

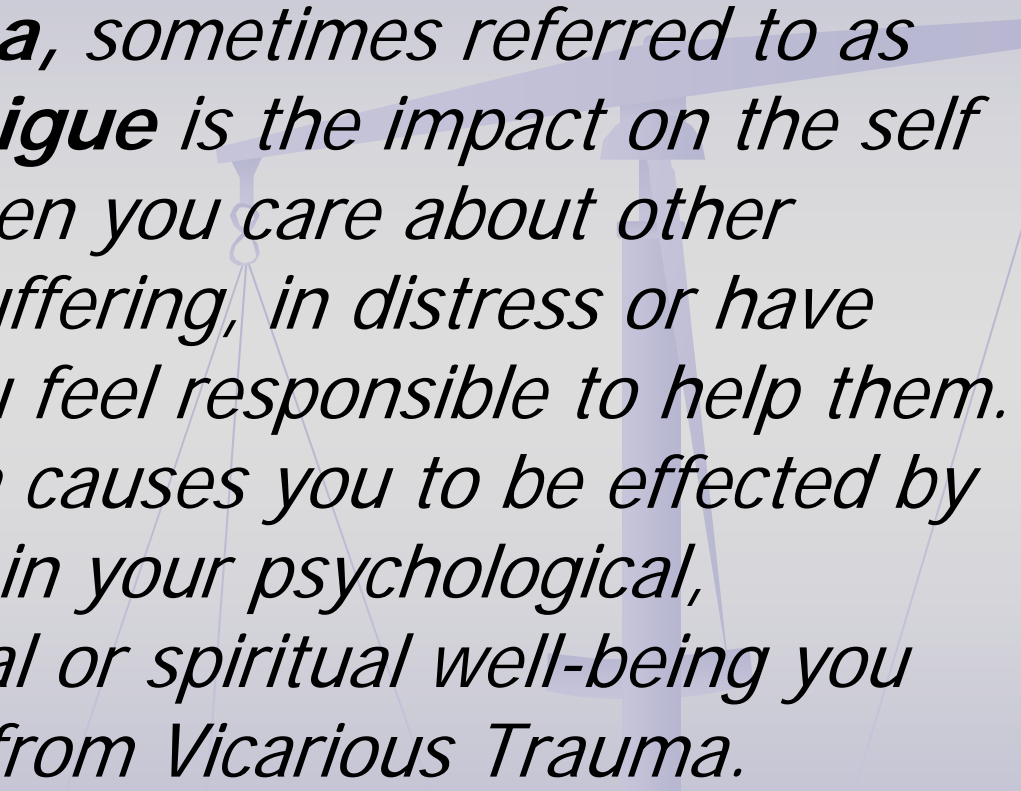
# VICARIOUS TRAUMA



WHEN COMPASSION  
OVERWHELMS THE HELPER

# What is Vicarious Trauma

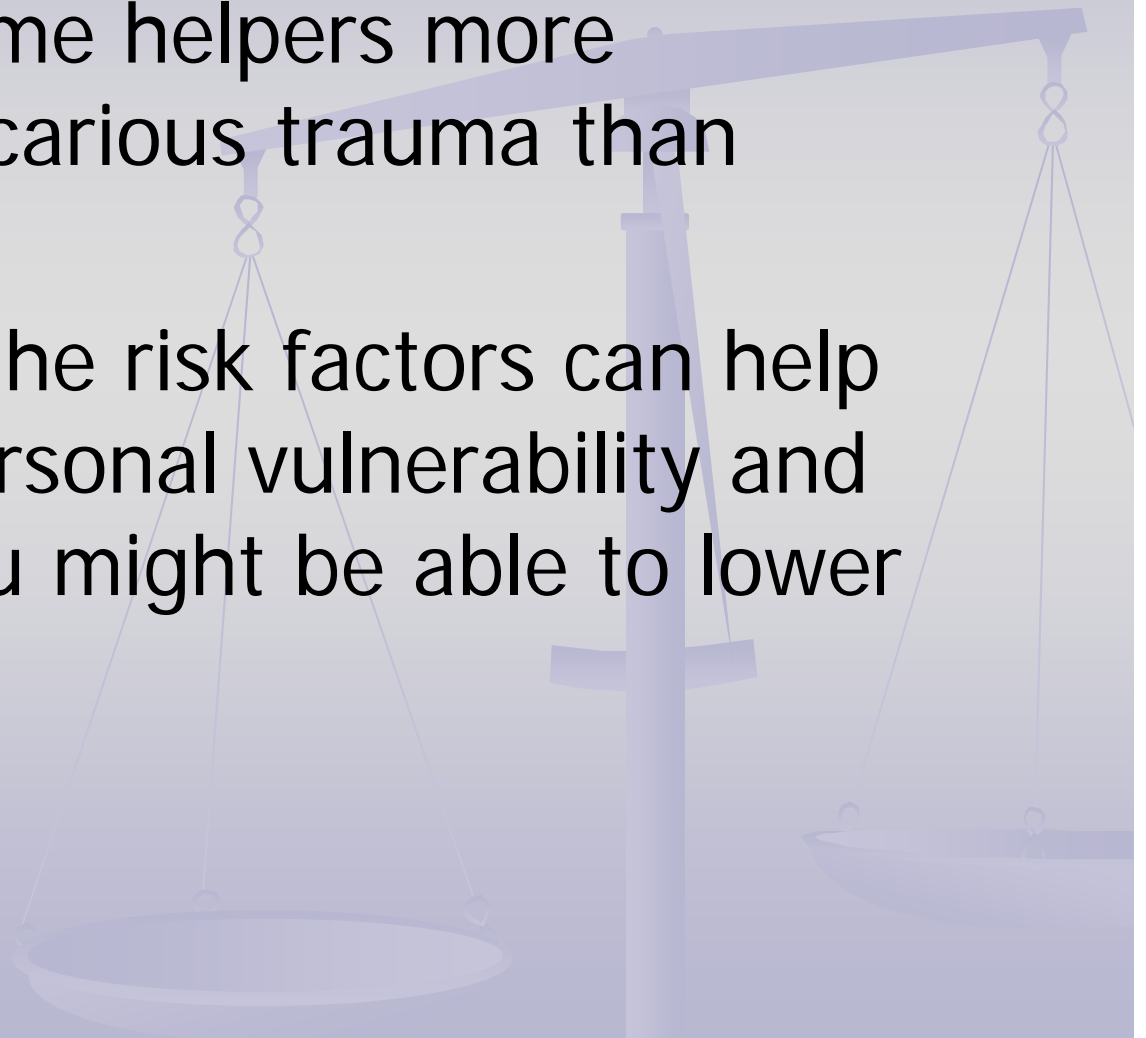
*Vicarious trauma, sometimes referred to as **Compassion Fatigue** is the impact on the self that can occur when you care about other people who are suffering, in distress or have been hurt and you feel responsible to help them. If this compassion causes you to be effected by negative changes in your psychological, emotional, physical or spiritual well-being you may be suffering from Vicarious Trauma.*



# Risk Factor

What makes some helpers more vulnerable to vicarious trauma than others.

