

Working with Human Trafficking Survivors

A Primer on Trauma for Lawyers, Advocates and Others

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Overview

As you prepare to use your legal know-how to assist survivors of human trafficking in accessing justice and empowering them to rebuild their lives, one of ALIGHT's goals is to provide you with some valuable background information regarding trauma, the impacts of trauma and additional guidance on working with individuals who have experienced trauma. Along with better preparing you to build rapport with traumatized individuals as you interact with them, this primer will provide you with other useful details that will aid you in developing an understanding of the clients with whom you aim to work, along with helpful pointers about taking care of yourself on this journey.

This resource has been informed by multiple disciplines, such as counseling, cultural anthropology, gender studies, psychology and victims' advocacy, to provide a more holistic perspective on working with trafficked persons. With that being said, it is not intended to represent an exhaustive review of literature or resources on the topic of trauma, practice and cultural considerations as they pertain to legally representing survivors of human trafficking as each survivor and situation is unique, complex and variable. Rather, this primer is intended to provide information to supplement your current professional and ethical obligations.

ALIGHT does not provide legal advice, nor does it directly represent survivors of human trafficking. For attorney resources and policies relating to legal representation, please see the American Bar Association's Human Trafficking Task Force online materials [here](#). ALIGHT encourages you to seek out additional resources or training on these topics as needed.

A Note on Terminology

The terms "victim" and "survivor" are both used in different contexts to refer to individuals who were trafficked. For some parties, the term "victim" implies a different meaning than the term "survivor." This can be a linguistically confusing area of law and policy. "Survivor" is used by many service providers to acknowledge the strength and resilience demonstrated by those who have been trafficked (Hockett & Saucier, 2015).

The use of the term “victim” in certain circumstances is often required or may be beneficial to use. For instance, the term “victim” has legal implications within the criminal justice system. “Victim” generally means someone who has suffered direct harm from a crime, and thus has certain rights within the criminal justice process; however, the legal definition of “victim” varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction (NCVLI, 2011).

This primer is titled Working with Human Trafficking Survivors because ALIGHT anticipates that you will provide legal support to individuals who have separated from the trafficking situation. Throughout this document, the term “survivor,” rather than “victim,” is used in a conscious effort to recognize the importance of empowering these individuals on the road to rebuilding their lives. Rather than representing trafficked persons as powerless and weak, ALIGHT recognizes both the oppression and resistance of survivors as they exhibit strength in moving past their trafficking experiences and begin to heal (Hockett & Saucier, 2015).

What is human trafficking?

Some of you may already be familiar with the concept of human trafficking, but for those of you who are not, or need a refresher, human trafficking is essentially about the exploitation of vulnerable individuals and populations (ALIGHT, 2016). ALIGHT uses the internationally accepted definition of human trafficking, as enshrined in international law through the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (commonly known as The Palermo Protocol) adopted by the United Nations in 2000 and ratified by the United States. Under this definition, human trafficking is “...the recruitment, transportation, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of coercion, abduction, deception or abuse of power or of vulnerability, for the purpose of exploitation... exploitation, at a minimum, includes sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery and slavery-like practices” (United Nations, 2000, p. 2). This definition includes sex and labor trafficking and points to the multiple means through which traffickers control their victims, including through false promises, threats of serious harm and emotional abuse. Human trafficking has also been referred to as “modern day slavery;” although, it is important to remember that this term may be associated with extreme forms of trafficking that involve chains and other physical restrictions that are not necessary to make a determination that someone has been trafficked. Additionally, “trafficking” has sometimes been confused with “smuggling,” although trafficking is not about movement or a crime against a country’s borders (American Bar Association, 2016). It is a crime against a person, often a person in a vulnerable position.

Who is trafficked?

The phrase “human trafficking” may conjure images of girls forced to work in Asian brothels or one of young women kidnapped and sold into sex slavery by gangs in Mexico. While scenarios like these certainly have happened, and continue to happen, they do not fully and fairly represent the wide variety of individuals who fall prey to traffickers. Anyone—men, women and children of all ages—can be trafficked for the purpose of labor or sexual exploitation, and this can occur both domestically and internationally in rural, suburban and urban areas (Dworkin & Martyniuk, 2012; Hepburn & Simon, 2010; NHTRC, n.d.). Trafficked persons can be foreign nationals or U.S. citizens (American Bar Association, 2016).

