

Types of vicarious trauma interventions

Organisational interventions relating to vicarious trauma and other mental injuries can be classified as either proactive, ameliorative, or reactive.

Proactive/Primary interventions

Focus on preventing mental injury by reducing organisational stressors

Focus on organisation

e.g. professional skills training; reducing workload; modifying policies and procedures

Ameliorative / Secondary interventions

Focus on preventing mental injury by enhancing workers' ability to cope with organisational stressors

Focus on individual

e.g. resilience training; yoga and mindfulness

Reactive/Tertiary interventions

Focus on managing and supporting distressed workers; not preventative

Focus on individual

e.g. Employee Assistance Programs; debriefing

The best approach uses all three types of interventions:

- reducing organisational stressors (proactive)
- enhancing workers' ability to cope with remaining organisational stressors (ameliorative)
- and offering support to workers who are impacted by work (reactive).

However, many organisations do not have a comprehensive prevention approach for vicarious trauma or other mental injuries. Organisations that take a preventative approach largely offer ameliorative interventions, which focus on enhancing workers' ability to cope rather than addressing the organisational stressors which contribute to vicarious trauma.

Though ameliorative interventions can be very useful, it is critical to use proactive interventions that identify and control the risk of vicarious trauma as far as reasonably practicable.



