


# Compassion Fatigue:

## Keeping Mental Health Workers Healthy



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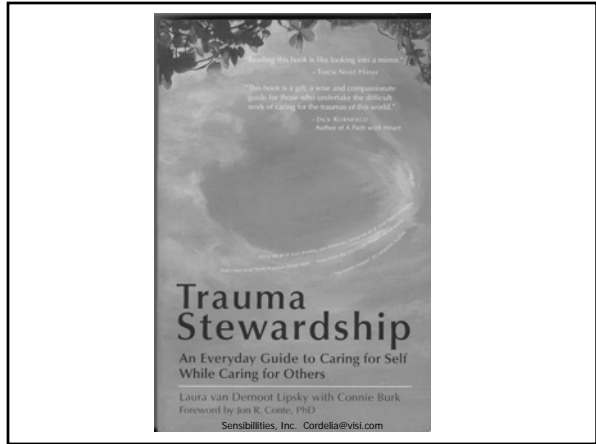
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"I rise in the morning  
 torn between a desire to  
 improve the world  
 and a desire to enjoy the  
 world. This makes it hard  
 to plan the day."  
 e.b. White

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- ### Why this Session
- Prevention involves keeping workers healthy
  - Trauma work has an impact and “trauma stewardship” is an ethical issue
  - Occupational hazard of the work
  - Organizational & Individual Strategies both matter
  - Trainers need to be attentive to the impact of the training and of the work & plan for impact of the trauma on the workers
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- ### Making Meaning & Use of This Information
- For Yourself
  - As tools, information, exercises in your own training of trainers in total or in part
    - For the initial training considerations
    - For follow-up supervision of those trained
  - Can be “informational” or “experiential”
  - Can be “academic” or “personal”
  - Consider balance between defining the problem and practicing prevention
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- ### Claming Your Health
- No magic pill
  - There are symptoms: Pay attention
    - When advocates are “reacting” and to what degree” - normal to ‘feel it’ – “NORMALIZE the difficulty of the topic”
  - Figure out your current level of stress:
    - Stress (helpful/good stress or at least not harmful)
    - Over stressed (Pay attention)
    - Burnout
    - Dis-ease (Crispy, Crossed Over)
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## Trauma Immunization

- Marine Corp



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## Definitions & Categories

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## Stress

Situations that tax the physical and psychological resources of the individual

Stressors & Responses

Perceptions matter

Emotional & Physical

Internal & External

(Smoll & Smith)

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## Stress Management Training

Issue: What is an individual vs situation/systemic problem?

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## Burnout:

The exhaustion of physical and psychological resources caused by excessive striving for unrealistically high expectations

(Update on Human Behavior, Vol 7, No. 4, 1987)

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## Unrealistic or high expectations?



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## **Burnout**

Burnout is the index of the dislocation between what people are and what they have to do

(Masloach, Leiter, 1997)

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## **Burnout**

is used to describe a syndrome that goes beyond physical fatigue from overwork. Stress and emotional exhaustion are part of it, but the hallmark of burnout is the distancing that goes on in response to overload.

(Christina Maslach)

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## **Indicators**

- Erosion in values, dignity, spirit and will – an erosion of the human soul
- Gradual, over time; imbalance of what you can give and provides less than what you need
- Feel overworked, undervalued, no longer in control of the job you do
- Presence of negative emotions and absence of the positive ones.

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**Relevancy to Supervisors and Organizations:  
Employees who FEEL stressed are three times more likely than people in low stress jobs:**

- to suffer from depression,
- twice as likely to think about quit their jobs
- \* twice as likely to work overtime regularly

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## **Potential Impact**

### **Professional Isolation**

Why do you do this work?

### **Victimization Issues**

Fear, self-blame

### **Power and Control issues**

Irrational thinking, helplessness, hopeless

### **Sexual Dysfunction**

Is my sex drive PC?

Scrutiny of behavior

Tired

Deviant exposure/fantasy

Where is the balance of the good/bad?

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### **Minimization & Denial**

Distorted Thinking

Addictive behaviors

### **Emotional Frustration**

Blame systems

Blame Clients

Everyone else and Everything is stupid

### **Pathological Responsibility**

Over responsible

Letting go challenged

### **Social Isolation**

Too busy for friends, family, relationships

(Update on Human Behavior, Vol 7, No. 4, 1987)

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## Impact on Relationships

- Are you still a “fun date?”
  - Is every movie reduced to political debate?
  - Does every billboard jump out at you?
  - Are you suspicious of everyone?
- Do your children wish they had a “normal parent” that didn’t always see/expect the worst?
  - Are you increasingly “protective?”