Understanding the risk factors can help identify your personal vulnerability and explore how you might be able to lower these risks.



# Risk Factors

- Personal Characteristics and Lifestyle
- Work Environment
- Context



# Risk Factors

## Personal Characteristics and Lifestyle:

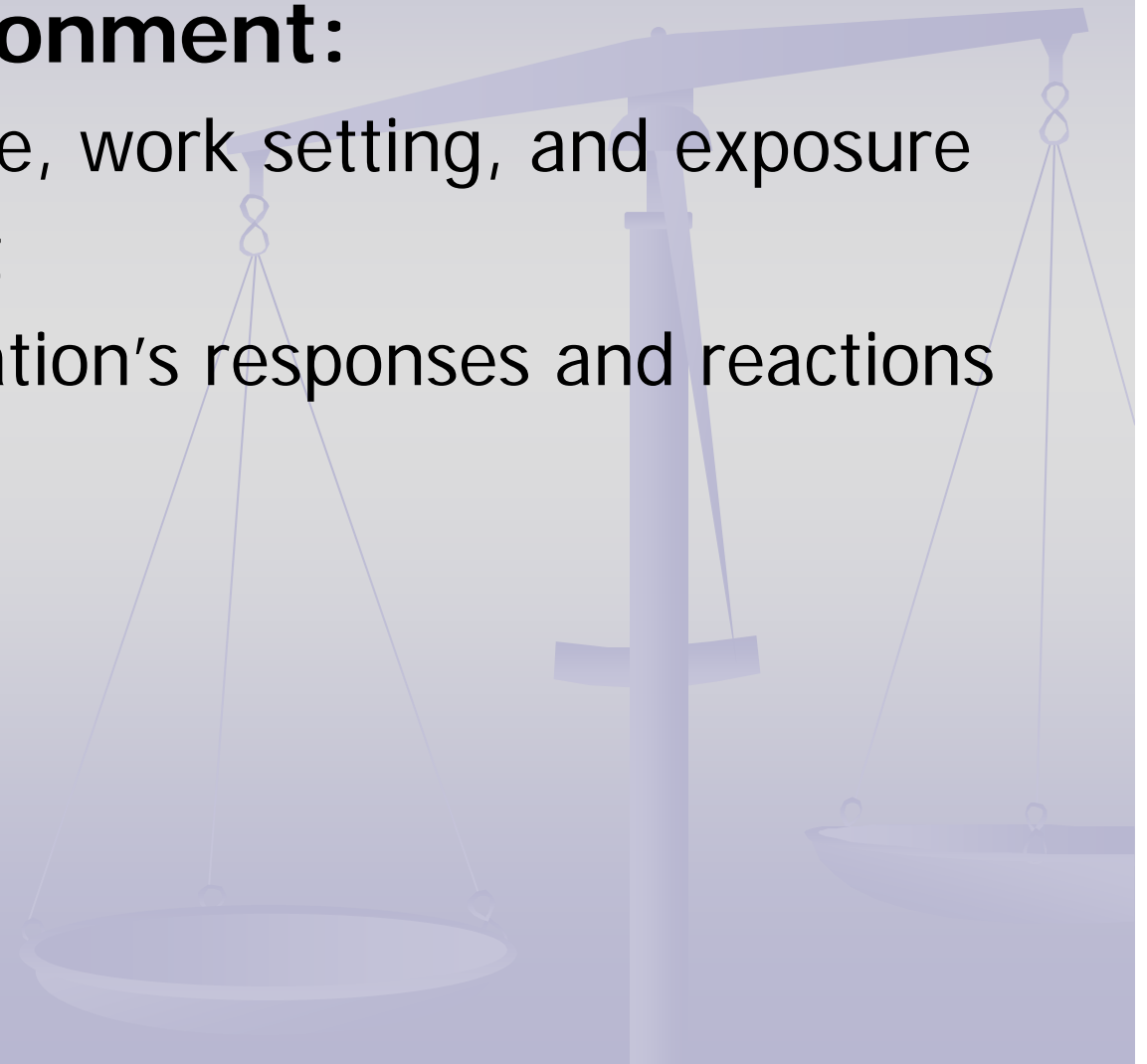
- Personality and coping style
- Personal history
- Current life circumstances
- Social support
- Spiritual resources
- Work style



# Risk Factors

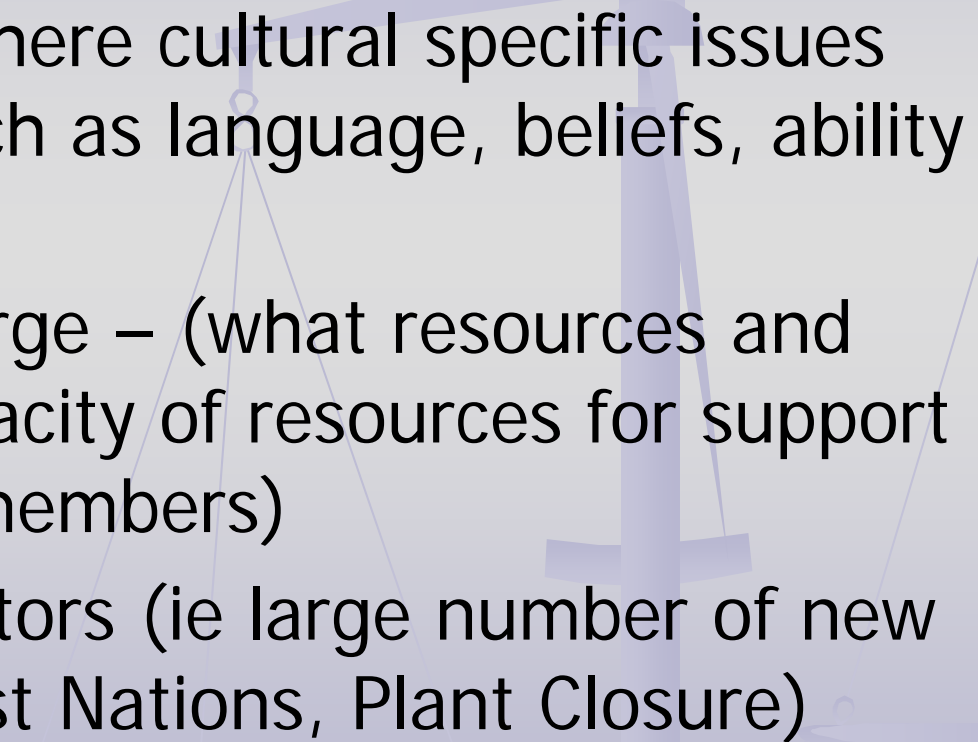
## The Work Environment:

