

***Helping the Helpers:  
The Journey from  
Compassion Fatigue  
to  
Resilience***

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**Objectives:**

- Define the concept of compassion fatigue and identify factors which may contribute to it's development.
- Recognize common manifestations of compassion fatigue.
- Describe practical strategies which promote personal, professional and organizational resilience.

**A Moment for Reflection:**

- What drew you to this work?
- What is the best thing about your work?
- What is the most challenging thing about your work?
- What do you do to cope with job stress?

***"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."***

Martin Luther King Jr.

**Trauma Exposure: Personal Impact for Helpers**

- Compassion Satisfaction
- Compassion Fatigue
- Vicarious Trauma
- Burnout

**Compassion Fatigue:  
(Figley,1995)**

- The work of helping traumatized people is gratifying but also brings risks.
- Helpers can experience pain as a direct result of exposure to other's traumatic material.
- The Cost of Caring.

### Pearlman and Saakvitne, 1995

- Vicarious trauma is the transformation in the inner experience of the therapist that results from empathic engagement with a client's trauma material.
- Empathy = lowering resistance or separation to allow a connection with another's experience.

### The Role of Exposure in the Development of Compassion Fatigue:

- How one is exposed is not as important as the extent to which the helper "takes in" the material.
- "Taking in" refers to a process where the normal ego defenses which allow some distance from what is heard or observed are weakened.
- The unique connection between survivor and helper.

### Compassion Fatigue Key Concepts:

- The emotional residue of working with suffering clients.
- The effects are cumulative.
- A normal reaction to an abnormal situation.

### Compassion Fatigue vs Burnout:

- Burnout is a stage of extreme dissatisfaction with one's work characterized by excessive distancing, impaired competence and irritability.
- The nature of the workplace not the nature of the work.

### The Trauma Exposure Response

- Manifests in the cognitive, behavioral and emotional life of the helper.
- Individualized
- Dynamic

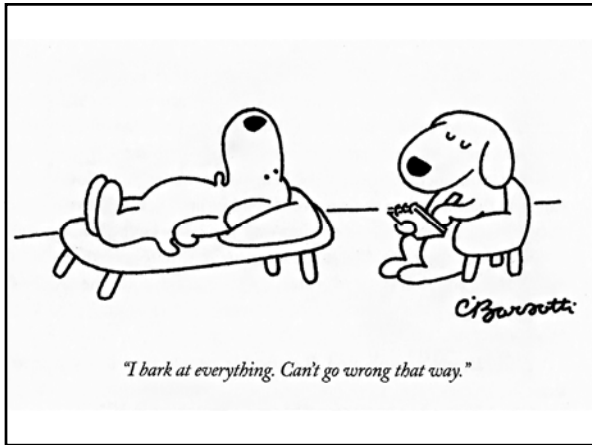
Lipsky 2010

### Cognitive Manifestations of Compassion Fatigue:

- Alterations in Cognitive Schema especially relating to safety and relationships.
- Intrusive Thoughts
- Cynicism
- Grandiosity
- Guilt
- Inability to Embrace Complexity
- A Sense of Persecution



- Behavioral Manifestations of Compassion Fatigue:**
- Avoidance
  - Isolation
  - Boundary Issues
  - Exhaustion
  - Addictions
  - Hypervigilance
  - Diminished Creativity
  - Working All the Time
  - Absenteeism/Tardiness



- Emotional Manifestations of Compassion Fatigue:**
- Anxiety
  - Sadness
  - Hopelessness/Helplessness
  - Numbing
  - Anger/Fear
  - Irritability



**Compassion Fatigue  
Contributing Factors:**

- Lack of Experience.
- Trauma Caseload: Hours per week spent with traumatized clients.
- Exposure to Child or Sexual Assault Victims.
- Low Level of Social Recognition.
- Primary Trauma in the Workplace.

**Compassion Fatigue  
Individual Vulnerabilities:**

- Personal Trauma History
- Coping Style – Locus of Control
- Current Life Situation

**Compassion Fatigue  
Self-Assessment Tools:**

- Compassion Satisfaction/Fatigue Self Test for Helpers (Figley,1995)
- Professional Quality of Life Scale proqol.org (Hudnall Stamm, 2009)

**Trauma Stewardship:  
A Map for the Journey**

- We create space for and honor others suffering but do not assume their pain as our own.
- We care for others but we do not take on their path as our path.
- We maintain a long term strategy that allows us to remain whole and helpful to others.  
Lipsky (2009)

**Resilience:**

- The power to cope with adversity and adapt to challenges or change.
- Emerging from stressful situations feeling normal and perhaps even stronger than before.
- A Dynamic Process of Prevention or Recovery

**Resilience  
Core Elements:**

- Self Knowledge and Insight.
- Sense of Hope.
- Healthy Coping.
- Strong Relationships.
- Personal Perspective and Meaning.

### Personal Resilience:

- A Set of Learned Behavioral Competencies.
- By validating ourselves we promote acceptance.
- By meeting our own mental, physical and emotional needs, we give care from a place of abundance, not scarcity.

### Operationalizing Self Care:

- Awareness
- Balance
- Connection
- Discharge What is Harmful
- Embrace What is Helpful

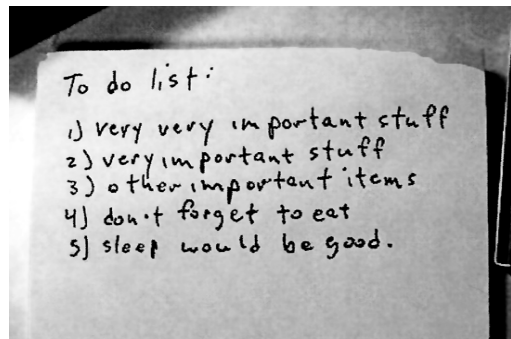
### Awareness

- Mindfulness and Acceptance.
- Mindfulness – paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally. (Jon Kabat-Zinn)
- An Exquisite Quality of Being.

### Awareness



### Balance



### Connection



### Discharge



### Embrace



### Professional Resilience:

- Education: Trauma-informed, Job-specific, User-friendly and Regularly Scheduled.
- Individual and Group Supervision: Clinical Problem Solving and Active Support.
- Professional Organizations

### Organizational Resilience:

- Organizations have an ethical duty to address the issue of Compassion Fatigue.
- Support following traumatic events.
- Caseload management
- Necessary tools and resources to do the job.
- Employee benefits which facilitate self care.

### Creating a Culture of Thriving

- Strength-based Resiliency-focused Activities
- Creating Space
- Evidence-based Practices
- Trauma Informed Care

I wish I could show you when you are  
lonely or in darkness,  
The Astonishing Light of Your Own  
Being.

Hafiz

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