### **UNDERSTANDING VICARIOUS TRAUMA Recognizing, Preventing, and Addressing Secondary Trauma**

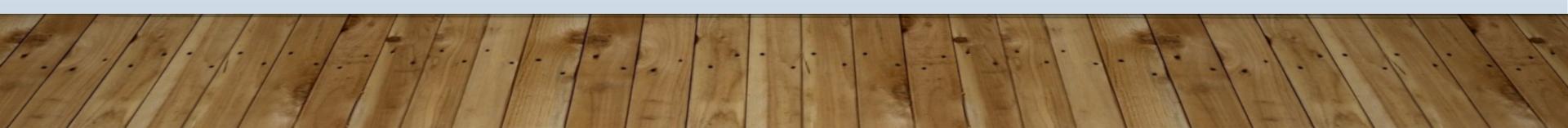




### You Can't Take it With You!

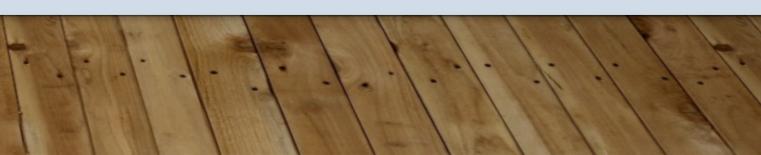
#### Introduction

- Vicarious trauma is the emotional residue from hearing traumatic stories, especially from vulnerable populations like the elderly.
- Lawyers working with elder clients often witness abuse, neglect, exploitation, or isolation.
- Chronic exposure to these stories can lead to emotional and psychological strain.



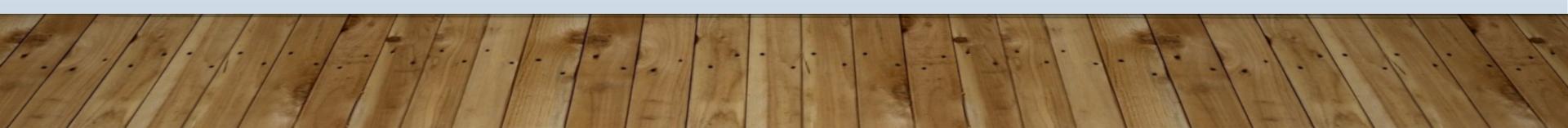
#### How Vicarious Trauma Happens

- Repeated exposure to clients' distressing experiences
- Deep empathic engagement with elderly clients
- Lack of time or support to process emotional impact
- A strong sense of responsibility to protect vulnerable clients



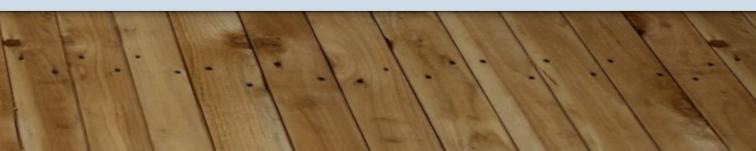
### Signs & Symptoms

- **Emotional**: Irritability, sadness, helplessness
- **Cognitive**: Difficulty concentrating, cynicism
- **Physical**: Fatigue, headaches, insomnia
- **Behavioral**: Avoidance, reduced productivity, withdrawal
- **Ethical**: Reduced objectivity, over-identification with clients



#### Risk Factors

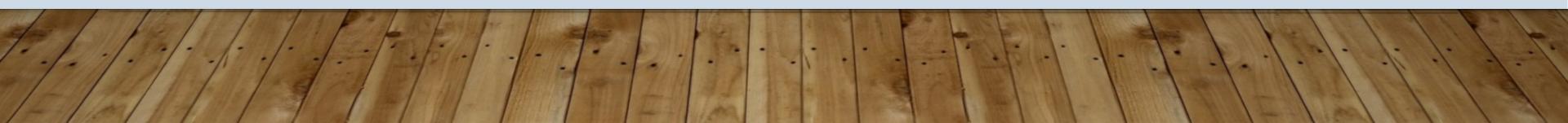
- High caseload of trauma-impacted elderly clients
- Exposure to systemic injustice and ageism
- Personal experiences with aging or caregiving
- Lack of trauma-informed legal training
- Limited resources for mental health or support



