Compassion Fatigue: an Integrative Approach to Self Care for the Hospice Worker

presented by:

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Your Compassion Fatigue IQ

- CF occurs when I have given too much & I am tired of giving.
- Only helpers working in health care are at risk for CF.
- The symptoms of CF will disappear if I ignore them.
- I have an unlimited reserve of empathy, compassion & inner strength I can call on anytime there is a crisis.
- De-briefing after a traumatic incident isn’t useful to me.
- Sharing the details of my latest crisis is helpful to my colleagues.
- Resiliency is a genetic trait – you have it or you don’t.
- Once I heal from CF, its effects are gone forever.
- It is impossible to care for myself while caring for others.
Today’s Agenda:
Compassion Fatigue
an Integrative Approach to Self Care for the Hospice Worker

- What is Compassion Fatigue?
- Compassion Fatigue vs. Burnout
- Self Assessment
- Self Compassion Care Options
  The Path to Healing – Tips and Resources
In the words of the founding father of 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
## Your Compassion Fatigue IQ

| Up to 85% of helping professionals were found to have Compassion Fatigue and/or high rates of traumatic symptoms. | 59% of mental health workers sought counseling as opposed to 15% of law enforcement professionals. |

Source / Francoise Mathieu
“The Compassion Fatigue Workbook”
Who is at risk?
### Healthy vs Unhealthy Caregivers

| Healthy caregivers 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. | Unhealthy caregivers have not reconciled past trauma and attach themselves to the pain of others. This negates the resiliency needed to continue to do the work we choose to do. |
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?
Unresolved Past Pain & Trauma

“Unexpressed emotions will never die. They are buried alive and will come forth later in uglier ways.”

Sigmund Freud
It is important to remember...

Compassion Fatigue is a set of symptoms, not a disease.
poor memory

headache

flushed face

tense muscles

racing heart & higher blood pressure

shortness of breath

sweaty palms

stomach upset & diarrhea

frequent illnesses: colds & flus

crying & mood swings
What is Compassion Fatigue?

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

<table>
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<th>Cause</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other-Directedness: Putting the needs of others before our own</td>
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<td>Providing service to others w/stress &amp; work-related trauma</td>
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<td>Lack of personal and/or professional coping skills</td>
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<td>Lack of personal boundaries</td>
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<td>Overdeveloped sense of responsibility</td>
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<td>Practice of minimizing traumatic events</td>
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<td>History of unresolved childhood trauma</td>
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What are the Symptoms?

- Isolation
- Emotional outbursts
- Sadness, apathy
- Impulse to rescue anyone in need
- Persistent physical ailments
- Lack of self care practices
- Substance abuse
- Hypervigilence, hyperarousal
- Recurring nightmares or flashbacks
- Prone to accidents
- Excessive complaints about colleagues, management, and/or those being helped
“I just want to be left alone. There is always someone wanting something from me and I have nothing left to give.”

- Carole M. / Social Worker
Or...is this you?

“I don’t even want to go to sleep at night. I see images of the day that both frighten and upset me – almost every night.”

- Graciela V. / ER Nurse
Is this your friend or neighbor?

“Every time I hear the bell go off, my pulse races, my heart beats so fast I think it’s going to jump out of my chest. I try to breathe deeply to calm myself down, but I can’t even catch my breath.”

- Ken W. / 30-Year Firefighter Veteran
“I’m getting to the point where I want to yell and scream at the people who come to the shelter to adopt an animal. Why are they all so stupid when it comes to the care and treatment of animals?”

- Miguel C. / Animal Shelter Worker
“Each time a new mother and child come through our doors, I want to steal the child and run away. I know that child will never reach its full human potential living with that level of trauma every day.”

- Joseph D. / Homeless Shelter Worker
CF is Prolific!

- Emotional Signs
- Social
- Physical
- Intellectual
- Spiritual
- Professional
What is Compassion Satisfaction?

“Compassion Satisfaction is the pleasure we derive from being able to do our work well. Higher levels of Compassion Satisfaction are related to our ability to be effective helpers.”

