

DO YOU HAVE COMPASSIONS FATIGUE??

WHAT IS COMPASSION FATIGUE?

- Also known as, **Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)**, **Vicarious Traumatization** or **Secondary Victimization** - a condition characterized by *gradual lessening of compassion* over time.
- One who struggles with *functioning in care giving environment*.
- One who displays *chronic stress resulting from care giving*.
- One with a strong *identification with helplessness, suffering, traumatized people or animals*.
- Work related, secondary exposure to extremely stressful events; i.e., aggressive, assaultive, threatening patients and/or family and visitors

ARE YOU BURNED OUT??

WHAT IS BURN OUT?

- Frustration, Loss of Interest, Decreased Productivity, Anger and Exhaustion *caused by overwork and prolonged stress*.
- Consequences include *emotional distress, physical illness and interpersonal conflict*.
- Burn-out develops from stress – it is a more serious kind of stress.
- **Some causes include**, *lack of control* or influence in job decisions like schedules or workload, *unclear job expectations, dysfunctional workplace dynamics* like being undermined or bullied, *mismatch in value, poor job fit, extremes of activity* like too many behavioral problems, , *work-life imbalance*.
- Generally a combination of two elements:
 - Disruption of an equilibrium or balance
 - Coping style which is not adapted properly

SIMILARITIES/DIFFERENCES

- Compassion Fatigue and Burn Out are similar in that they are both caused by “normal displays” of chronic stress
- Compassion Fatigue and Burn Out are different because, while Compassion Fatigue occurs from the stress of caring and giving, Burn Out occurs from the stress of overwork.
- Compassion Fatigue and Burn Out are contributed to by *being too involved, not being able to let things go, or for one’s quest for perfection.*
- Compassion Fatigue and Burn Out are each likely to occur if one takes his/her stress with them everywhere (in their minds) and cannot let it go.
- Compassion Fatigue and Burn Out are less likely when preventive measures like meditation, exercise, breathing exercises, recreational activities, maintaining a diverse network of social support are put into place.
- *Unlike Burn Out, people who are attracted to care giving often enter the field already Compassion Fatigued!*

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

- When Compassion Fatigue or Burn Out goes unrecognized and untreated, the health of the person and the entire organization are at risk. *Your mental health suffers. Your physical health suffers. Your work health suffers. Your personal life suffers. Those whose lives you touch, including patients and loved ones suffers. The organization suffers.*

Symptom List

Physical exhaustion – fuzzy thinking, short temper, drooping eyelids

Lack of motivation

Empty creative reserves

Excessive blaming

Bottled up emotions

Isolation from others

Voicing excessive complaints about administrative functions

Recipient of unusual number of complaints from others

Difficulty concentrating

Over spending, overeating, gambling

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS, continued

Symptom List

Apathy
Nightmares
Mentally tired
Pre-occupied
In denial about problems
Legal problems; indebtedness
Poor self care
Mood swings
Depression
Anxiety
Chronic physical ailments – back aches, headaches,
Sleep disturbances
Substance abuse
Cynicism
Detachment
Hypervigilance

WHO IS AT GREATEST RISK?

- These conditions are common among those working directly with trauma (or suffering) victims such as *therapists, nurses, teachers, psychologists, police officers, paramedics, animal welfare workers, military personnel, health unit coordinators* and ANYONE WHO HELPS OTHERS, including family members, relatives and other informal caregivers of patients suffering from a chronic illness.
- “Those who have an enormous capacity for feeling and expressing empathy tend to be more at risk for Compassion Fatigue.”

IMPACT ON OTHERS

Individuals experiencing Compassion Fatigue and/or Burn- Out symptoms impact their work environments and co-workers in negative ways:

- Chronic absenteeism
- Constant changes in co-workers relationships
- Inability to engage in teamwork
- Desire to break rules
- Inability to respect or meet deadlines
- Outbreaks of aggressive behaviors toward staff
- Inability to complete assignments and/or tasks
- Lack of flexibility
- Inability to believe that improvement is possible
- Negativism toward management
- Lack of vision for the future

PATH TO WELLNESS

Upon recognizing that you may be experiencing Compassion Fatigue or Burn Out take action to relieve symptoms. Exploring this new awareness can sometimes uncover past personal pain and trauma.

- Employ authentic and sustainable self-care
- Be kind to yourself
- Regular exercise
- Healthy eating habits
- Drink lots of water
- Enjoyable social activities
- Journaling, Adult coloring books, Crossword/Word Find Puzzles
- Restful sleep
- Enhance your awareness with education
- Exchange information/feelings with people who can validate you
- Express your needs verbally
- Learn when to say, NO! Set boundaries with other people.
- Organize your life so you become proactive as opposed to reactive.
- View life in an optimistic way