



# Recognizing and Addressing Compassion Fatigue: Building Resilience and Well-Being

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# Learning Objectives

Participants will:

1. Recognize signs of work-related stress
2. Describe components of Professional Quality of Life model including compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue
3. Discuss how leaders and organizations can promote compassion satisfaction
4. Discuss support strategies for themselves, staff, and family caregivers to address compassion fatigue

# Have you ever noticed???

## **Personal Experience**

- ▶ Can you describe a recent situation in which you felt emotionally drained/overwhelmed by the needs of others?

## **Work Impact**

- ▶ Have you ever noticed a change in your professional relationships or job satisfactions due to the high emotional demand of your work?

## **Self Awareness**

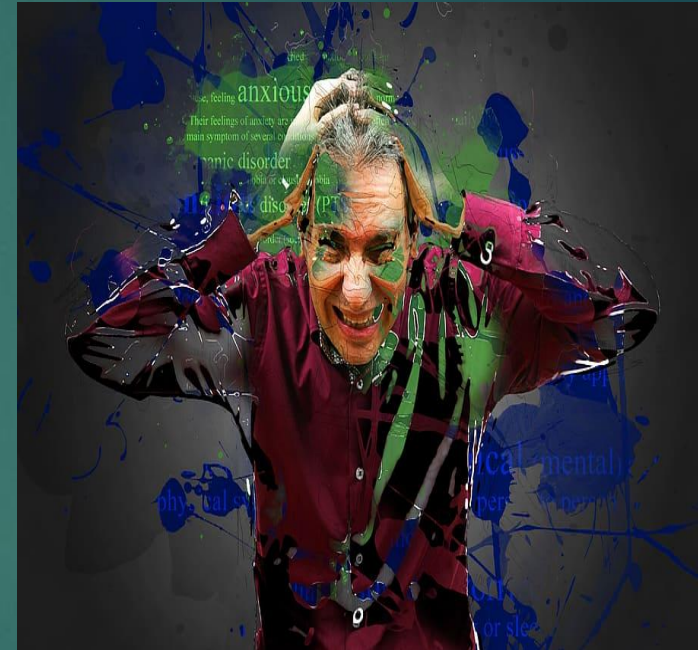
- ▶ Are you able to identify how you balance the emotional demands of your work and personal life?

## **Coping**

- ▶ What strategies have you found helpful in managing or mitigating emotional fatigue on the job.

# You Know You Are Stressed When...

- ▶ You find yourself hoping you will get sick, just so you have a reason to stay in bed for the day
- ▶ You've wondered if your cell phone would float when hurled into a river
- ▶ Research articles have become 'light bedtime reading'
- ▶ You consider Red Bull a part of a balanced diet
- ▶ It takes six days of vacation to feel relaxed, and six minutes back to make you forget you took a vacation



# Stress...



In the 'eye of the beholder'



Comes in many forms – often in the form of unwanted/bad things, but sometimes desired/good things



Stressful experiences that are constant can lead to exhaustion, overreaction to less stressful events, anxiety, depression



