



## **Value to Cisco of the Vicarious Trauma Training**

At Cisco we put a lot of effort to ensure that our employees' mental and physical wellbeing are treated with equal importance. We do it on global level by offering a range of benefits like private medical insurance, group income protection, programs like Employee Assistance Program, #SafeToTalk employee community or in-house wellbeing program – Pavelka House@Cisco.

In the UK, as a result of employees' initiative and with support from Mental Health First Aid England, we have additionally decided to train volunteers as Mental Health First Aiders. What started with a handful of interested employees attending a two-day course organised by MHFA England is now a strong group of over 100 MH First Aiders trained by three in-house instructors. They are an incredibly valuable community supporting employees in need and easing their way towards professional help which, in the current situation of global pandemic, seems to be more important than ever.

During the two-day MHFA course, participants hear a lot about the importance of self-care but at Cisco, with valuable support from Mark Stancombe, we went a step further and invited employees who complete their MHFA course to a follow-up training on Vicarious Trauma. The VT training explains in details the notion of trauma and how supporting others through their own traumatising experiences, can have a profound impact on those providing the support. The training helps to recognise the signs of vicarious trauma, offers various ways of dealing with it and underlines the importance of looking after oneself. Employees who volunteer to become Mental Health First Aiders are often those with high level of natural empathy which makes them even more vulnerable to vicarious trauma. By inviting them to the course, we normalise the fact that being exposed to somebody's else difficult experience can be a traumatising situation in itself. This ensures that the First Aiders don't stigmatise themselves for being vulnerable or "weak" and feel able to themselves seek for help when needed.

We appreciate and value our Mental Health First Aiders and I believe that offering them the possibility to attend the Vicarious Trauma training is an extremely important part of taking care of those who care for others and I wholeheartedly recommend this training.

Natalia Nowak  
People Representative  
MHFA England Instructor  
Member

