



COMPASSION FATIGUE - HOW IT AFFECTS YOU

Amie Martin
They/ Them
LGBTQIA+ Mental Health Advocacy Officer



Compassion Fatigue

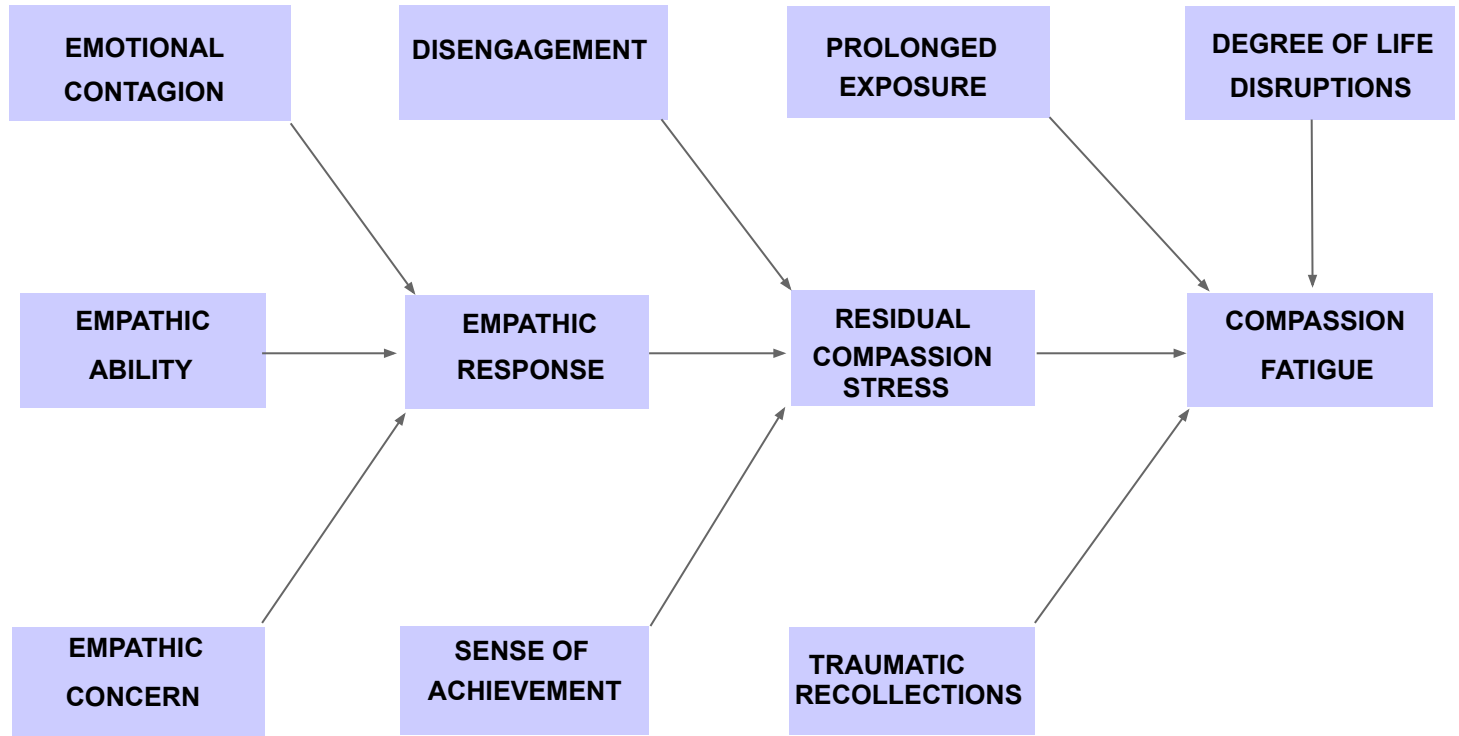
- Compassion fatigue is an emotional and physical burden created by the trauma of helping others in distress, which leads to a reduced capacity for empathy towards suffering in the future.
- Sufferers can exhibit several symptoms including hopelessness, a decrease in experiences of pleasure, constant stress and anxiety, sleeplessness or nightmares, and a pervasive negative attitude.
- This can have detrimental effects on individuals, both professionally and personally, including a decrease in productivity, the inability to focus and feelings of incompetency, scepticism, guilt and self-doubt.



