic tends to be a combination of the following:

- The event
- The timing of the event
- What’s going on in that person’s life.
- That person’s history and identity.

# How can vicarious trauma affect us in our work?

Anyone who engages empathetically to a victim of trauma can be affected.

Examples of situations which may cause vicarious trauma:

- Hearing accounts of the abuse someone has experienced
- Reading details of tragic deaths
- Repeatedly supporting people in crisis

# Identifying signs of vicarious trauma



## **Emotional**

Signs may include feeling extremely sad or becoming extremely angry and irritable.



## **Behavioural**

Characteristics might present as increased alcohol consumption or eating more – or less – than usual.



## **Cognitive**

Someone might become more cynical and see the world as a terrible place, or they may find it hard to make decisions.



## **Physical**

These signs could include headaches, anxiety, increased sweating or possibly even eczema flares or sleeplessness.



## **Spiritual**

Symptoms don't necessarily relate to faith. It might be that someone loses all hope, begins to dwell in despair and withdraws from social situations.

# How can we build resilience?

1. Self –care- the first two letters of mental health are “me”.
2. Check in with your manager/supervisor (consider peer support)
3. Reflective practice sessions
4. Clinical/External supervision

# Group Discussion – How do you currently look after yourself?



## Regular self-assessment and self-reflection are necessary practices for identifying early signs of vicarious trauma

- Reflective practice could help with vicarious trauma.
- It can get us to think about the ways we do things, identify feelings and learn from our experiences.

### **Reflective practice**

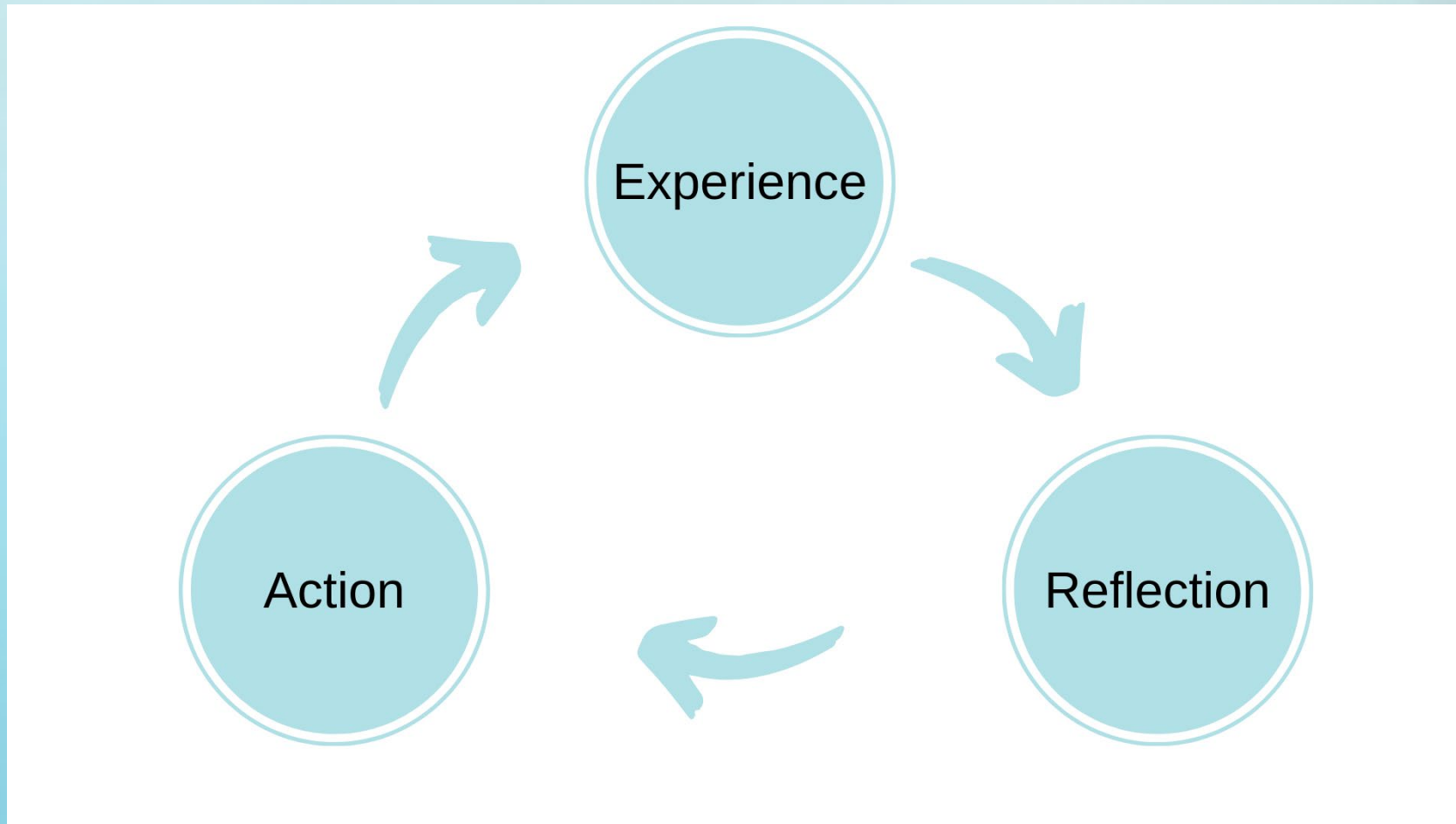
Reflective practice is the ability to reflect on one's actions so as to engage in a process of continuous learning.

