



Professional Healthcare Resiliency Learning to Prevent and Manage Compassion Fatigue

What is Compassion Fatigue?

Described as the convergence of secondary traumatic stress (STS) and cumulative burnout, Compassion Fatigue is considered a state of physical and mental exhaustion caused by an inability to cope with one's everyday environment. Compassion Fatigue is common amongst professionals who are regularly exposed to traumatic life experiences, such as healthcare specialists. The lasting results of Compassion Fatigue can impact standards of patient care, personal and professional relationships, or even lead to serious mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).



Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

Intrusive Symptoms

- Work-related issues encroach on personal time
- An inability to "let go" of work-related issues
- Thoughts and feelings of inadequacy as a caregiver

Avoidance Symptoms

- Loss of enjoyment in self-care activities
- Loss of energy
- Loss of hope
- Unhealthy self-soothing behaviors

Arousal Symptoms

- Increased anxiety
- Inability to sleep
- Sudden and inexplicable impulses

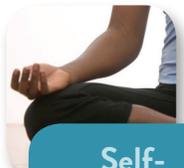
In the work environment, notable signs of a healthcare provider experiencing compassion fatigue include increased fatigue and nervousness, cynicism and pessimism, a loss of self-esteem, misdirected anger towards colleagues, a desire to quit, and daily anxiety about going to work. At home, a fatigued individual suffers from sleeplessness, changes in appetite, weight loss/gain, nightmares about work experiences, and a loss of interest in social activities.

The content of this issue is based on a webinar presentation by Chaplain Julie Allen Berger, D.Min., BCC-HPCC (Chaplain, Palliative Care and Oncology Services, Barnes-Jewish Hospital, St. Louis, MO) and Catherine Powers, MSN, RN, ACNS-BC (Clinical Nurse Specialist, Heart & Vascular Center, Barnes-Jewish Hospital, St. Louis, MO). A special thanks to Julie and Catherine for their contributions to this in-service. We'd also like to extend a sincere thanks to J. Eric Gentry PhD, Vice President of Arizona Trauma Institute, for his contributions to this educational offering.

Resources

- Gentry, J.E. & Monson, M. (2017). Professional Resilience: Helping Doesn't Have to Hurt. Phoenix: Compassion Unlimited.

Going from BURNOUT to BURN-THROUGH

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|  <p>Self-Regulation</p> <p>Scan your body for muscle tension. Stop squeezing muscles. Try to relax.</p> |  <p>Self-Validation</p> <p>Attend to what you CAN control and accept the things you CANNOT control.</p> |  <p>Intentionality</p> <p>Follow your mission/code-of-honor and bring into alignment your transgressions (even small ones).</p> |  <p>Connection</p> <p>Build a community where you can share your difficulties, give support and get support.</p> |  <p>Self-Care</p> <p>Refuel by eating well, getting sufficient sleep and doing aerobic activities. Be active instead of passive.</p> |
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