- Professional role, work setting, and exposure
- Agency support
- Affected population's responses and reactions



# Risk Factors

## The Context:

- Culture – (are there cultural specific issues which arise, such as language, beliefs, ability to engage)
  - Resources at large – (what resources and what is the capacity of resources for support of community members)
  - Community Factors (ie large number of new immigrants, First Nations, Plant Closure)
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# Reflective Question

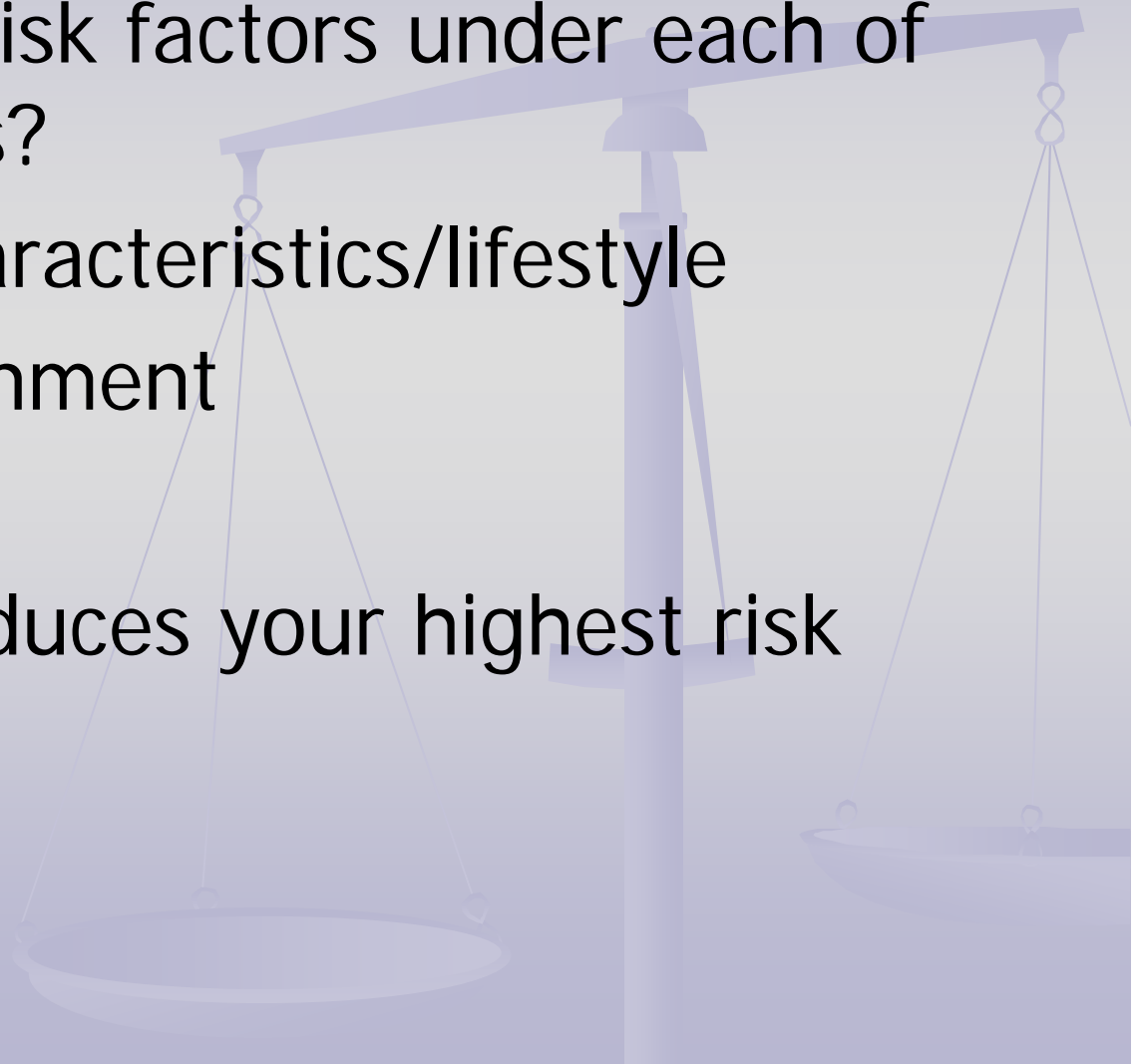
What are your risk factors under each of the 3 categories?

Personal Characteristics/lifestyle

Work Environment

Context

Which area produces your highest risk factors?