Since stress is part of our lives, we must pay attention to it

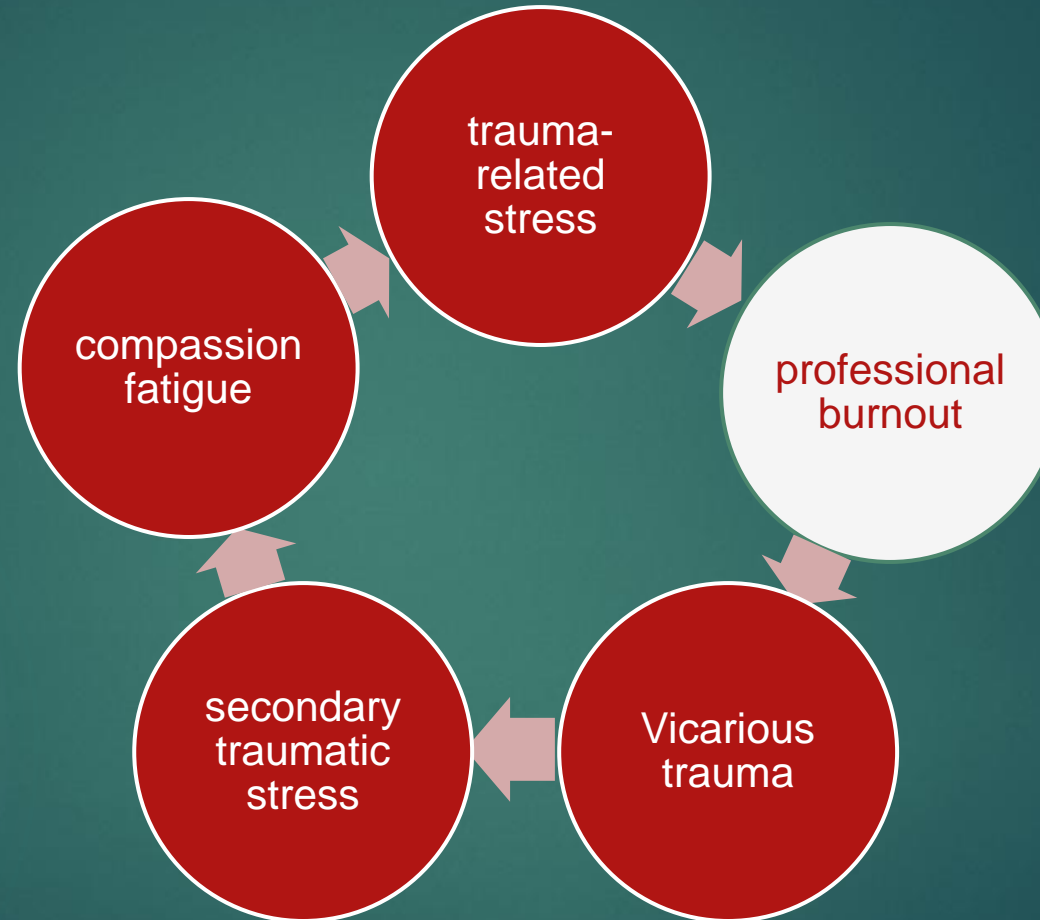
# Signs of Work-Related Stress

- ▶ Being afraid to take time away
- ▶ Thinking the worst in every situation
- ▶ Reacting disproportionately
- ▶ Constantly not getting enough sleep
- ▶ Physical symptoms – headache, upset stomach
- ▶ Increased arguments with family/close friends
- ▶ Decreased social life
- ▶ Feeling disconnected



What are  
your signs?

# Lots of Ways to Describe Work-Related Stress



# Vocabulary

- ▶ **Compassion Satisfaction**
  - Positive feelings and fulfillment derived from helping others
- ▶ **Compassion Fatigue**
  - Negative aspects of working as a helper
- ▶ **Burnout**
  - Inefficacy and feeling overwhelmed
- ▶ **Work-related traumatic stress**
  - Primary traumatic stress direct target of event
  - Secondary traumatic exposure to event due to a relationship with the primary person

# Compassion Satisfaction

*Protects against compassion fatigue*

Compassion Satisfaction (CS) has been described as an individual's sense of self-efficacy related to their helping profession, as well as their sense of positivity and satisfaction regarding their helping work ([Figley, 2013](#)).

- ▶ Self-efficacy – belief that you have the tools to do your job
- ▶ Strong social support networks
- ▶ Positive feedback
- ▶ Reflective supervision

# Compassion Fatigue

- ▶ The emotional and physical fatigue experienced by professionals due to their chronic use of empathy in constant lieu of assisting others in distress.
- ▶ Figly and colleagues (1995) introduced compassion fatigue as a “user friendly” term to describe the phenomena of secondary trauma stress

“The most insidious aspect of compassion fatigue is that it attacks the very core of what brings helpers into this work: their empathy and compassion for others.”