It doesn't matter where you live, human trafficking exists in some form regardless of the city or nation you reside in (Hepburn & Simon, 2010). Human trafficking has many faces and involves many situations. It includes men working on construction sites, domestic workers, runaways and youths going door-to-door selling magazines. Trafficking can occur to people you cross paths with on the street, who cut your country club's lawn or who ring you up in stores.

For example, human trafficking may occur among Salvadoran migrant workers forced into indebted servitude, among Korean men and women forced to work long days with little to no pay in a dry cleaner, on the streets of the U.S. in the form of forced prostitution and among Thai nationals trafficked to post-Katrina New Orleans for forced manual labor (Hepburn & Simon, 2010; Young, 2008).

Risk Factors of Human Trafficking

The experiences of survivors of human trafficking from different backgrounds may vary. However, there are common risk factors related to vulnerability. These risk factors include poverty, living in areas with high crime rates, gender inequality, food insecurity and/or government or police corruption, along with the survivor having a previous history of health or mental health issues, substance abuse, domestic violence and/or sexual abuse (Dworkin & Martyniuk, 2012; West, n.d.). Unemployment, lack of access to education, homelessness and age are also risk factors (Dworkin & Martyniuk, 2012). Despite these drivers, survivors of human trafficking have varied education levels, may be documented or undocumented and come from a variety of social, cultural and economic backgrounds (NHTRC, n.d.).

Understanding the Experience of Being Trafficked

Traffickers often target their victims based on poverty and social inequalities. Especially in the case of international trafficking, war and civil unrest may have had a devastating impact on the health and safety of human trafficking survivors. Traffickers play on the misfortune and struggles of their victims by falsely promising better economic opportunities. This may involve relocation to more affluent nations when trafficking occurs internationally (Dworkin & Martyniuk, 2012).

Regardless of their socio-cultural and economic background, survivors of human trafficking are isolated from their support systems and experience a destruction of their self-esteem and personal autonomy while trafficked (West, n.d.). Traffickers may use brainwashing, threats to the survivor and their family, force, fraud, violence, forced drug use and coercive tactics to achieve their aims. Trafficked persons routinely experience intimidation and fear at the hands of their traffickers; often this takes the form of long-term, repetitive physical and emotional abuse, such as isolation, beatings, rape and gang rape (Dworkin & Martyniuk, 2012; Stotts Jr. & Ramey, 2009; West, n.d.). Traffickers may also trap their victims in un-repayable debt bondage by charging extremely high and excessive fees for things like housing and transportation, along with interest (Dworkin & Martyniuk, 2012; Hepburn & Simon 2010). For example, there is a case in India in which an entire family has been trapped in forced servitude for a total debt of \$22. Often when the original debtor dies, the debt is passed to their children (Keehn, 2011). Trafficked individuals may lack access to information, methods of communicating with others and knowledge regarding the services and programs available to them (West, n.d.).

Additionally, trafficked persons are often made to live in unclean and unsafe environments, and they most likely do not have access to sufficient medical care. As a result of the violence they endure, survivors may suffer from burns, broken bones, concussions, vaginal or anal tearing and other physical injuries. Mutilations or infections caused by medical procedures performed in unsanitary conditions by unqualified persons may have occurred. As a result of rape or commercial sex work, survivors may have experienced unwanted pregnancies. Infertility due to chronic untreated sexually transmitted infections and botched abortions is common. Survivors of labor trafficking may experience a variety of health issues, such as chronic back pain, hearing loss and respiratory issues, due to working in dangerous conditions. Serious dental problems and malnourishment are also characteristics of trafficked persons, and these issues are particularly detrimental to children (Stotts Jr. & Ramey, 2009). Living under such harsh, dehumanizing and hazardous conditions is an extremely traumatic experience for survivors of human trafficking.

