

Newsroom Traumatic Stress



It is normal to “feel stressed”

It's not just war correspondents that experience traumatic stress. Young journalists are more likely to experience trauma.

Journalists, especially photojournalists experience traumatic stress. Deadlines, graphic images and repeated exposure to “bad news” take a toll. Journalists, especially women, often think they have to “suck it up” or they will be labeled as “too soft” to do the job and they will be replaced.

1

KNOW YOUR TRIGGERS

What images or sounds are you sensitive to?

2

RESET TO NORMAL

What images or music can you use to remind you of what is normal?

3

TALK OPENLY

It is not macho to avoid talking about stress. Don't penalize those who do.



Anger masks fear

When you feel anger rising ask “What am I afraid of that is making me so angry?”



Unplug

Step away from work. Recreation is really “re-creation.”



Work stress disrupts work-life balance.

Americans only took off 54% of their available vacation time last year.

Healing begins with awareness

It's not only stories making national headlines that cause trauma for journalists. Car crashes, crime and catastrophic floods can too. So can being harassed or stalked, getting email threats, hearing "fake news" shouted, or being criticized for appearance.

Journalists often cover stories that remind them of traumatic events in their own lives including the death of a loved one, abuse, bullying and even childhood trauma. Sometimes journalists cover storms, for example, that have damaged their own homes.

Social media producers may edit and caption dozens of disturbing photos in a shift. The **repetition** can cause more harm than the **duration of the exposure** to the images. Journalists working solo may have nobody to talk with who understands what he/she witnessed.



Accolades and awards for coverage of tough stories reinforce the idea that trauma is the norm for news.

An afternoon with therapy dogs immediately following a major event may be helpful, but it's not enough. Healing takes time.

Managers feel stress when they are responsible for assigning difficult stories, knowing the impact it could have on reporters. Bosses have to make it routine to talk about trauma and stress.

BELIEVING IN THE IMPORTANCE OF JOURNALISM HELPS TO RELIEVE STRESS

The sheer duration of coverage of major events adds to newsroom stress. Long hours, no days off, lousy food all add to the stress. Research shows one important way journalists can reframe the stress of covering news: "Journalists who believe they are doing important work are FAR more likely to recover from trauma." That means it is especially important for newsrooms to talk about the value of journalism to society that can make enduring difficult stories bearable.

