

YMCA – Week 4

What is Compassion Fatigue?

Compassion fatigue has been described as the “cost of caring” for others in emotional pain (Figley, 1982). The helping field has gradually begun to recognize that workers are profoundly affected by the work they do, whether it is by direct exposure to traumatic events (for example, working as a first responder or in a hospital ER or child welfare investigation); secondary exposure (hearing clients talk about trauma they have experienced, helping people who have just been victimized, working in the field of child abuse) and the full gamut in between. The work of helping requires professionals to open their hearts and minds to the people they service— unfortunately, this very process is what makes helpers vulnerable to being profoundly affected and even possibly damaged by their work and yet it is an essential skill to maintain in order to be effective, ethical and compassionate. We will explore this important, often over-looked condition of the “caring professional” and ways to manage.

Vicarious Trauma

Burnout

Signs and Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

Risk Factors for Compassion Fatigue

Take the Test

What to do? – Review Self Care, Explore your own “healthy relationships”

Therapy Take Away:

-How about codependency? What’s the relationship with codependency and compassion fatigue?

-Healthy Relationships

Compassion Fatigue – What is it?

Originally identified by Charles Figley in the late '90s following the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. After repeated exposure to traumatized people, Oklahoma City's first responders started to experience subtle, yet significant, negative impacts on job performance.

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Vicarious Trauma

Coined by Perlman & Saakvitne (1995) to describe the profound shift in world view that occurs in helping professionals when they work with clients who have experienced trauma: helpers notice that their fundamental beliefs about the world are altered and possibly damaged by being repeatedly exposed to traumatic material.

VT typically implies more permanent effect than compassion fatigue.

Signs and Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

Each individual will have their own warning signs that indicate that they are moving into the danger zone of compassion fatigue.

These will include some of the following:

- Exhaustion
- Reduced ability to feel sympathy and empathy
- Anger and irritability
- Increased use of alcohol and drugs
- Dread of working with certain clients/patients
- Diminished sense of enjoyment of career
- Disruption to world view, Heightened anxiety or irrational fears
- Intrusive imagery or dissociation
- Hypersensitivity or Insensitivity to emotional material
- Difficulty separating work life from personal life
- Absenteeism – missing work, taking many sick days
- Impaired ability to make decisions and care for clients/patients
- Problems with intimacy and in personal relationships

Risk Factors of Compassion Fatigue

While all caregivers are vulnerable to compassion fatigue, some risk factors make people more prone to developing such symptoms. These include:

- Working with acute crises or emergencies regularly
- Working with dangerous or violent populations
- Specializing in grief, bereavement, or death
- Having a heavy caseload or workload
- Over-identification with survivors
- Incidents that trigger personal experiences
- Problems with codependency
- Perfectionism and control issues
- History of similar traumatic experiences
- Having overly idealistic expectations for yourself or others

Compassion Fatigue and Codependency

“Many researchers have studied so-called compassion fatigue. According to Tibetan medicine, compassion fatigue doesn’t exist because compassion doesn’t cause exhaustion. Rather, compassion fatigue is codependency, defined as enabling addiction, poor mental health, and irresponsibility. Codependents feel burned out, go beyond their personal limits, and need other people’s approval. In studies of nurses, these characteristics were inversely related to self-compassion.”

Tibetan Medicine and You: A Path to Wellbeing, Better Health, and Joy

By Miriam E. Cameron, Tenzin Namdul

Characteristics of Healthy Relationships

How many of the following attitudes and behaviours are present in your relationships?

- Communication is open and spontaneous (including listening)
- Rules/boundaries are clear and explicit, yet allows flexibility
- Individuality, free and personal identify is enhanced
- Each enjoys doing things for self, as well as for the other
- Play, humour, and having fun together is common
- Each does not attempt to "fix" or control the other
- Acceptance of self and other (for real selves)
- Assertiveness: feelings and needs are expressed
- Humility: able to let go of the need to "be right"
- Self-confidence and security in own worth
- Conflict is faced directly and resolved
- Openness to constructive feedback
- Each is trustful of the other
- Balance of giving and receiving
- Negotiations are fair and democratic
- Tolerance: forgiveness of self and others
- Mistakes are accepted and learned from
- Willingness to take risks and be vulnerable
- Other meaningful relationships and interests exist
- Each can enjoy being alone and privacy is respected
- Personal growth, change and exploration is encouraged
- Continuity and consistency is present in the commitment
- Balance and oneness (closeness) and separation from each other
- Responsibility for own behaviours and happiness (not blaming other)
- _____
- _____
- _____



Developing Healthy Relationships is an Important Life Skill!

Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL)

Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue (ProQOL) Version 5 (2009)

When you [help] people you have direct contact with their lives. As you may have found, your compassion for those you [help] can affect you in positive and negative ways. Below are some questions about your experiences, both positive and negative, as a [helper]. Consider each of the following questions about you and your current work situation. Select the number that honestly reflects how frequently you experienced these things in the last 30 days.