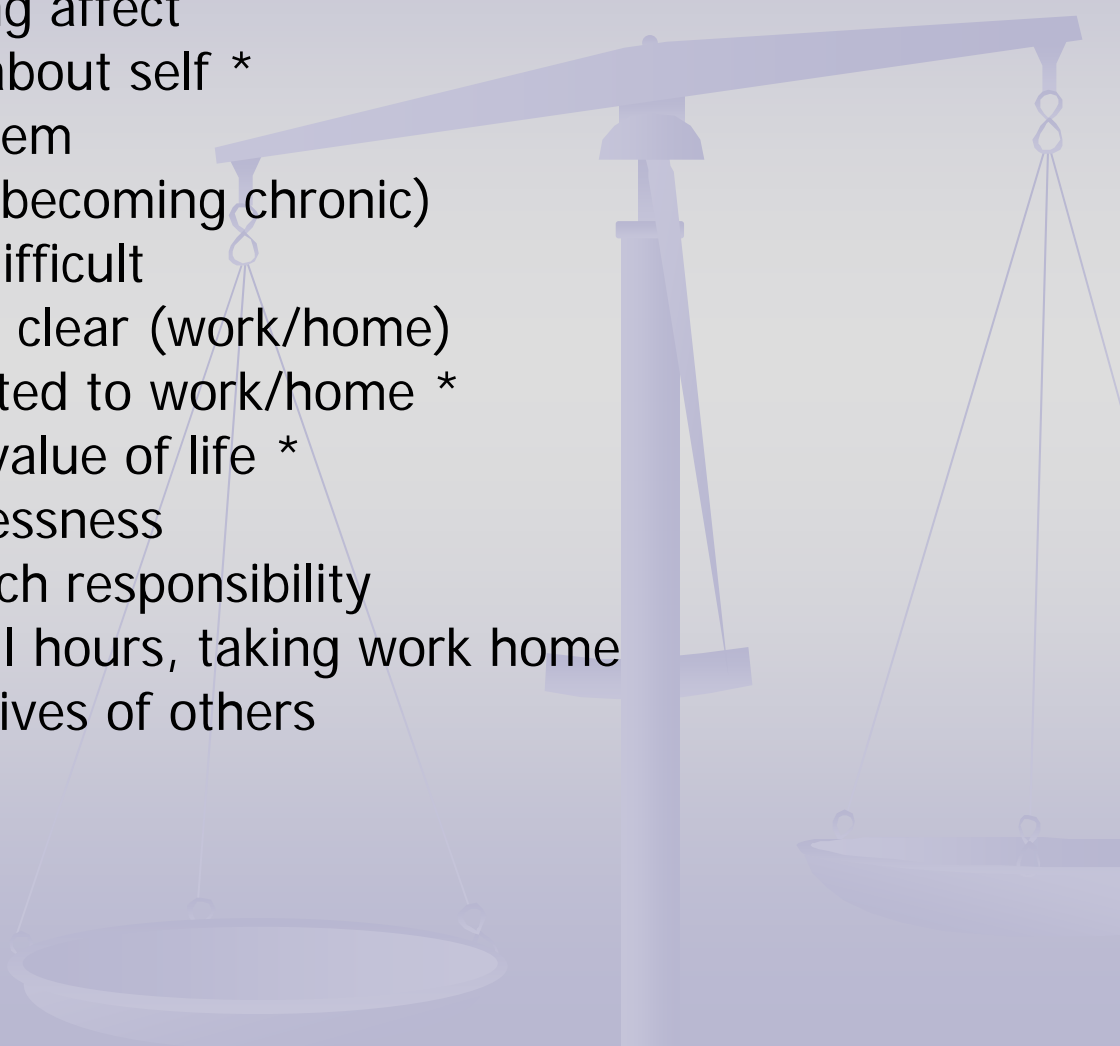


# Burn Out vs Vicarious Trauma

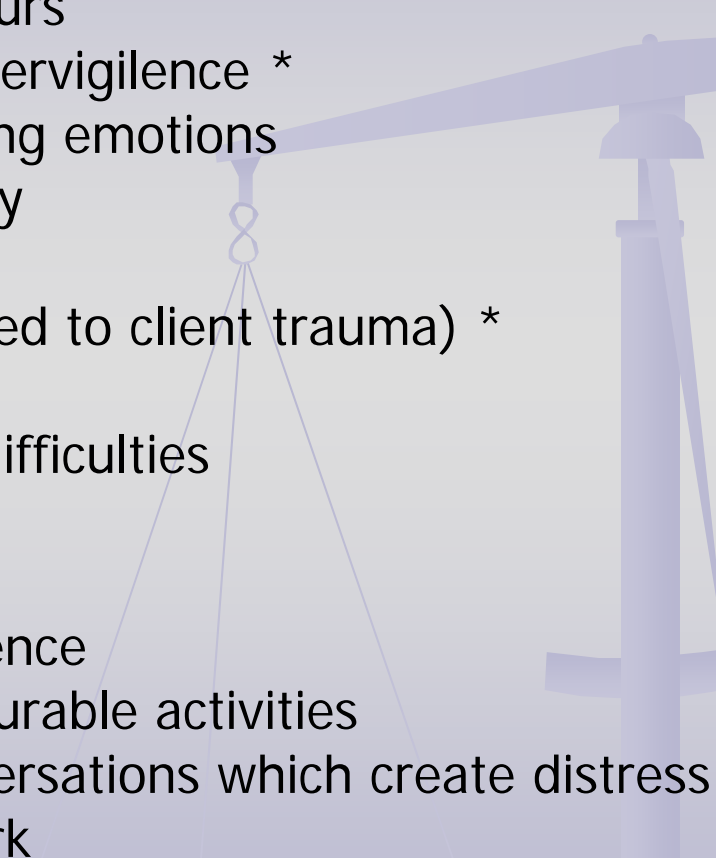
These are not the same:

<b>Burnout</b>	<b>Vicarious Trauma</b>
Cumulative	More Immediate
Predictable	Less Predictable
Work Dissatisfaction	Life Dissatisfaction
Can lead to health problems	Can lead to health problems
Feel under Pressure	Feel Out of Control

