

Employee Assistance Program

Health and Wellness Presentations



EAP



STRESS AND TRAUMA EXPOSURE

Strategies for Coping



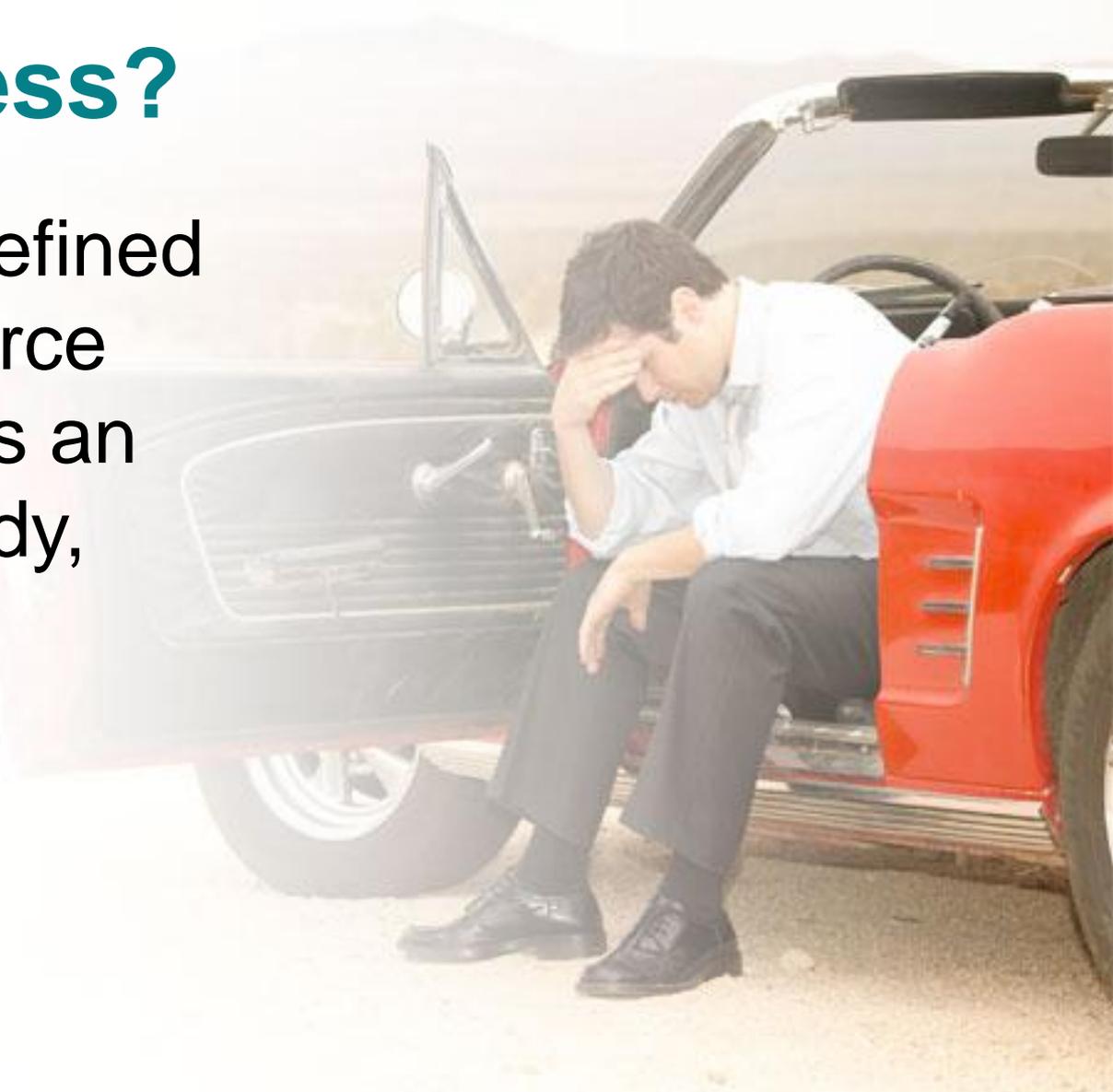
EAP

Objectives

- Understand the meaning of vicarious or secondary trauma.
- Review the possible effects and symptoms.
- Consider strategies for managing trauma stress and building resilience to prevent the effects of secondary trauma.
- Know how to access the EAP.

