
Compassion Fatigue

Danielle Henderson, PhD HSPP

January 29, 2020



Indiana University Health



SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
INDIANA UNIVERSITY

Defining Compassion Fatigue

- Emotional residue or strain of exposure to working with those suffering from the consequences of traumatic events.
 - It differs from burnout, but can co-exist.
- Can occur due to exposure on one case or can be due to a “cumulative” level of trauma



Prevalence of Compassion Fatigue



20%

50%

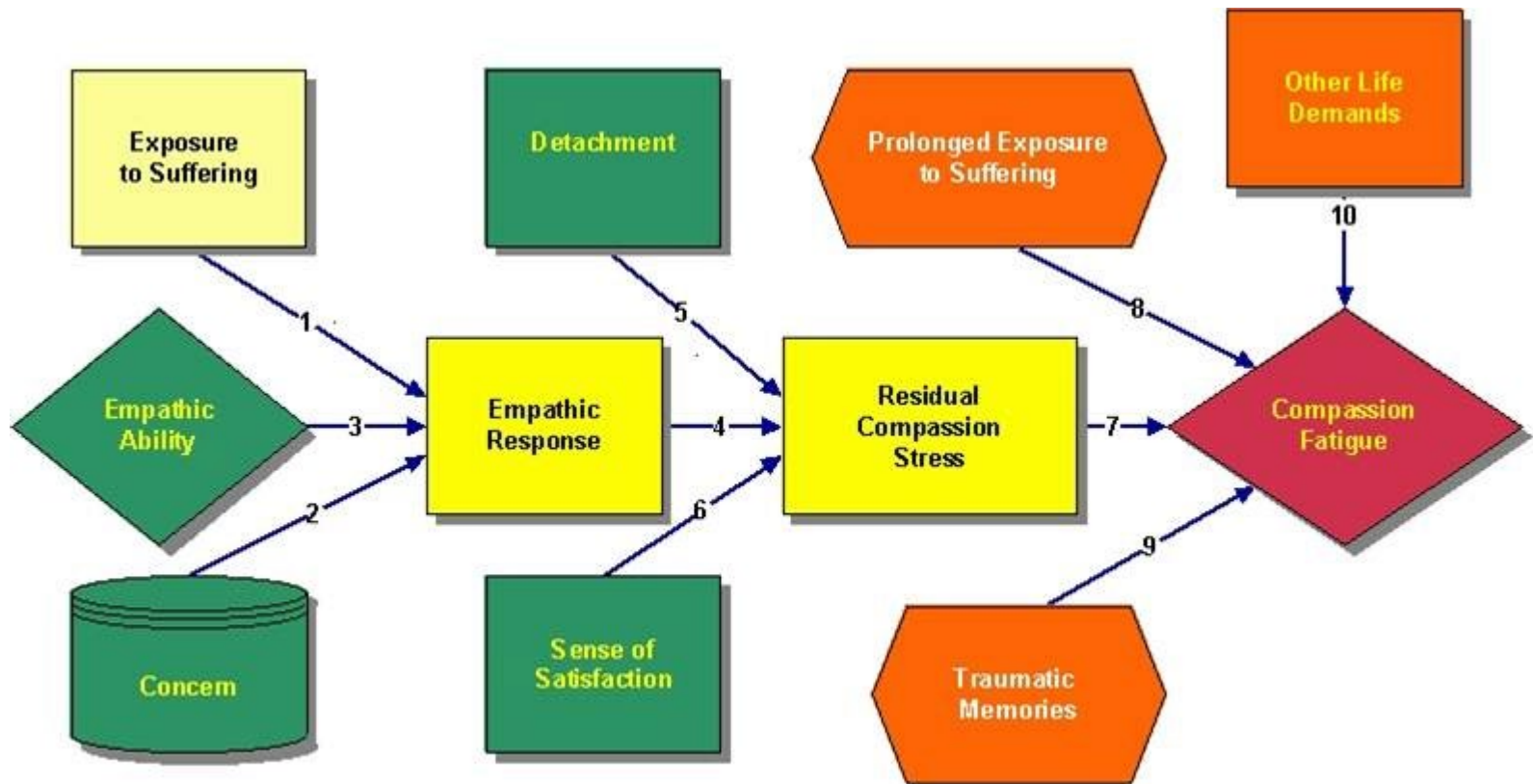
10%



Indiana University Health



SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
INDIANA UNIVERSITY



The Compassion Fatigue Process (Figley, 2001)