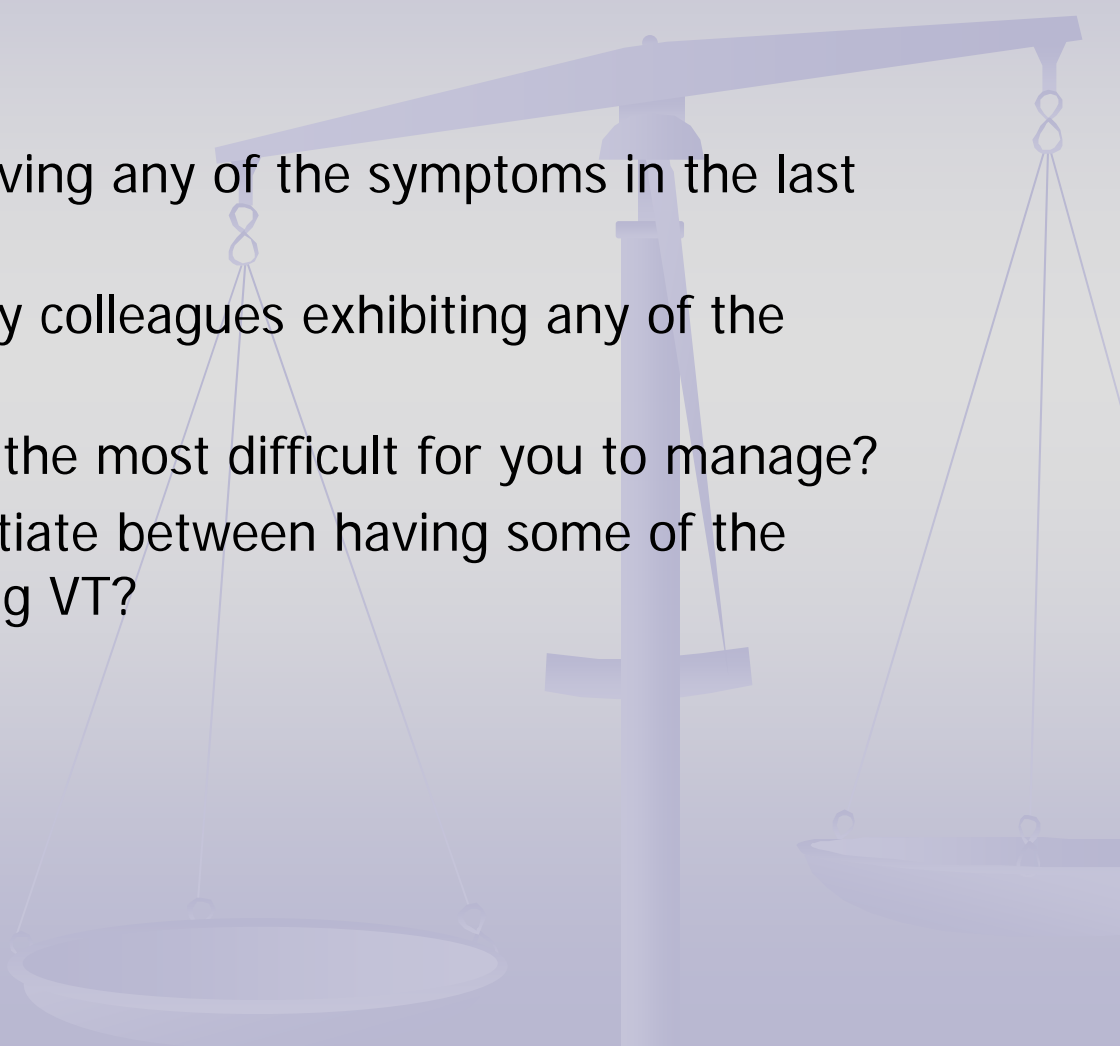
# Signs and Symptoms

- \* Difficulty managing affect
  - \* Not feeling okay about self \*
  - \* Relationship problem
  - \* Health Problems (becoming chronic)
  - \* Problem Solving difficult
  - \* Boundaries not as clear (work/home)
  - \* Feeling disconnected to work/home \*
  - \* Loss of meaning/value of life \*
  - \* Feeling of Powerlessness
  - \* Taking on too much responsibility
  - \* Staying at work all hours, taking work home
  - \* Trying to control lives of others
  - \* Accident Prone
  - \* Cynicism \*
- 

# Signs and Symptoms

- \* Addictive Behaviours
  - \* Hyperarousal/Hypervigilance \*
  - \* Avoidance of strong emotions
  - \* Emotional volatility
  - \* Fear
  - \* Triggers (connected to client trauma) \*
  - \* Guilt
  - \* Sexual/Intimacy difficulties
  - \* Impulsivity
  - \* Feeling numb \*
  - \* Sensitivity to violence
  - \* Decrease in pleasurable activities
  - \* Re-directing conversations which create distress
  - \* Absence from work
- 

# Reflective Questions

1. Have you noticed having any of the symptoms in the last month?
  2. Have you noticed any colleagues exhibiting any of the symptoms?
  3. What symptoms are the most difficult for you to manage?
  4. How do you differentiate between having some of the symptoms and having VT?
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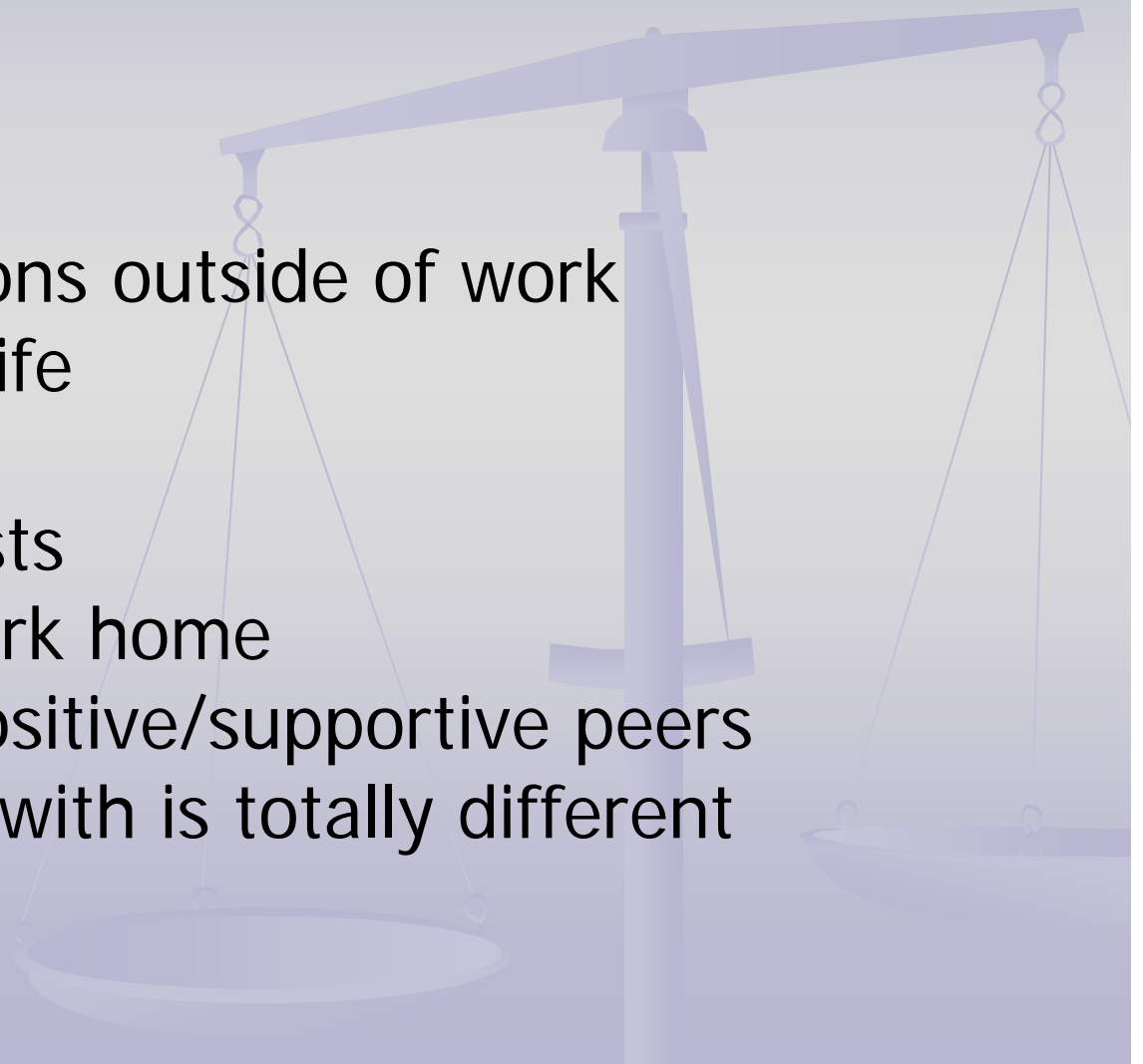
# Impact on World View

One of the hallmarks of VT is how our view of life and the world around us is impacted. This is also connected to the issue of transference/counter-transference and the helper seeing the world in many of the same ways as the person(s) being worked with.

