


National Resource Center
 on Domestic Violence

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**Preventing Compassion Fatigue:
Honoring Thyself**

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**Compassion Fatigue is the
#1 epidemic in the
Caregiving Field**



The Care-giving Personality

Trauma can teach the art of empathy, the ability to experience heart-to-heart what another person is feeling. This same set of experiences can render us more vulnerable, though; it can lead to unconsciously absorbing and internalizing, as secondary traumatic stress, the freezing cold fear that our clients experience in their own bodies and minds.

A Crisis in Care-giving

Caring people sometimes experience pain as a direct result of their exposure to others' traumatic material. Unfortunately and inadvertently, this secondary exposure to trauma may cause helpers to inflict additional pain on the originally traumatized.

This situation – call it **compassion fatigue, compassion stress, or secondary traumatic stress** – is the natural, predictable, treatable, and preventable unwanted consequence of working with suffering people.

Deepening Awareness

Being Seen



Compassion Fatigue 101: Deepening Your Awareness

**What is your BODY, MIND and
HEART saying to you?**



You've been granted
permission to be Seen...

Your Body's Mind

"The body is the unconscious mind! Repressed trauma caused by overwhelming emotion can be stored in a body part, thereafter affecting our ability to feel that part or even move it. The new work suggests there are almost infinite pathways for the conscious mind to access and modify – the unconscious mind and the body, and also provide an explanation for a number of phenomena that the emotional theorists have been considering."

-Candice Pert, *Molecules of Emotion*, Pg. 141

Stress



STRESS

=

PERCEPTION OF THREAT

Burnout

• Burnout is a process (rather than fixed condition), and becomes progressively worse.

Cherniss, 1980; Maslach 1976, 1982.

• This process includes: gradual exposure to job strain; erosion of idealism; and a void of achievements.

• There is an accumulation of intensive contact with clients.

Figley, 1995, pp. 11-12.

STS vs. PTSD

- Criterion A: Event
 - "...witnessing or gaining knowledge of event... learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate" – DSM-IV
- Criterion B: Intrusion
 - - Intrusive thoughts of clients, client's imagery, dreams, etc.



Compassion Fatigue

- "I first called it a form of burnout, a kind of secondary victimization." Figley, 1983
- Mimics PTSD and other disorders of clients/patients.
- Compassion fatigue = Secondary Traumatization + Burnout Figley, 1995.



Compassion Fatigue

- ❖ The Zealot Phase
- ❖ The Irritability Phase
- ❖ The Withdrawal Phase
- ❖ The Zombie Phase
- ❖ Pathology vs. Renewal/Maturation

The Zealot Phase

Idealistic- We are committed involved and available, ready to problem solve and make a difference all the time. We are willing to put in the extra time and go the extra mile and do so without hesitation.

The Irritability Phase

- Cutting corners,
- avoiding contact with clients,
- mock our clients and colleagues,
- talking down/joking about their medical and mental health,
- the use of humor is strained,
- we daydream and become distracted when clients are speaking to us,
- we make mistakes, oversights,
- we distance ourselves from family and friends.

The Withdrawal Phase

- We lose our enthusiasm,
- we lose our ability to see our clients as individuals,
- we complain and there are complaints about our work and struggle with our personal lives,
- we are tired a lot, neglect ourselves and family and our wall gets thicker and thicker.

The Zombie Phase

Our hopelessness turns anger and rage. We begin to dislike others and they become incompetent and ignorant in our eyes, we have no patience and lose our sense of humor.

Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

- Physical: Tired, Keyed Up, Nervous, Body Pains, Sick ...
- Psychological: Cynical, Pessimistic, Lower Self Esteem...
- Emotional: Angry, Depressed, Irritable, Loss of Hope...
- Spiritual: Isolated, Distrustful, Fear of Safety, No Time...
- Professional: Less Productivity, Poor Boundary, Disinterest...

How do you measure up?

SYMPTOMS OF COMPASSION FATIGUE

Physical Symptoms

- I have had increased absenteeism "sick days"
- I have been feeling physically ill
- I have been feeling fatigued
- I have been feeling keyed-up and nervous
- I am doing less rather than more exercise
- Normal sleep has been difficult for me
- I have lost enjoyment in intimate and sexual activities

Psychological Symptoms

- I have noticed myself being more cynical and pessimistic
- I noticed that I was trying to avoid feelings by numbing or shutting down
- I have had work-related nightmares/bad dreams
- I have lost interest and enjoyment in activities
- I have difficulty in making decisions or making poor decisions
- I feel like I have lost some of my self esteem

SYMPTOMS OF COMPASSION FATIGUE

Emotional Symptoms

- I have anger directed toward my supervisors or co-workers
- I have been feeling flat, depressed, and hopeless more than I used to
- I have been more angry and irritable than normal
- I have moments of dread when thinking about going to work
- I am having trouble finding hope
- I am less connected to my spiritual and religious beliefs than I used to be
- I have felt overwhelmed more than three times

Spiritual Symptoms

- I have been avoiding spending time with my friends and family
- I fear for the safety of myself and my loved ones
- I have engaged less rather than more in activities that used to bring me pleasure
- I have had a lack of time for self
- I find it difficult to trust others
- I have feelings of despair and hopelessness