Signs of Human Trafficking

As an attorney or advocate, you can play a pivotal role in identifying individuals currently being trafficked, or who have recently escaped trafficking, and provide your legal services or recommend the services of appropriate organizations and agencies. Unfortunately, many individuals that a trafficked person may come in contact with are not aware of or alert to the warning signs of trafficking (Leidholdt & Scully, 2013). Because human trafficking may occur to any person in any segment of the population, there are certain behaviors, interactions and visible signs that may stand out as red flags for identifying trafficked persons. Identifiable warning signs may include:

- Possession of multiple expensive items
- Appearance of tattoos or branding on the body
- Visible signs of physical abuse
- Appearance of mutilations of the body or infections
- Exhibits addictive behaviors, hyper-vigilance, paranoia, depression or anxiety
- Has experienced gender-based violence, sexual abuse and/or domestic violence
- Involvement in prostitution
 - Has a relationship with a pimp
- Undocumented status
- Provides conflicting information
- Frequently misses or cancels appointments
- Exhibits “non-compliance” or does not following through
- Refuses services
- Distrusting
- Accompanied by a person who does not let the individual speak
- Non-speaker of the local language
 - Especially in situations where this makes the individual more vulnerable or where some level of language competency would be expected
 - Such as a marriage with someone who is only an English speaker
- Has accounts opened by someone else
- Has large amounts of debt
- Occurrence of irregular transaction times
 - Wire transfers during non-business hours

(Baikie, 2016; Eldredge & Hardesty, n.d.; Leidholdt & Scully, 2013)

The presence of any or a combination of any of these characteristics should signal to you that the person you are interacting with may be a trafficked person or a survivor of trafficking. It is not unusual for trafficked persons to deny their trafficking

experiences or the presence of any of these indicators. The absence or denial of any of these warning signs should not lead you to the conclusion that trafficking is not involved. Additionally, it is important to note that not all traffickers fit the stereotypical depictions of members of organized crime rings; intimate partners, family members and community members of the survivor are just as likely to be traffickers (Leidholdt & Scully, 2013).

What is trauma?

Lawyers and advocates may face challenges when representing trafficking survivors that are the result of material, psychological and physical harm perpetrated by traffickers. This harm that survivors endure manifests psychologically as trauma (Leidholdt, 2013). Trauma can be defined as how a survivor responds to their experience of being present to or witnessing physical violence, abuse, neglect, terrorism, disaster or war.

Events and experiences that individuals perceive as overwhelming, shocking or terrifying, which result in feelings of fear, horror and helplessness, can also be classified as trauma. Trauma is a response that can affect individuals of any gender, occupying any socio-economic status and belonging to any cultural or ethnic group. Trauma can even span generations, and the impacts are cumulative over a person's life (West, n.d.). Intergenerational trauma can occur when the caregiving abilities of parents or grandparents are impaired due to the traumatic experiences that they have suffered (Phipps & Degges-White, 2014).

Impacts of Trauma

Not every individual will experience trauma or be impacted by trauma in the same way; cultural group, psychiatric history of the family, age, exposure to trauma in the past and emotional functioning will all have some bearing on how a person responds to trauma (Bicknell-Hentges & Lynch, 2009). Despite these variables, there are many characteristics that identify the nature and impact that trauma has on individuals. The effects of trauma are neurological, biological, psychological and social and can span a lifetime. Brain neurobiology is changed by experiencing trauma, and there are social, emotional and cognitive impacts. Trauma can result in persistent and severe health, behavioral health and social problems and can even result in an early death. In the case of children, the effects of trauma are exacerbated (West, n.d.).

A person can sustain major damage to their health caused by exposure to traumatic events and extensive intervals of stress. The stress response and memory systems of the brain can undergo long-term changes if an individual experiences repetitive and

excessive stress (Bicknell-Hentges & Lynch, 2009). Additionally, trauma can have a substantial effect on a person's health attributable to the use of potentially harmful coping and adapting mechanisms and mental health issues that may develop. Individuals who have experienced trauma may exhibit emotional numbness or dissociation, aggression or violent behavior or obsessive behavior, like obsessive working or exercise or the development of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). Substance abuse, eating disorders, smoking, self-injury and sexual promiscuity are also common among individuals who have endured traumatic experiences. None of these issues can be addressed without first addressing and overcoming the trauma that the individual has experienced (West, n.d.).