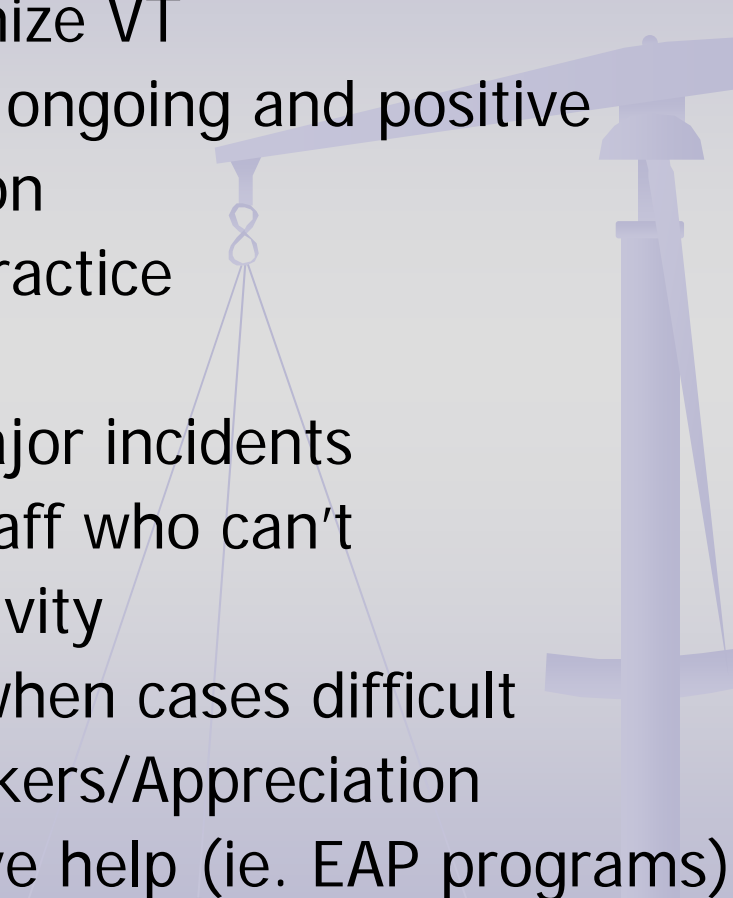
- i.e. Feelings of being helpless/hopeless/Powerless
- Feelings of lack of safety, trust
- Alienation from others
- Shattered assumptions about basic beliefs
- Loss of Faith (anger with God)

# Personal Strategies

- Good nutrition
- Exercise
- Rest
- Social Connections outside of work
- Spiritual/Faith Life
- Personal Goals
- Hobbies, interests
- Avoid taking work home
- Connect with positive/supportive peers
- Volunteer work with is totally different



# Agency Strategies

- Policies that recognize VT
  - Support for staff is ongoing and positive
  - Effective Supervision
  - Use of Reflective Practice
  - Balanced Workload
  - Debriefing after major incidents
  - Limit Setting for Staff who can't
  - Humour/Fun/Creativity
  - Diverse workload when cases difficult
  - Recognition of workers/Appreciation
  - Access to supportive help (ie. EAP programs)
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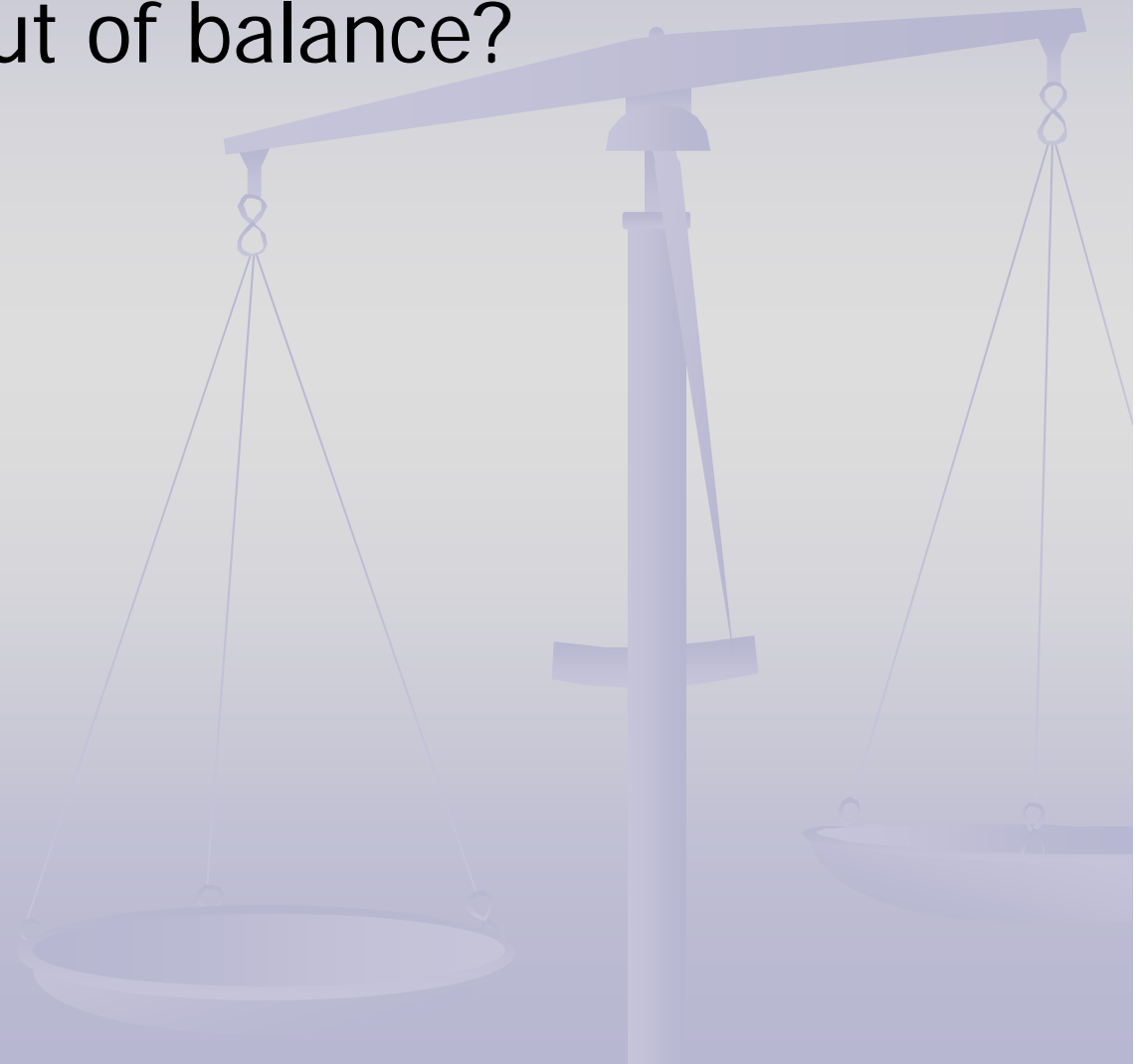
# #1 Protective Strategy

BALANCE



# Balance

What can get out of balance?



