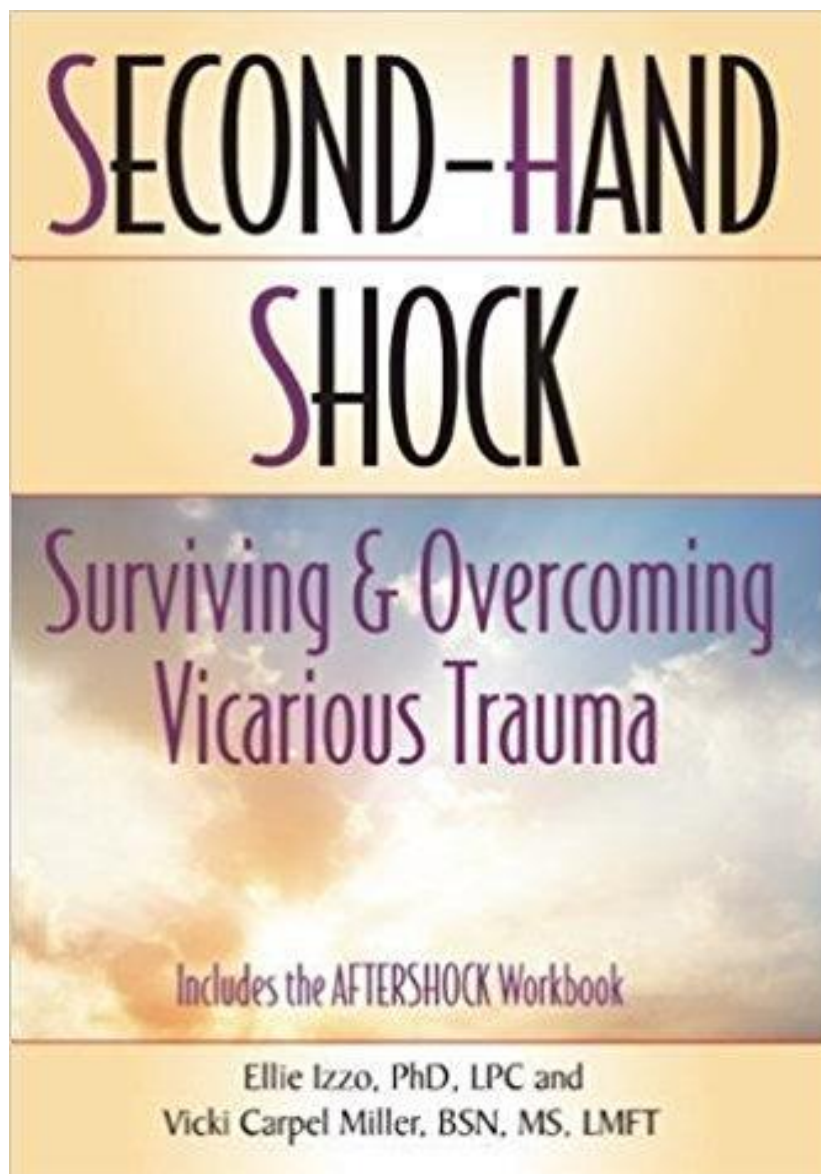


Trauma and Empathy





Second-Hand Shock...what image does that conjure up for you? We've all heard of second-hand smoke. Put yourself in a room with a heavy smoker. You breathe in the smoky air. It irritates your nose, your mouth, your lungs and your blood stream. After a while, you might start wheezing, coughing, and your eyes might become irritated. It will become difficult for you to breathe. Prolonged exposure will adversely affect your health and well-being, causing damage to your heart and your brain.

The experience of absorbing trauma, second hand, is much the same as inhaling second-hand smoke. Helping people in trauma day after day is a contaminant that, if left unaddressed, can kill you. Bearing witness to someone else's trauma is dangerous.