



Compassion Fatigue

Taking care of self while caring for others

The helping professional



Training outcomes


- Understand the **compassion fatigue** and be able to **recognize the stages, causes, symptoms, and consequences** of compassion fatigue
- **Identify your level** of compassion fatigue
- Determine the **most effective self-care strategies** for yourself
- **Create a plan** so you can continue to do your work in a sustainable way.

Definitions

- Compassion Fatigue (Secondary traumatic stress disorder)
- Burnout
- Vicarious Trauma


Compassion Fatigue

- It is often an occupational hazard for those working in helping professions (as a result of their strengths: empathy and involvement).
- It is NOT a reflection of the helper's inadequacy.
- It does NOT indicate the toxicity or “badness” of a client.



Emotionally I'm
done. Mentally,
I'm drained.
Physically, I smile.

ihaveabadtummy.tumblr



Share a time when you mentally
took your work home with you.

How were you acting/thinking/feeling?

Stages of compassion fatigue

- Enthusiast
- Irritability
- Withdrawal
- Zombie

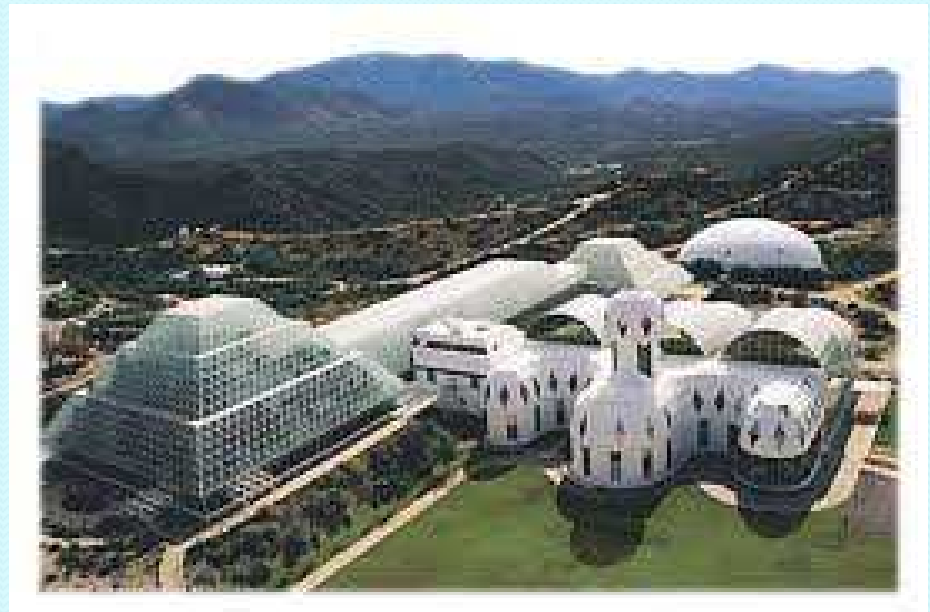


Common causes

- Serving in a “helping capacity”
- Being an empathetic person
- Repeatedly experiencing needs
- Doing more with less (\$, options, time, etc.)
- Manipulation by those that you serve
- Extraordinary circumstances
- Your personal life

Stressors

- Healthy, useful
- Chronic, detrimental



Physiological effects of stress

Autonomic Nervous System

- Regulates the functions of our internal organs
- Two main subsystems:
 - Sympathetic
 - Parasympathetic

Physiological effects of stress

Sympathetic nervous systems:

- Increased adrenaline
- Blood (oxygen, nutrients) diverted to large muscles
- Five senses heightened
- “Fight or flight”



Physiological effects of stress

Parasympathetic system:

