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# The Experience of the Spouses of Sexual Trauma Therapists, from Their Perspective, in View of the Spouse's Work

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## Abstract

The treatment of sexual trauma has unique characteristics related to the victims' difficulty of exposing the harsh contents of the abuse, and the fact that these atrocities are often committed by a person close to them, who is occasionally the one trusted with the victim health and well-being (Courtois, & Ford, 2009). These characteristics are likely to have an impact on the therapist's experience. The prominent and unique negative reactions to the field of trauma treatment as conceptualized in the literature are *secondary traumatization*, referred to as a psychological distress resulting from exposure to a traumatic event experienced by a significant other (Figley, 1995) and *vicarious traumatization* referred to as a gradual and continuous effect of working with traumatic substances [word] that causes a change in the inner experience of the therapist (McCann & Pearlman, 1990). Secondary traumatization studies conducted among therapists for victims of violence and sexual trauma found that their treatment affects, the therapists' relationship perception and can negatively affect the intimacy between the therapist and its partner (Ben-Porat & Itzhaky, 2009; Pines & Nunes, 2003). It was also found that social workers exposed to sexual trauma events reported dissatisfaction with their marriage (Finzi-Dottan & Kormosh, 2016). Alongside this, no studies that examine the consequences of trauma therapy on the spouses of sexual trauma therapists. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the experience of the spouses of sexual trauma therapists, from their perspective, in view of the spouses' work. The study was carried out using a descriptive phenomenological quality method, using a semi-structured interview. The study participated in 16 men, spouses of sexual trauma therapists, at different ages and with various seniority and education. The couple were located through their spouses, through the social network and in the treatment centers of various sexual assault victims.



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From the research findings, 4 deaths came up:

1. The consequences of the spouse- "*I see her 'down' and it hurts me*"- the couple's recognition of the consequences of the treatment of sexual trauma victims on their spouses.
2. Implications for the relationship- "*the door is closed*"- the consequences of the treatment of trauma on intimacy between the couple and the couple's relationship.
3. Implications for the couple- "touching not touching"- the dialectic of the trauma, the implications of trauma on the couple and their coping.
4. Implications for parenting- "parenting in the shade of trauma"- the concept of parenting designed in accordance with the treatment of sexual trauma and the couple's coping with it.

The findings of this study make it possible to deepen the understanding of the nature of sexual trauma therapists and the consequences of other circles in their lives, ie their spouses and their family. The contribution of this study is first in expanding knowledge about trauma ripples and the implications of trauma treatment in general and sexual trauma in particular, on the families of the therapists. Expanding and deepening the knowledge on this subject may also have a significant contribution to providing assistance to facts and their spouses if necessary, while allocating appropriate resources.

**Keywords:** secondary traumatization; spouses; Treatment of sexual trauma