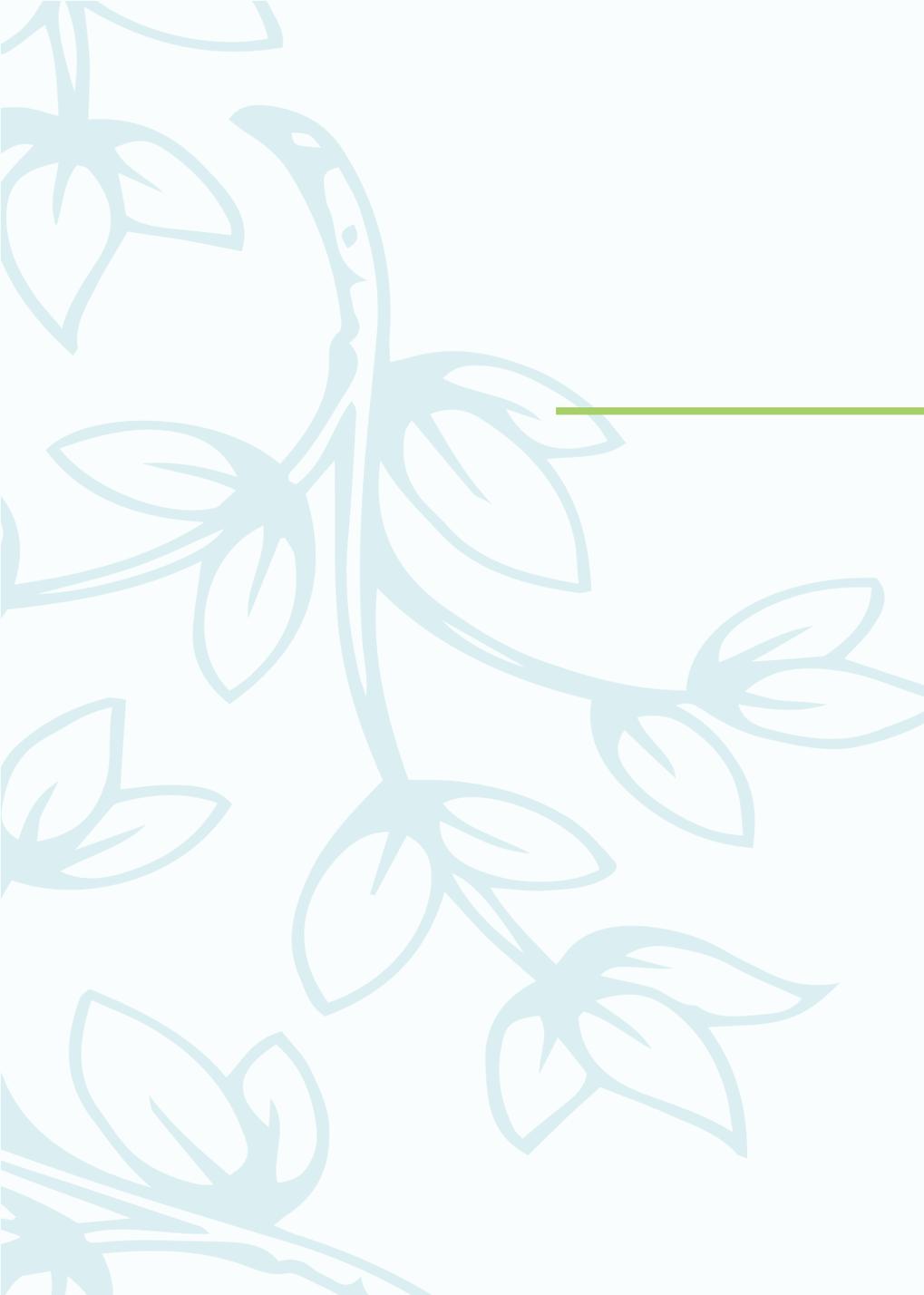


Caregivers need care too: Compassion fatigue and how to engage in self-care

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“From what we get, we can make a living; What we give, however, makes a life” Arthur Ashe

