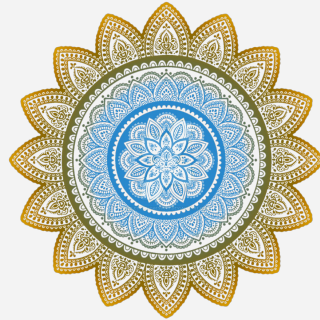




COMMUNITY
HEALTH CARE
ASSOCIATION
of New York State

Community Care Corner

Health Center Staff Wellness Resources



Trauma-Informed Toolbox Strategy Session: Creating Meaning Based on the Work

Whitney L. Marris, LMSW

The Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care

”

*The future depends on
what we do in the present.*

- Mohandas K. Gandhi



“And the dim fluorescent lighting is meant to emphasize the general absence of hope.”

([van Dernooy Lipsky, 2009](#))



(Berinato, 2020; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995; Weir, 2020)



Creating Meaning

Possible Impact of the Work	Description
Vicarious Resilience (VR)	Positive meaning-making and shift of an individual's experience as a result of witnessing the resilience of others.
Vicarious Post-Traumatic Growth (VPTG)	Development of positive changes and growth in an individual's world view as a result of witnessing others' growth after trauma.

Impacts of Vicarious Resilience

- Experiencing patients as models and important sources of information for the worker's own learning about coping with trauma and hardships
- Increased capacity for remaining present while listening to others' trauma narratives
- Increased consciousness about power relative to social location
- Understanding and valuing spiritual dimensions of healing
- Reaffirming the value of the work
- Increased capacity for resourcefulness
- Greater empathy and compassion for others
- Changes in personal goals and perspectives
- Increased self-awareness and self-care practices
- Appreciation for others' strength and tenacity
- Regaining hope and optimism



(Killian et al., 2017)

Impacts of Vicarious Post-Traumatic Growth

- Improved personal relationships and increased pleasure derived from being around people we love
- Seeing and embracing new possibilities – personal and professional
- Increased emotional strength and resilience
- Greater spiritual connection
- A heightened sense of appreciation and gratitude toward life altogether



(Yi et al., 2018)

What Helps: Supporting VR, VPTG, and Meaning-Making

Health Center and Leadership-Level Actions/Considerations



Encourage, meaningfully support, and model taking care of self



Trust staff, honor autonomy, and support empowerment to realize the mission/vision/values



Provide training opportunities to increase education and awareness around the impacts of the work (including the positive ones)



Introduce and intentionally discuss the concepts of meaning-making, VR, and VPTG in team/staff meetings/huddles, case consultation, and supervision



Acknowledge and encourage sharing of “wins” and positive experiences/outcomes during staff connection points

(Kang et al., 2018; Killian, 2018; Reynolds, 2020; Wendt Center, n.d.)

What Helps: Supporting VR, VPTG, and Meaning-Making

Individual Actions/Considerations



Take intentional pause to check in with yourself and notice what is happening for you during positive, meaningful moments



Take care of your body with movement, nutritious foods, water, and rest



Establish and maintain healthy professional boundaries, prioritizing what matters most



