



Compassion Fatigue: An Overview of Concepts and Self-Care Strategies for School-Based Social Service Professionals

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Thank you for joining us for this discussion of compassion fatigue. We'll be covering a number of the points below during the discussion and we welcome your participation—feel free to share your own thoughts about the information presented and to ask any questions about the items listed below, or other related issues.

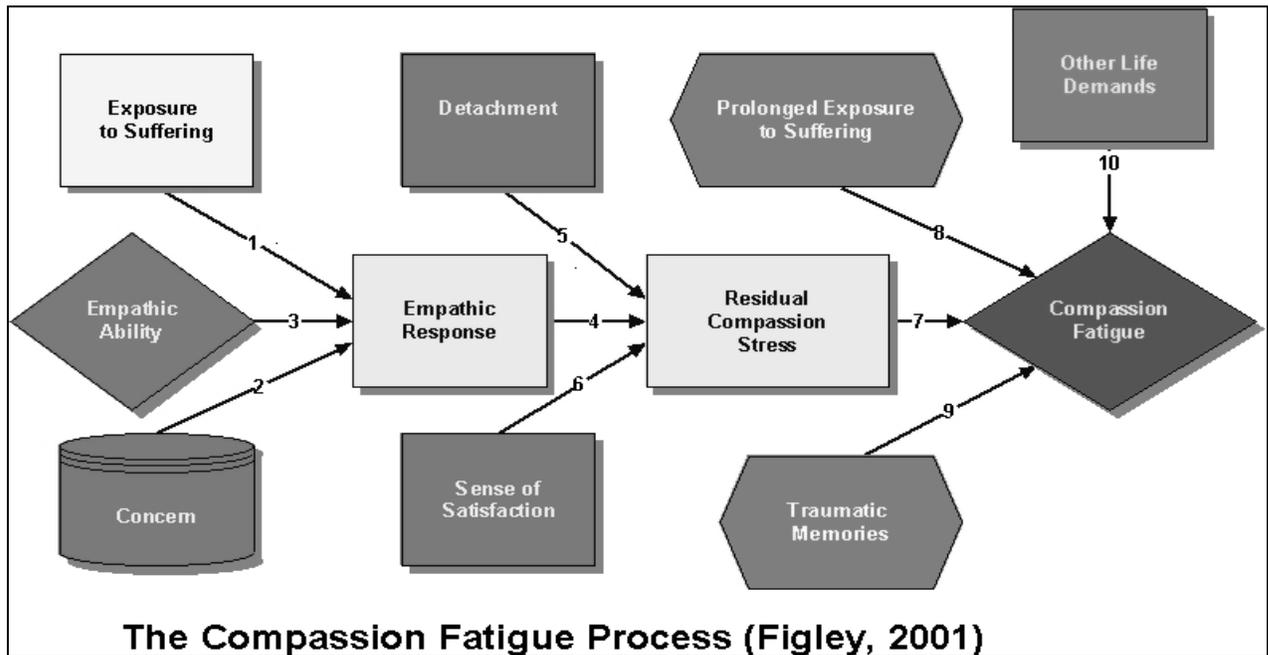
□ What is "compassion fatigue?"

- The concept of Compassion Fatigue has been around only since 1992 when Joinson used the term in a nursing magazine. It fit the description of nurses who were worn down by the daily hospital emergencies. Other terms related to the concept of "compassion fatigue" include secondary victimization, secondary traumatic stress, vicarious traumatization and secondary survivor. A similar concept, "emotional contagion," is defined as an affective process in which "an individual observing another person experiences emotional responses parallel to that person's actual or anticipated emotions". Another related concept concerns the generational effects of trauma and the need for family "detoxification" from war-related traumatic.
- Some writers view difficulties with client problems as one of simple countertransference and has been discussed within the context of PTSD treatment. However, the concept is encased in an elaborate theoretical context that is difficult to measure and traumatic issues from all others in the client-therapist transactions.
- DSM-IV holds that the diagnosis of PTSD is only possible when one is traumatized either directly (in harm's way) or indirectly, as a parent. Both may experience trauma, though different social pathways. The latter pathway is sometimes referred-to as secondary traumatic stress and many writers view the term "compassion fatigue" to be interchangeable with the concept of secondary traumatic stress disorder, which is believed to mirror PSTD, except it affects those emotionally affected by the trauma of another (usually a client or a family member)..

Signs & symptoms of compassion fatigue (adapted from Figley, C, 1995):

Cognitive	Emotional	Behavioral	Spiritual	Relationships	Physical	Performance
! concentraton	Powerlessness	Impatient	Questioning meaning of life	Withdrawal/isolation	Shock	Low morale
! self-esteem	Guilt	Withdrawn	Loss of purpose	Decreased interest in intimacy/sex	Sweating	Low motivation
Apathy	Anger/irritability	Moody	Decreased self-appraisal	Mistrust	Rapid breathing	Task avoidance
Rigidity	Survivor guilt	Sleep changes	Hopelessness	Overprotective as parent/spouse	Tachycardia	Obsession about details
Disorientation	Numbness	Nightmares	Anger at God	Projective anger/blame of others	Breathing difficulties	Dichotomous thinking
Perfectionism	Fear	Appetite changes	Question beliefs	Intolerance	Aches/pains	Apathy
Preoccupation with trauma	Helplessness	Hypervigilant	Loss of faith in higher power	Loneliness	Dizziness	Negativity
Thoughts of harm to self/others	Sadness	Startle response	Skepticism	Increased interpersonal conflicts	Medical/somatic complaints	Lack of appreciation
	Depression	Accident prone			Impaired immune system	Detachment
	! energy					Poor work quality & communication Staff conflicts Absenteeism

- How does compassion fatigue develop?
 - Unrealistic expectations
 - Recurrent exposure to traumatic circumstances
 - Poor balance of work/enjoyment
 - Other factors:



- Coping strategies:
 - Admit to yourself that you may be struggling with burnout
 - Damage control—assess your behavior in the workplace and repair relationships with co-workers
 - Collaborate with others—don't take the world on your shoulders
 - Take advantage of educational workshops, seminars, etc.
 - Take care of yourself physically
 - Sleep
 - Appetite/nutrition
 - Assess relative balance of work & play in your life
 - Make use of the support of others
 - Don't be embarrassed by being affected
 - Review your own expectations—are they realistic?
 - Expose yourself to inspiring models of human good, to offset exposure to negative images, information and knowledge of suffering
 - Sustain a sense of your own personal creativity
 - Try to always have something coming up in your life that is positive, that you welcome
 - Maintain varied interests and skills

- References
 - <http://www.giftfromwithin.org/html/cmpfatig.html>
 - <http://www.giftfromwithin.org/html/helping.html>
 - <http://www.massey.ac.nz/~trauma/issues/1998-2/steed.htm>

Good Luck!

Dr. John Jochem is a clinical psychologist with many years experience working with adults, adolescents, couples and families. Should you have any questions about this presentation, or wish to learn more about the range of services available through Dr. Jochem's practice, Hawthorn Counseling Group, feel free to call Dr. Jochem at (847) 680-0755 or contact him via email at jjochem@aol.com .