

WHAT IS COMPASSION FATIGUE?



Compassion Fatigue (CF) refers to the emotional, physical, spiritual exhaustion that helpers can experience through repeated exposure to the emotional pain of clients. CF can impact helper's personal, professional lives with symptoms such as emotional distancing or numbness, difficulty concentrating, intrusive imagery, loss of hope, exhaustion and irritability (Figley, 1995).

Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) is a condition similar in symptoms to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, but is the result of exposure to another person's traumatic material rather than direct personal exposure to trauma (Figley, 2003).

Vicarious Trauma is defined as the transformation of the inner experiences of the therapist that comes about as a result of empathic engagement with client's trauma material. It is a process, an expected result of long term involvement with other people's trauma (McCann and Pearlman, 1990).

BEYOND BALANCE CONSULTING

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WORKSHOPS FOR HELPING PROFESSIONALS



*Reducing the risk of
compassion fatigue
and vicarious trauma in
helping professionals*

Why Self Care?

Working on the front line with people who are affected by traumatic experiences is a common situation for helping professionals. Staff need to be aware of the way they can be affected by exposure to other people's trauma. By creating awareness of the risks associated with caring for others, prevention of harmful stress and burnout may be possible.

Self care refers to a range of practices involving maintaining balance, setting limits, developing healthy habits, nurturing ones self and being mindful of one's physical, cognitive and emotional state.

Individuals and organizations must acknowledge the risks and support the strategies intended to ensure professional and personal wellness of helpers.

Helpers are ethically responsible to themselves, their clients and their colleagues to be aware of this potential occupational hazard, and to develop self-care practices.

Self-care is not just an ideal to strive for, but an ethical and professional responsibility for all helping professionals.

Workshops

Compassion Fatigue: What helping professionals need to know about secondary traumatic stress

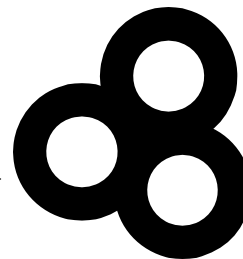
Keynote or Information session (60-90 minutes)

This talk provides an overview of the concepts of compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress, vicarious trauma and burnout. Signs, risk and protective factors and preventative strategies will be discussed.

Self-care begins with self: Creating awareness and maintaining balance

Half day workshop (3 hours)

Understanding who we are is a critical step in establishing boundaries and developing a system of self-care that may reduce our risk for compassion fatigue, or vicarious trauma. This presentation will include an overview of literature describing how helping professionals can be psychologically impacted by their work, and will offer an overview of strate-



gies that support self-care at the individual level.

Beyond balance: Professional and Personal self-care for counsellors

Full day workshop (5 hours)

This workshop provides important information about compassion fatigue and the related concepts of secondary traumatic stress and vicarious trauma, as well information about the science involved in the transmission of emotion between people. Participants will learn practical strategies that promote self care and resiliency at the individual, professional group and organizational level.