

MENTAL HEALTH IN THE NEWSROOM

A Comprehensive Analysis of Vicarious Trauma & PTSD

From individual suffering to collective care

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| SCOPE OF THE CRISIS

Anxiety
Depression
Burn out
Trauma

| SCOPE OF THE CRISIS

Anxiety disorders

Mood disorders

Trauma related disorders

SCOPE OF THE CRISIS

93%

Surveyed journalists report experiencing mental health challenges due to their work.

50%

Considering leaving the profession this year due to burnout.

38%

Noted a decline in their mental health over the past year alone.

11%

showed symptoms of PTSD

| SCOPE OF THE CRISIS

DIGITAL OVERLOAD: *Social media, hyperconnectivity, AI*

PRESSURE & HARASSMENT: *Fake news, online or physical threats*

CONSTANT EXPOSURE: *Wars, intense stories, graphic footage*

THE CYCLE OF STIGMA



Continuous exposure to tragedy shifts our world view and alters our psychological foundation.

| THE CYCLE OF STIGMA

Desk-Based Risk

Editors and digital teams process hours of raw, disturbing footage daily. This repetitive "screen-based" exposure is the primary driver of secondary trauma.

Field-Based Risk

Reporters and camera crews witnessing war, natural disasters, or violence firsthand. Direct exposure leads to acute psychological impacts.

WHAT IS TRAUMA

Defining trauma

Trauma is a word used to explain experiences that overwhelm our nervous system

- Trauma remains in the body, like a moment in time **frozen within us**

Trauma isn't about the event itself
It's linked to how our bodies responded to an overwhelming experience



Source:
Safely Held Spaces
Trauma awareness for
newsrooms

VICARIOUS TRAUMA (VT)



Definition

The emotional toll from repeated **indirect** exposure to traumatic content through digital media.



At Risk

Video editors, sub-editors, fact-checkers, and verification desk staff.



Symptoms

Anxiety, nightmares, emotional numbness, and difficulty concentrating.

PTSD OVERVIEW



Definition

A mental condition triggered by witnessing or experiencing a **direct** terrifying event.



At Risk

Field reporters, war correspondents, and photographers on the frontlines.



Symptoms

Flashbacks, panic attacks, severe sleep problems, and avoidance behavior.

THE STORIES THAT BREAK OUR DEFENCES

Stories that **resonate** with our own lives

Take place in places or settings we're familiar with

- Have personal meaning or significance to us

Involve stories that we would describe as 'close to home' for us

Source:
Safely Held Spaces
Trauma awareness for
newsrooms

THE STORIES THAT BREAK OUR DEFENCES

Watching the mother of a tiny boy murdered by Lucy Letby describe her grief, I wept in court for the first time in 25 years: Every day, LIZ HULL studied her - haunted by the fact that the killer started at hospital just months after she gave birth there

- **Lucy Letby was convicted of seven murders and six attempted murders**

By **LIZ HULL**, NORTHERN CORRESPONDENT

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Perhaps it was because I could picture the maternity ward, I knew its smell, could remember myself being in those same hospital beds, that the tears came.

Until Monday, I hadn't allowed my mind to reflect on or connect the horrors of what happened at the Countess of Chester Hospital to my own babies. 'Do your job, keep it professional,' I told myself.

Source:
Safely Held Spaces
Trauma awareness for
newsrooms

COPING STRATEGIES



Recognize

Monitor early behavioral shifts in yourself and peers.



Limit

Restrict total daily exposure to traumatic content.



Break

Enforce mandatory rest and digital detox periods.



Support

Access structured peer groups and resources.

| EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT NEWSROOMS

The **culture** in our newsroom

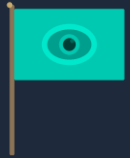
How our colleagues respond to us when we're distressed

Whether we feel safe to be vulnerable

The degree to which important emotional responses – such as crying – are normalised by our colleagues and those in leadership roles

Source:
Safely Held Spaces
Trauma awareness for
newsrooms

DUTY OF CARE: REDUCING THE IMPACT OF GRAPHIC CONTENT



Flag

Alert a senior manager in the newsroom that you want to bring the material in



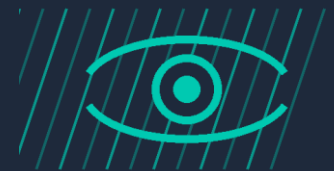
Location

Decide if the content will be edited in the newsroom or in the field



Consent

Ask whether the editor, producer or journalist feels comfortable viewing & editing the material



Minimise

Ingest material, ensuring it's seen by as few newsroom staff members as possible

DUTY OF CARE: REDUCING THE IMPACT OF GRAPHIC CONTENT



Limit duration

Select a portion of the content to use from the source material



Warning label

Ensure the material is labelled with the words 'GRAPHIC CONTENT' on the server



Limit Access

If possible, ensure the content isn't stored on the main server, save it elsewhere



Delete source material

Once the material that will be used has been selected, delete the source file if possible

ENEEX



Questions?

CLOSING WORDS



Alfred Adler (1870–1937)

From individual suffering
to collective care:

Gemeinschaftsgefühl

- Adler lived in Vienna and was a contemporary of Freud and Jung

ENEEX

Thank you!

Part of **RTL**