What is Stress?

Stress can be defined as an outside force or event that has an effect on our body, mind, emotions, and/or behavior.



Trauma: A Type of Stress

- **Trauma:** An experience that is emotionally painful, distressful, or shocking, which often results in lasting mental and physical effects
- **Traumatic event:** A life-threatening or frightening occurrence that is witnessed or experienced by an individual

Vicarious Trauma

- Also called
 - Compassion fatigue
 - Indirect trauma
 - Secondary traumatic stress
 - Vicarious trauma
- It is the result of opening one's heart and mind to the experience of a trauma survivor.

Vicarious Trauma (continued)

The severity of vicarious trauma may also increase due to external factors such as:

- Cumulative exposure to trauma victims
- Serious workplace instability
- Other stresses and issues in one's personal life
- Inadequate or limited social support

Some Normal Reactions to Stress

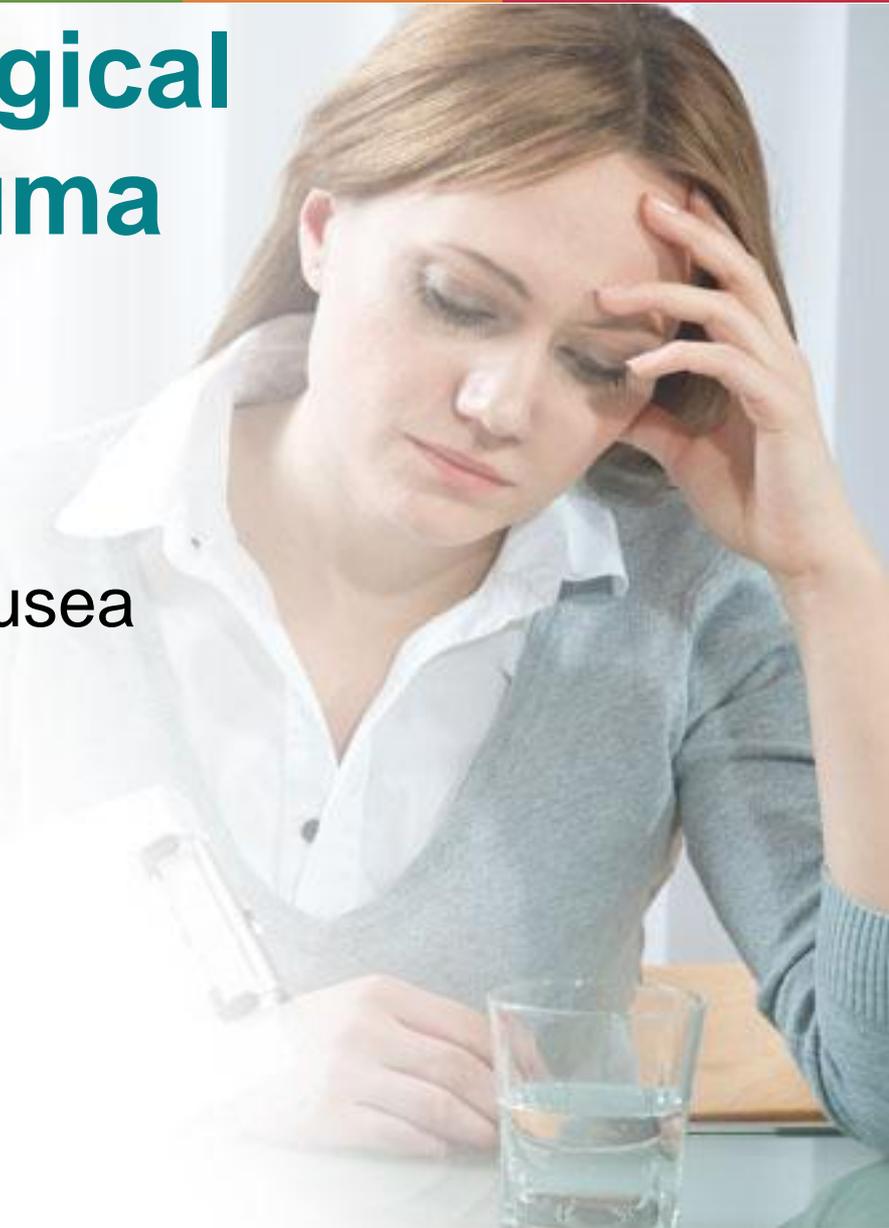
Numbness
Helplessness
Fearfulness
Frustration
Anger
Worry
Sadness

