



WEBINAR SERIES

Running on Empty: Compassion Fatigue in Health Professionals

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Disclosures

- Demi Maglio, M.A. – Nothing to disclose

Following This Session:



- You should be able to:
 - Describe what compassion fatigue is and its consequences
 - Recognize signs and symptoms of compassion fatigue
 - Develop a general understanding of organizational and personal strategies that can serve as risk and protective factors against compassion fatigue
 - Create a compassion fatigue ‘action plan’ to prevent/ manage the development of compassion fatigue

Compassion Fatigue: What is it?

- ▶ An emotional state with negative **psychological**, **emotional**, and **physical** consequences that emanate from acute or prolonged caregiving of patients who are suffering from intense trauma or misfortune
 - A 'cost of caring' for others in emotional pain
 - Sometimes referred to as cumulative 'secondary traumatic stress'
 - Associated with **burnout**

Secondary Traumatic Stress

- ▶ Work-related, secondary exposure to extremely or traumatically stressful events
- ▶ Being exposed to others' traumatic events as a result of your work
- ▶ Associated with:
 - Fear, difficulty sleeping, unwanted images, and avoidance

Burnout

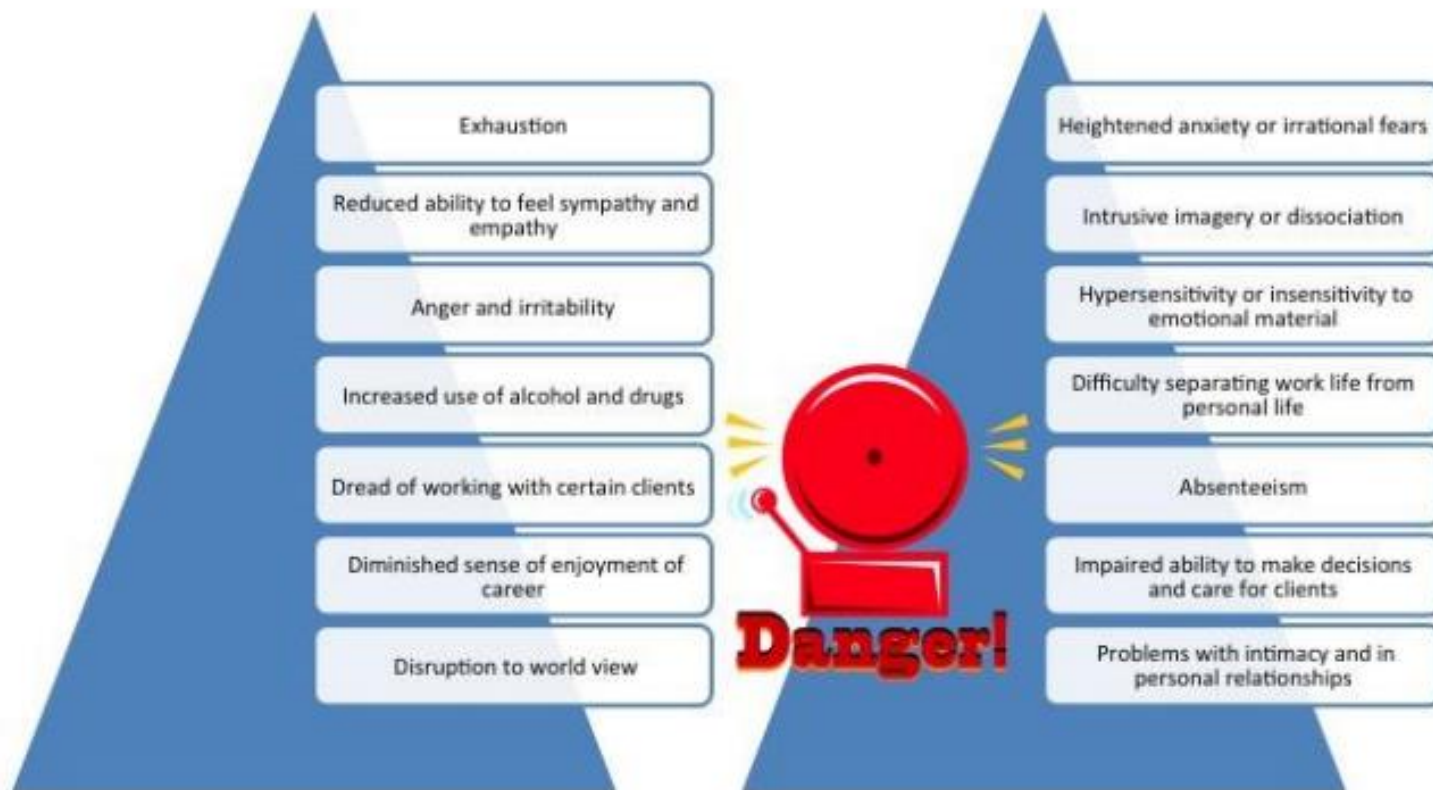
- ▶ The state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by a depletion of one's ability to cope
- ▶ Associated with:
 - Depersonalization
 - Doubts of one's competence and value of work
 - Decreased performance and patient satisfaction
- ▶ *'taking away a person's spirit and will'*