Look for and intentionally notice resilience/PTG in patients/colleagues

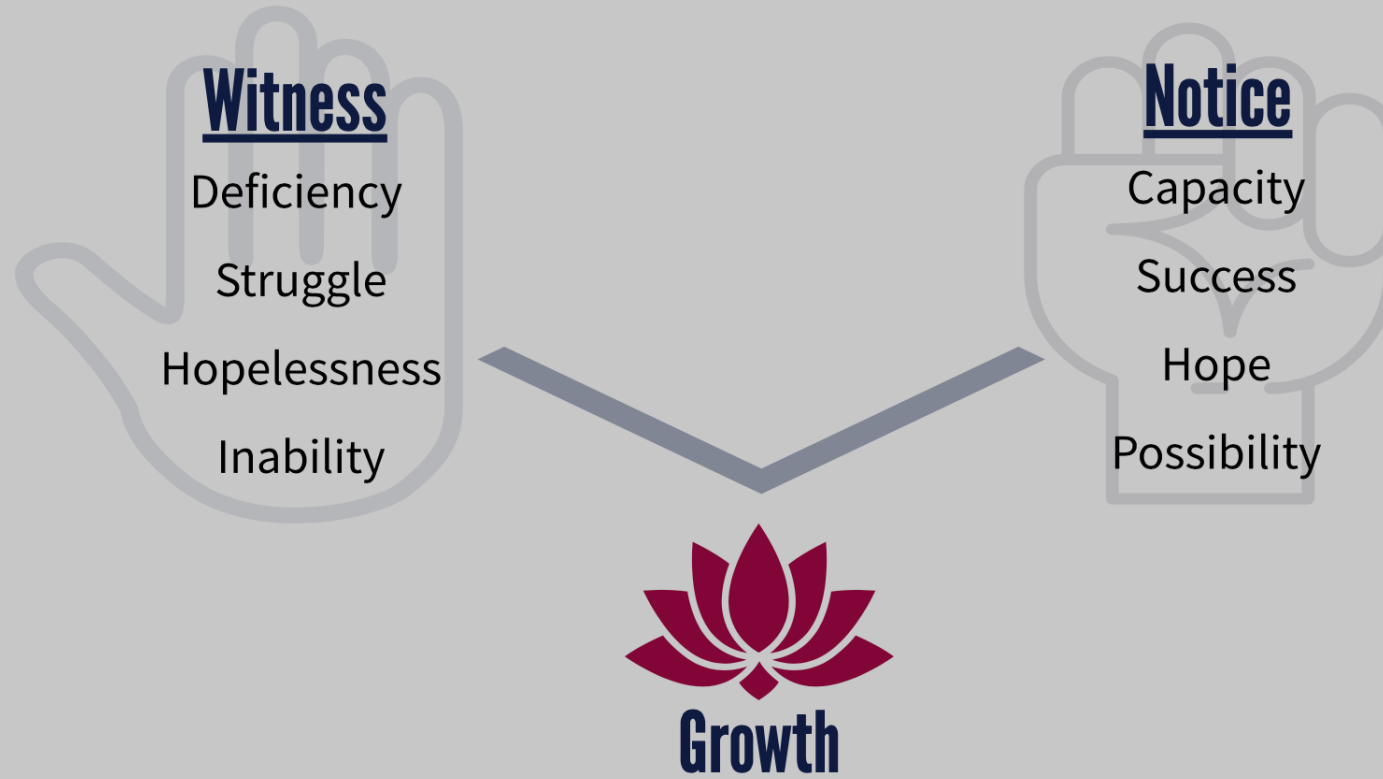


Maintain quality social support/peer relationships

(Kang et al., 2018; Killian, 2018; Reynolds, 2020; Wendt Center, n.d.)