- *Donald Schon*

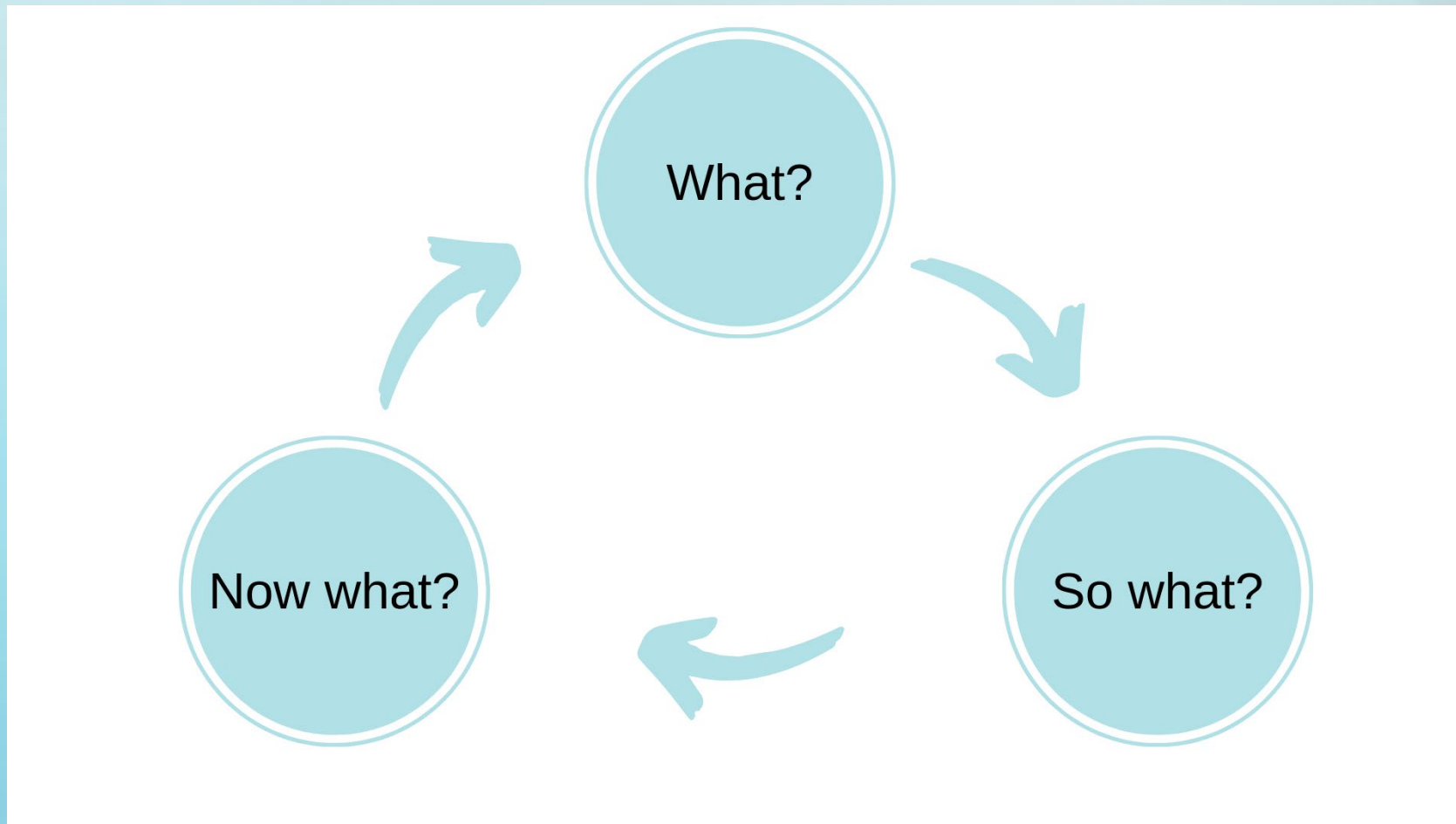
# What are the benefits of reflective Practice?