Effects of Compassion Fatigue

- ▶ Negatively impacts the quality of life, health, and performance of health care professionals
- ▶ May experience:
 - Decrease in job performance
 - Negative effects on relationships
 - Loss of passion
 - Personality changes
 - Patient dissatisfaction
 - Limited attention
 - **BURNOUT!**

Warning Signs of Compassion Fatigue in Staff



Developed by Christina Clarke, MS, HS-BCP, Coordinator of Continuing Medical Education and faculty, Wake Forest School of Medicine, Northwest AHEC

Risk Factors

- ▶ Prior burnout experience
- ▶ Personality characteristics:
 - Inadequate coping skills, intolerance of failure
- ▶ Poor communication skills
- ▶ Limited support systems
- ▶ Current life circumstances

Compassion Fatigue vs. Compassion Satisfaction

- ▶ Compassion fatigue may be a response to:
 - Workload demands
 - Poor organizational practices
 - Intense time pressures
 - Unsupportive relationships
 - Lack of control across work environments
 - Environmental factors

- ▶ Compassion satisfaction associated with:
 - Competence
 - Confidence
 - Support of coworkers and supervisor
 - A focus on staff wellness
 - Feeling empowered to use voice and choice

Measuring Compassion Fatigue

- ▶ The Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL)
 - 30-item self-report measure of Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue → <http://proqol.org>
 - Two subscales:
 - ☐ Burnout
 - ☐ Secondary Trauma
- ▶ Stress Diary:
 - Self-monitoring method that helps individuals identify stressors and how they respond to them

Prevention and Management

- ▶ Periodic assessments of compassion fatigue
- ▶ Daily self-care strategies
 - Physical, mental, emotional, social, spiritual
- ▶ Organizational strategies

Self-Care Strategies

► **Physical self-care:**

- Regular exercise; good nutrition; adequate sleep; tend to personal needs daily; maintain medical care appts.

► **Mental self-care:**

- Establish a routine that separates work from home; pick up a hobby; learn to receive

► **Emotional self-care:**

- Lean on support systems; establish coping mechanisms; seek out activities that provide emotional comfort

► **Social self-care:**

- Debrief with work peers; learn to ask for help; join support groups; spend time with support systems

► **Spiritual self-care:**

- Create a self-care journal; make time for prayer, meditation, and reflection



Organizational Strategies

► Staff tips:

- Assess and change workload
- Delegate work
- Take regular breaks
- Engage in **peer support**

► Supervisor tips:

- Openly discuss and recognize compassion fatigue
- Provide **check-ins** for staff
- Encourage staff to take breaks and set aside time for debriefings
- Provide staff with tools and resources that they need
- Celebrate individual and collective successes

Building Resiliency through Coping Interventions

- ▶ Self-regulation and connection:
 - Arousal regulation; relaxation; meditation; mindfulness; imagery and visualization
- ▶ Self-reflection:
 - Journaling; keeping a stress diary; debriefing with coworkers
- ▶ Self-validation:
 - Clarify values and learn to work towards values and integrity
- ▶ Counseling:
 - Seek support from a mental health professional
 - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy & Acceptance Commitment Therapy



Develop a Compassion Fatigue Prevention Toolkit

- ▶ What would go in that toolkit?
- ▶ What are my warning signs – on a scale from 1 to 10, what is a 4 for me, what is a 9?
- ▶ Schedule a regular check in – “how am I doing?”
- ▶ What things do I have control over vs. what things do I not have control over?
- ▶ What stress relief strategies do I enjoy?
- ▶ What stress reduction strategies work for me?
- ▶ What stress resiliency strategies can I use?

Take Home Messages



- ▶ Compassion fatigue is common in healthcare settings and if left unacknowledged, can have catastrophic effects
- ▶ Monitoring warning signs is key in preventing compassion fatigue
- ▶ Develop a toolbox with daily self-care strategies and organizational strategies
- ▶ Rely on your support systems and reach out for help if needed



Questions?





Thank you!



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