Symptoms of Trauma in Human Trafficking Survivors

In the case of survivors of human trafficking, the impact of trauma results in a broken spirit, loss of simple trust and a lack of determination (Guglielmucci et al., 2014; West, n.d.). Depression, listlessness, panic attacks, intense emotional expression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are all symptoms of psychological trauma that trafficking survivors may experience. In many cases, personal trauma histories predate trafficking experiences with the effects of trauma accumulating and expanding over time (West, n.d.). Survivors of human trafficking often experience the same types of violence as survivors of other crimes, such as theft, torture, corruption, rape, intimate partner violence and sexual harassment. In many cases trafficked persons are betrayed by their trusted loved ones, robbed of their economic resources, have their intimate boundaries and privacy violated, sustain abuse over the course of many years and live in a constant state of fear (Leidholdt, 2013).

Duration of Trauma

Even if it may be assumed that trafficking ends as soon as the survivor is separated from the trafficker and in a safe location, in fact the situation is much more complex. Survivors of human trafficking often have many challenges after their trafficking experience ends, which are related to the trauma they sustained while being trafficked. They may have no trust in anyone and live in fear. Many survivors do not self-identify as "victims" because they think of their experiences differently. Under the thumb of their traffickers, they were conditioned to do as they were told which can make making personal decisions difficult afterwards. Adding even more complexity to this situation is the fact that most survivors will not seek "mental health services." Many survivors do not want to be labeled in that way or do not define their needs in that capacity (West, n.d.).

In addition to living with the impacts sustained while being trafficked, survivors may experience additional trauma as they seek help in the aftermath of being trafficked.

Many service providers often assume survivors are abusing substances, and some will not provide service to those who are. Trafficked persons are often blamed by service providers for making bad choices that led to their victimization. Survivors often have to face accusatory questions, like “Why didn’t you just leave?” or “What is wrong with you?” (West, n.d.).

Retelling and revisiting traumatic memories may be detrimental to some survivors of human trafficking. If a person is pushed to discuss their traumatic experiences before they are ready to, then it puts them at risk of being re-traumatized or overwhelmed. Someone who has been re-traumatized may dissociate, regress or rely on substances or other potentially harmful behaviors to cope with the traumatic memories (Bicknell-Hentges & Lynch, 2009).

Representing Traumatized Individuals

The legal profession and the criminal justice field can definitely benefit from implementing trauma-informed care practices. Trauma-informed care is the conscious effort of organizations and programs to provide a service delivery approach that is more supportive than traditional approaches and avoids re-traumatization of survivors (West, n.d.). This approach operates on the assumption that many clients may have suffered traumatic experiences, and it is the responsibility of the professional to be sensitive to this by establishing an understanding of vulnerabilities and triggers of trauma (Richardson, 2016; West, n.d.). To be trauma-informed is to understand the role that trauma plays in the lives of people (West, n.d.).

At the heart of trauma-informed care is the ability to comprehend that how an individual perceives his or her physical and emotional safety, relationships and behaviors is affected by the trauma that the individual has endured (Richardson, 2016). Trauma-informed practices involve screening for and responding to past traumas, using methods that allow for survivor empowerment and facilitating healing. Implementing this approach calls for working with survivors collaboratively by allowing the survivor to define mutual goals. One can most effectively do this by respecting the voices and choices of survivors and meeting survivors where they are emotionally, socially and physically (West, n.d.).

How Trauma May Manifest in a Survivor

It is very important for you to be sensitive to the fact that your client may be experiencing psychological distress. Remember that trauma impacts every individual differently. However, in addition to the symptoms already discussed above, you may

observe one or more of the following manifestations of psychological trauma in survivors of human trafficking:

- Displaying emotional reactions
- Experiencing flashbacks, images or nightmares
- Exhibiting avoidance
 - Minimizing, numbing, denial or dissociation
- Expressing anger and irritability
 - May have tantrums
 - Anger and irritability are often directed at those attempting to help the survivor
- Having difficulty concentrating
- Experiencing insomnia
- Having feelings of helplessness, self-blame, meaninglessness or fatalism
- Being suspicious, guarded and reluctant to disclose information
- Experiencing suicidal thoughts or attempts

(Eldredge & Hardesty, n.d.; Leidholdt, 2013)

At times you may feel frustrated with your client because they are continually late to appointments or are extremely difficult to elicit important information from, but please remember that they have endured intense psychological trauma and are trying to find their footing. Implementing trauma-informed practices can help you work through some of these challenges and better represent survivors of human trafficking.