Preoccupation
Curiosity
Irritability
Uncertainty
“Hyperness”
Confusion
Panic

Denial
Feeling ill
Mistrust
Isolating
No apparent reaction

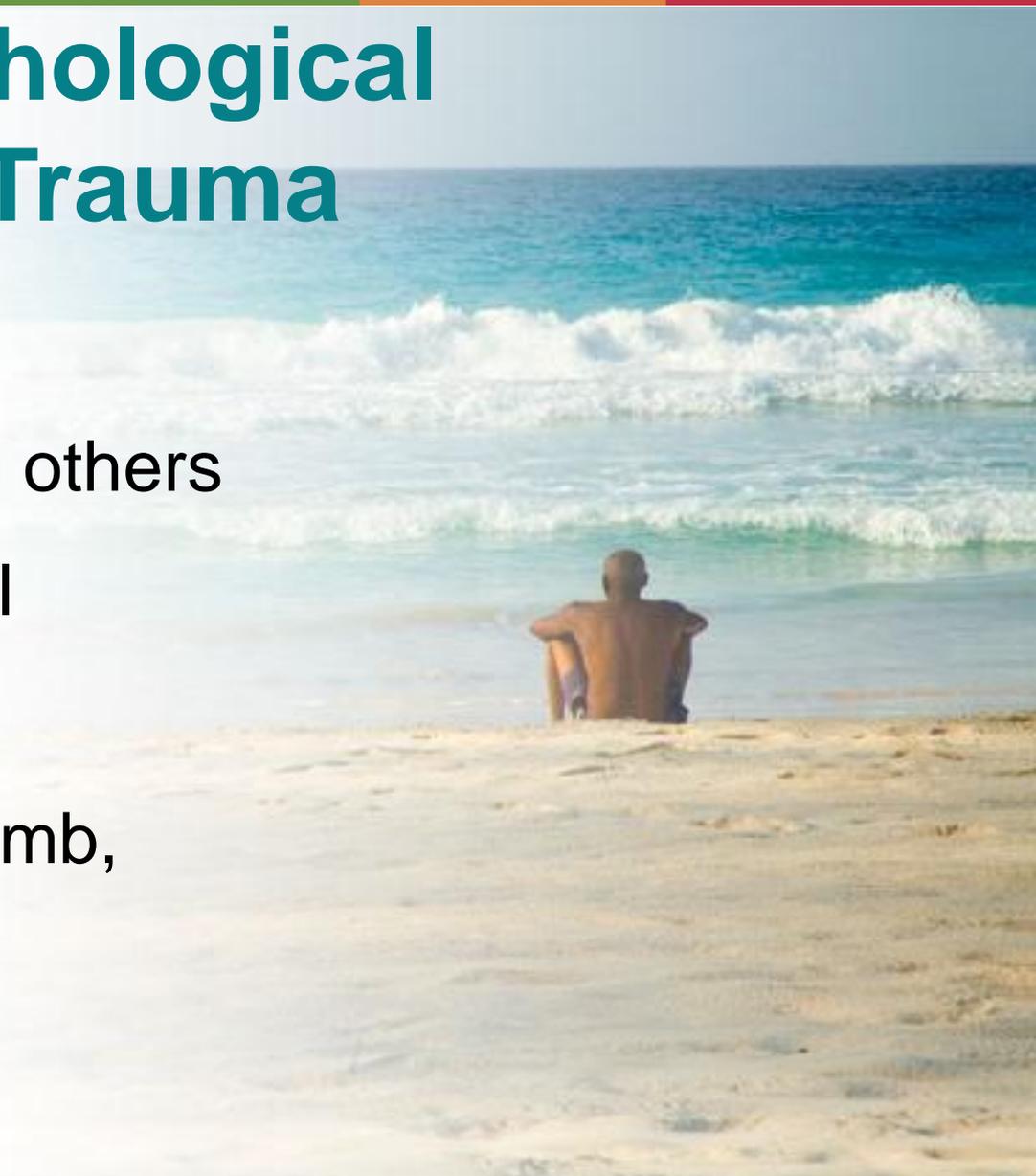
Possible Physiological Symptoms of Trauma

