

# 16 WARNING SIGNS OF TRAUMA EXPOSURE RESPONSE

from *Trauma Stewardship* by Laura van Dernoot Lipsky with Connie Burk

## Feeling Helpless and Hopeless

I feel overwhelmed, as if any work I do is insignificant when compared to the scale of the problem.

## A Sense That One Can Never Do Enough

If I don't do the work, it won't get done. And if it doesn't get done, people suffer. I can never do enough.

## Hypervigilance

I am constantly thinking about my job and assessing risks. Even when I'm off-the-clock, I'm always "on."

## Diminished Creativity

I am bored with my work, but all my energy goes into just getting it done. Change is one more thing I don't have time for.

## Inability to Embrace Complexity

I struggle to address the cause of an issue because I am stuck on whether it's right or wrong.

## Minimizing

I respond less and less to the pain of others. I compare every situation to worst it could be.

## Chronic Exhaustion / Physical Ailments

I am tired in my body and mind. I have physical or mental health issues, but haven't slowed down.

## Inability to Listen / Deliberate Avoidance

I often hope my clients don't show up. My voicemail is full and I have to convince myself to answer when it rings.

## Dissociative Moments

I feel weak when I am unable to shake off my clients' stories and they distract me when I'm completing other tasks.

## Sense of Persecution

I have no power over my work. My day is completely controlled by my clients, my co-workers, or my boss.

## Guilt

I feel guilty taking a vacation or enjoying time with my family when I know that the people I work with can't do those things.

## Fear

I am scared by the things I see in my work, but I feel that if I talk about it, I will no longer be able to do my job effectively.

## Anger and Cynicism

I joke about how the same clients keep coming back with the same problems and that nothing changes in my work.

## Inability to Empathize / Numbing

I move a hundred miles a minute, even when there's not much to do. I am unemotional at work, but snap at my family.

## Addictions

I count down the hours until I can have a glass of wine after work.

## Grandiosity

I don't know who I would be if I weren't doing this work. My work is what makes me important.



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It is ok if you have experienced some, all, or none of the warning signs. It is perfectly normal to have a response to trauma exposure. It is necessary to recognize our responses before we can move forward.