Compassion Fatigue

- Burnout is chronic and happens gradually over time, often as a result of work-related attributes such as a lack of resources, or long shifts, whereas Compassion Fatigue is acute and has a rapid onset as a result of absorbing trauma.
- The term Compassion Fatigue refers to the impact of helping others, whereas Burnout is a term used to describe the impact of a stressful workplace.
- People who experience Compassion Fatigue, generally still value their jobs and will carry on providing care, whilst those with Burnout tend to disengage.

FIGLEY MODEL COMPASSION FATIGUE





The Personal Impact of Compassion Fatigue

Emotional

- Powerlessness
- Guilt
- Anger
- Numbness
- Helplessness
- Depression
- Hypersensitivity
- Overwhelmed

Cognitive

- Decreased Self-esteem
- Apathy
- Rigidity
- Self-doubt
- Perfectionism
- Minimisation

Morale

- Decrease in Confidence
- Loss of Interest
- Dissatisfaction
- Negative Attitude
- Apathy
- Demoralisation
- Lack of Appreciation
- Detachment
- Feelings of Incompleteness

Spiritual

- Loss of purpose
- Questioning the meaning of life
- Questioning of prior religious beliefs
- Lack of self satisfaction
- Hopelessness



The Personal Impact of Compassion Fatigue

Interpersonal

- Withdrawn
- Decreased interest in intimacy
- Mistrust
- Isolation from friends
- Impact on parent (over protective)
- Intolerance
- Loneliness

Physical

- Sweating
- Rapid heartbeat
- Breathing difficulties
- Aches and pains
- Impaired immune system

Performance of Job Tasks

- Decrease in Quality
- Decrease in Quantity
- Low Motivation
- Avoidance of Job Tasks
- Increase in Mistakes
- Setting Perfectionist Standards
- Obsession about Details

Interpersonal

- Withdrawal from Colleagues
- Impatience
- Decrease in Quality of Relationships
- Poor Communication
- Subsume own needs
- Staff Conflicts



The Personal Impact of Compassion Fatigue

Behavioural

- Absenteeism
- Exhaustion
- Faulty Judgement
- Irritability
- Tardiness
- Irresponsibility
- Overworking
- Frequent Job Changes
- Impatient
- Moody
- Withdrawn
- Sleep Disturbances
- Increased Smoking, drinking
- Losing things
- Accident proneness

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Connect with meaning and purpose

Be well connected with the people around you

Develop/ maintain positive relationships that make you feel good

Use your Social Supports

Socialising helps us forget about our worries and fears

Connect with your community

Talk to line manager/ supervisor



GROUNDING, BALANCE, MINDFULNESS

Contact with Nature – beaches, mountains and forests give us a sense of how small in this world we really are – that helps to make our worries feel smaller too

Creative Expression (music, art, cooking – whatever you like to do!

This gives the left-hand side of your brain a wee rest 😊

Take notice



PHYSICAL

Being active helps lift our mood, reduces stress and anxiety, improves physical health and gives us more energy (brain has it's own little pharmacy!! Endorphins and Serotonin!!)

Nurturance – human contact, hugs, touch, hairdressers....

Try to get a healthy sleep routine – not easy but going to bed and getting up at same time helps

Try to eat well and drink plenty of water and watch the cigs and alcohol and big bars of chocolate!! (and small bars too!!)



SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Assertiveness Training

Stress Reduction

Time Management

Self Awareness (knowing your limits)

Humour!!

