



# COMPASSION FATIGUE: MANAGING DURING TROUBLING TIMES



Mental health professionals have both rewarding yet demanding jobs providing support for others. The cost of caring, or compassion fatigue, refers to the natural response of stress from caring for others in crisis. This infographic defines compassion fatigue, identifies common symptoms, and offers prevention strategies; the information from this infographic was gathered from the accompanying webinar, which can be accessed [here](#).

## WHAT IS COMPASSION FATIGUE?

- Emotional and physical exhaustion resulting from caring for and helping others in distress. Over time, this leads to a reduced ability to empathize or feel compassion for others.
- It can imitate Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
- Burnout and compassion fatigue are different.
  - Burnout results from the stresses in the workplace.
  - Compassion fatigue results from the work you do.



## COMPASSION FATIGUE SYMPTOMS

Learn to recognize the signs and symptoms of compassion fatigue. Check in with yourself to help prevent and manage compassion fatigue when it arises.



## BEHAVIORAL SYMPTOMS

- Irritable, withdrawn/isolating, moody, hyper-vigilance
- Poor sleep, nightmares, appetite change
- Poor self-care (hygiene, appearance)
- High absenteeism
- Outbreaks of aggressive behavior



## COGNITIVE SYMPTOMS

- Lowered concentration, apathy, rigidity, disorientation
- Minimization, preoccupation with trauma
- Inability to complete tasks or assignments



## EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS

- Powerlessness, anxiety, guilt, anger, numbness, fear, helplessness
- Sadness, depression, depleted, shocked, blunted, or enhanced affect
- Sudden and involuntary recall of a frightening experience while working
- Excessive blaming or bottled up emotions



## SPIRITUAL SYMPTOMS

- No longer attending spiritual support groups or meetings
- Change in spiritual values or beliefs/skepticism
- Excessive complaints about what used to be spiritual strengths
- Questioning life's meaning, pervasive hopelessness, loss of purpose



## SOMATIC SYMPTOMS

- Chronic physical ailments such as gastrointestinal ailments, aches and pains, impaired immune system, headaches
- Rapid heartbeat, sweating, breathing difficulty, dizziness
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep

## SELF CARE



As mental healthcare providers, it can be easy to overlook your own needs while caring for others. It is important to find a balance between taking care of others and yourself. One way to protect yourself from or to manage compassion fatigue is to practice self-care. Although self-care may vary from person to person, there are a variety of ways to engage in the practice. Below are a few examples of self-care activities.

### Workplace/ professional



Activities that help you work consistently:

- Supervision or consulting with colleagues
- Attending a support group
- Arriving and leaving work on time consistently
- Reading journals
- Continuing Education – workshops, seminars, trainings

### Physical



Activities that help you stay healthy:

- Getting enough sleep
- Eating a healthy and nutritious diet
- Taking breaks from work – daily, weekly, vacations
- Engaging in physical activities you enjoy

### Psychological



Activities that help you stay focused:

- Journaling
- Finding or participating in a hobby or non-work activity
- Leaving work at work – turning email and work phone off
- Engaging with family and friends

### Emotional



Activities that allow you to safely express your emotions:

- Talking to friends or family about work and life demands
- Participating in enjoyable activities - movies, music, hobbies
- Reflecting on the positives

### Spiritual



Activities that allow you to connect spiritually:

- Yoga
- Community - Church, Temple, Synagogue
- Nature
- Meditation

### Relationships



Activities that allow you to maintain supportive relationships:

- Prioritizing family and friendships
- Attending special events for loved ones
- Setting & maintaining appropriate boundaries with family, friends, colleagues, and clients