

# Module 10

## Compassion Fatigue and Self-Care



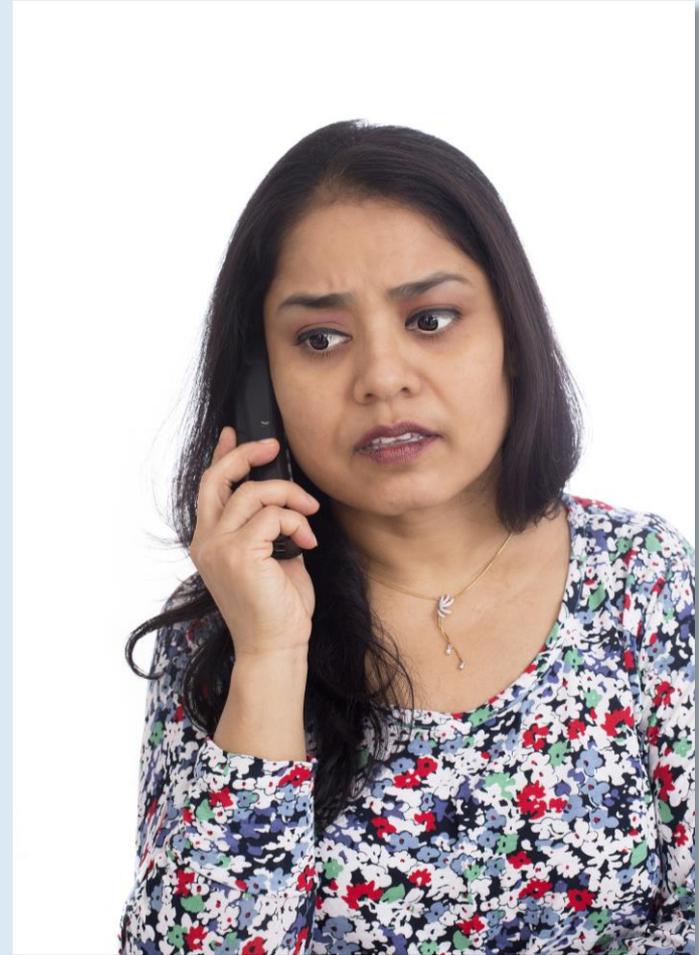
**OVC**TTAC  
OFFICE FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME Training and Technical Assistance Center

# Learning Objectives

- Describe the symptoms and effects of compassion fatigue.
- 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.



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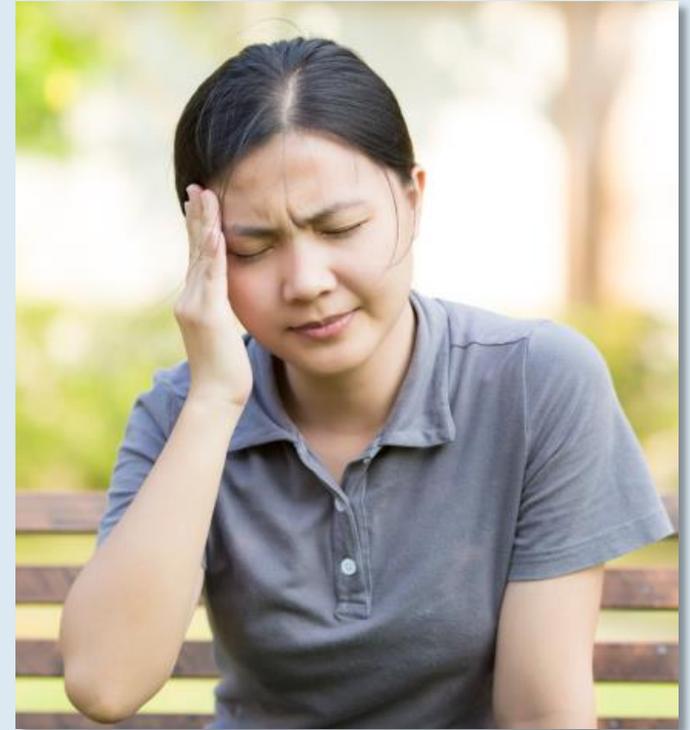
# Survivors as Advocates

- 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

“...the cumulative physical, emotional, and psychological effect of exposure to traumatic stories or events when working in a helping capacity, combined with the strain and stress of everyday life.”

(American Bar Association n.d.)



