

Interviewer Distress Guidance

Distress and/or secondary trauma can present itself during any stage of the cognitive interview study process. You can experience pre-interview anxiety before the start of a study or interview. During the interview you can also experience anxiety and distress, as well exposure to vicarious trauma via the respondent narrative. Vicarious trauma and distress for interviewers can be triggered while writing notes, transcripts and again during analysis. Intensity of the distress can vary during the different phases of a study.

Recognize the signs of distress and secondary trauma

- ❖ Before the study or an interview
 - Many interviewers express feeling anxiety before the start of a project or interview. Some signs of pre-interview anxiety are:
 - Fear
 - Nervousness
 - Rumination
 - Sleep disturbances
 - Combat pre-interview anxiety
 - Interviewer discussion
 - In addition to a “Project kick off meeting” or as part of the kickoff meeting, we will have a discussion on the population to be recruited. The discussion will include advice from experienced interviewers and operations team members on working with the population. And strategies to complete a successful interview
 - Training/Lectures
 - Depending on the study topic and population being recruited, trainings and lectures with representatives from the community will be available. Trainings and lectures will center best practices while interacting with the population and tips and strategies to engage them during cognitive interviews
 - Watch old CCQDER interviews with similar study topics or demographics
 - CCQDER has a plethora of interviews with hard-to-reach respondents, sensitive topics, and complicated interviews. Watch older interviews for ideas of how to navigate sensitive topics and difficult respondents.
 - Reach out to the operations team to determine which previous project(s)/interviews would be best suited
 - Refer to “Vicarious trauma” presentation provided by WWO (Worklife Wellness Office)
 - Reach out to WWO for individual support
- ❖ During interviewing and note writing
 - It is very common for interviewers to experience distress and or vicarious trauma during the interviewing phase of a study. Depending on the study topic and respondent narrative

interviewers can be exposed to harrowing narratives from respondents detailing abuse and crime. This trauma can be triggered again during note writing and analysis. Signs of vicarious trauma can present itself as:

- o Lowered Concentration
- o Procrastination
- o Avoidance
- o Apathy
- o Replaying the trauma
- o Guilt
- o Numbness
- o Helplessness
- o Anger

If you find yourself experiencing these signs during a cognitive study here are resources available to you.

- Reach to Operation Team member lead
 - o The operation team lead will organize an informal structured group discussion
 - Either lead by WWO representative
 - Or just CCQDER
 - These discussions can also be standing meetings if interviewer distress is anticipated during the study
- Refer to “Vicarious trauma” presentation provided by WWO
- Reach out to Gordon Hughes of WWO for individual discussion or counseling
- Speak with experienced interviewers and operation team member for strategies and advice

If you find the study topic and respondent narratives of particular projects too triggering, speak with the PI of the project about number of interviews you conduct, time between interviews and assistance with analysis. If these measures aren’t enough, speak with the PI and team lead about removal from the project.