

Module 7

Compassion Fatigue

and Self-Care

OVC Can Help You Put the Pieces Together



OVCTTAC

Learning Objectives

- ❖ **Identify actions and behaviors that violate healthy boundaries.**
- ❖ **Develop a personalized self-care plan to prevent compassion fatigue.**

Compassion Fatigue

- ❖ **Advocates get doses of the trauma while helping survivors to heal.**
- ❖ **Work also provides meaning and reward.**

Survivors as Advocates

- ❖ **Often become particularly sensitive to fears and concerns of victims, and the magnitude of their needs.**
- ❖ **May have had a positive or disappointing experience with the system.**
- ❖ **May seek to continue healing.**
- ❖ **May or may not have greater empathy.**
- ❖ **Wounds may reopen.**

Compassion Fatigue Defined

Compassion fatigue is a psychological consequence of caregivers' continual exposure to the traumatic experiences of victims, without sufficient relief for themselves.

~Schauben and Frazier, 1995

Compassion Fatigue

- ❖ **Mary Jo Barrett differentiates between compassion fatigue, burnout, secondary posttraumatic stress, and vicarious traumatization.**
- ❖ **Intellectual, physical, emotional, spiritual, and sexual energy gets depleted.**

Burnout

- ❖ **Depletion of physical and intellectual energy.**
- ❖ **Happens when overworked, stressed, and involved in demanding situations over a long period of time.**

Burnout

- ❖ **May feel tired, rundown, overwhelmed, and irritable.**
- ❖ **Reduced sense of personal accomplishment and discouragement as an employee/volunteer.**



PHOTOGRAPH BY SUSAN

Secondary Posttraumatic Stress (SPTS)

- ❖ **Specific form of compassion fatigue.**
- ❖ **Occurs when we get symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).**
- ❖ **Susceptible to SPTS when repeatedly exposed to traumatic events.**

Vicarious Traumatization (VT)

- ❖ **Can emerge suddenly.**
- ❖ **Happens when you are actually traumatized during your job.**

Disruptions in Frame of Reference

- ❖ **Likely to experience disruptions in your sense of who you are.**
- ❖ **Disrupted worldview.**
- ❖ **Spirituality challenged.**
- ❖ **Intrusion of sexually traumatic images.**

Disruptions in Self-Capacities

- ❖ **Shut down emotionally.**
- ❖ **Refuse social engagements or activities.**
- ❖ **Disruptions in self-care habits.**

Disruptions in Ego Resources

Disruption of inner abilities to self-monitor to effectively meet your psychological needs and manage interpersonal relationships.

Costs of Compassion Fatigue

- ❖ **Increasingly difficult to attend to survivors with empathy, hope, and compassion.**
- ❖ **Results in caregivers changing roles from caregiver to victim.**

Costs of Compassion Fatigue

- ❖ **Caregivers often work in a culture where it is largely unacceptable to talk about feeling exhausted, overwhelmed or not connecting with clients.**
- ❖ **Pay attention to how you are affected by your work and prioritize your own self-care.**

Activity

Boundaries Checklist Worksheet 7.1

Strategies for Self-Care

- ❖ **Commit to replenishing yourself.**
- ❖ **The alternative is to continue doing advocacy at an impaired level or leave the field.**
- ❖ **Be aware of how well you are eating, sleeping, exercising, socializing, enjoying life, spending time with family, and participating in the hobbies and activities you love.**

Meet With a Supervisor

- ❖ **Difficult, new, or unusual cases.**
- ❖ **Cases involving vicarious trauma.**
- ❖ **Cases with boundary issues.**
- ❖ **Cases in which you are meeting with the victim more than once a week or 12 total sessions.**

Activity

Self-Care Planning Worksheet 7.2



Review of Learning Objectives

- ❖ **Identify actions and behaviors that violate healthy boundaries.**
- ❖ **Develop a personalized self-care plan to prevent compassion fatigue.**

End of Module 7

Questions? Comments?