Trauma-informed Practices

Using trauma-informed practices alongside your legal services to aid the survivors of human trafficking can be achieved by incorporating the following techniques into your interactions with clients:

- Respect body space
- Make eye contact
- Initiate greetings
 - Demonstrate a pleasant demeanor
- Speak in clear, calm tones
- Offer beverages or snacks
- Use an open stance
 - Don't cross your arms
 - Acknowledge you are listening by nodding
- Provide options

- Let survivors make choices
- Empower survivors to choose the room you will enter, the seat they sit in (many survivors do not like their back to face the door), etc.
- Offering options will hopefully provide comfort to the survivor
- Avoid potential triggers that may cause anxiety
 - For example, locks, closed doors, small spaces, crowds, certain smells or sounds, etc. may trigger anxiety in a survivor of human trafficking
- Consider that your gender may be an issue for survivors
 - Be sensitive to the gender factor
 - Employ the help of a legal professional of a different gender to assist you
 - Do not exhibit judgmental feelings or behaviors
- Understand that a survivor may have a complex relationship with their trafficker
 - Survivors may be suffering from Stockholm syndrome or traumatic bonding in which they view their traffickers as protectors
 - A survivor may experience conflicting emotions about their trafficker because their relationship may have included care, loyalty, dependence and affection, along with violence
 - Survivors may even feel love or gratitude towards their trafficker
 - Not every survivor wants to be involved with the investigation and prosecution of their trafficker
 - This is a similar phenomenon to that which occurs among survivors of domestic violence and incest
- Be honest
- Provide information upfront
 - Explain legal processes fully
 - Let survivors know what to expect during each step of the process
- Do not assume an individual's needs
 - Make sure to ask what their needs are
- Respect the survivor's voice and decisions
- Respond to requests for assistance
- Make every effort possible to minimize delays
- Validate the fears the survivor is expressing
- Promote means for building self-esteem

(Dworkin & Martyniuk, 2012; Hepburn & Simon, 2010; Leidholdt, 2013; Richardson, 2016; West, n.d.)

In addition to the guidelines above, you may find it helpful to incorporate trauma-informed values at your workplace by using approaches that focus on safety, prevention of trauma for survivors, other clients and staff. Trauma-informed care is

focused on creating an environment that is safe for everyone. It may be useful to provide ongoing trauma-informed training and education for your staff (West, n.d.).

Cultural Factors

When representing survivors of human trafficking, it is important to also be aware of the many cultural factors that may influence the survivor's behavior, feelings, communication and worldview. Culture in this context is defined as the socially learned knowledge and patterns of behavior shared by a particular group of people (Peoples & Bailey, 2014). It may be helpful to think about the many lenses survivors view the world through. Consider the following:

- What is their personal identity?
 - How might their age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status, education level, religion and/or political affiliations influence the way in which they view themselves, others and the world around them?
 - For example:
 - A young Muslim woman may not feel comfortable being alone in a room with a man or discussing sensitive, intimate or personal topics with a man
 - Young adults of the millennial generation may prefer to communicate via text messaging or social media
- What is their cultural identity?
 - How might their cultural upbringing and religious traditions influence their day-to-day activities and interactions with people?
 - For example:
 - Latinos and Euro-Americans may not have the same idea of what being on time for an appointment or event actually means
- What are their experiences?
 - How might their unique lived experiences as an individual inform their thoughts, perceptions, interpretations and interactions?
 - For example:
 - Consider how a young African-American man raised by a single mother, living in an impoverished area, lacking the opportunity and means to pursue a different path may view selling drugs as a preferable form of employment over a minimum wage job

Because culture is a learned phenomenon, we all have the ability to become culturally competent.

