

Building Resilience: One Step at a Time

Compassion Fatigue and COVID-19

Healthcare workers dealing with COVID-19 have been faced with an unprecedented amount of stress. They must work tirelessly caring for others while also maintaining their own health and wellbeing. This can be draining and often self-care is put on the back burner. As a result, **compassion fatigue** can occur.

What is compassion fatigue?

- It is commonly seen among healthcare workers
- Physical and emotional exhaustion caused by caregiving for someone working through traumatic events
- Feeling taxed because of someone else's trauma
- Compassion fatigue can be experienced after caring for one case or cumulative stress can build up and cause compassion fatigue
- Also referred to as 'secondary traumatic stress' and 'the cost of caring.'

Symptoms of compassion fatigue

Become knowledgeable about sign and symptoms, so you are aware for yourself and others.

Physical Symptoms	Psychological Symptoms	Institutional Symptoms
Exhaustion/ fatigue	Irritability/outbursts	Poor work performance
Insomnia	Spontaneous crying	Irritability with co-workers
Headaches	Poor concentration	Increased ethical violation
GI distress	Anxiety and panic	Increased in family conflict or distance
Alcohol/drug abuse	Depression	Social isolation
Loss of appetite	Capacity for empathy isolated for only work or overall decline	

Preparing for and preventing compassion fatigue

Physical	Psychological	Institutional
Practice self-care	Do not minimize or catastrophize your symptoms	Discuss what to expect beforehand
Take breaks when needed to clear mind and find an appropriate balance between work and leisure time	Recognize and honor normalcy of your own reactions to stress, traumatic stories and disaster contexts	Create a work environment committed to having open conversations about this topic
Work on sleep hygiene	Set emotional boundaries	Check in with others—create a buddy system
Establish healthy eating and exercise habits	Do not play therapist or provider in your own personal relationships	Connect with people and discover hobbies outside of your work environment
	If you need help, seek it	

What is your plan to address Compassion Fatigue? Who will you discuss this plan with?