# Impact on Legal Professionals

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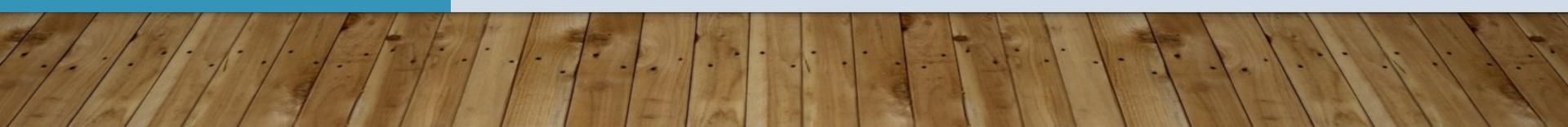
- Increased risk of burnout
- Emotional detachment or over-involvement
- Impaired decision-making or advocacy
- Decreased job satisfaction and higher turnover



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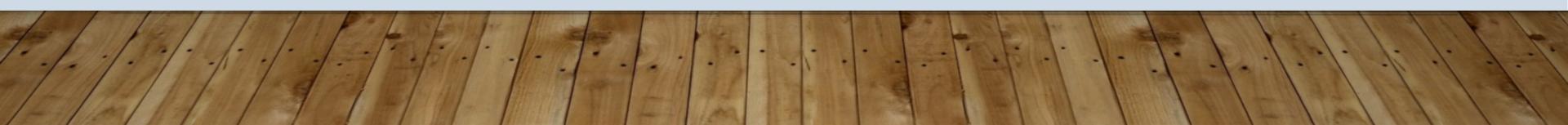
#### Prevention Strategies

- Establish healthy emotional boundaries with clients
- Engage in regular self-reflection and supervision
- Develop a network of supportive colleagues
- Take time for restorative activities (exercise, hobbies)
- Advocate for manageable workloads and support systems
- Box breathing\mindfulness



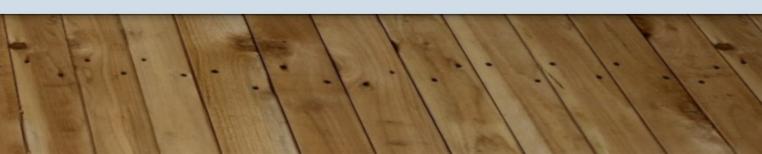
## Organizational Support

- Train staff in trauma-informed legal practice
- Normalize mental health discussions in legal settings
- Create space for peer support and debriefing
- Provide access to wellness programs and EAPs



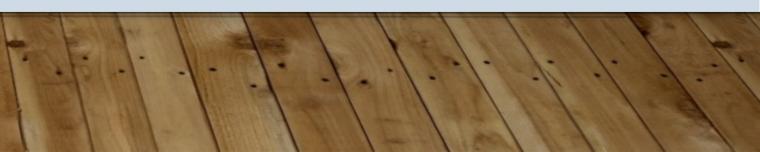
## Coping & Recovery

- Seek professional counseling or therapy
- Participate in peer support groups for elder law professionals
- Practice mindfulness and stress-reduction techniques
- Reconnect with your values and purpose in your legal work



#### Ethical Considerations

- Vicarious trauma can influence ethical decision-making
- Ensure decisions prioritize client autonomy and dignity
- Recognize when trauma is affecting your judgment

