Recognizing & Managing Compassion Fatigue

The Marine Mammal Center
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Sausalito, CA
Patricia Smith
Founder, Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project
www.compassionfatigue.org

To Weep for a Stranger:
Compassion Fatigue in Caregiving

Healthy Caregiving
A Guide to Recognizing & Managing Compassion Fatigue

Presenter's Guide
Level 1

By Patricia Smith, Founder
Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project®

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Founder, Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Healthy vs Unhealthy Caregivers</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>As Healthy caregivers we</strong> are fully present in our work. We display true compassion and empathy for others while not taking on the suffering we witness as our own.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>As Unhealthy caregivers we</strong> have not reconciled past trauma and attach ourselves to the pain of others. This negates the resiliency needed to elevate compassion satisfaction levels.</td>
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The ultimate goal in creating **healthy caregivers** is so we can master the art of resiliency and return quickly to high-functioning behaviors after enduring a traumatic event or incident.
Why Healthy Caregiving?

Life is not merely to be alive, but to be well.

Marcus Valerius Martial
What is Compassion Fatigue?

“Compassion Fatigue is a state experienced by those helping people or animals in distress; it is an extreme state of tension and preoccupation with the suffering of those being helped to the degree that it can create a secondary traumatic stress for the helper.”

Dr. Charles Figley
Professor, Paul Henry Kurzweg Distinguished Chair
Director, Tulane Traumatology Institute
Tulane University, New Orleans
What is Compassion Fatigue?

**Compassion Fatigue** is a combination of physical, emotional, and spiritual depletion associated with the trauma-related work we do where people or animals are in significant emotional pain and/or physical distress.
What are the Symptoms?

- Isolation
- Emotional outbursts
- Sadness, apathy
- Impulse to rescue anyone in need
- Persistent physical ailments
- Substance abuse
- Hypervigilence, hyperarousal
- Recurring nightmares or flashbacks
- Excessive complaints about colleagues, management, and/or those being helped
What are the Causes?

- Other-Directedness: Putting the needs of others before our own
- Providing service to others w/stress & work-related trauma
- Lack of personal and/or professional coping skills
- Lack of personal boundaries
- Overdeveloped sense of responsibility
- Practice of minimizing traumatic events
- History of unresolved childhood trauma
“Unexpressed emotions will never die. They are buried alive and will come forth later in uglier ways.”

Sigmond Freud
# On the Job Stresses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress is about being anxious: work-related overload, too much</th>
<th>Burnout is about being worn out: work-related hopelessness and feelings of inefficacy, too little</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PTSD</strong> is a primary stress disorder: work-related exposure to extreme or traumatic events</td>
<td><strong>STS</strong> is a secondary stress disorder: Work-related secondary exposure to extreme or traumatic events involving people or animals</td>
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Managing Stress

- Identify your source(s) of stress
- Educate yourself about the effects of stress
- Identify unhealthy coping methods
- Adopt healthy coping mechanisms
- Tighten your personal boundaries
- Practice empathic discernment
- Increase capacity for vulnerability
What is Vulnerability?

“I define vulnerability as uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure.”

Source: *Daring Greatly* by Brené Brown, Ph.D.
Why Vulnerability in the Workplace?

- Builds trust & transparency
- Allows a full range of human emotions
- Promotes authenticity and sustainability
- Encourages productive team building
- Leads to solutions to challenges
- Promotes healing
- Raises Compassion Satisfaction levels
What is Compassion Satisfaction?

“Compassion Satisfaction is the pleasure we derive from doing the caregiving work we do. Higher levels of Compassion Satisfaction lead to becoming healthier, more effective caregivers.”

Source: Dr. Beth Hudnall Stamm
What is Compassion Satisfaction?

- The positive aspects of helping
- Pleasure & satisfaction derived from working at The Marine Mammal Center

Compassion Satisfaction may be related to:
- Creating hope and healing for the marine mammals
- Working for your organization & its mission
- Working with dedicated colleagues
- Working as an effective team
- Supervising and directing positive outcomes
- Developing high levels of staff, volunteer and community satisfaction
Managing CF in the Workplace

- Educate staff about Compassion Fatigue
- Create a space for meditation or silence
- Debrief as a group after a traumatic event
- Create an organizational Wellness Program
- Urge management to take the lead
- Offer nutritious food at meetings and events
- Take lunch breaks daily & breathers throughout the day
- Learn to recognize Organizational Compassion Fatigue
Organizational Compassion Fatigue exists when a high percentage of staff exhibit elevated levels of Compassion Fatigue. This leads to a loss of meaning of the organization’s mission. Dysfunction seeps into the processes and procedures that keep the organization focused, productive and healthy.
What are the Symptoms of Organizational CF?

- High absenteeism
- Elevated rate of Workers Comp Claims
- Lack of flexibility
- Tendency to break rules
- “Us versus Them” mentality
- Strong reluctance to change
- Lack of vision for the future
- Undermining the mission of the organization
Our mission is to expand knowledge about marine mammals—
their health and that of their ocean environment—and to
inspire their global conservation. Our core work is the rescue
and rehabilitation of sick and injured marine mammals,
supported by state-of-the-art animal care and research
facilities, a corps of dedicated volunteers, and an engaged
community.
“I had the pleasure of helping out in the fish kitchen yesterday, as the general public was invited to help with KP duty in the face of an unbelievable patient load. We newbies bumped around but figured our way after the seasoned folk guided us and, hopefully, we freed the real tried & true volunteers to take care of the hands-on patient issues for which they train. What wonderful people they are, doing wonderful work. How the regulars are keeping up is beyond me. It was an honor to lend a bit of a hand and wish the MMC core staff strength and stamina. I'll be back next week. Blessings, LJ”
“I am so impressed with this organization. The facilities were well maintained and their mission as a healing hospital for marine mammals was evident from the beautiful care the animals receive, to the friendly & knowledgeable volunteers and their awesome education programs.”
“Loved this place! It's essentially a hospital. I took the tour and loved it! Our tour guide was very informative - she was on top of her stuff! I love the purpose of this establishment. It warms my heart knowing there's people out there that help the sick and injured marine mammals! I'd love to go back ASAP.” :}
Managing Compassion Fatigue

✓ Practice authentic, sustainable self-care daily
✓ Create balance between work, relationships & “me-time”
✓ Build a healthy support system
✓ Create a Self-Care Plan (DOT)
✓ Stay in the complexity of the crisis situation
✓ Simplify your life
✓ Promote vulnerability
✓ Take Professional Quality of Life Self-Test regularly
Six Steps to Healthy Caregiving

1. Build Resiliency
2. Cultivate Compassion
3. Improve Coping Skills
4. Support Your Colleagues
5. Embrace Self-Confidence
6. Manage Change
## Ten Words to Live By

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<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Trauma</td>
<td>Emotional reaction following a difficult event</td>
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<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Opening our hearts to the suffering of others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>Upon seeing suffering, we are moved to act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassion Fatigue</td>
<td>Secondary traumatic stress</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compassion Satisfaction</td>
<td>The pleasure we derive from caregiving work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resiliency</td>
<td>Ability to bounce back after a traumatic event</td>
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<tr>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td>Finding your True North – the real you</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>The behaviors &amp; actions that carry us through</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vulnerability</td>
<td>Being fully open to a wide range of emotions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Healthy Caregiving</td>
<td>The ability to be fully present</td>
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Compassion Fatigue Resources

- www.compassionfatigue.org
- www.healthy caregiving.com
- www.facebook.com/compassionfatigue
- www.proqol.org
- www.greencross.org
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