# Balance

- Work Life
- Home Life
- Roles
- Feelings
- Eating, Sleeping
- Relationships
- Boundaries
- Self Esteem
- Exercise

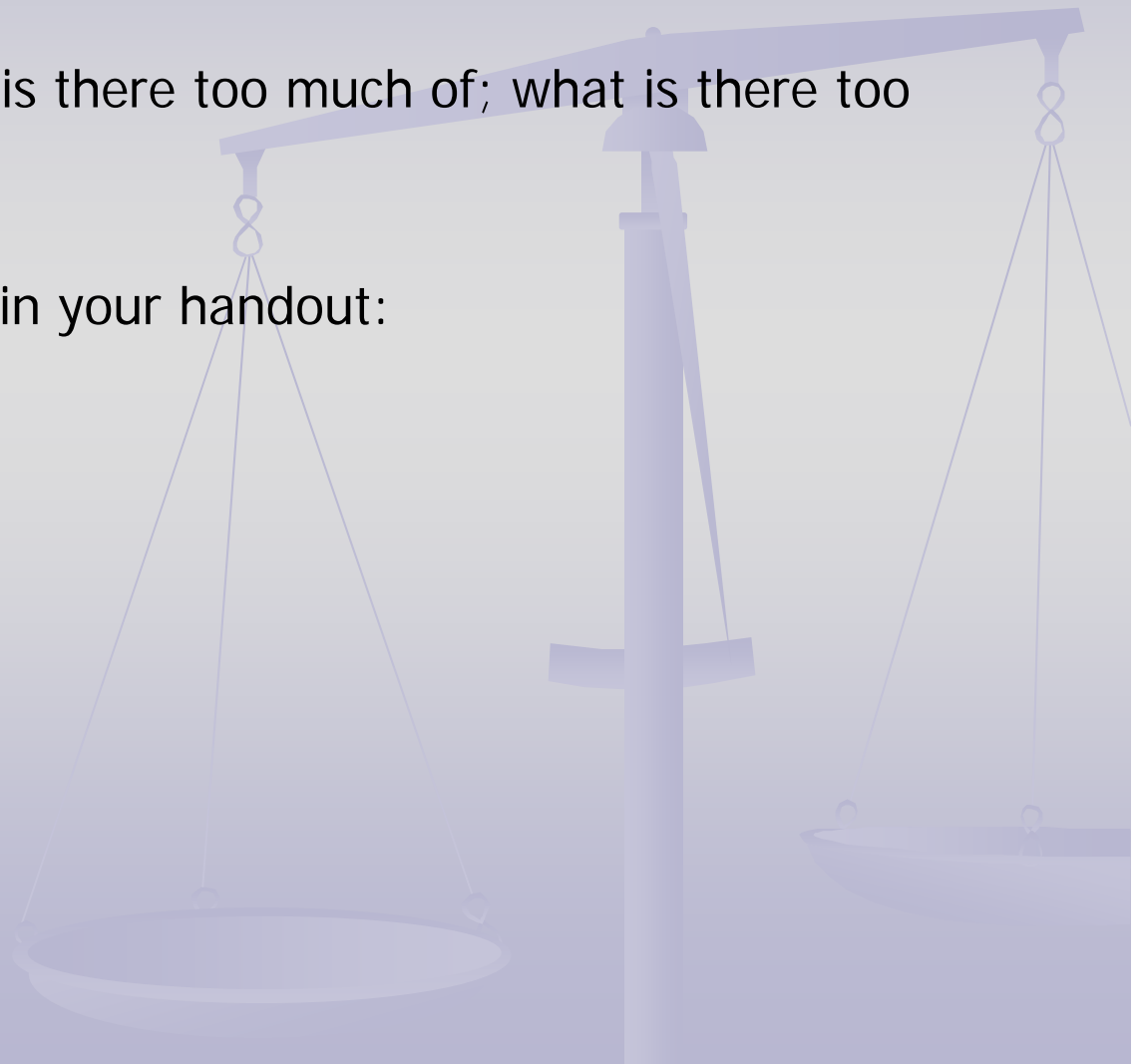


# Balance

Reflective Questions:

What is in balance; what is there too much of; what is there too little of:

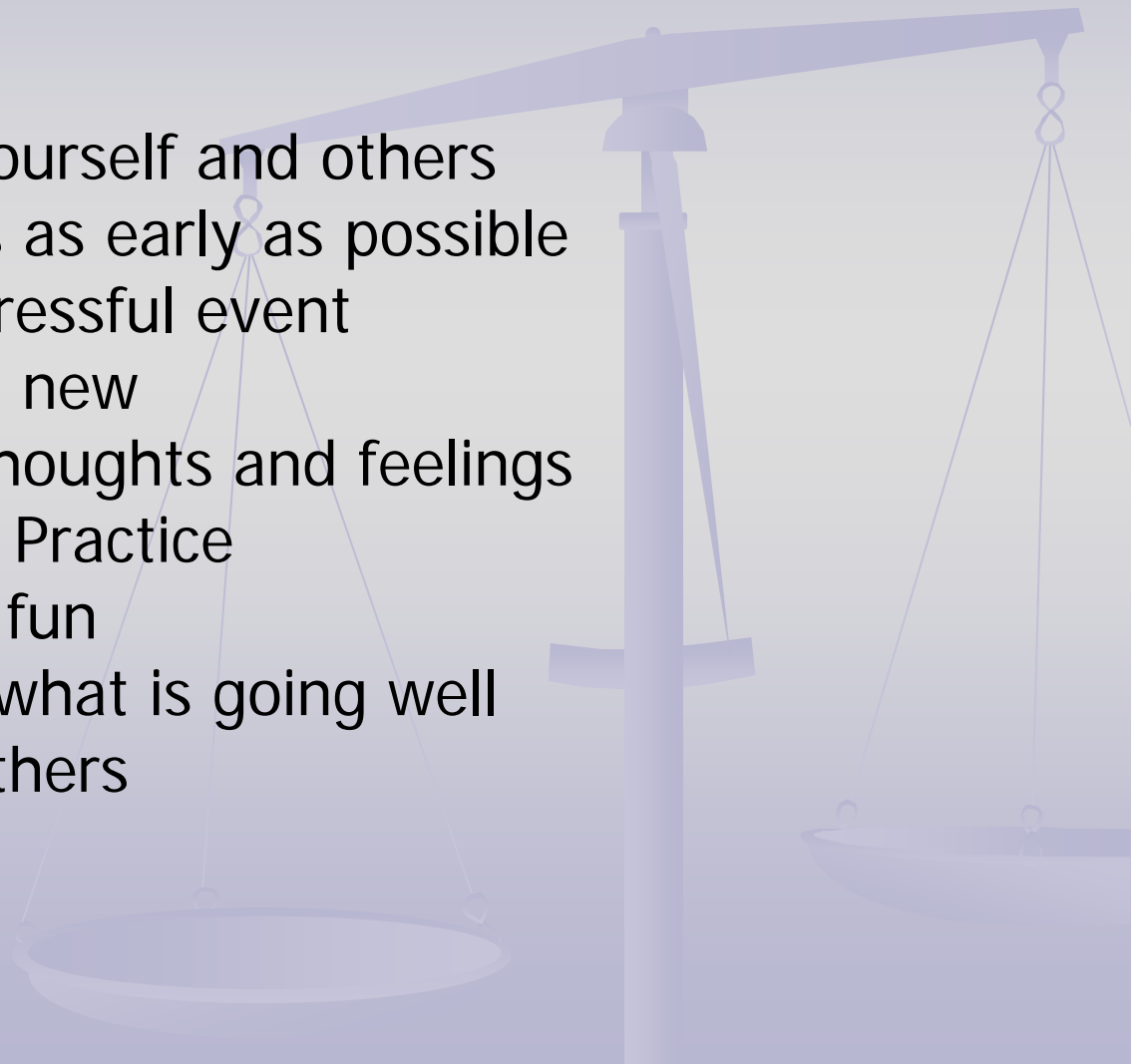
Complete the Worksheet in your handout:



