Ola Lokahi
Finding Judicial Balance and Renewal

Judge Elizabeth J. Berns
King County Superior Court, Seattle Washington

Judge Kenneth Skilnick
Provincial Court of British Columbia

Judge Michael A. Town, Retired
Circuit Court, Honolulu

(with credit and gratitude to Dr. Peter Jaffe Professor, Western University, London Ontario Canada)
We are all connected. Our individual thoughts and actions (good or bad) ultimately affect the collective just as the collective has an effect on us as individuals.
Historical jurisprudence
Judge as unemotional, with impersonality and dispassion...
central to neutrality, legal authority, and legitimacy.
Emotion is viewed as inherently irrational, disorderly, impulsive, and personal and therefore inconsistent with the legitimate exercise of judicial authority.
The neglect of the emotional and interactive components of being a judge may have several potential consequences for how judges view and perform their work...

The Emotions and Judging Project
The Impact of Our Work

- **BURNOUT** - physical and emotional exhaustion experienced with low job satisfaction and feeling powerless and overwhelmed at work.

- **COMPASSION FATIGUE** - profound emotional and physical erosion when helpers are unable to refuel and regenerate.

- **VICARIOUS TRAUMA** - shift in world view that occurs in helping professionals when they work with clients who have experienced trauma – change in fundamental beliefs about the world are altered and possibly damaged by being repeatedly exposed to traumatic material.

www.tendacademy.ca/what-is-compassion-fatigue/
Traumatic Cases for Judges & Court-Related Professionals

- Domestic violence
- Juvenile proceedings
- Sexual assault
- Child abuse
- Homicides
- Abductions
Vicarious (Secondary) Trauma

- Short and long-term consequences of working with trauma victims/survivors
- Effects may be in all of the following areas
  - Physically emotionally,
  - Behaviourally cognitively,
  - Interpersonally and spiritually
- Can persist for months and sometimes years
- The experience of the professional parallel those experienced by trauma survivors.
- Wide range of normal feelings and reactions.
Factors that Influence a Person’s Vulnerability to Vicarious Trauma

- Life Situation Factors
- Individual Factors
- Organizational Factors
Research on Judges

- Female judges scored higher on the internalizing factors than male judges
- Judges on the bench 7 or more years of experience scored significantly higher on the externalizing factors

Major Symptoms of Vicarious Trauma

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short-term</th>
<th>Long-term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flashbacks</td>
<td>Cynical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>Fearful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sad, depressed</td>
<td>Loss of faith in humanity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helplessness</td>
<td>Alcohol abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawal</td>
<td>Inability to maintain intimate relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleeplessness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We acknowledge that we are all individually and collectively affected by trauma through the work we do each day, which for many is also compounded by the experience of trauma in our personal lives.
• We have an opportunity to create deeper compassion and greater ability. The magnitude of our collective suffering demands this response. We all need to meet that demand.

• What we do for others is profound—what we need to do for ourselves is essential.
Reflections on Effective Coping Strategies for Judicial Officers

- What strategies work for you (or what ideas have you learned from others?)

- How to you help colleagues who aren’t reaching out for support (but need help)?

- What advice would you give new judges when they are starting out?