

COMPASSION FATIGUE

The Ghost in the Back: The Cost of Caring

Feb 22, 2010



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WELCOME

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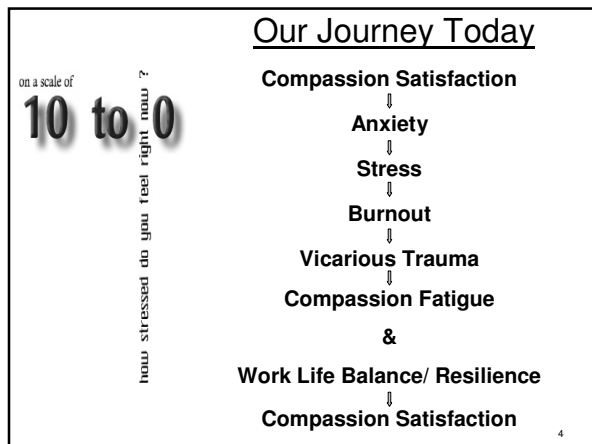
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Session Objectives

1. Provide information about factors which contribute to Compassion Fatigue
2. Improve awareness of the various physiological and mental conditions that may contribute to the development of compassion fatigue
3. Provide strategies and practices that promote life balance and self care, leading to positive change and compassion satisfaction.

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Compassion Satisfaction

- Compassion Satisfaction is about the pleasure you derive from being able to do your work well (Stamm, 2002)
- . . . an expression of the positive aspects of care-giving (Stamm, 2002)
- For example, you may feel like it is a pleasure to help others through your work
- You may feel positively about your colleagues or your ability to contribute to the work setting or even the greater good of society

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People with Anxiety are allergic to

“Uncertainty”

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What is Anxiety?

- Anxiety is a response to danger or threat.
- Immediate or short-term anxiety is called the "fight-or-flight response." It is an automatic, inborn, physiological response to threat or danger that prepares the body to "fight" or "flee" the threat (**Functional Anxiety**).

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Stress

- Stress is a complicated cascade of physical and biochemical responses to Powerful emotional stimuli. (Maté 2004, p.7)
- We each have a particular way of responding to stress. Some of us have physical signs such as muscle tension and difficulty sleeping (insomnia). Others may have more emotional reactions, such as outburst of crying or anger. (Heart and Stroke, 1997)
- If we decide that a situation is stressful, we put into play the body's "fight or flight" reaction, causing the release of adrenalin, a natural body chemical. This starts the first stage of the stress response.

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Burnout

- A state associated with stress and hassles involved in your vocation
- Stress that is cumulative, relatively predictable

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Vicarious Trauma (Secondary Trauma)

The natural consequence of stress resulting from caring for and helping people who have experienced or are experiencing trauma or suffering.



Caregivers may repeatedly hear stories about the traumatic events/experiences that happen to other people. The effects are cumulative.

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Burnout & Vicarious Trauma
=
Compassion Fatigue
(C.R. Figley 2006, 2007)

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Compassion Fatigue

- A state of tension
- Describes the emotional, physical, social, and spiritual exhaustion that overtakes a person and causes a pervasive decline in his or her desire, ability, and energy to feel and care for others. (McHolm, 2006)

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Charles R. Figley

Professor, School of Social Work - Florida State University

- "The people who experience this are often the best and the brightest. They have extra sensitivity," he says.
- "If we don't do something about compassion fatigue, we're going to lose people."

Chronicle of Philanthropies 2002

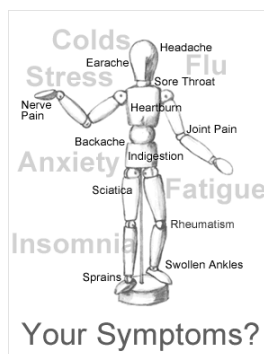
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2. Factors Contributing to Compassion Fatigue

- The "cost of caring" for people on a daily basis
- Emotional drain of remaining empathetic all the time
- Feeling isolated and unsupported in your work
- Working beyond your skill level

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3. Some symptoms of Compassion Fatigue



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Some symptoms of “CF” (cont’d)

- Increased negative arousal, irritable
- Intrusive thoughts/images of clients' situations/traumas (or clinicians' own historical traumas)
- Difficulty separating work life from personal life
- Lowered frustration tolerance/outbursts of anger or rage
- Dread of working with certain clients

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Some symptoms of “CF” (cont’d)

- Depression
- Perceptive/assumptive world disturbances (i.e., seeing the world in terms of victims and perpetrators, decrease in subjective sense of safety)
- Increase in ineffective and/or self-destructive self-soothing behaviours
- Hypervigilance

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Some Symptoms of “CF” (cont’d)

- Feelings of therapeutic impotence or de-skilled with certain clients
- Diminished sense of purpose/enjoyment with career
- Decreased functioning in non-professional situations
- Loss of hope

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Any of these
symptoms
could be signalling
the presence of
Compassion
Fatigue.