- Gain new knowledge.
- Tweaking of existing knowledge, for example by changing some of our thinking.
- An improved understanding of the connections between theory and practice.
- An improved understanding of the rationale behind your actions, in terms of factors such as why you do the things that you do, and why you do things a certain way.
- Improvement of your goals and of the rules that you use for decision-making
- A better understanding of yourself, in terms of factors such as your strengths and weaknesses.
- Development to analyse your thoughts more effectively.
- Increased feelings of autonomy, competence, and control.
- Increased motivation to act.
- Improved performance, for example due to learning how to take action in a more effective way, or due to having more motivation to take action.

# ERA Cycle



# Driscoll's What Model



# Gibbs Reflective Cycle



# Types of Reflections

## **Anticipatory reflection.**

Anticipatory reflection is reflection that's performed before an event occurs. For example, this type of reflection can involve asking yourself what might happen, what challenges you're likely to face, how should you respond, and what you can do to prepare.

## **Reflection-in-action.**

Reflection-in-action is reflection that's performed while an event is occurring. For example, this type of reflection can involve asking yourself what's currently happening, whether things are going as expected, how you're feeling, and whether there's anything you should be doing differently.

## **Reflection-on-action.**

Reflection-on-action is reflection that's performed after an event has occurred. For example, this type of reflection can involve asking yourself what happened, what went well, and what you should have done differently

# Tops Tips

## 1. **Invest the time**

Think about reflection as a time investment rather than a time drain. Building regular time to reflect into your schedule will help you to plan your time effectively.

## 2. **Reflect big and small**

Remember that you don't have to reflect only on the big things. We all have hundreds of experiences a day and each of them is worthy of reflection.

## 3. **Choose your own path**

There is no one right method of reflection. Choose the method(s) that work for you and adapt them to suit your own circumstances. If a particular method is not working then don't be afraid to try a new one.

## 4. **It's all about balance**

Balance reflecting on both positive and negative experiences in order to get a complete picture.

# Supervision

- Work with a supervisor or colleague who can provide support and guidance as you navigate challenging cases. Regular supervision can help you stay grounded and prevent vicarious trauma. Its important to be honest with your supervisor.
- Learn and use coping strategies such as mindfulness, relaxation techniques, and stress reduction exercises to help manage the stress and emotional toll of your work.

*“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.” (Remen, 2006)*





# Self – soothing: Palms Up Palms Down Exercise

1. Sit comfortably with your back straight. Close your eyes or lower your eyelids & focus on your breathing. Take a slow, deep breath while counting to 4. Then exhale, counting to 5.
2. Do this 4 times until your breathing is slow & relaxed.
3. Keep breathing slowly & evenly. Hold your hands gently in front of you with your palms up & imagine them holding all the negative or upsetting thoughts & feelings you've had today.
4. Now turn your palms down. Imagine yourself emptying your hands of all the negative or upsetting things you've been carrying today. Let go of them.
5. Keep breathing slowly. Now turn your palms up. Your palms are up & open to Positive Energy & Positive Thoughts & Feelings. Your palms are open to receive support & help.
6. Now slowly open your eyes

# Resources:

- Self-care Psychology <https://www.selfcarepsychology.com>
- The Headington Institute [Resources - Headington Institute \(headington-institute.org\)](http://headington-institute.org)
- [read about stress on the NHS website.](#)
- [Every Mind Matters - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)
- [Guide to wellness action plans \(PDF, 604KB\).](#)