



Module 7: Compassion Fatigue and Self-Care

Purpose

This module helps participants understand the impact of compassion fatigue and the importance of self-care.





Module 7 Objectives

By the end of this module, you will be able to

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



Compassion Fatigue

- Advocates get doses of the trauma while helping survivors to heal.
- Work is not without substantial meaning and reward.
- Compassion fatigue is defined as a psychological consequence of caregivers' continual exposure to the traumatic experiences of victims, without sufficient relief for themselves (Schauben and Frazier, 1995).



Compassion Fatigue (cont.)

- Mary Jo Barrett differentiates between compassion fatigue, burnout, secondary post-traumatic 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.
- May feel tired, rundown, overwhelmed, and irritable.
- Reduced sense of personal accomplishment and discouragement as an employee/volunteer.

Secondary Post-Traumatic Stress

- Specific form of compassion fatigue.
- Occurs when advocates get symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Susceptible when repeatedly exposed to traumatic events.



Vicarious Traumatization

- 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 ability to self-monitor to effectively meet your psychological needs and manage interpersonal relationships.

Costs of Compassion Fatigue

- It becomes increasingly difficult to attend to survivors with empathy, hope, and compassion.
- It can result in caregivers changing roles from caregiver to victim.
- Caregivers often work in a culture in which 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.



Boundaries Checklist

Participant's materials,
pages VII-7 through VII-8



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 for a total of 12 sessions.



Self-Care Planning Activity

Participant's materials,
page VII-10





Module 7

Questions or comments?