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## Definition Compassion Fatigue

- Burnout & Secondary Trauma =  
Compassion fatigue (Figley)
  - Empathy is key to induction
  - Response is to shut down emotionally

“Working with Traumatized people can profoundly disrupt the caregivers own beliefs”

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## Vicarious Traumatization - Pearlman and Saakvitne

**Causes one to disconnect from the usual experience of oneself**

- Core identity challenged
- Unrealness
- Affective numbness
- **Empathy is key factor in induction**
- Personal trauma can be activated by work
- Unresolved trauma can arise
- Response can be to shut down

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38% of SW experience moderate to high levels of secondary traumatic stress

(Cornille & Meyers, 1999)

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## “Silencing Response”

(Baranowsky, 1997)

Manipulate clients into silence because we can’t take anymore

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## Four Most Common Negative Behaviors ETC/Career Tracks

- 1) Defensiveness not my fault
- 3) Hostility not angry, get even
- 2) Nay-saying it’ll never work
- 4) Chronic Hopelessness it’ll never get done / change

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### Six Sources of Burnout & Six Areas of Organizational Life

- Work over load
- Insufficient reward
- Unfairness
- Breakdown of community
- Growing value conflict
- Control: Lack control over what we do

(The Truth About Burnout, 1997)

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### 6 Paths to Engagement

- 1) Sustainable workload
- 2) Feelings of choice and control
- 3) Recognition and reward
- 4) Sense of community
- 5) Fairness, respect, and justice
- 6) Meaningful and valued work

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**“Is what is coming at me  
really coming from me?”**

Lo Lo

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### Legacy of the Heart – Wayne Muller

*What are you hanging on to that gets in the way of health & well-being?*

#### Pain & Forgiveness

Body prepared to flee or defend self even w/o real danger

- Maintain high level of fear

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“While you are proclaiming peace with your lips,  
be careful to have it even more fully in your  
heart.”

Saint Francis

Sufis: Are these words true?  
Are these words kind?  
Are these works necessary?

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Chinese word for busy consists of two characters “heart” & “killing”



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## Disappointment & Nonattachment

- Expecting the worst rather than the best
- Careful not to poison gentle moments
- Let go of the expectation and meet the moment fact to face

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## T Mychael Rambo's Aunt

### Point to yourself



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## PREVENTION

- Be Intentional
- Ecological/Strategic
- Personal and Institutional
- Not a Technique but a way of life
- **“CHANGE WITH HEART”**

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## Laura Van Dernoot Lipsky

- SIGN: Loose our ability to be present so we do not know the harm to self or others
- NOTE: *The only thing I can control is a compassionate quality of presence*
- NOTE: How do we not add to the trauma we see?

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The difference between stumbling blocks and stepping stones is how you use them

~ Source Unknown ~



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## What Organizations Can Do

- Be open about distress
- Empowerment
- Clarity of vision and expectations
- Restoration
- Prevention

(Dr. Anna Salter)

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**Safeguard Program NCMEC**  
Dr. Juliet Francis, Psy.D

- Exploited Child Unit
- Study of Impact;
- Proactive weekly group meetings  
Opportunities for private sessions
- Hiring assessment based on learnings
- Debrief at departures
  - (Occupational Hazard)

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**Impact of Seeing Child Pornography  
on Investigators**

- [www.shiftwellness.org](http://www.shiftwellness.org);
- Research shows the impact
- Innocent justice Foundation with OJJDP, ICAC's and MH expert in CSA Images developed "Supporting Heroes in MH Foundational Training (SHIFT)

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**Mission & Vision: Organizations**

"Most organizations - within a few years of their existence - lose sight of their mission. They become focused on doing things right - not doing the right thing."

Drucker

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**Agency Culture & Prevention of Vicarious Trauma**

**7 Areas to Focus**

- Organizational Culture: Acknowledge the impact of trauma
- Workload                      Avoid Harmful Norm
- Group support                Proactive not reactive
- Supervision Supportive, Strengths
- Self-care                        Staff care should be intentional, expressed part of mission  
ID resources for support
- Education                      Trauma Specific  
Continuing
- Work Environment Safe, comfortable, private  
Workers need personally meaningful items  
Need breaks

(Journal of Contemporary Human Services, Organizational Prevention of VT; Bell, Holly; Kulkarni, Shanti; Dalton, Lisa)

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**Art of Possibilities –**

Benjamin and Rosamund Zander

- **Downward Spiral talk –**
- Focus on scarcity
- Based on fear
- Focus is on what is wrong and problematic
- Ask: Where do I/we put our energy?
- It is not simplistic or Polyanna to open up to POSSIBILITIES

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**FISH**

- "Make their day"
- Be present
- Choose your attitude
- Play > Have Fun



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**Taking Care of Self**  
**Teaching With Heart, Judith Deiro**

- Detaching
- Feeling Effective On The Job
- Past Childhood Experiences With Bonding

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“If your compassion does not include yourself it is incomplete”

Jack Cornfield

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**Skill – Tool: Mindfulness**



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**Skill, Tool: Breathe**

- Breathe
- Free
- Each of us can do it
- *Instant* centering, relaxation,
- Work on mindfulness



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**Gratitude Journal**  
**Exercise – READ & DO**

A person's gratitude journal may be as simple as listing five items each day:

- 1) someone in my life,
- 2) an experience,
- 3) an unexpected kindness,
- 4) a pleasant memory, and
- 5) something I am able to share with another.