# Preventive Measures

## PERSONAL:

- \* Be aware of yourself and others
- \* Identify issues as early as possible
- \* Debrief any stressful event
- \* Try something new
- \* Journal your thoughts and feelings
- \* Use Reflective Practice
- \* Make time for fun
- \* Keep track of what is going well
- \* Compliment others
- \* Mindfulness



# Preventive Measures



## Personal

- \* Connect with positive people (energizers)
- \* Disconnect from negative people (drainers)
- \* Time Management skills
- \* Ask for help
- \* Delegate
- \* Pursue Hobbies, interests that you enjoy
- \* Compartmentalize
  - create Rituals for starting, ending work
  - practice changing your thoughts
  - redirect yourself (puzzle, game, music)
- \* Yoga
- \* Relaxation (try different types)

# Preventive Measures

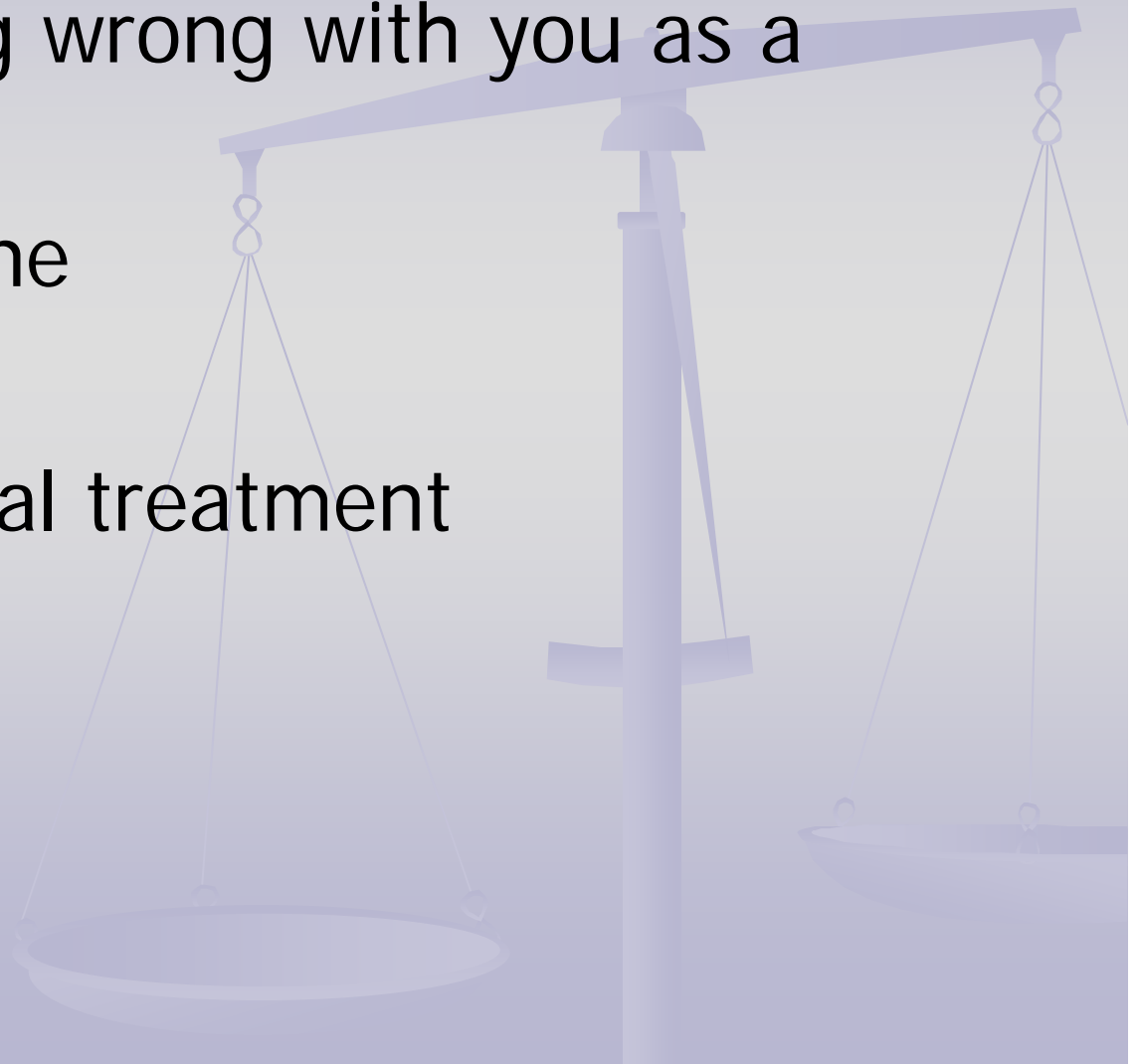


## Agency/Managers

- \* Policies supporting VT strategies
- \* Training of managers and staff
- \* Policies and Protocols for staff safety
- \* Debriefing on regular basis
- \* Access to mental health support
- \* Reviewing and balancing caseloads
- \* Diversifying caseloads
- \* Creating fun, accepting environment
- \* Stress relievers on site (exercise equipment, games, comfortable chairs, etc.)
- \* Foster safe, effective teams
- \* Respond to issues, communicate to staff on them
- \* Support Professional Development
- \* Training and support for Transference/Counter-transference
- \* Recognition and acknowledgement
- \* Time off balance (may need to be directive)
- \* Self Care Exercises/Activities

# If you are suffering from VT

- There is nothing wrong with you as a person
- You are not alone
- It will be better
- Seek professional treatment



Questions?????