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

- The positive aspects of helping
- Pleasure & satisfaction derived from working in caregiving environments

Compassion Satisfaction may be related to:
- Creating a safe environment for others
- Working for your organization & its mission
- Working with dedicated colleagues
- Working as an effective team
- Supervising & directing positive outcomes
- Developing high levels of staff engagement
What is Compassion Stress?

“The perceived demands derived from experiencing the suffering of others and wanting to help relieve their suffering in some way.”

(Figley, 1995; 2002)
Stress is caused by...

- Inability to say “no”
- Chronic need to prove ourselves
- Lack of respect & support from others
- Work-related overload
- Too much anxiety
- Working against deadlines
- Involvement in dysfunctional relationships
- Lack of sustainable self-care practices
- Lack of clear-cut responsibilities
- Lack of organizational skills
What is Burnout?

- Frustration and exhaustion stemming from a highly stressful workload and/or a non-supportive work environment

- Burnout: Stress that is cumulative, relatively predictable, and frequently can be helped through a respite or habit/life change.
+ CF Burnout Symptoms…

- Exhaustion/poor health
- Feelings of hopelessness about life
- Feelings of helplessness
- Loss of purpose in life
- Withdrawal from activities and hobbies
- Withdrawal from family & friends
- Low morale
+ Burnout is caused by…

- Being seriously stressed
- Being unable to cope
- Being underappreciated
- Being overworked
- Too few resources
- Too little support
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Feelings of inefficacy
Stress vs Burnout

Stress is TOO MUCH
- Too much pressure
- Too much work
- Too many expectations

Burnout is TOO LITTLE
- Not enough
- Feeling depleted
- Feeling empty
- Feeling apathetic
- Devoid of motivation
What is Trauma?

Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible accident, natural disaster or work-related traumatic incident. Immediately after the event, shock & denial are typical.

Longer term reactions lasting more than a month include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea. While these feelings are normal, some people have difficulty moving on with their lives.

Source / American Psychological Association
What is Secondary Trauma Stress?

Secondary trauma stress is work-related, indirect exposure to extremely stressful events such as working with child abuse victims, treating war-related causalities and responding to disasters.
Secondary Stress

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“I can’t work next to Phil anymore.  
I’m tired of inhaling secondhand stress!”
Compassion Fatigue Trajectory

- **Zealot phase:** Keen, committed, enthusiastic, extra hours

- **Irritability phase:** Cut corners, avoid pt. contact, mocking, daydream

- **Withdrawal phase:** Exhausted, clients become irritants, neglect (family, coworkers, clients, ourselves)

- **Zombie phase:** Automatic pilot, distain for clients, no compassion, no patience

- **Pathology & Victimization vs. Renewal & Maturation**
  Overwhelmed, ill, leaving profession vs. transformation/resilience

Initially from Jan Spilman 2010 inservice: Caring on Empty: creative tools for compassion fatigue transformation & resilience http://www.compassionunlimited.com/pdf/PowerPointPresentation.pdf (Gentry)
Where are you?

- What phase do you think you are in right now? Zealot, Irritability, Withdrawal, or Zombie?
- Pathology or resilience?
The Professional Quality of Life (ProQOL) Self-Test is the life’s work of Dr. Beth Hudnall Stamm

- Well-established measuring tool
- Used for 20+ years in many different fields
- Developed with data from thousands of caregivers worldwide
- Measures compassion satisfaction, burnout and secondary traumatic stress levels
- Take the test regularly at: www.proqol.org
Organizational Compassion Fatigue exists when a high percentage of employees 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
- Constant changes in policies/procedures
- Lack of vision for the future
- Undermining the mission of the organization
What is Compassion Satisfaction?

