

WHEN HELPING YOU IS HURTING  
ME!

Addressing Compassion Fatigue

# CARING ON EMPTY



## WHAT IS COMPASSION FATIGUE?

- Compassion fatigue can be defined as the emotional residue of exposure of working with (or living with) those suffering from the consequences of traumatic events.
- The prolonged exposure from listening to clients' traumatic stories makes you susceptible to compassion fatigue and is not always easily identifiable.

# ME TOO!!!!



Compassion fatigue used to be a problem that was most commonly seen among health care professionals.

In today's world, where every tragedy is instantly broadcast live in living color directly into our living rooms (TV), laps (laptop), and/or hands (smartphone), compassion fatigue is no longer unique to certain professions.

# SIGNS & SYMPTOMS



Feeling burdened by the suffering of others  
Blaming others for their suffering  
Isolating yourself  
Loss of pleasure in life  
Difficulty concentrating  
Insomnia  
Physical and mental fatigue  
Bottling up your emotions  
Increased nightmares  
Feelings of hopelessness or powerlessness  
Frequent complaining about your work or your life  
Overeating  
Excessive use of drugs or alcohol  
Poor self-care  
Beginning to receive a lot of complaints about your work or attitude

**Denial**

## BURNOUT VS. COMPASSION FATIGUE

Compassion fatigue and burnout are not the same thing, although they do share some overlapping traits. [The American Institute of Stress](#) (AIS) explains the difference: “*Compassion Fatigue has a more rapid onset while burnout emerges over time.*” If recognized early, ***Compassion Fatigue is less severe with a faster recovery.***

# BURNOUT VS. COMPASSION FATIGUE

## Compassion Fatigue



The emotional residue or strain of exposure to working with those suffering from the consequences of traumatic events.

## Burnout



Cumulative process marked by emotional exhaustion and withdrawal associated with increased workload and institutional stress, NOT trauma-related.

# PREVENTING AND MANAGING COMPASSION FATIGUE



Self-Care is a  
priority and necessity  
- not a luxury -  
in the work that we do.

Compassion Fatigue and Burnout **can both include emotional exhaustion**, reduced sense of personal accomplishment, mental exhaustion, isolation, physical exhaustion, and/or depersonalization.



# PREVENTING AND MANAGING COMPASSION FATIGUE

- Enhance your awareness with education
- Accept where you are on your path at all times
- Exchange information and feelings with people who can validate you
- Clarify your personal boundaries—what works for you and what doesn't
- Be kind to yourself
- Express what you need verbally
- Take positive action to change your environment

## **PREVENTING AND MANAGING COMPASSION FATIGUE**

- Limit the amount of daily news you watch or read about
- Try to come to terms with the fact that pain and suffering are realities of life over which we have little or no control
- Be grateful for what is good in your life and in the world
- Try to find some meaning in the suffering you see
- If you must blame something, blame the situation, not the person
- Show compassion to yourself by being kind, soothing, and comforting to yourself

WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS NOW...



# RESOURCES

- ProQOL.org B. Hundall Stamm
- Dr. Sherrie Bourg Carter
- Dr. Amit Sood book, [\*The Mayo Clinic Guide to Stress-Free Living\*](#)
- [\*GoodTherapy.org\*](#)