

## What's the role of friends and family?

Experiencing vicarious trauma impacts many areas of our lives—professional, personal, and social. Several signs of vicarious trauma centre on our relationships with our friends and family. Two big ones are **disconnecting from your loved ones** and an increase in **negative views about others**, including your loved ones.

Here are some examples of what that might look like:

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### Disconnecting from loved ones might look like...

being less physically affectionate

being emotionally distant

rarely telling them about important or stressful things going on at work

not spending as much time with your loved ones

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### Negative views about loved ones might look like...

becoming easily irritated

becoming more critical

thinking less of them if they don't do the same type of work you do

becoming suspicious about who they 'really' are

When you do the kind of work that exposes you to traumatic content, it's important to keep connected with your loved ones. While support at work is critical, social support in your personal life can keep you grounded. So here are some general tips:

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### Make sure you tell your loved ones how things are going at work

Don't brush off their questions! It's important to 'share the load' of your stress without overwhelming your friends and family.

At the same time, *don't share details that violate confidentiality or put your loved ones at risk for vicarious trauma.*

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### Keep doing things with your friends and family

Or reach out if you haven't met up for a while - it's important to disconnect from work!

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### Lean on them for support when you need to

If you need more support than your friends and family can offer you, see a General Practitioner for a Mental Health Plan – or contact your employer's Employee Assistance Program.

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