Challenges and Barriers Survivors Face

Survivors of human trafficking face a number of barriers after they escape their trafficking conditions. Some of these particular challenges may stem from or be related to their cultural identity or upbringing. Survivors may encounter difficulties such as:

- Distrust of the criminal justice system
 - Many traffickers tell their victims that law enforcement and the criminal justice system will only deport or arrest them for being involved in trafficking
 - Additionally, some ethnic minority communities may have a persisting distrust of the criminal justice system due to institutionalized racism
- A lack of understanding of the legal system in the U.S.
 - Societies around the world have varying forms of legal and political systems
- Fear of deportation
 - This relates to the point above in which trafficked persons are repeatedly told this by traffickers as a way to maintain control and power
 - For some this may just be a threat, but for others, it is a reality
 - Some survivors of human trafficking have been deported after raids by government organizations, like U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)
 - Survivors may not have any personal identification and legal documents in their possession
 - These documents are usually withheld or destroyed by traffickers
 - Or survivors may be undocumented migrants and lack documentation in the first place
- Shame and taboo
 - Survivors may experience shame because they were deceived, taken advantage of, exploited and failed to provide monetary support to their families
 - Because the period of oppression they experienced was lengthy, the shame that may accompany human trafficking is often more persistent than that experienced by survivors of other crimes
 - In many societies, commercial sex work is viewed as immoral and a violation of religious ideology
 - Because of this, women who engage in sex work, forced or otherwise, are stigmatized, regarded as “fallen women” and marginalized

- Role of family
 - Survivors may lack family support for a variety of reasons
 - Family members could have collaborated with traffickers
 - Survivors might be homeless, orphaned, a runaway or have been “throwaway” (this includes children and youth who have been refused entry to their homes by parents or other adults)
 - Inversely, kinship ties may play an important role in the life of the survivor
 - This is especially true for survivors from non-Western societies in which kinship networks plays an integral role in the happenings of day-to-day life
 - It is important to be aware that survivors may not have divulged their trafficking experiences to family members or friends
 - They could be judgmental or critical of the survivor
- Gender and power dynamics
 - Survivors may face stigma in their home communities
 - This can be especially difficult for women who have contracted sexually transmitted infections or have birthed a child fathered by a trafficker or abuser
 - If a woman was forced into sex work, she may be viewed as “damaged” or “unmarriageable” in her community
- Isolation
 - Lack of access to cultural group and traditions, support systems or kinship network
- Language barriers
 - Many survivors cannot speak English which makes them unable to communicate effectively with service providers, law enforcement and others who might be able to assist them
 - This challenge is more broad than just not speaking the dominant language
 - It may create challenges with literacy and other forms of communication

(Dworkin & Martyniuk, 2012; Hepburn & Simon, 2010; Leidholdt, 2013; NHTRC, n.d.; Stotts Jr. & Ramey, 2009; Young, 2008)

Taking into consideration the challenges discussed above, it is not difficult to understand and empathize with the situation that survivors of human trafficking are in. Sonya is a perfect example of the cultural, social and economic challenges that face survivors. She is a Latina woman who is a survivor of trafficking, but she was initially resistant to seeking help from various service providers. When questioned about her resistance, it was revealed that Sonya had deeply rooted issues with

trusting others because she was sold by her parents to a trafficker. Sonya is also Catholic, but while she was under the control of her trafficker she was involved in many activities that are viewed as sinful by the church. The shame she felt for her past was a barrier she had to overcome in order to seek help. Conversely, her religious beliefs provided her with hope and courage that she would survive and overcome (Young, 2008). The feelings, beliefs and behaviors of survivors can be very complex to interpret, but working towards greater cultural competency is beneficial in building working relationships.

Challenges You May Face

While survivors of human trafficking have their own cultural hurdles to overcome, you may also have to contend with a number of challenges as you provide legal advocacy for survivors. You may have to confront a variety of issues such as:

- Stereotyping
 - Keep in mind that you, too, are always wearing your own set of cultural lenses which impact how you think, feel, believe, behave and interact in the world around you
 - Your cultural lenses may impact your ability to connect with the survivors you represent
 - Be self-aware of your own biases regarding topics that may have an influence on how you perceive and interact with survivors
 - It may be useful to explore your own thoughts on topics such as immigration, racism, sex work, gender roles, sexism, religion, non-Western peoples and traditions, capitalism, victimization and the like
- Language barriers
 - Ineffective cross-cultural communication
 - In addition to not speaking or writing the same language as the survivor, there is a wide spectrum of cultural variation in nonverbal communication, like facial expression, body language and proxemics or the messages conveyed by the space and distance between people interacting
- Role of power and privilege
 - Be aware of the privileges you have in society based on categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, education level, age, religious or political affiliation and citizenship status
 - This can impact the expectations of the roles of legal advocates and survivors