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Some caregivers appear to be more resilient
than others to the transmission of
traumatic stress;
however
any caregiver who continually works with
traumatized individuals is at risk for
compassion fatigue.

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What I have discovered is that Compassion
Fatigue exists on a continuum.

Meaning...that at various times in our careers

we may be more immune to its damaging effects
and at other times feel very beaten down by it.

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For those of you who are fortunate
enough not to count yourselves
among this group.

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Here is a sure-fire recipe for
joining the ranks of the

STRESSED

23

THE FOLLOWING POINTS
SHOULD HELP YOU MAXIMIZE
YOUR STRESS LEVEL

Modified from a no-nonsense guide to being stressed,
Hines & Wilson 1986

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1.

Do not communicate openly by
expressing how you feel.

- Do not ask for what you need.
- Certainly do not ask for what you want.
- Just let people walk all over you.

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2.

Harbour resentment and complain often

- Gripe and complain for at least 2.5 hrs per day to anybody who will listen (boss, coworkers, family members and friends).
- Such behaviour will help you avoid intimacy and emotional ties
- Personal isolation is very stressful

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3.

Do not feel confident enough in your skills,
beliefs and values to give your opinions and
concerns.

- Blindly accept the judgments of others.
- Personalize all criticisms.
- Remain offended.

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4.

Do not develop a support system of any kind.

- No close friends, no pets, no social activities
- No extended family, nothing
- Never ask for help of any kind from anyone
- Languish in loneliness and suffer, suffer, suffer

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5.

Practice mean, humiliating and embarrassing behaviours towards other people.

- Gossip at every opportunity.
- Concentrate on making other people look bad.
- Your turn is guaranteed to come.

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6.

Become a workaholic.

- It's easy to do.
- Just put work before everything else.
- Take work home with you every day, weekend.
- Never take vacations that last more than 28 hrs.
- Definitely work on holidays.
- The goal is to Burn-out.

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7.

Do not get enough sleep or rest.

- Lack of sleep reduces your ability to deal with stress by making you irritable
- A sure sign of stress

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8.

Don't exercise regularly.

- As a matter of fact, don't exercise at all.
- Physical activity allows you a "fight outlet" for mental stress.
- Exercising also wastes time that could be better spent on stress-producing situations

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9.

Eat and drink what you want.

- Don't avoid fat, sugars, salt, red meat or caffeine.
- Strive to be at least 35 lbs overweight.

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10.

Increase your intake of drugs.

- Take that valium, aspirin, alcohol and cigarette.
- Ignore those warning signs from your body when you are under stress.

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11.

Keep your problems to yourself.

- Your best bet is to suffer in silence.

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12.

Make every effort not to have fun.

- Beware of fun
- You might laugh and enjoy yourself
- This is definitely detrimental to creating stress

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13.

Remain inflexible, narrow-minded and bigoted, and avoid change.

- This allows you to get upset and stay upset about everything because You are convinced that you Know everything.

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14.

Keep work and play imbalanced.

- No hobbies
- No Recreational activities
- No Movies
- No walks in the park
- Avoid everything that could be mistaken as a cure for stressful situations

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15.

Spend no time cultivating self-understanding

- Give no thoughts to yourself
- Your values, goals or purpose in life
- Just blame everything on your spouse, boss, friends and family

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16.

Avoid the urge to manage time.

- Be available to everyone.
- Take on more projects than you can handle.
- Say "yes" to whatever is asked.
- Cultivate the myth that you work better under pressure.
- After all, you must do everything yourself because you're the only one who can do things right.

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17.

Procrastinate, procrastinate, procrastinate.

- As Mark Twain said, "Never put off for tomorrow what you can put off for the day after tomorrow."
- If it were not for the last minute, lots of things would never get done.

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18.

Ignore whatever you read about the benefits of relaxation exercises.

Avoid:

- Positive self-talk
- Mental imaging
- Deep breathing
- Massages
- Yoga or anything else that relaxes you - avoid it!

*How can you possibly be stressed if you're relaxed?

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19.

Adopt the hurry-flurry-work syndrome.

- This is a great method of putting a lot of pressure on yourself.
- The "HFW" syndrome make you think you're so important.
- "Look at me. Look at how I'm working".
- Because you are so stressed, you must be working hard.
- Also the HFW Syndrome could help you avoid responsibility.
- You look so overworked and worried that people don't want to ask you for anything.

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20.

Set no goals and make no plans.

- Setting goals and making plans to reach them brings order and direction to your life.
- Personal goals force you to take care of yourself and your relationships.
- Career goals make you responsible for work success.
- Money goals mean that you're in control of your wealth.
- With no personal, career or financial goals, you may make sure that you remain distressed. If you don't know where you are going, anywhere you end up is O.K.!