1=Never

2=Rarely

3=Sometimes

4=Often

5=Very Often

- _____ 1. I am happy.
- _____ 2. I am preoccupied with more than one person I [help].
- _____ 3. I get satisfaction from being able to [help] people.
- _____ 4. I feel connected to others.
- _____ 5. I jump or am startled by unexpected sounds.
- _____ 6. I feel invigorated after working with those I [help].
- _____ 7. I find it difficult to separate my personal life from my life as a [helper].
- _____ 8. I am not as productive at work because I am losing sleep over traumatic experiences of a person I [help].
- _____ 9. I think that I might have been affected by the traumatic stress of those I [help].
- _____ 10. I feel trapped by my job as a [helper].
- _____ 11. Because of my [helping], I have felt "on edge" about various things.
- _____ 12. I like my work as a [helper].
- _____ 13. I feel depressed because of the traumatic experiences of the people I [help].
- _____ 14. I feel as though I am experiencing the trauma of someone I have [helped].
- _____ 15. I have beliefs that sustain me.
- _____ 16. I am pleased with how I am able to keep up with [helping] techniques and protocols.
- _____ 17. I am the person I always wanted to be.
- _____ 18. My work makes me feel satisfied.
- _____ 19. I feel worn out because of my work as a [helper].
- _____ 20. I have happy thoughts and feelings about those I [help] and how I could help them.
- _____ 21. I feel overwhelmed because my case [work] load seems endless.
- _____ 22. I believe I can make a difference through my work.
- _____ 23. I avoid certain activities or situations because they remind me of frightening experiences of the people I [help].
- _____ 24. I am proud of what I can do to [help].
- _____ 25. As a result of my [helping], I have intrusive, frightening thoughts.
- _____ 26. I feel "bogged down" by the system.
- _____ 27. I have thoughts that I am a "success" as a [helper].
- _____ 28. I can't recall important parts of my work with trauma victims.
- _____ 29. I am a very caring person.
- _____ 30. I am happy that I chose to do this work.

YOUR SCORES ON THE PROQOL: PROFESSIONAL QUALITY OF LIFE SCREENING

Based on your responses, place your personal scores below. If you have any concerns, you should discuss them with a physical or mental health care professional.

Compassion Satisfaction _____

Compassion satisfaction is about the pleasure you derive from being able to do your work well. For example, you may feel like it is a pleasure to help others through your work. You may feel positively about your colleagues or your ability to contribute to the work setting or even the greater good of society. Higher scores on this scale represent a greater satisfaction related to your ability to be an effective caregiver in your job.

If you are in the higher range, you probably derive a good deal of professional satisfaction from your position. If your scores are below 23, you may either find problems with your job, or there may be some other reason—for example, you might derive your satisfaction from activities other than your job. (Alpha scale reliability 0.88)

Burnout _____

Most people have an intuitive idea of what burnout is. From the research perspective, burnout is one of the elements of Compassion Fatigue (CF). It is associated with feelings of hopelessness and difficulties in dealing with work or in doing your job effectively. These negative feelings usually have a gradual onset. They can reflect the feeling that your efforts make no difference, or they can be associated with a very high workload or a non-supportive work environment. Higher scores on this scale mean that you are at higher risk for burnout.

If your score is below 23, this probably reflects positive feelings about your ability to be effective in your work. If you score above 41, you may wish to think about what at work makes you feel like you are not effective in your position. Your score may reflect your mood; perhaps you were having a "bad day" or are in need of some time off. If the high score persists or if it is reflective of other worries, it may be a cause for concern. (Alpha scale reliability 0.75)

Secondary Traumatic Stress _____

The second component of Compassion Fatigue (CF) is secondary traumatic stress (STS). It is about your work related, secondary exposure to extremely or traumatically stressful events. Developing problems due to exposure to other's trauma is somewhat rare but does happen to many people who care for those who have experienced extremely or traumatically stressful events. For example, you may repeatedly hear stories about the traumatic things that happen to other people, commonly called Vicarious Traumatization. If your work puts you directly in the path of danger, for example, field work in a war or area of civil violence, this is not secondary exposure; your exposure is primary. However, if you are exposed to others' traumatic events as a result of your work, for example, as a therapist or an emergency worker, this is secondary exposure. The symptoms of STS are usually rapid in onset and associated with a particular event. They may include being afraid, having difficulty sleeping, having images of the upsetting event pop into your mind, or avoiding things that remind you of the event.

If your score is above 41, you may want to take some time to think about what at work may be frightening to you or if there is some other reason for the elevated score. While higher scores do not mean that you do have a problem, they are an indication that you may want to examine how you feel about your work and your work environment. You may wish to discuss this with your supervisor, a colleague, or a health care professional. (Alpha scale reliability 0.81)

WHAT IS MY SCORE AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

In this section, you will score your test so you understand the interpretation for you. To find your score on **each section**, total the questions listed on the left and then find your score in the table on the right of the section.

Compassion Satisfaction Scale

Copy your rating on each of these questions on to this table and add them up. When you have added them up you can find your score on the table to the right.

3. _____
6. _____
12. _____
16. _____
18. _____
20. _____
22. _____
24. _____
27. _____
30. _____

Total: _____

The sum of my Compassion Satisfaction questions is	And my Compassion Satisfaction level is
22 or less	Low
Between 23 and 41	Moderate
42 or more	High

Burnout Scale

On the burnout scale you will need to take an extra step. Starred items are "reverse scored." If you scored the item 1, write a 5 beside it. The reason we ask you to reverse the scores is because scientifically the measure works better when these questions are asked in a positive way though they can tell us more about their negative form. For example, question 1. "I am happy" tells us more about

- *1. _____ = _____
*4. _____ = _____
8. _____
10. _____
*15. _____ = _____
*17. _____ = _____
19. _____
21. _____
26. _____
*29. _____ = _____

Total: _____

The sum of my Burnout Questions is	And my Burnout level is
22 or less	Low
Between 23 and 41	Moderate
42 or more	High

You Wrote	Change to
	5
2	4
3	3
4	2
5	1

the effects of helping when you are *not* happy so you reverse the score

Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale

Just like you did on Compassion Satisfaction, copy your rating on each of these questions on to this table and add them up. When you have added them up you can find your score on the table to the right.

2. _____
5. _____
7. _____
9. _____
11. _____
13. _____
14. _____
23. _____
25. _____
28. _____

Total: _____

The sum of my Secondary Trauma questions is	And my Secondary Traumatic Stress level is
22 or less	Low
Between 23 and 41	Moderate
42 or more	High