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**The Pleasure Prescription,**

Paul Pearsall, Hunter House, 1996

- Haole - The mental and physical exhaustion of the millions of over stressed and overworked individuals in today's society leads to what Polynesians call a “haole life” (ha = breath, ole = without)
- Haole living is an urgent breathless existence in pursuit of an elusive “better” that leaves one disconnected and fatigued.

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## Life Pie

- What or who takes energy ?
- Where do you get it back?
- How much is left at the end of a typical work day?
- How do you renew?
- Do you tend to attract positive or negative energy?
- Do you tend to attract "high drama" or relative calm?

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## Crossed Over: Needing to Renew

- Name It
- Make a plan to change
- Make the change
- Build a team
- Evaluate
- Celebrate Success

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## Dr. Kuhn, the Fun Factor

(Minerva Books)

Laughter is an instant vacation. Laughter:

- Reduces the level of stress hormones
- Perks up the immune system
- Relaxes muscles
- Clears the respiratory tract
- Increases circulation
- Eases perceived pain
- Feel good endorphins flow
- Laughter both stimulates and soothes

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## Dr. Daniel Goleman

Emotional Intelligence,

- "Laughter seems to help people think more broadly and associate more freely; it is the ha ha ha to aha effect"
- All mental stimulation boosts brain functioning.

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## How to thrive in 2005

Bob Hostetler

- Think Mission
- Think Goals
- Think of someone else

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## Symptoms of Inner Peace

### Some Signs Are:

- A tendency to think and act spontaneously rather than on fears based on past experiences.
- An unmistakable ability to enjoy each moment.
- A loss of interest in judging other people and in interpreting their actions.
- A loss of interest in conflict.
- A loss of the ability to worry (very Serious Symptom!)
- Frequent, overwhelming episodes of appreciation.
- Frequent attacks of smiling (Also very Serious).
- An increasing tendency to let things happen, rather than to make them happen.
- An increased susceptibility to the love extended by others and the uncontrollable urge to extend it.
- Self.wk3Source Unknown

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## I Wish You Enough



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- Life is not what it is suppose to be, it is what it is. The way you cope with it is what makes the difference.

Virginia Satir

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## Evaluating

- Review of workplace practices and policies
  - Do they include **proactive** measures at employee / volunteer health & well-being & organizational support for the reality of trauma?
  - Are there **reactive** supports (debriefings, counseling support)
- Assessment upfront, proactive check in's, exit interviews
- Check for signs of health: moral, tone of 'humor' collaboration/support/creative thinking, physical wellness, mental health

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## Resources

- **The Artist's Way**, Julia Cameron with Mark Bryan, Tarcher/Putnam, 1992
- **Becoming Stress Resistant**, Ray Flannery, DC Health/Lexington Books, 1992.
- **Compassion Fatigue: Coping with Secondary Stress Disorder in Those Who Treat the Traumatized**, Charles Figley, Brunner/Mazel, 1995.
- **Care of the Soul**, Thomas Moore, Harper Perennial, 1992
- **Chicken Soup for the Soul**, (1, 2, 3) Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hanson Health Communications, Inc., Deerfield Beach, Florida
- **Chop Wood, Carry Water**, R. Fields, Peggy Taylor, Putnam Books, 1984.
- **FISH**, ChartHouse Learning,
- **How To Take Care of You Sue Vineyard**, Heritage Arts Publishing, 1987
- **If You Don't Fee the Teachers They Eat the Students**, Neila Connors, Incentive Publications, 2000
- **Kitchen Table Wisdom**, Rachel Naomi Remen, Riverhead Books, New York, 1996
- **Legacy of the Heart**, Wayne Muller, Fireside Books-S&S, 1992
- **Living a Life That Matters**, Harold Kushner, Alfred Knope, New York, 2001.
- **The Pleasure Prescription**, Paul Pearsall, Hunter House, 1996
- **Real Moments**, Barbara De Angelis, Dell Trade Paperback, 1994

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## Resources

- **Secondary Traumatic Stress**, Self-Care Issues for Clinicians, Researchers, and Educators, Edited by B. Hudnall Stamm, Sidran Press, 1995.
- **Teaching With Heart**, Judith A. Deiro, Corwin Press, 1996
- **Trauma and the Therapist: Countertransference and Vicarious Traumatization in Psychotherapy with Incest Survivors**, Laurie Anne Pearlman, Karen W. Saakvitne, W.W. Norton & Company, 1995
- **Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization**, Saakvitne, Pearlman, WW Norton Books, 1996.
- **The Truth About Burnout: How Organizations Cause Personal Stress and What To Do About It**, Christina Maslach, Michael Leiter, Jossey-Bass, 1997 Publishers, San Francisco
- **When Helping You is Hurting Me**, Carmen Barry, Harper Collins Books, 1989.
- **Workbook/Journal 4ACF Specialists**, Baranowsky, Gentry.
- **Working with Emotional Intelligence**, Daniel Goleman, Bantam, 1998
- [www.cpd.fsu.edu/pet/TRAUMA-1b.htm](http://www.cpd.fsu.edu/pet/TRAUMA-1b.htm)
- **Other:**

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