- Loss of appetite
- Headaches, chest pain
- Diarrhea, stomach pain, nausea
- Hyperactivity
- Nightmares
- Inability to sleep
- Fatigue, low energy



Possible Psychological Symptoms of Trauma

- Irritability, anger
- Self-blame, blaming others
- Isolation, withdrawal
- Fear of recurrence
- Feeling stunned, numb, or overwhelmed
- Feeling helpless



Possible Psychological Symptoms of Trauma

(continued)

- Mood swings
- Sadness, depression, grief
- Guilt
- Anxiety, hyper-alertness
- Denial
- Concentration, memory problems
- Relationship conflicts/marital discord
- Increase in alcohol or drug consumption



Cultural and Individual Differences

Culture and personality may influence how people experience the stress of secondary trauma.

- Degree and intensity of the stress response varies from person to person.
- Some have difficulty asking for help.
- Some want to talk; others do not.
- Some are comfortable with touch; others are not.



The Value of Symptoms

- When we get a sports injury and feel pain that lingers or recurs, we usually practice home or self-care—e.g. ice, rest, compression.
- If the pain goes on for too long and doesn't improve, or if home remedies and self-care don't work, we usually seek outside help.
- In the same vein, the best course when we experience ongoing stress, or ongoing symptoms of vicarious trauma, is to actively use self-care strategies, and seek outside support and help as needed.

Reducing Stress and Building Resiliency

What is resiliency?

- The ability to adapt positively in the face of crises, trauma, day-to-day stressors, or the build-up of stressors
- Being realistic
- Turning challenges into opportunities
- Learning from adversity
- Preparing for challenging situations



Successful Stress Management

- Managing how you *respond* to difficult events and situations; not about “*controlling*” what goes on around you
- Building preventive supports and providing a strong foundation to help you respond adaptively to negative situations



EAP

Building Resiliency: Physical Self-Care

- Get enough sleep.
- Exercise regularly.
- Eat healthily.
- Reduce alcohol and caffeine consumption.
- Release tension.
- Take deep breaths.
- Have fun.
- Balance work, play, and rest.
- Use humor when you can.



Building Resiliency: Emotional Self-Care

- Know your vulnerabilities.
- Use relaxation skills that work for you.
- Talk to others often.
- Debrief.
- Set limits.
- Get help early on.
- Increase resilience.

Building Resiliency: Social Self-Care

- Be aware of withdrawal and isolation.
- Get nurturance/care from loved ones.
- Use friends and family.
- Debrief in a group.
- Practice team building.
- Balance work, home, and rest.