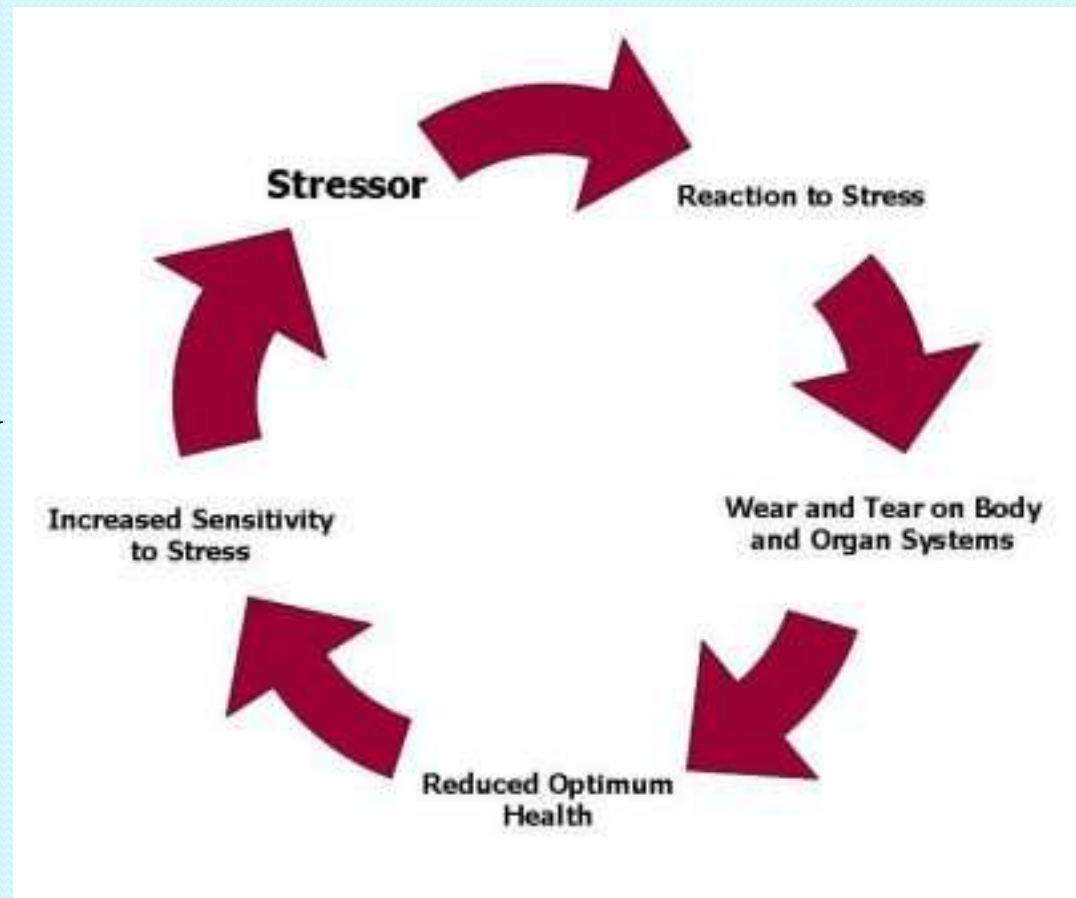
- Conserves energy
- Dilates vessels
- Relaxes muscles
- “Rest and Renew”



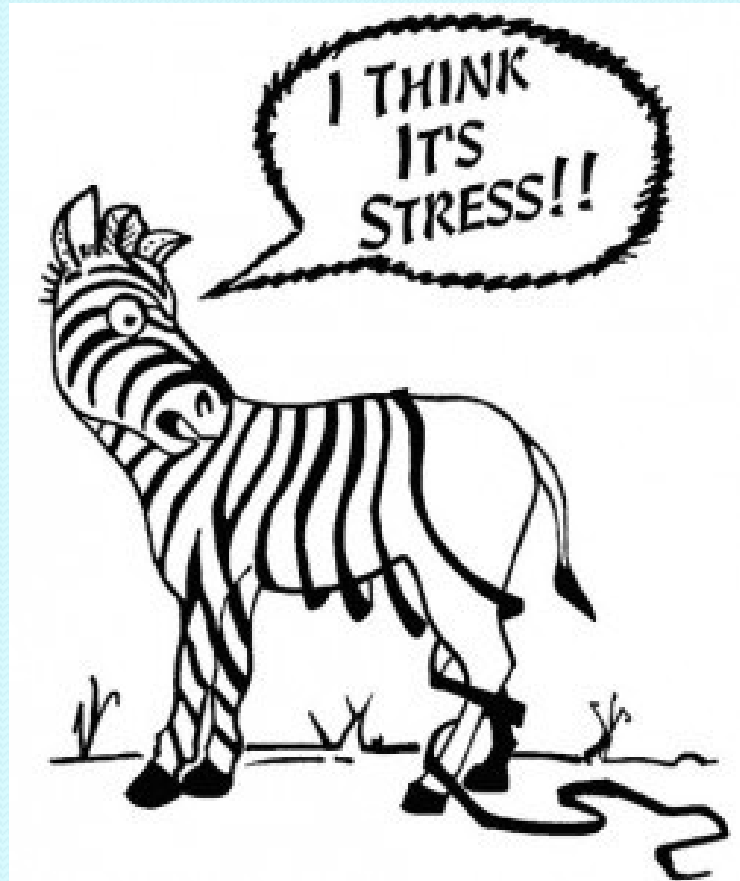
Physiological effects of stress

Chronic stress

- Cardiovascular disease
- Decreased immunity
- Increased allergen vulnerability
- Pain
- Mental health



How do you react to stress?



Workplace toxicity

- A common consequence of compassion fatigue, particularly when employees feel burdened by unreasonable workloads, lack of support, mistrust, and lack of control over their schedules.
- Negative ruts: feeling that others are responsible for our well-being, obsessing about the wrongs done to us, gossiping, “must be nice”, turning on each other rather than collaborating for change.