Popular misconceptions

- I will “fix” the problem...save the world
- I am responsible for outcomes
- If I care enough, everything will be ok
- The client will appreciate everything I do for them
- Significant people in my life will make things better
- I know what I am getting into
- I can do it alone and don't need any help
- If I am spiritual enough, I can deal with the stress of working with suffering clients

Work Environments



Some occupations deal with illness and death regularly



Professionals are trained to not have personal emotions



Grief is internalized and not openly expressed



Demands of the job overshadow grief



Caregivers are distant mourners and the effects are often hidden and subtle



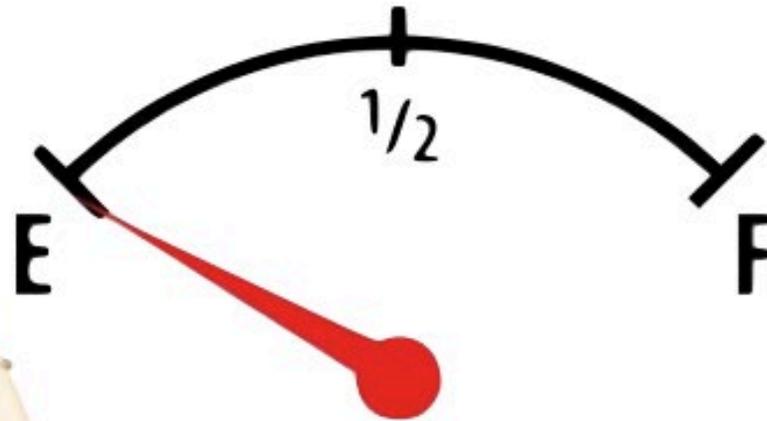
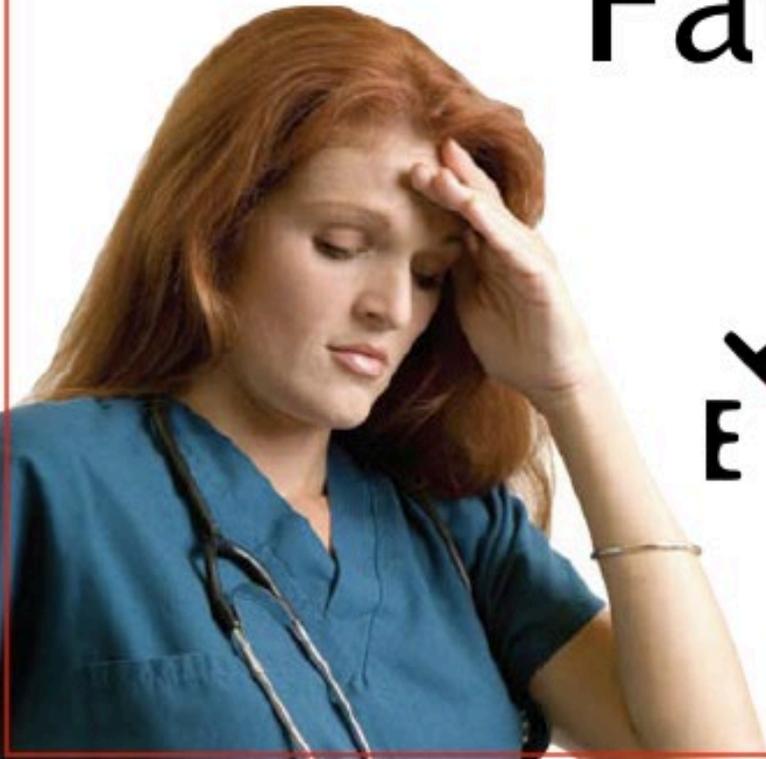
Multiple and continuous losses will generate a grief response



Leads to Compassion Fatigue

Compassion

Fatigue



Does this look familiar?

What is Compassion Fatigue?

