



- ♦ **Feeling helpless or hopeless** - A person feeling this way may wake up in the morning with that “Why am I even getting out of bed” feeling. It may be hard to see that progress is being made for positive social change.
- ♦ **A sense that one can never do enough** – The belief that “I am not doing enough and I should be doing more.”
- ♦ **Hypervigilance** – Is when a person is constantly tense and "on guard." A person experiencing this will be motivated to maintain an increased awareness of their surrounding environment, sometimes even frequently scanning their settings to identify potential sources of threat.
- ♦ **Diminished creativity** – Is when you think to yourself “When was the last time I had an original thought.” You may find that you are bored with what you are doing and you can’t remember a time you were creative.
- ♦ **Inability to embrace complexity** – You crave clear signs of good and bad and right and wrong, and you feel an urgent need to choose sides. Taking sides can surface in workplace dynamics. We may see it in the form of gossip, cliques, divisions among staff and rigid expectations of workers.

- ♦ **Minimizing** – Occurs when we trivialize a current situation by comparing it with another situation that we regard as more dire. This coping strategy is at its worst is when you’ve witnessed so much that you begin to downplay anything that doesn’t fit into the most extreme category of hardship.
- ♦ **Chronic exhaustion/physical ailments** – The kind of tired that results from trauma exposure response is a bone-tired, soul-tired heart-tired kind of exhaustion – your body is tired, your mind is tired, your spirit is tired your people are tired.
- ♦ **Inability to listen/deliberate avoidance** – When avoidance is a regular habit in your life, the highlight of your workday is when you don’t have to do your job. You may choose not to answer the phone, to let your voicemail box get full and you may go out with people less and less.
- ♦ **Dissociative moments** – Can happen when a person experiences intrusive or overwhelming feelings. It is the experience of being engaged in your work and, for whatever reason, having something suddenly unhinge you. You realize that you have not heard the last five sentences of what someone just said to you, or maybe you failed to track the behavior in front of you; you’re not following the story at all.
- ♦ **Sense of persecution** – Feeling persecuted speaks to feeling a profound lack of efficacy in one’s life. We become convinced that others are responsible for our well-being and that we lack the personal agency to transform our circumstances. We may believe that we deserve better pay, safer work environments, more respect, adequate time away from work, and greater resources, and all this may be true. We can succumb to a belief that we have no capacity to influence any outcome.
- ♦ **Guilt** – Persons feeling guilt are impossible to separate from larger forces like sociopolitical context, life experiences and philosophical/spiritual beliefs. Workers can get caught up in their discomfort about the disparity between their lives and the lives of those they serve.
- ♦ **Fear** – Can manifest itself in a number of ways: fear of intense feelings, of personal vulnerability, or of potential victimization. Fear is a natural and healthy response to much of what we witness.
- ♦ **Anger or cynicism** – Anger is a common feeling among those trying to do the right thing in the world. One may feel anger at the sources of injustice, at the treatment from one’s organization, or at the client’s themselves. Cynicism is a sophisticated coping mechanism for dealing with anger and other intense feelings we may not know how to manage. Its undercurrent is anger and yet it is often witty, quick, sharp, easy to laugh at and incredibly alluring.
- ♦ **Inability to empathize/numbing** – This often happens as a result of one’s system being overwhelmed with incoming stimuli. You may overwork and overschedule which may cause our bodies to secrete adrenaline, a hormone that keeps us alert and racing around but may block our awareness of the feelings underneath. Dependence on caffeine and sugar may help us feel better temporarily, but they may also numb us to feelings of fatigue or craving.
- ♦ **Addictions** – An addiction is an attachment so strong that it persists despite our understanding of its potentially destructive nature. There are classic addictions: drugs, alcohol, food, sex. But we can be addicted to the rush of adrenaline – it’s so tempting to stay wired when the alternative is to slow down enough to feel what is going on within and around us.
- ♦ **Grandiosity: An inflated sense of importance related to one’s work** – When our work becomes the center of our identity, it may be because it feeds our sense of grandiosity. You think, “Who else will do it if I’m not here?” or “I can’t possibly leave, they’re relying on me.”

Reference for Trauma Exposure Response indicators: Lipsky, L. v. D., Burk, C., & Safari Books Online. (2009). *Trauma stewardship: An everyday guide to caring for self while caring for others*. San Francisco, Calif.: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.