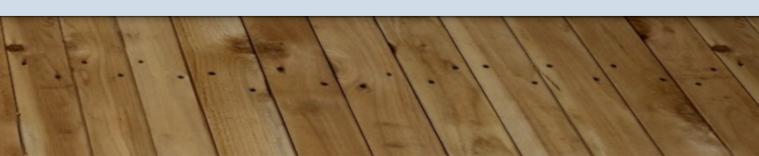


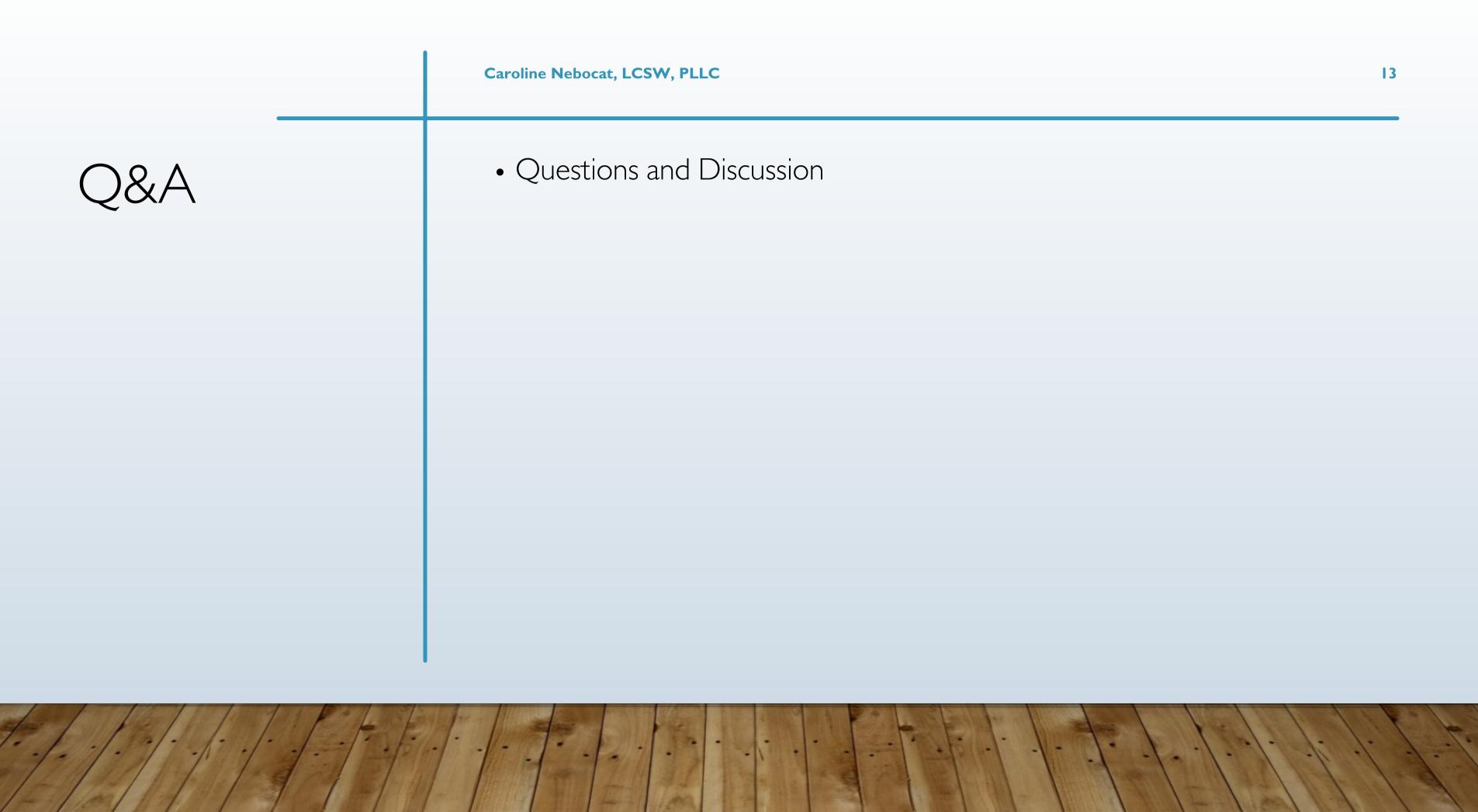
#### Conclusion

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- elder law attorneys
- Prioritize emotional well-being alongside professional excellence
- Build a trauma-informed, supportive legal culture

• Vicarious trauma is a serious occupational hazard for trusts & estates and

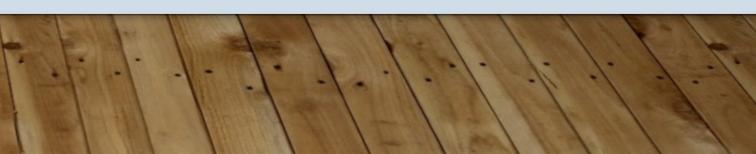




#### Contact Information

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#### Resources

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- for Others" by Laura van Dernoot Lipsky
- National Center on Elder Abuse: https://ncea.acl.gov/
- ABA Commission on Law and Aging: https://www.americanbar.org/groups/law\_aging/
- Mental health apps: Headspace, Calm, Insight Timer

• "Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Cring for Self While Caring