- Françoise Mathieu



Isn't it all just "burnout"?



**Burnout**

# Secondary Trauma versus Burnout

## Secondary Trauma

- ▶ Profound emotional/physical erosion that happens to helpers are unable to regenerate – often described as feeling “tired”
- ▶ Negative aspects of working as a helper
- ▶ Focus is on the individual

## Burnout

- ▶ The feeling that what you are doing has stopped making a difference due to the combo of stress and frustration caused by the workplace
- ▶ Inefficacy and feeling overwhelmed
- ▶ Focus is on the workplace

# People Bring Themselves

- ▶ People bring a past and a present to anything they do
  - Their schemas and beliefs
  - Their stigma beliefs
  - Their social support systems
    - ▶ Positive support
    - ▶ Negative support
  - Their history of trauma and illness
  - Their families and close others
  - Their economic situation

# Risk Factors for Secondary Traumatic Stress

## Organizational Factors

- ▶ Lack of support after experiencing traumatic content on the job
- ▶ Constant, intense exposure to trauma
- ▶ Insufficient orientation, ongoing training, and guidance

## Person Factors

- ▶ Prior traumatic experiences
- ▶ Lack of support system (workplace and personal)
- ▶ Less experienced or newer employees (high turnover)

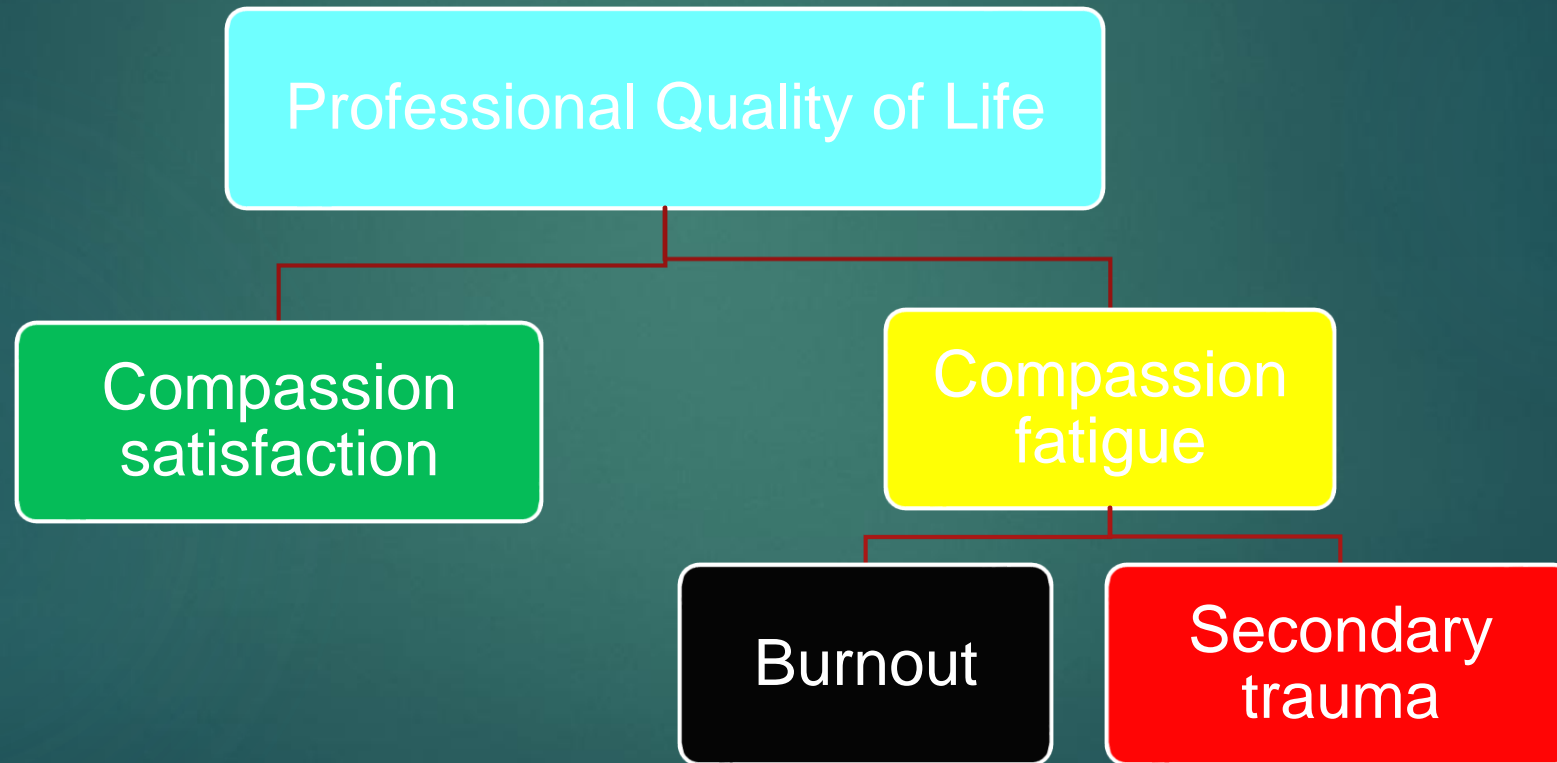
When compassion fatigue is suspected



# Warning Signs of Compassion Fatigue

Bio	Psycho	Social
Physical symptoms (headaches, GI distress, dizziness)	Irritability, sadness, anxiety, anger	Relationship/coworker conflicts
Sleep difficulties	Detachment or numbness	Isolating or withdrawing
Fatigue, loss of motivation	Feeling hypersensitive <b>or</b> less empathetic	Feeling powerless to help others

# What Helps? How Do We Build Compassion Satisfaction?



# PERMA Model

## Positive Emotions

- Feeling hope, interest, joy, love, compassion, pride, amusement, gratitude