- **Compassion-** we are designed to care for one another and want to help others BUT sometimes it is hard, too much or too
- **Compassion fatigue is caused by empathy. It is the natural consequence of stress resulting from caring for and helping traumatized or suffering people. It is basically burnout + Secondary Traumatic Stress**
- It is a gradual lessening of compassion over time due to the cumulative effects of caring for those whose conditions are
 - chronic
 - Irreversible
 - Terminal

*Empathy and helping exercise from book



Causes of Compassion Fatigue

- Putting others' needs before your own
- Unresolved pain or trauma
- Lack of professional boundaries
- Lack of coping skills
- Overcommit "yes"
- You need your clients as much or more than they need you
- Neglect your own personal relationships

Take a moment... Video Clip



Take a moment...

Discussion

- What were some signs they gave that they were suffering from compassion fatigue?
- What signs have you seen in yourself or coworkers?

Phases of Compassion Fatigue



Zealot phase

Willing to go extra mile, enthusiastic about helping, volunteers to work



Irritability phase

Cut corners, mistakes, cynical, avoids people/work



Withdrawal phase

Complaints, tired, avoids sadness, detach, clients irritating instead of people



Zombie phase

Hopelessness turns to anger, disdain for clients, no patience, no fun

There are now two options: Pathology and Victimization vs. renewal and maturation (some cite this as the 5th phase)

Personal symptoms

- Angry or irritable, sadness
- Nervousness or anxiety/panic
- Apathy
- Physical and emotional exhaustion
- Sleep difficulty
- Depression or withdrawal
- Difficulty concentrating
- Questioning faith/suffering of others

Personal symptoms con't

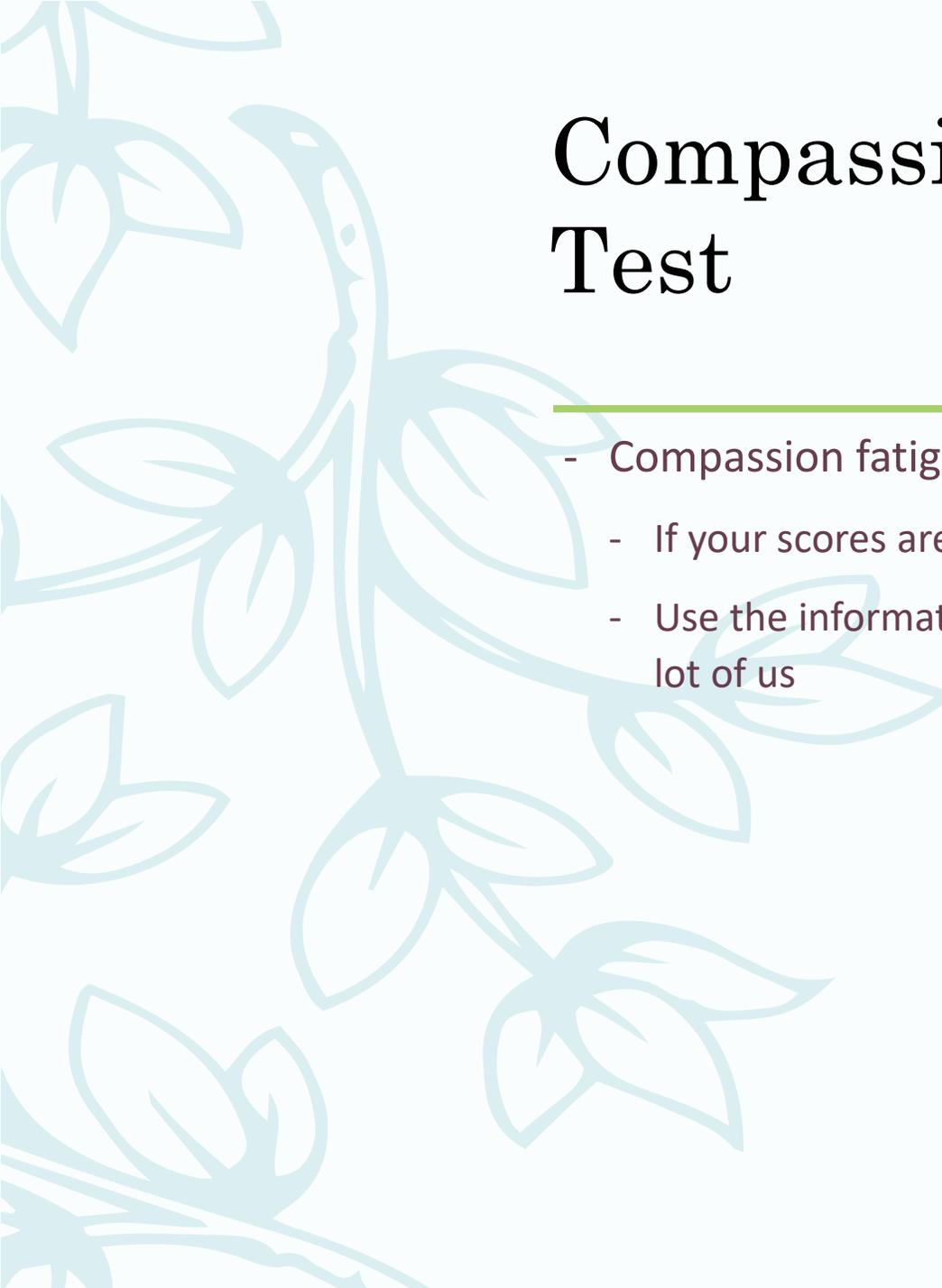
- Using alcohol, food or drugs to cope
- Poor self-care (ex. hygiene, appearance)
- Appetite changes
- Unable to “let go”
- Do not feel accomplished
- Blaming others/detaching from others
- Flashbacks if dealing with trauma
- Client issues take over personal time