Symptoms of compassion fatigue

WORK RELATED	EMOTIONAL
Avoidance or dread of working with certain patients Reduced inability to feel empathy towards patients or families Frequent use of sick days Lack of joyfulness	Mood swings Restlessness Irritability Oversensitivity Anxiety Excessive use of substances: nicotine, alcohol, illicit drugs Depression Anger and resentment Loss of objectivity Memory issues Poor concentration, focus and judgment
PHYSICAL	
Headaches Digestive problems: diarrhoea, constipation, upset stomach Muscle tension Sleep disturbances: inability to sleep, insomnia, too much sleep Fatigue Cardiac symptoms: chest pain/pressure, palpitations, tachycardia	

Lombardo & Eyre, 2011, p.3



Risk Factors for Compassion Fatigue

- Repeated exposure to stressful events
- Exposure to traumatic events
- Life demands
- Excessive empathy
- Ongoing motivation to help those in need
- Lack of support



Costs



**WRONG
DECISION**



Indiana University Health



SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
INDIANA UNIVERSITY

PTSD and OUD

- Abnormalities in the endogenous opioid system have been associated with PTSD
- The co-occurrence of PTSD with other drug use disorders involving cocaine, opiates, sedatives, stimulants and other substances constitute another 22% of patients.
- Prevalence of OUD has now been found to be higher among those with PTSD than among those without.



Veterans – PTSD and OUD

- Veterans are diagnosed with OUD at higher rates than non-Veterans.
- Among patients treated in the VA with a new diagnosis of PTSD, the rate of diagnosis of OUD grew from 2.5% in 2004 to 3.4% in 2013 (24,872), a 37% relative increase



Burnout

- Cumulative process marked by emotional exhaustion and withdrawal associated with increased workload and institutional stress, NOT trauma-related.



Stages of Burnout

Stage 1:

Enthusiasm

You set your personal goals high and invest a great deal of energy. The prevailing feeling is optimism.

Stage 2:

Stagnation

Your life becomes limited to work and/or taking care of business; family and personal priorities suffer. Trying harder does not change anything or lead to success, and disappointment sets in.

Stage 3:

Frustration

You experience failure and a sense of powerlessness. Your efforts do not visibly pay off. Not receiving enough acknowledgement leads to feeling incompetent and inadequate.

Stage 4:

Apathy

Despair and disillusionment occur. You see no way out of your situation. You become resigned and indifferent.

Stage 5:

Intervention

A feeling of helplessness or actively experiencing burnout prompts you to look for and accept help.

