How to Combat Compassion Fatigue

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Objectives

➤ At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to recognize and state at least 3 different signs that Compassion Fatigue may be starting to enter them professionally.

➤ At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to discuss and have the tools to implement a methodology that will assist them in setting healthy boundaries to prevent compassion fatigue.

➤ At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to identify at least 3 self-care skills that will prevent and/or alleviate compassion fatigue.
### Compassion Fatigue vs. Burnout

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Burnout</th>
<th>Compassion Fatigue</th>
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<td>• Can happen in many different aspects of life</td>
<td>• Specific to those in the helping professions</td>
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<td>• Can affect the others area of life but don’t necessarily have to</td>
<td>• Giving so much of yourself that you have no more left to give</td>
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<td>• Anyone can experience burnout: burger flipper, truck driver</td>
<td>• Typically affects other areas of your life (i.e. family, spouse, children, friends, and self)</td>
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<td>• Really focused on emotional depletion</td>
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What is Compassion Fatigue (CF)?

- Different than burnout
- Gradual lessoning of compassion and increasing tension
- Reduced willingness to provide care giving services
  - Decrease in therapeutic skills—we stop seeing each person for who they are
- Consuming state of tension and preoccupation with the cumulative trauma of clients
  - Healthcare workers re-experience the traumatic events of the client, they avoid reminders of client, and anxiety increases when thinking about the client

What is Compassion Fatigue (CF) cont.

- Adopting or displaying client’s symptoms “secondary PTSD”
- Exhaustion from the awareness of the client’s suffering and our own desire to relieve it
  - physical, spiritual, emotional pain
- Depletion of internal emotional resources
Who is affected?

- Health care professionals (medical and psychological)
- First responders
- Law enforcement
- Human service workers
- Clergy
- Care-givers for the chronically ill or elderly
- Exposed to suffering clients with little emotional support in the workplace
- Anyone in a helping profession

What are the emotional effects?

- Apathy
- Mood disturbances (labile)/irritability
- Poor concentration
- Lack of attention
- Difficulty with memory
- Numbness/shut down
- Aggression/hostility
- Judgmental
- Overly critical
Emotional effects cont.

- Avoidance of places or things that are reminders of the clients
- Difficulty separating work and personal lives
- Diminished intimacy in personal lives
- Decrease in listening and communication
- Lose desire/passion for career (premature departure from the profession)
- Loss of confidence (professionally and personally)
- Loss of hope
- Symptoms don’t all happen at once

- Does this sound like you or anyone you work with?
- Are you able to think of someone who you thought was experiencing burnout but maybe is really struggling with Compassion Fatigue?
- How do we as helping professionals begin to fight off compassion fatigue &/or recover from it?
Taking care of yourself beyond basic self care:

- Are you meeting your psychological needs?
  - Love and belonging
  - Worth/self-esteem
  - Freedom of choices/Independence
  - Security/stability- boundaries
  - Fun

Getting Unstuck:

- What you do will impact how you feel.
- How you think is how you feel-Stinking thinking
- Cognitive Distortions
Who is in control?

- Should of, could of, the power of understanding the roles we play.
- Process vs. Outcome
  - Ask good questions
  - Listen – be present and in the now
  - Share the best plan and options
  - Be compassionate, direct, firm, and caring
- Happiness and Self Improvement

Using consultation/supervision to combat CF

- The idea of consultation/supervision is not to be alone.
  - 2 way street in identifying CF among staff/helpers
- The burden of worrying about a client/patient’s situation or circumstances is heavy.
- Private practice: network of peers that you can share these issues with
- Carrying all of the responsibility/burden alone contributes to fatigue
- Other disciplines, friends & family
Healing/preventing CF

- Live a balanced life (sing, dance, and play) sometimes we can’t think our way out of things, we need to change our behavior- do the things that we know we enjoy
- Increase personal self-care (exercise, nutrition, sleep, hygiene, gratitude, meditation, time away, refocus)
- Do your own work-sometimes things need shifted-particularly when working with difficult/complicated cases
- Clarify personal boundaries
- Get support- use consultation/supervision/peer support

Healing/preventing CF continued

- Take care of your psychological needs
- Focus on what you can control and your process
- Let go of the outcomes
- Recognize your limitations- know when to take a break, ask for help, or re-examine your purpose
References


Questions?

Thank you for your time!

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