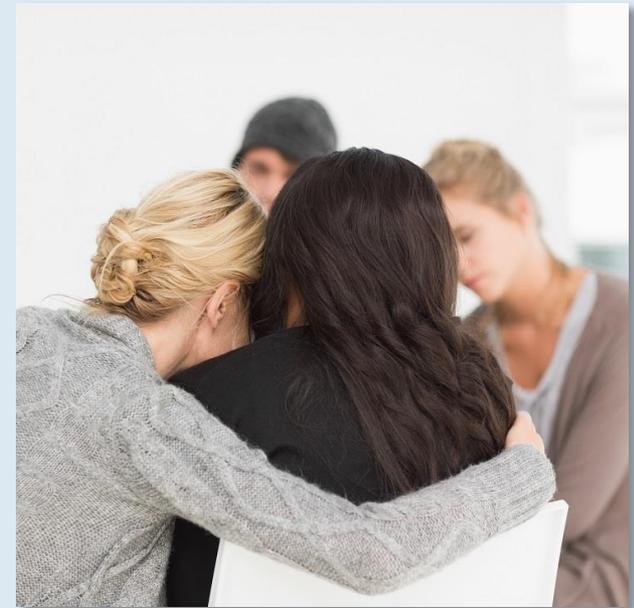
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# Vicarious Trauma

Vicarious trauma is a cognitive shift in beliefs about one's self or one's world view about issues such as safety, trust, or control.

For example, hearing about a particularly horrible event might compromise one's trust or faith in humanity.

(Newell and MacNeil 2010)



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# Secondary Traumatic Stress

Secondary traumatic stress (STS) results from bearing witness to another person's trauma via an empathetic relationship, often resulting in anxiety and intrusive thoughts—however, STS is a normal reaction to the stressful and sometimes traumatizing work with survivors. STS may occur independently or co-occur with vicarious trauma.

(Newell and MacNeil 2010; Rosenbloom, Pratt, and Pearlman 1995)

# Burnout

Burnout is a physical, emotional, psychological, or spiritual exhaustion resulting from chronic exposure to vulnerable or suffering populations. Burnout can include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization or cynicism and detachment, as well as a reduced sense of personal accomplishment.

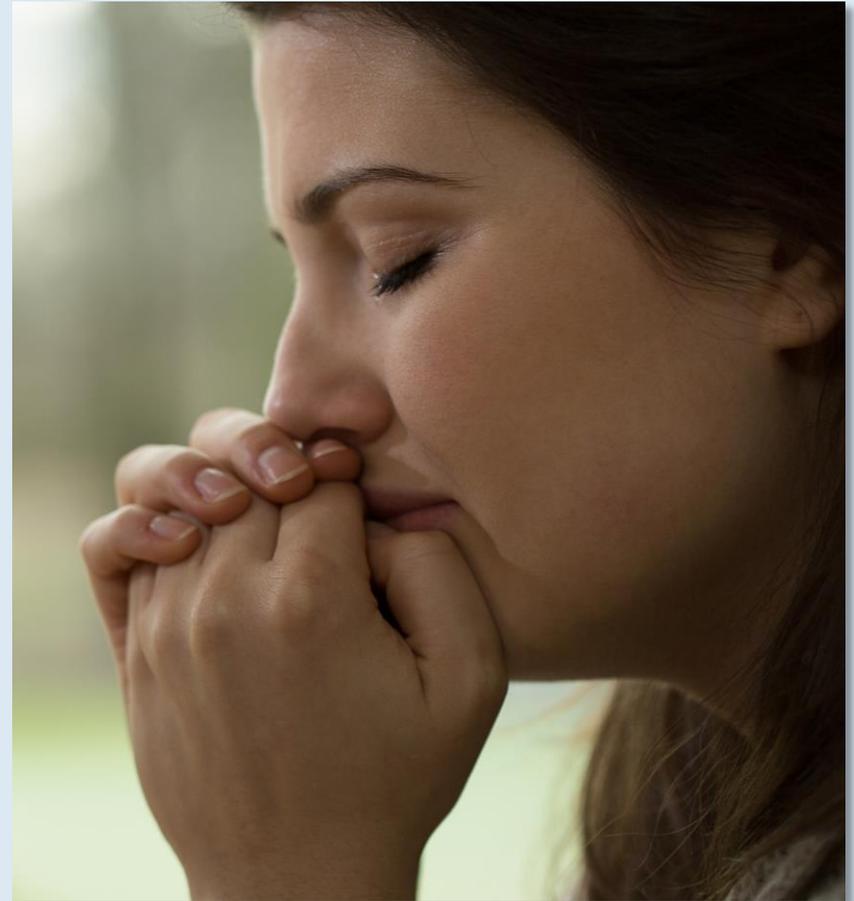
(Newell and MacNeil 2010)

# Conditions Affecting Advocates

Condition	Who is Affected	Exposure
Compassion Fatigue	Those who work with trauma survivors.	Develops over multiple exposures to traumatic stories.
Vicarious Trauma	Those who work with trauma survivors.	May develop from exposure to one or more instances.
Secondary Traumatic Stress	Those who work with trauma survivors.	May develop from exposure to one or more instances.
Burnout	Anyone in a stressful work environment.	Develops over time.