Three Types of Employees:

- **Engaged:** work with passion, live the mission, drive innovation, move organization forward

- **Not Engaged:** checked out, put in their time without energy or passion

- **Actively Disengaged:** unhappy in the organization, act out their frustrations, undermine the mission & values of the organization

Source / Gallup State of the Global Workplace Report
Highly Engaged Employees

- Experience high levels of Compassion Satisfaction
- Display high levels of creativity & productivity
- Demonstrate consistent success in meetings goals & objectives
- Willingly take on leadership roles
- Take ownership of and responsibility for their workload
- Exhibit loyalty and respect for colleagues
- Trust management
- Embrace the mission and values of the organization
Managing CF in the Workplace: Best Practices

- Educate staff about Compassion Fatigue
- Learn to recognize Compassion Fatigue symptoms
- Debrief as a group after a traumatic event
- Create a Corporate Wellness Program
- Urge management to take the lead
- Take lunch breaks daily & breathers throughout the day
- Create a space for meditation or silence
- Offer mindfulness courses
- TAKE DANCE BREAKS!
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
## Eight Laws Governing Resiliency & Self Healing

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<td>1</td>
<td>Recognize &amp; accept that you can recover</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Recognize your internal locus of control</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Practice perseverance</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Build a solid support system</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Develop a strong sense of humor</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Learn from the past</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Keep it in perspective</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Keep it simple</td>
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The CF Self-Care “DO List”:

- Create integration between work, relationships and “me-time”. Develop & nurture interests outside of your work.

- Train yourself to stay in the present moment, in the Power of NOW!

- Create Stillness: learn mindfulness practices to connect with YOU & achieve inner balance. Unplug.

- Recharge, renew daily: Get enough, restful sleep. MOVE your BODY, eat well, & feed your spirit & soul.

- Have one meaningful conversation each day: time with family, friends, or a spiritual advisor. Build a healthy support system. Find a good therapist.
The CF Self-Care “DO List” (cont.):

- Take one thing at a time. **Multi-tasking is overrated!**
- **Simplify your life.** Identify what is really important to you, and invest your time & life force accordingly.
- **Laugh** out loud. (a lot.)
- Create space to escape into your imagination.
- Honor your **SELF**.
- **Understand** that your pain is normal, the work you do is intense.
- Take some time off (seriously).
- **Take Professional Quality of Life Self-Test regularly**
Self Care “DO NOT List”

- Blame others.
- Ignore the problem.
- Neglect your own needs, interests, & desires.
- Look for a new job, buy a new car, get a divorce, have an affair.
- Work harder and longer.
- Complain to coworkers.
- Self-medicate.
- Hire a lawyer.
- Have unrealistic expectations.
- Look for easy answers.
- Reduce leisure activities.
On the Spot Stress Relievers

- MOVE YOUR BODY! Dance | Stretch | Yoga

- Dance is a conversation between body & soul.

- Breathe deeply
- Meditate, pray
- Play music/Hum a tune
- Surround yourself with INspiration! (art, poetry, nature, music, beauty)
- PLAY!
Transitions and New Beginnings

Change is taking place when:

- Things start coming together/feels right
- You exude “good energy”
- You don’t lose interest
- You feel motivated to succeed
- You have increased energy levels
- You network with others
- You feel a need to share your skills, ideas & knowledge
How Do I know I’ve Changed?

- You say different things
- You think different thoughts
- You feel different things
- You make different choices
- You wear different clothes, colors
- You gravitate toward different people
- You recognize negative thoughts – and dismiss them
- You are living a better life!
What’s in it for me? (WIIFM?)

- A new level of self-awareness
- Self-knowledge
- Self-acceptance
- Self-respect
- On going healing
- Diminished compassion fatigue symptoms
- Caregiving from a place of abundance, not depletion
- Authentic respect, empathy and compassion for others
A Final Thoughts…

“I have come to the belief that caring for myself is not self indulgent. Caring for myself is an act of survival.” —Audre Lorde

“A moment of self-compassion can change your entire day. A string of such moments can change the course of your life.” —Christopher Germer
Compassion Fatigue Resources

- www.compassionfatigue.org
- www.healthycaregiving.com
- www.proqol.org
- www.greencross.org
- www.educaredallas.com
- www.juleinthelotus.com
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