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Fact

People have family and personal responsibilities and needs outside of work

- Whether it is the caring of children
- Elderly parents
- The pursuit of personal interests
- Activities or hobbies

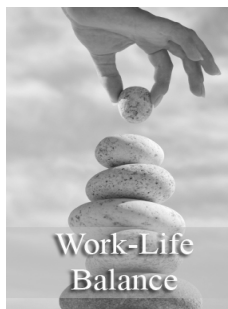
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Fact

- Finding ways to accommodate these responsibilities and needs can make a real difference to employees and to an organization

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Enhancing Self-Care



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Work-Life Balance

- Is about creating supportive, healthy work environments while striving to better integrate your work and personal responsibilities.

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Are You In Balance?

- Achieving work/life balance means having equilibrium among all the priorities in your life.
- This state of balance is different for every person.
- But, as difficult as work-life balance is to define, most of us know when we're out of balance.

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- You know better than to ignore crushing chest pain or the fact that the mole on your cheek suddenly looks a little strange.

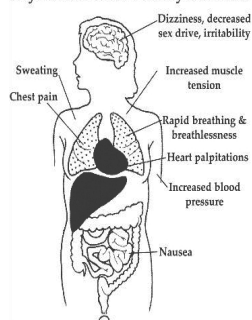
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Even when we recognize we're not feeling quite right, we're more apt to ignore it than take action, giving the problem a chance to grow.

Worse yet, many people also try to drown their distress

- with alcohol
- Tobacco
- Gambling
- Other vices

Physical Effects of Anxiety Disorders



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Mental wellness is our personal Responsibility; nurturing mental wellness will lead to emotional Growth.

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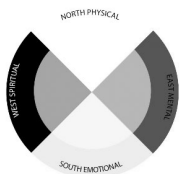
Emotional Growth

Happens when our physical and emotional needs are met.

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Life Balance

Includes the health and wellness of our:



- Body
- Mind
- Heart
- Spirit

To ignore any one of them is to invite imbalance and disease.

Maté 2004 p. 281

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The next step

...Of course, is finding out what you can do to make your work-life balance better.

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What you can do!!

1. Take frequent breaks from what you are doing.
2. Learn the word "No." Use it whenever necessary.
3. Share the load with others.
4. There is humour in every situation. Find it and laugh!
5. Recognize when you need help. Ask for it!
6. Give yourself credit when credit is due.
7. Give others credit when credit is due.
8. Breathe deeply as often as possible.
9. Progressive muscle relaxation.
10. Etc.

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Develop a sense of MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness involves paying attention non-judgementally In a particular way:

- On purpose and in the present moment

John Kabat-Zinn 57

Develop Emotional Competence

Emotional Competence...

Is what we need to develop if we are to protect ourselves from the hidden stresses that create a risk to health, and it is what we need to regain if we are to heal.

(Maté 2004 p. 38)

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Develop Emotional Competence

- The capacity to feel our emotions, so that we are aware that we are experiencing stress.
- The ability to express our emotions effectively to assert our needs.
- The facility to distinguish between the present and the past; focus on present needs.
- The awareness of those genuine needs that do require satisfaction rather than their repression.

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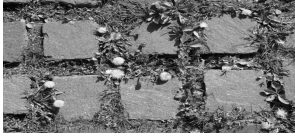
Developing CF Resiliency



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What is Resiliency?

- According to (Green & Conrad, 2002) resilience is “an interactive and systemic phenomenon, the product of complex relationships of inner and outer helps throughout a person's life span”.
- Is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or even significant sources of stress .(APA Help Centre, 2008)



- It means "bouncing back" from a difficult experiences.

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Factors in Resilience

- The primary factor in resilience is having caring and supportive relationships within and outside the family.
- The capacity to make realistic plans and take steps to carry them out
- A positive view of yourself and confidence in your strengths and abilities
- Skills in communication and problem solving
- The capacity to manage strong feelings and impulses

(APA Help Centre, 2008 :Yehuda & Flory, 2007; Hoge, Austin & Pollack, 2006)

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Strategies For Building CF Resilience

- Developing resilience is a personal journey.
- People do not all react the same to traumatic and stressful life events.
- What works for one person might not work for another.

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Ways to Build CF Resilience

- Make connections, seeking help.
- Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems.
- Accept that change is a part of living.
- Move toward your goals.
- Take decisive actions.
- Look for opportunities for self-discovery and self-mastery.
- Nurture a positive view of yourself.
- Keep things in perspective.
- Maintain a hopeful outlook.
- Learning from your past.
- Being Flexible.

(Adapted from APA Help Centre, 2008)

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Questions & Answers



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