

Compassion Fatigue: Symptoms & Rehabilitation



April Batson, M.A.
Valerie Passarella
City of Yorba Linda

1

Goals for our time together today.
This may sound crazy!

- Be selfish!**
Think only of yourself.
- Take breathing breaks.**
We will practice breathing exercises throughout the session!
- Pay attention to how you feel/react.**
Topics may be emotional for some, lean into it!
- Communicate openly.**
This is a safe space!

2

Over the past 2 years...

- My daily life changed drastically.
- I cared for someone else (younger, older, same age).
- My financial situation changed.
- I missed the way life used to be.
- I felt isolated and bored.
- I worried about the future.
- Life had more pressure.
- My responsibilities at work changed.
- I worried about getting the groceries, medications, or supplies my household needed.
- My staff regularly called out sick and each call-out triggered a risk assessment.
- I experienced short staffing.
- I regularly had to assess the risk of activities I previously wouldn't have given a second thought to.
- I felt overwhelmed.

How many of these apply to you?

Oliverian Dwyer @OliverianDwyer

Hi! Just wanted to say that we're all doing really well under ridiculous circumstances. Really, Good job, everybody, I hope you have a beautiful weekend.



3

Breathing Break: Diaphragmatic Breathing

4

com·pas·sion fa·tigue
noun

indifference to charitable appeals on behalf of those who are suffering, experienced as a result of the frequency or number of such appeals.

5

Additionally...

- Can include emotional, physical, and spiritual distress in those providing care to another. Is associated with caregiving where people are experiencing a significant emotion or physical pain and suffering.
- 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.

Often confused with burnout, but it is directly related to the physical and emotional impact of helping others.

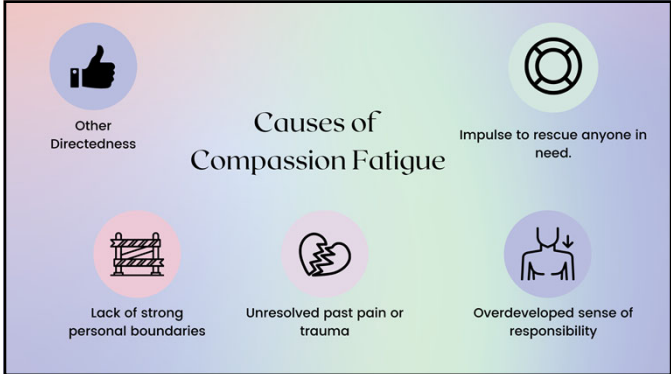
6



Discussion:
Why are women more prone to compassion fatigue than men?

"You are so brave and quiet I forget you are suffering."
-Ernest Hemingway

7



Causes of Compassion Fatigue

- Other Directedness
- Impulse to rescue anyone in need.
- Lack of strong personal boundaries
- Unresolved past pain or trauma
- Overdeveloped sense of responsibility

8

Breathing Break:
Pursed Lips Breathing

9

Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

Physical	Emotional	Work Related
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Headaches Digestive problems Muscle tension Sleep disturbances Fatigue Cardiac symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mood swings Excessive use of substances Depression & anxiety Irritability Oversensitivity Memory issues, poor concentration, lack of focus Anger 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent use of sick days Avoidance of working with certain people Reduced ability to feel empathy Lack of joyfulness

10



Discussion:
What are some elements of your job make you prone to CF?



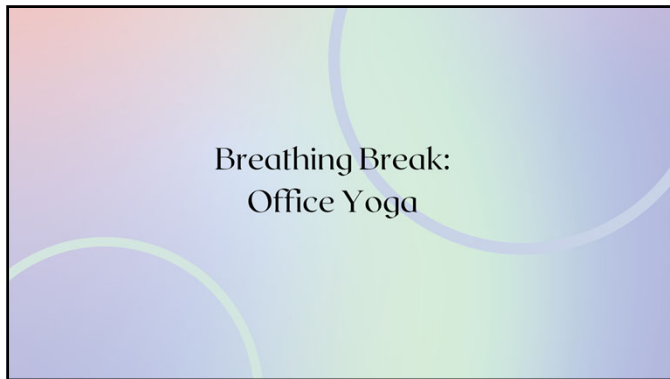
11



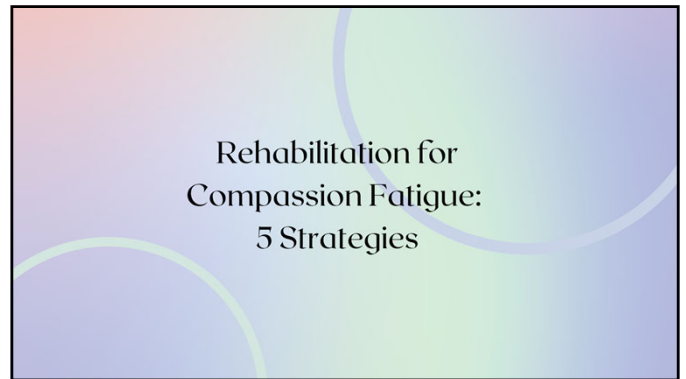
What not to do

- Blame others
- Make any major life decisions (i.e. look for a new job, buy a new car, get a divorce, or have an affair)
- Fall into the habit of complaining with your colleagues.
- Hire a lawyer.
- Work harder and longer.
- Self-medicate.
- Neglect your own needs and interests.

12



13



14

- Take a break to go on a walk. Even better, bring a colleague.
- Taking your lunch/breaks.
- Make changes to your workspace (plants, essential oils, pictures of family/friends, calming playlists, etc.)
- Take breaks to stretch and practice breathing exercises.
- Surround yourself with mentors and supportive colleagues.
- Be a voice for change in your agency.

#1

Prioritize Self-Care at Work

Small Changes are OK!

What is one positive change you can make at work today?

15

- Avoid the 'retail therapy' or 'wine-o-clock' traps.
- Avoid doom scrolling. Set limits for social media, news, and other apps.
- Find a new hobby.
- Try a virtual workout with a friend.
- Enjoy time outdoors.
- Baths, pedicures, spa visits.
- Enjoy a TV show, book, movie, or dance in your kitchen.

#2

Find Positive Ways to Relax

What is one positive way your relax outside of work?

16

- Unplug from the office
- Prioritize plans / be organized / maximize productivity time
- Practice & actually say no
- Ask for help / outsource
- Don't double book yourself
- Don't suffer in silence
 - Don't complain to co-workers, back to #1 & 2

#3

Set Healthy Boundaries

What is one boundary you can set at work or home?

17

- Pleasure that results from being able to do one's job well and helping others
- Find proactive ways to help others
- Remind yourself of the things you love about your job
- Look to the people you are helping
- Give back to your community, not as a City staff

#4

Compassion Satisfaction

18

#5
Seek Out a Professional

- Spouses, partners, others close to you may be experiencing it too
- Outsource
- No judgement
- Unbiased opinions
- No feelings of placing burden on others
- May uncover underlying issues that are magnifying CF



19

Final Thoughts

20