Physical exhaustion

Mental & emotional exhaustion

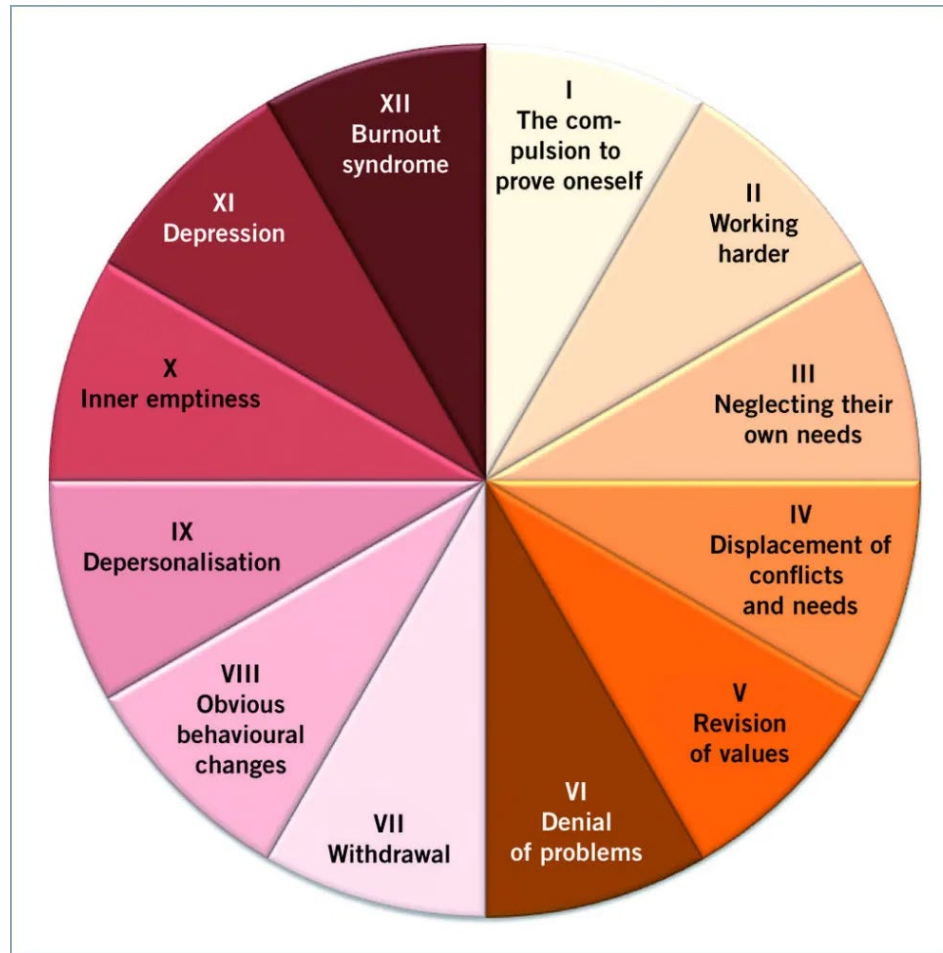


Indiana University Health



SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

INDIANA UNIVERSITY



What Do Compassion Fatigue & Burnout Have in Common?

- Emotional exhaustion
- Reduced sense of personal accomplishment or meaning in work
- Mental exhaustion
- Decreased interactions with others (isolation)
- Depersonalization
- Physical exhaustion



Next Steps

- Self – Assessment
 - Professional Quality of Life Scale
(<https://proqol.org/>)
 - Life – Stress Test
(<http://www.compassionfatigue.org/pages/lifestressstest.pdf>)



Positive Coping Strategies

Cognitive	Emotional	Behavioral
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Moderation o Write things down o Make small, daily decisions o See the decisions you are already making o Give yourself permission to ask for help o Plan for the future o Get the most information you can to help make decisions o Anticipate needs o Remember you have options o Review previous successes o Problem solve o Have a Plan "B" o Break large tasks into smaller ones o Practice, Practice, Practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Moderation o Allow yourself to experience what you feel o Label what you are experiencing o Give yourself permission to ask for help o Be assertive when necessary o Keep communication open with others o Remember you have options o Use your sense of humor o Have a buddy with whom you can vent o Use "positive" words and language o Practice, Practice, Practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Moderation o Spend time by yourself o Spend time with others o Limit demands on time and energy o Help others with tasks o Give yourself permission to ask for help o Do activities that you previously enjoyed o Take different routes to work or on trips o Remember you have options o Find new activities that are enjoyable and (mildly) challenging o Set goals, have a plan o Relax o Practice, Practice, Practice



Positive Coping Strategies (cont.)

Spiritual	Interpersonal	Physical
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Moderation o Discuss changed beliefs with spiritual leader o Meditation o Give yourself permission to ask for help o Practice rituals of your faith/beliefs o Spiritual retreats/workshops o Prayer o Remember you have options o Mindfulness o Find spiritual support o Read Spiritual literature o Practice, Practice, Practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Moderation o Give yourself permission to ask for help o Take time to enjoy time with trusted friend/partner o Hugs o Healthy boundaries o Remember to use "I" statements o Use humor to diffuse tense conversations o Play together o Talk with trusted partner/friend o Apologize when stress causes irritable behavior or outbursts o State needs and wants as clearly as possible o Practice, Practice, Practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Moderation o Aerobic exercise o See doctor and dentist o Routine sleep patterns o Minimize caffeine, alcohol, and sugar o Give yourself permission to ask for help o Eat well-balanced, regular meals o Drink water o Wear comfortable clothes o Engage in physical luxuries: spa, massage, bath, personal trainer o Remember to breathe – deeply o Take mini-breaks o Practice, Practice, Practice

