



## COMPASSION FATIGUE

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Empathy is the ability to emotionally understand another's feelings, point of view, and position. Compassion includes caring and practicing altruism. Empathy and compassion are valuable traits for those in helping professions (emergency services, social work, healthcare, teachers, etc.), but they can also be difficult at times. Professions that include prolonged exposure to others' trauma or stressors can become vulnerable to compassion fatigue (also called vicarious or secondary trauma). It can cause physical and mental symptoms and wariness of giving and caring.

### Ways to Combat Compassion Fatigue

- **Self-care:** Like in an airplane, put your oxygen mask on first before helping others with theirs. Create a self-care routine with the 4 core components of resilience: adequate sleep, healthy eating, regular physical activity, and active relaxation.
- **Journal:** Process thoughts, release feelings, and identify 3 things you are grateful for that day.
- **Be aware of your media use:** What you watch and read can affect you, be mindful and take a break when needed.
- **Find proactive ways to help others:** Do concrete small acts of kindness that can give you immediate positive responses.
  - **Grow your compassion satisfaction:** Be mindful of and savor the hope, joy, rewards, and sense of meaning from your work.
  - **Focus on what you can control:** Put your energy towards simple routines and tasks that bring back a sense of normalcy and agency.

"COMPASSION IS A META-COGNITIVE PROCESS... ONE ONLY VISITS COMPASSION. YOU CAN'T LIVE THERE. IT WOULD BE COGNITIVELY EXHAUSTING,"  
-DR. ERIC ZILLMER.

- **Practice self-compassion:** Treat yourself like a friend when you hit a setback or challenge.
- **Protect your emotional state:** To practice more cognitive empathy, seek additional information and understanding when others talk about their pain. Take short respites in your day. Reduce exposure to stress where you can. Set healthy boundaries and realistic goals. Enjoy life outside of work.
- **Nurture a positive support system:** Being social with others such as coworkers, loved ones, a therapist, etc. is very important. Seek comfort, support, and/or solutions.
- **Make your surrounding environment more positive:** Create a safe space with items that boost your mood and help to decompress. Build workplace organizational resilience.
- **Get additional help if needed:** Seek professional help from a doctor, counselor, Village EAP services, etc., if you are finding it difficult to manage compassion fatigue, and/or showing signs of depression, anxiety, or overwhelming stress.

Practicing empathy and compassion is essential. It's crucial to take care of yourself and seek support if needed. Prioritize your well-being so you can continue to make a positive impact on those around you!

*happy mental health month!*