- Survivors may not hold these same privileges in society
 - For example, survivors may have severely limited economic means and resources
- As an attorney, you also hold a certain amount of power, authority and knowledge that survivors do not

(Young, 2008)

Mitigating Challenges

Keeping the cultural factors that may influence the thoughts, feelings, behaviors, interactions and worldviews of survivors of human trafficking in mind, along with how your own cultural identity and understanding may influence you, there are a few things you can do in order to raise awareness of cultural factors and moderate their effects. The first and most important thing you can do is to avoid value judgements. It is important to try to understand the circumstances of survivors from their own perspective, so be overly diligent about putting aside any biases or judgmental thoughts that can cloud your ability to provide effective legal assistance. Try to depersonalize behaviors or mindsets that you would normally find offensive and work towards understanding the meanings of actions.

Effective communication is also imperative when working with survivors of human trafficking. Avoid using legal jargon and words or phrases that your client may be unfamiliar with or intimidated by. If you do not proficiently speak the language and dialect the survivor is most comfortable communicating in, then enlist the help of a staff member who does or use an interpreter. If you find that an interpreter is needed, it is necessary to ensure that the interpreter does not know the survivor or the accused trafficker. Make sure that the interpreter understands what human trafficking entails, what the impacts of trauma are and how to utilize trauma-informed practices. The interpreter should also demonstrate cultural competency and uphold confidentiality. It is important to never use another survivor of human trafficking as an interpreter due to the risks of retraumatization. If the survivor has previously worked with an interpreter through another agency or program, then check their availability (Dworkin & Martyniuk, 2012).

Cultivating a relationship built on trust while representing a survivor of human trafficking is essential. It is important to clarify your role with your client because they may assume that you are some type of government official and may be suspicious and fearful of you. Put your client's mind at ease by explaining that all of your communications are confidential, and that nothing he or she discloses to you will be revealed to the government or the traffickers. In order to break down the power dynamics involved in attorney-client relationships and engage your client in a

meaningful way, listen to the concerns and acknowledge the strengths of the survivor, while also expressing concern for their needs (Leidholdt, 2013).

Finally, continue to develop an understanding of the importance of culture in day-to-day life. Make sure that you are integrating knowledge of cultural factors into your planning processes; for example, if you are meeting a client, be sure to choose a location that is both physically and culturally safe, and if possible, let the survivor choose the location. If you lack competency in the culture that a survivor you are representing belongs to, then work towards developing your own awareness. Showing survivors that you respect and value their cultural identity and traditions will only help you in building stronger rapport and trust. It demonstrates that you are committed to assisting the individual, and you will have a better understanding of how cultural factors may uniquely influence a survivor's victimization and resilience (Dworkin & Martyniuk, 2012). It may be beneficial for you and your staff to seek out additional training in cultural competency.

Self-care

As noted by the National Center for PTSD (2016), "...a large majority of individuals who work with trauma survivors indicate that it has brought great meaning into their lives, increased their sense of purpose and strength, and heightened their sense of connection with others" (para. 14). While there are many personal benefits to working with survivors of human trafficking, there are also possible negative impacts. Having a good understanding of trauma is important so that you can be self-aware and apply the knowledge that you have gained to yourself while working with survivors of human trafficking. Research has shown that some individuals who work with trauma survivors in certain capacities may be impacted negatively, despite the many benefits an individual working with trauma survivors might experience, such as increased sense of purpose or meaning. As a result of working with survivors of human trafficking and witnessing the effects this trauma has on others, you may notice changes in yourself; you may start to show signs of stress disorders from difficulty sleeping to PTSD symptoms, like heightened reactivity or avoidance (National Center for PTSD, 2016). Below you will find a discussion of a number of terms that help to explain the changes you may experience while representing survivors of human trafficking.