# 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.



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# Disruptions in Self-Capacities

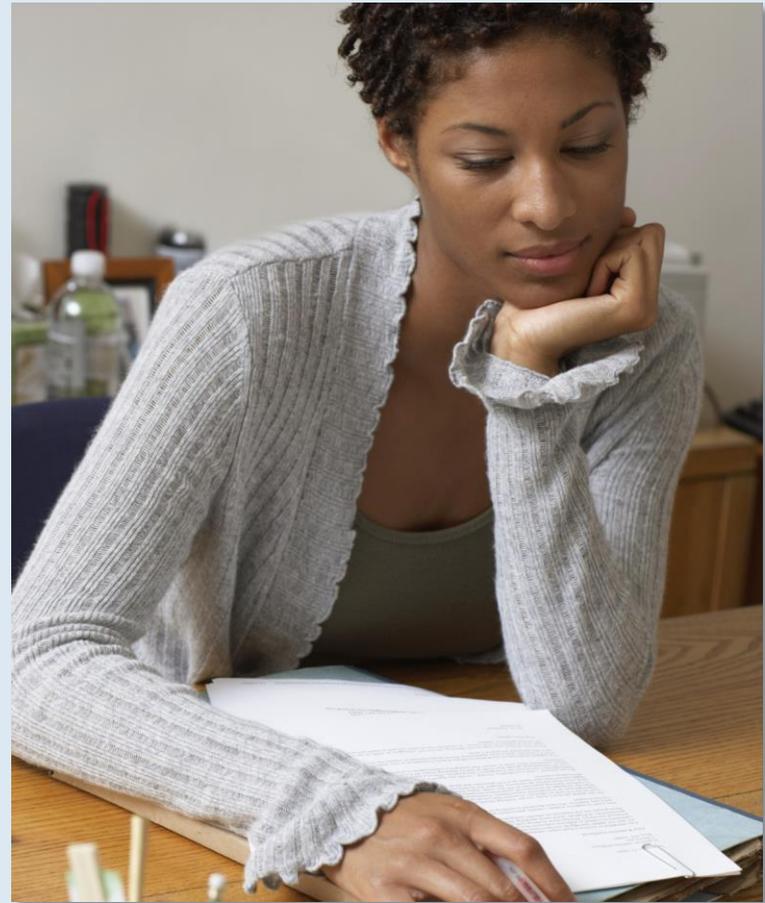
- Shut down emotionally.
- Refuse social engagements or activities.
- Disruptions in self-care habits.



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# Disruptions in Ego Resources

Disruption of your abilities to effectively meet your psychological needs and manage interpersonal relationships.



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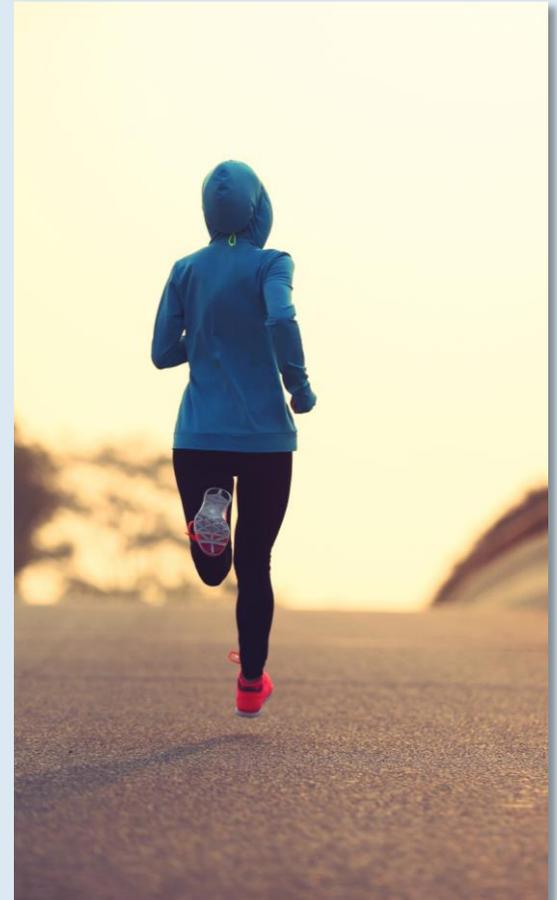
# Costs of Working With Survivors

- Increasingly difficult to attend to survivors with empathy, hope, and compassion.
- Caregivers and supervisors must be aware of this possibility and recognize early symptoms.
- Remain connected to survivors and protect yourself emotionally by remaining conscious of the broader context.

# 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 victims.

Pay attention to how you are affected by your work, and prioritize your own self-care.



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# Activity



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## *Boundaries Checklist Worksheet 10.1*



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# Strategies for Self-Care

- Commit to replenishing yourself.
- Practice self-compassion.
- The alternative is to continue doing advocacy at an impaired level or leave the field.
- Be aware of how well you are functioning.
- Meet with your supervisor.



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# 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 frequently.
- Cases similar to your own victimization.



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# Activity



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## *Self-Care Planning Worksheet 10.2*



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# Review of Learning Objectives

- Describe the symptoms and effects of compassion fatigue.
- Identify actions and behaviors that violate healthy boundaries.
- Develop a personalized self-care plan to prevent compassion fatigue.

# End of Module 10

## Questions? Comments?



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