PROQoL

Professional Quality of Life Scale

Measures compassion satisfaction, burnout,
and secondary traumatic stress

Available free on-line at www.proqol.org

The remedy: Self-care

Doing whatever is necessary so that you maintain the optimum physical, mental, social, and spiritual health to perform your work in a sustainable way.

Isn't it selfish?



It is an issue of needs (not desires/preferences)

You are only able to serve others to the degree to which you are physically and emotionally healthy.

“First do no harm”

Identifying triggers

Are the situations that you face triggering past experiences or emotions?

Reflect:

- What are *your* triggers?
- Why do they affect you?
- What can you do to help yourself heal from the past?

Healthy outlets for stress

- Grief
- Set appropriate, healthy boundaries
- Create a work → home transition
- Talking it out
- Working it out
- Play!



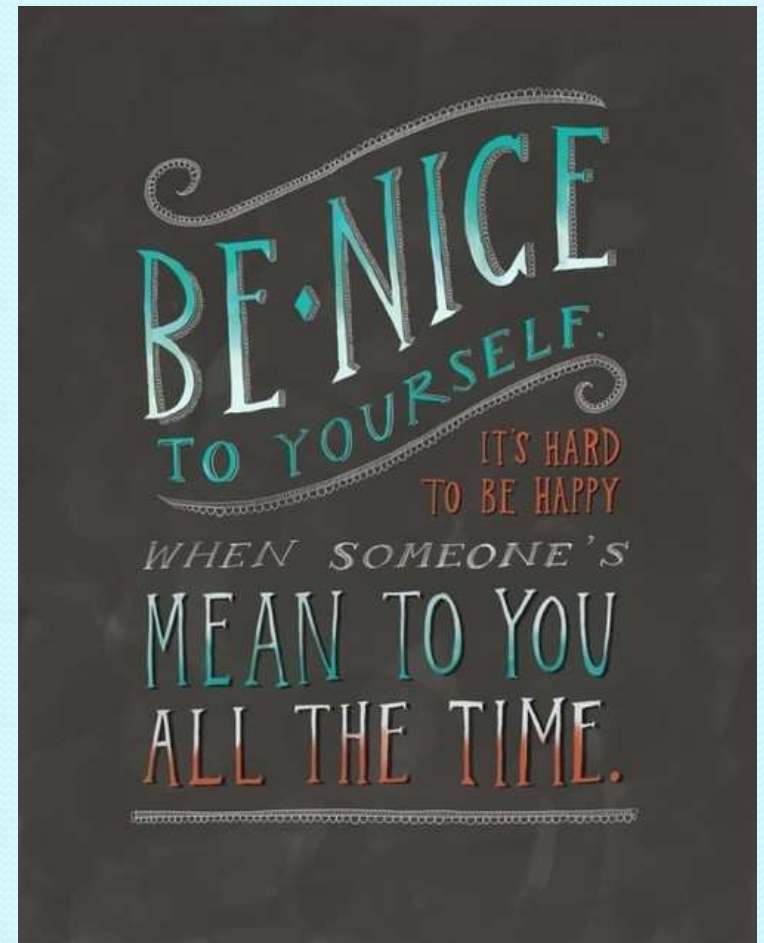
Support system

- Workplace vs. home life support systems
- Relational poverty
- Low-impact debriefing



Standards of self-care

- The responsibility of self-care is your alone – no situation or person can justify neglecting it.
- We have respect for the dignity and worth of each person (including ourselves).
 - ~ Green Cross Academy of Traumatology



Create S.M.A.R.T. Goals



How do you put this information to use?

- Growth goals and maintenance goals
- Professional goals and personal goals
- Based on your life priorities
- Accountability buddy?

SMART goals

Vague goal

- Value: nutritional health
- I'm going to start eating healthier starting next week.

SMART goal

- Value: nutritional health
- I'm going to shop this weekend for fruits and vegetables. I will pack my lunch each day this week and include one fruit and one vegetable. (I will invite a co-worker to brown bag it and eat with me).

Satisfaction & Gratitude

Connect with the rewards of the work you do

- Why did you choose this field in the first place?
- Name one aspect of the work that you find rewarding.
- How can you focus on the small victories?
- What can you learn from the past?
- *Is this still the right place for you?*

Questions?

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Resources

- Figley, Charles (1995) Compassion Fatigue: Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorders in Those Who Treat the Traumatized
- Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project, www.compassionfatigue.org
- Mathieu, Francoise (2011) The Compassion Fatigue Workbook: Creative Tools for Transforming Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma

Resources

- Saakvitne, Karen (1996) Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization
- Green Cross Academy of Traumatology,
www.greencross.org
- Van Dernoot Lipsky, Laura (2009) Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others