Burnout

The term "burnout" refers to the cumulative psychological strain of working with many different stressors. This is felt as a wearing down over time due to the culmination of many factors such as working long hours with few resources,

undergoing emotional drain caused by empathizing and experiencing unreciprocated giving and attentiveness. Feelings of discouragement, boredom and cynicism, along with depression and a loss of compassion, are all symptoms of burnout (National Center for PTSD, 2016).

Compassion Stress

Compassion stress is viewed as more of a “natural outcome” of being exposed to the trauma experienced by clients, friends or family members rather than a medical condition. It is the stress that comes along with wanting to help or helping survivors of trauma. Compassion stress is a sudden onset of symptoms, like isolation, confusion, helplessness and secondary traumatic stress symptoms (National Center for PTSD, 2016).

Compassion Fatigue

Compassion fatigue is used to describe the cumulative impacts of severe compassion stress. Enduring prolonged exposure to compassion stress can cause a state of exhaustion and dysfunction, which manifests biologically, physiologically and emotionally (National Center for PTSD, 2016).

Secondary Traumatic Stress

Secondary traumatic stress is not currently recognized as a clinical disorder, but this phrase is used to designate the signs and symptoms of PTSD exhibited by people working with traumatized individuals. The symptoms generally mirror those of individuals who have experienced direct trauma and include anxiety, hyper-arousal, avoidance and intrusive symptoms (National Center for PTSD, 2016).

Vicarious Trauma

Changes in feelings, thoughts and behaviors that you have regarding yourself could indicate you are being affected by vicarious trauma due to repeated exposure to the trauma of others (Phipps & Degges-White, 2014; West, n.d.). The risk of experiencing vicarious trauma is more significant in individuals who are sensitive, highly empathetic and/or have experienced past personal trauma (National Center for PTSD, 2016; West, n.d.). Vicarious trauma is characterized by adversely affecting one’s sense of humor, intelligence, willpower, memory and ability to protect one’s self. Additionally, a person afflicted by vicarious trauma may struggle with their perception of meaning and hope, sense of self and self-esteem, an ability to meet their psychological needs and a sense of connection with others. Vicarious trauma can produce a wide variety of behavioral transformations, such as avoiding social and

work contact, developing extremely strict boundaries, becoming cynical or angry, taking on others' problems, feeling an enhanced sense of protectiveness, among other changes (National Center for PTSD, 2016).

Implementing Self-care

Striking a balance between helping others, taking care of yourself and maintaining your career and personal life is the key to self-care. It is very important that you are aware of your own emotional state, needs and limits. Working with traumatized individuals, like survivors of human trafficking, may take its toll on you physically, psychologically, socially and spiritually (Pierson, n.d.). If you notice that you are experiencing any of the changes or behaviors discussed above while representing survivors of human trafficking, it is recommended that you seek out the assistance of a mental health professional and take the necessary steps to practice self-care.

There are many techniques that you can implement in your daily or weekly routine that can help you recharge. You should find the things that best fit your personality, interests and schedule. Take a look at the list below for some great ideas on how to implement self-care in your life:

- Journal writing
- Vent emotions in safe ways through music, physical activity or talking with a friend
- Use visualization to create a safe and comforting place and visit it often
- Get a massage
- Exercise
- In your home or office create a nurturing and healing space
- Indulge in simple pleasures and social activities
- Connect with others by taking part in support groups, social clubs and other gatherings
- Participate in community organizing and social activism
- Engage in spiritual practices that are meaningful to you
- Spend time in the natural environment

(Pierson, n.d.)

Conclusion

The tools, tips and general information provided throughout this primer are intended to heighten your awareness of the experiences of trafficked persons and the many challenges they are up against. Awareness of the extreme, and often shocking,

circumstances survivors have managed to escape and the resulting psychological trauma they deal with on a daily basis is essential in making you a more effective advocate. While you may never truly know what it is like to be trafficked and survive, this resource should provide you with the background knowledge necessary to consider the lived experiences of survivors and empathize with their circumstances. Awareness of how trauma and cultural factors impact your clients in a variety of ways will only enable you to be the most effective and efficient advocate you can be. As you work with survivors, it is absolutely crucial to maintain self-awareness, work towards cultural competency and incorporate trauma-informed practices in your advocacy efforts.

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