## Engagement

- Being in “flow” – when we are completely absorbed in what we’re doing

## Relationships

- being authentically connected to others, feeling loved, supported and valued by others

## Meaning

- Having a sense of purpose –includes belonging, serving something greater than ourselves

## Accomplishment

- a sense of achievement, success in reaching goals, having “grit” to stick with things

## PLUS

- Optimism, Physical Activity, Nutrition, Sleep

# Self-Care & PERMA+

	What brings this aspect of PERMA	Strategies to enhance PERMA	What gets in the way of PERMA?	Things to Avoid
<b>P</b> ositive Emotion				
<b>E</b> ngagement				
<b>R</b> elationships				
<b>M</b> eaning				
<b>A</b> ccomplishment				
<b>P</b> lus Exercise, nutrition, sleep				

# Self-Care PERMA+ Prompts

## Positive Emotion (P)

- **Daily Gratitude Practice:** Write down three things you're grateful for each day.
- **Engage in Enjoyable Activities:** Listen to uplifting music, watch a comedy, or do an activity that makes you happy.
- **Self-Compassion:** Speak to yourself with kindness and celebrate small wins.

# Systems Perspective: What Can Organizations Do to Reduce Risks?

- ▶ Ensure practice of debriefing is in place
- ▶ Allow flexibility in work schedules
- ▶ Honor 'mental health days'
- ▶ Educate staff about vicarious trauma, burnout, compassion fatigue
- ▶ Welcome input on policies/practices that may be harmful or stressful

# Systems Perspective: What Can Organizations Do to Build Compassion Satisfaction?

- ▶ Reflect on values and how work reflects those values
- ▶ Celebrate contributions and accomplishments
- ▶ Find the joy in the work
- ▶ Create connections/encourage teamwork
- ▶ Practice gratitude

How does this  
show up in  
your  
organization?

# Reflections & Questions

- ▶ “You cannot pour from an empty cup. Taking care of yourself is not a pause in the work - it *is* the work.”

# References

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