SYMPTOMS OF COMPASSION FATIGUE

Professional Symptoms

- I have been unable to get work or something specific to work out of my head
- I have had unwanted memories popup in my head of past events from work
- My productivity at work has been reduced
- I have felt like quitting my job more than once
- I find paperwork and menial tasks getting in the way of my enjoyment of work

Compassion Fatigue Resiliency

Intentionality vs. Reactivity

<p><u>Intentionality</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission/Purpose Driven • Internal Locus of Control • Self-regulatory • Parasympathetic Dominance • Maximum Performance • Minimum Stress • Health 	<p><u>Reactivity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome Driven • External Locus of Control • Substance/Object/Activity • Dis-regulation • Unpredictable Performance • Stress and Anxiety • Symptoms
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Let the SELF CARE Begin

- Honor your Ancestors
- Notice your SPACE
- Why not check it out? – Ultimate Self Care
 - Breath Works
 - Meditation
- Guided Imagery/Visualization

How do you Honor your Ancestors?

Lessons of Courage Learned

Who do you Bring into the Work Room with you?

- What Rituals, Practices and Routines do you HAVE?
- Does Your space Support your Wellness?
- How do you Replenish yourself?

What is one thing you can commit to DOING TO CREATE A MORE HEALING WORK SPACE?

Developing the Ultimate Self-Care Plan

Caring for
Your basic needs, your intellect and your spirit

Breath Works: Breath as a source of life

- Three part Breath
- Alternate nostril Breathing
- Diaphragmatic Breath

Got Time? it only takes a little bit
10 seconds

Super shakes, rag doll, stand up and wipe it away, drink water, look out the window, pray, repeat a mantra or affirmation, create a gratitude list, and Add to this list...

**Lion Roar, Body Tense & Release ,
 Alternate and Deep Breathing , Spread
 Eagle, Massage....Ahhhh!!!!**

wHaT WoRkeD?

**Pathology and Victimization
 VS
 Maturation and Renewal Phase**

It's Our Call

We become overwhelmed and leave the profession, experience somatic illness,
 OR...
 We renew our vows to our care giving and self, call on our strength, resiliency and transformation.

We are responsible for the care of our instrument, our most precious gift... Our Self

Choose to Self – Supervise

- To resolve compassion fatigue we must learn to supervise ourselves with care and compassion instead of criticism and coercion.
- Critical self supervision leads to increased perceived threats, more, validated care-giving, and suffering of negative symptoms.

Letters from our Divine and Benevolent Supervisors



Mission Statements

The Great Supervisor

This letter should be written to yourself from an omniscient (all knowing) and omni-benevolent (all good) source. It should reflect the nurturance, support and validation that you have wanted and needed to hear from someone in authority.

It should focus upon your strengths, assets and goodness. This s will be a challenge for some; the more honest and sincere that you make this letter, the more benefit you will receive.

Dear _____

The Great Supervisor:

MISSION STATEMENT

A Mission Statement is designed to provide it' s author with direction, purpose and motivation towards actualizing all of his/ her potentials--professional and personal. It is written in an active and declarative voice and should empower its writer with a clear vision of her/his "best self"; the persons we are becoming.

This exercise is designed to help you bring into focus this "best self" and to identify pathways to facilitate continued evolution toward this goal.

An empowering Mission Statement:

- Represents the deepest and best within you.
- It is the fulfillment of your own unique gifts. Its your expression of your unique to contribute.
- Its transcendent, based on principle of contribution and purpose higher than self.
- Addresses and integrates al four fundamental human needs and capacities. It includes fulfillment in physical, social, mental and spiritual dimensions.
- Is based on principles that produce quality-of-life results.

- Deals with both vision and principle-based values. It is not good enough to have values without with out vision - you want to be good, but you want to be good for something. On the other hand, vision without values can produce struggle. An empowering mission statement deals with both character and competence; what you want to be and what you want to do in your life.
- Deals with all significant roles in your life. It represents a lifetime balance of personal, family, work, community - whatever roles are yours to fill.
- Is written to inspire you - not impress anyone else. it communicates to you and inspires you at the most elemental level.

Summary

- Compassion fatigue results from the combined effects of primary trauma, secondary trauma, and burnout to provide painful symptoms in caregivers.
- Compassion fatigue is very responsive to treatment.
- Compassion fatigue can be prevented through the development and maintenance of a non-anxious presence, self-validated care giving, and use of self care skills.

Where there is **Full Consciousness**; awareness of mental, emotional, psychological, physical and spiritual experiences, there is true compassion for all involved.

Remember that –

“ You yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe deserve your love and affection ”

The Buddha



**National Resource Center
on Domestic Violence**

The National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (www.nrcdv.org) provides a wide range of free, comprehensive, and individualized technical assistance, training, and specialized resource materials. You can access our publications online from the National Online Resource Center on Violence Against Women (VAWnet).

Contact us:
1-800-537-2238
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Online TA Request Form:
www.nrcdv.org/Tarequest.php