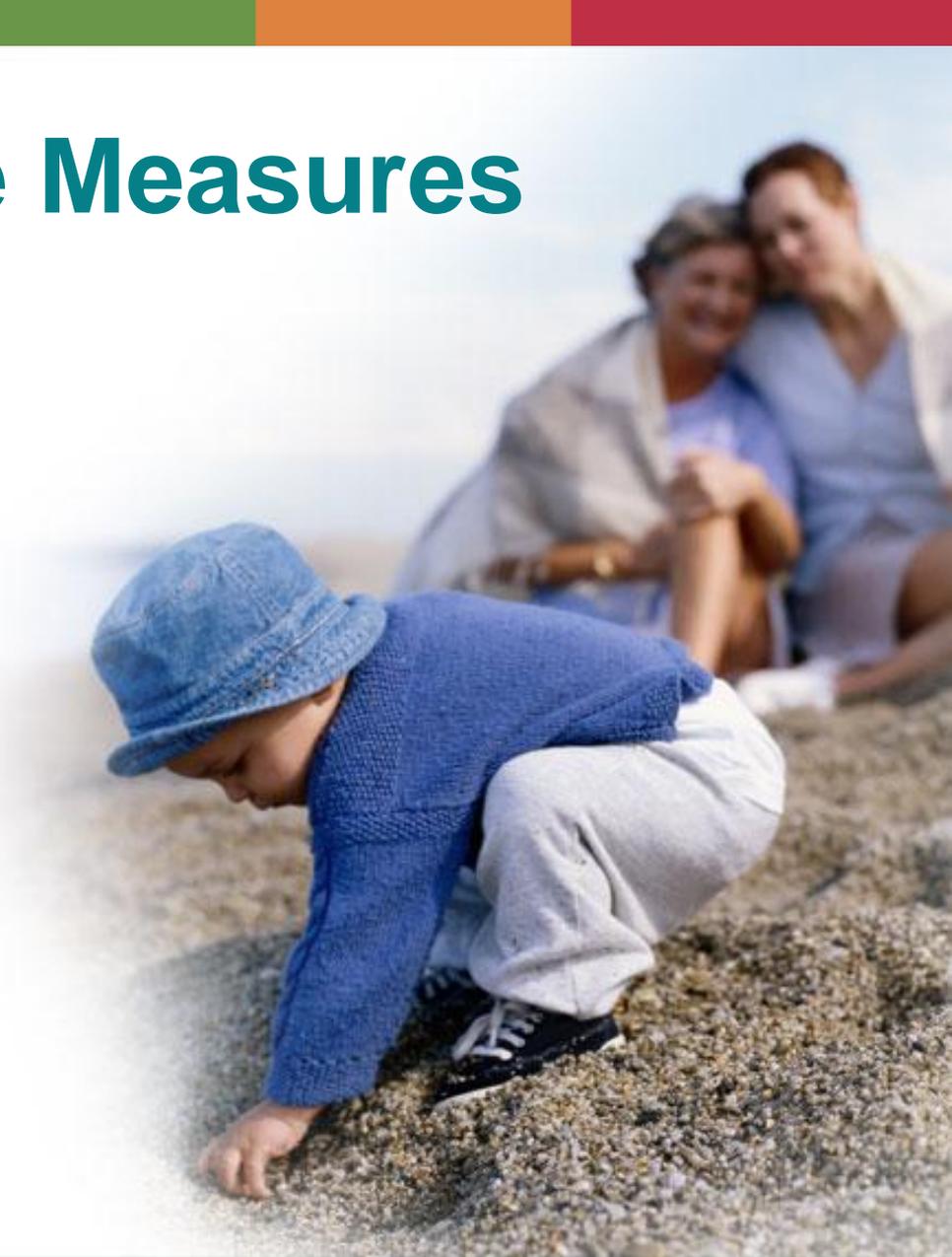


Building Resiliency: Spiritual Self-Care

- Connect with nature.
- Be aware of beauty around you.
- Find your creativity.
- Meditate.
- Use religious/spiritual resources.

Other Preventive Measures

- Allow yourself to receive as well as give.
- Remember that your identity is broader than that of a helper or caregiver.
- Connect with family and others.



Keep Life in Perspective

- Recognize signs of stress and look after yourself.
- Identify what you can and cannot change.
- Accept your limitations and use planning skills.
- Keep expectations realistic.
- Maintain a positive attitude.



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Improving the **health,**
safety, and **productivity**
of our Federal employees.