Symptoms affecting work

- Absenteeism
- Negative towards management/change
- Inability to complete tasks/meet deadlines
- Inability to work with coworkers
- Complaints of illness
- Negative attitude “nothing will improve”
- Become overwhelmed and leave the profession “easier to work at McDonalds”

Compassion Satisfaction/Fatigue Self-Test





Compassion Satisfaction/Fatigue Self-Test

- Compassion fatigue is real
 - If your scores are high, explore what is creating the burnout/fatigue
 - Use the information to help you focus on strategies; don't worry it happens to a lot of us



In these challenging times of COVID-19

- Take your temperature (and I don't mean body temperature)
- Acknowledge your own struggle in addition to those you care for or help
- Reach out to those that lift you up
- Even more important to have coping strategies

Stress Reduction Kit



**Bang
Head
Here**

Directions:

1. Place kit on FIRM surface.
2. Follow directions in circle of kit.
3. Repeat step 2 as necessary, or until unconscious.
4. If unconscious, cease stress reduction activity.

Strategies

This may not work so well!

Strategies for taking care of yourself

- Be aware of how your work impacts your life
- Explore your personal issues
- Do not rely on work as your source of happiness
- Assess your professional boundaries
 - Are you sharing too much information?
 - Are you getting too involved in their life?
 - Do you think you are the only one that can do the care the best?

Strategies for taking care of yourself

- Understand there are things you can and cannot control in the client's life
- Use your support system- who "gets it"
- Use what refreshes you and rids of stress, healthy eating (reading, biking, prayer, sing, dance, etc.)
- Listen to your inner voice- often times it will be screaming at you that you have little left to give
- Keep caregiving as only one facet in your life
- Mindfulness meditation/yoga (visualization)
- Be KIND to yourself- what we do can be hard

Strategies for taking care of yourself

– Laugh



IF YOUR COMPASSION
DOES NOT INCLUDE
YOURSELF,
IT IS INCOMPLETE.

JACK KORNFELD

WWW.SERVINGQUOTES.COM



"Taking care of myself
doesn't mean 'me first.'
It means 'me too.'"

L.R. Knost

GoodTherapy.org



Final
thoughts?

Resources

- Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project (2017). <http://compassionfatigue.org/index.html>
- Professional Caregiver Grief: The Hidden Loss for Senior Caregivers (2013). <https://easylivingfl.com/professional-caregiver-grief-the-hidden-loss-for-senior-caregivers/>
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- Smith, D. Being a Wounded Healer (1999).