What We Notice Gets Bigger

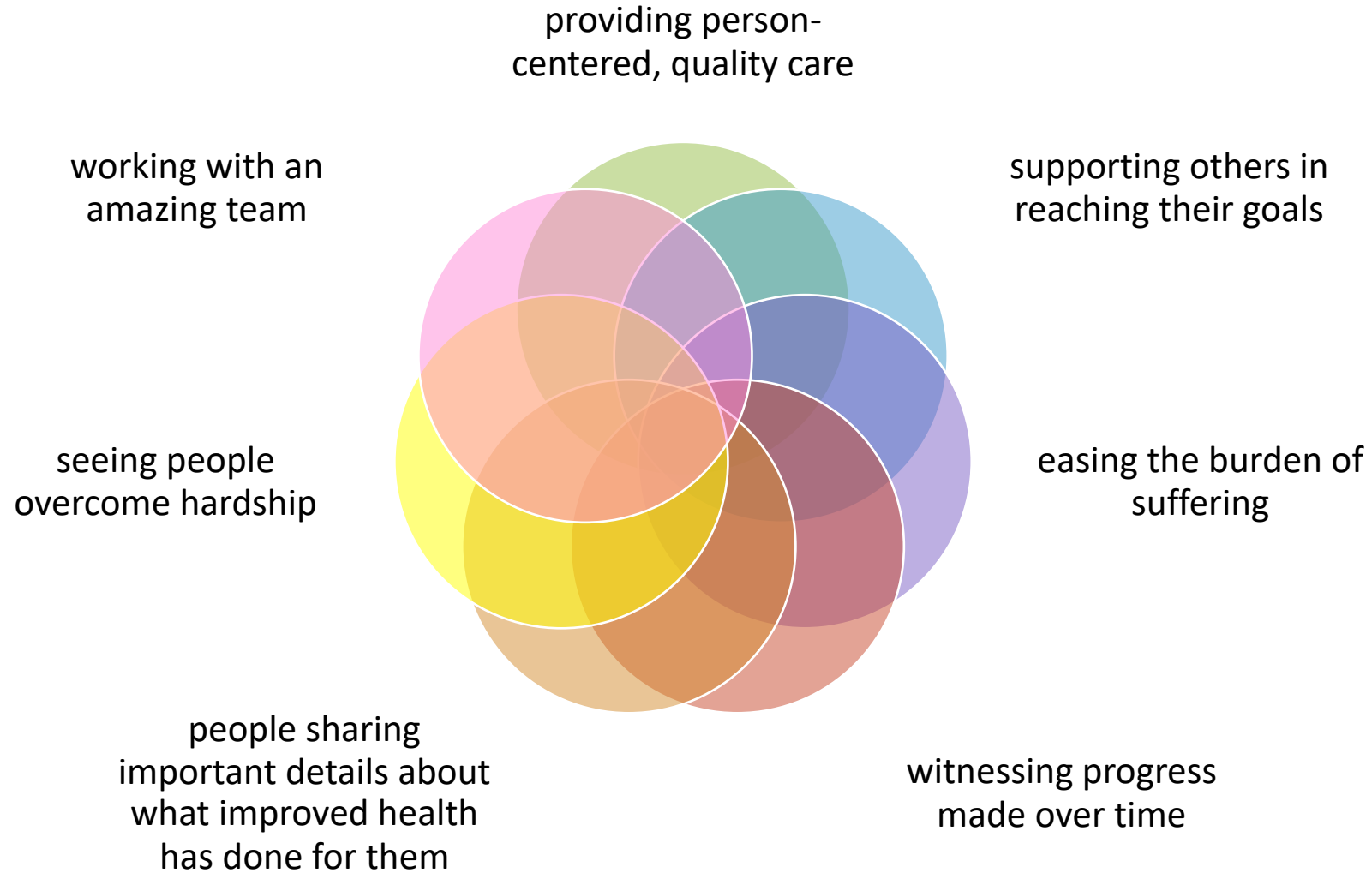
What we notice and focus on gets bigger--noticing strength and capacity while doing challenging work positions ourselves and others to **grow** in the aftermath of trauma.¹⁻²



It Really DOES Matter How We Respond

(The Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care, 2020)

Reflection Point: What Gives You Purpose and Meaning in Your Work?



Additional Resources on Creating Meaning

- **Tools to Measure Concepts Explored**
 - [Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory \(PTGI\)](#)
 - [Vicarious Resilience Scale \(VRS\)](#)
 - [Professional Quality of Life \(ProQOL\) Scale](#)
- [HealthLeaders – Purpose and Meaning Essential to Creating Joy in Healthcare Workplaces](#)
- [American Medical Association - Creating a Resilient Organization for Health Care Workers During a Crisis](#)
- [Canadian Mental Health Association of New Brunswick – Vicarious Resilience for Healthcare](#)
- [Institute for Healthcare Improvement – “What Matters To You?” Conversation Guide](#)



Step 1. Ask staff, “What matters to you?” — Build on assets and “bright spots”		
Do	Don't	Steps to Try
Ask staff members to share: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why I decided to work in health care • What makes me proud to work here • What matters to me in my work is... • What is the most meaningful or best part of my work • I know I make a difference when... • When we are at our best, it looks and feels like... • What makes a good day is... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assume all team members will understand what you're talking about immediately; they are often not used to being asked “What matters?” • Assume all will feel safe talking initially • Assume all have the same view • Mandate participation — instead, welcome and invite • Speak for others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose one question to get started, then listen and invite others to comment • Ask follow-up questions to clarify statements • Point out when bright spots are similar; identify the themes you hear • Capture what you are hearing so it is visible (e.g., on a whiteboard) and post the feedback in a location that's visible to all staff

