



Healing from Compassion Fatigue

People committed to helping others—including those in helping professions such as mental health and medicine, activists, volunteers and highly empathetic people—face nonstop exposure to a wide range of suffering. Compassion fatigue is a type of vicarious trauma that happens when a person is overwhelmed by the trauma and struggles of other people. This can undermine a person's relationships and connection to others.

Who Gets Compassion Fatigue?

Anyone who spends significant time helping others or thinking about others' suffering may develop compassion fatigue. Some research suggests that compassion fatigue is more prevalent when a person receives limited and no support. For instance, a caregiver for a person with dementia may be more vulnerable to fatigue when other members of the family refuse to help or constantly criticize their caregiving.

Symptoms Of Compassion Fatigue

The symptoms of compassion fatigue vary from person to person and may change with time. They include:

- An inability to show compassion or empathy
- Anger and resentment
- Becoming socially disconnected
- A decrease in productivity and effectiveness
- Depression

Strategies For Preventing Compassion Fatigue

Compassion fatigue is a common struggle, and can come on suddenly, even after a person has managed stress well for years. Certain prevention strategies, however, may reduce the risk and help a person better manage symptoms of compassion fatigue:

- Schedule time for self-care, including eating healthy meals, exercise and spending time on enjoyable hobbies
- Set clear boundaries, no one needs to answer calls 24 hours a day or provide constant care to another person
- Take time away from work or from caregiving labor when it is possible
- Spend time with people who support and understand the work you are doing
- Reward yourself for difficult tasks
- Seek help, no single person can solve the world's problems

If you are concerned about your mental health, don't hesitate to seek advice. Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides free and confidential assessment and counseling services. BHS is available by calling 800-245-1150 or by visiting www.behavioralhealthsystems.com.



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