BOUNDARIES

Time Boundaries

Over working

Therapeutic Boundaries (Depersonalise)

Personal Boundaries



SELF-COMPASSION

Try to make time for a good Life Balance – make time for yourself, friends and things you enjoy

Relax. Don't feel guilty. Do whatever works for you

Keeping it real

Promote a sense of Hope

Being self aware – my best is enough

Reach out and connect with others in a similar situation



Self Awareness

Red: Increasing symptoms. Potential crisis

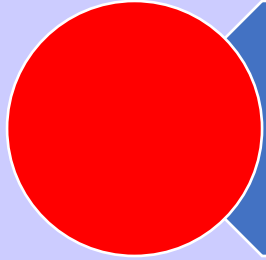
Amber: Subtle symptoms / early warning signs

Green: Feeling well, Calm

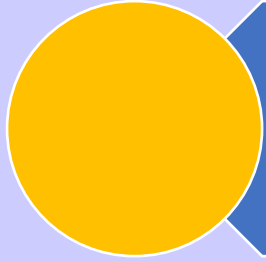
How am I:

- Emotionally?
- Behaviourally?
- Physically?

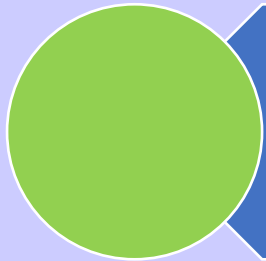
What does this look like?



Headaches, Crying, Not sleeping
Angry, Resentful, Withdrawn



Tense shoulders and neck, Irritable,
snappy, starting to withdraw



Energetic, optimistic, kind, helpful,
calm, good listener, present

YOU ARE COMPASSIONATE AND EMPATHIC

- These feelings are because you do such a good job – they are a 'side effect'
- They are not a weakness
- They are a sign of your strength
- But you must pay attention to them and look after yourself ALWAYS



Putting your own oxygen mask on first – Self Care

Sometimes when we are helping others it can be easy to forget about our own needs. So whether the person we are helping is someone we know personally, professionally, or a relative stranger, refocusing on ourselves regularly is vital - especially after an intervention.

Physical Self-Care

- Eat healthily
- Get regular sleep
- Take time off / seek medical care
- Get massages or other body work
- Do physical activity that is fun for you
- Take time to be sexual
- Get enough sleep for you
- Wear clothes that make you feel good
- Take day trips or mini vacations
- Get away from technology for a day

Emotional Self-Care

- Allow yourself to cry
- Find things that make you laugh
- Spend time with others whose company you enjoy
- Treat yourself kindly (positive inner dialogue)
- Feel proud of yourself
- Re-read favourite books, re-watch movies
- Express anger in constructive ways
- Playtime with children in your life

Spiritual Self Care

- Spend time outdoors / in nature
- Express gratitude
- Make time for meditation, reflection, prayer
- Participate in spiritual gathering, or community groups
- Be open to inspiration and have awe-inspiring experiences
- Celebrate milestones with rituals that are meaningful for you e.g. memorialise loved ones who have died
- Sing
- Contribute to or participate in causes you believe in
- Listen to music

Psychological Self-Care

- Write a journal
- Read literature unrelated to work
- Do something at which you are a beginner
- Notice your inner experience, your dreams & thoughts
- Let others know different aspects of you
- Be curious! Engage your intelligence in a new area e.g. gallery, museums, theatre
- Practise receiving from others
- Wear clothes that make you feel good
- Say no to extra responsibilities sometimes
- See a psychotherapist or counsellor

Workplace Self-Care

- Take time to eat lunch mindfully
- Take regular breaks, stand and stretch
- Talk with co-workers about non-work related topics
- Allow ample time to complete necessary tasks
- Take on tasks that are exciting, growth promoting and rewarding to you
- Set clear boundaries with clients and co-workers
- Balance your workload so no day is too much
- Make your workspace comfortable and comforting
- Get regular supervision or consultation
- Negotiate for your needs
- Have a regular peer support group

Let's make a personalised Self Care Plan!

- Physical
- Psychological
- Emotional
- Spiritual
- Workplace

