

COMPASSION FATIGUE

The cost of caring

What we can do about it?

- It is important to acknowledge that we are as important as the people who we care for or who have died. We do not dishonour them or their memory by taking care of ourselves. On the contrary, they would want us to care for ourselves.
- Learn about Compassion Fatigue – its nature, signs and symptoms and what we can do about it. Awareness is the first step to taking control.
- Know our own “triggers” and vulnerable areas and learn to defuse or avoid them, or have support when they are touched. Work on resolving our own personal issues and continue to monitor your own reactions to another's pain.
- Know that your feelings are normal. Our emotions are mixed and can change regularly. We can be up one minute and down the next, and can vary in intensity – this is normal. The important thing is not to judge or be hard on ourselves for our feelings; rather find a safe place to talk or write about them.
- Recharge your batteries daily. Take time to be kind to ourselves and do things that put energy back into us, that give us a sense of peace and wellbeing. Examples are, walking in nature, soak in a bubble bath, listen to music, get a massage, go shopping, watch a funny movie, go out for a meal, read a good book, do your hobby. Do what you need to do. Have at least one meaningful conversation daily.
- Allow ourselves to cry and grieve when we need to, e.g., when something bad happens to ourselves or another, don't shut them off or block them, or apologise for crying; tears are nature's release mechanism and we get sick or depressed if we don't.
- Have realistic expectations of ourselves, of the rewards as well as the limitations of being a helper. Set boundaries for yourself and for work. Ask yourself “Would the world fall apart if I step away from my work for a day, a week?”. When we are under pressure at work, it's okay to say no to others' demands on us. You matter too.
Make sure you eat well; a balanced healthy diet really helps the body and mind to cope with the demands placed upon it. It may also help to take a vitamin supplement to supplement our physical and emotional resiliency.
Balance the most stressful aspects of your work with more routine ones and with things that offer personal or professional growth.
- Develop a healthy support system – in work and out of work. Colleagues with experience can be a great help, use EAP, talk to your manager, friend, counsellor.

- Surround yourself with beautiful aesthetic things - to remind yourself that life is balanced and there are good things and people in the world.
- Spend time with positive nurturing people, with humour.
- Use positive self talk - By focusing on your strengths, name your resources, and learnings from past and others experiences.
- Find ways to provide yourself with strength and meaning from your emotional and spiritual beliefs."

"It's not the load that breaks us down, it's the way we carry it."

"I will have the same compassion and care for myself as I would for another walking in my shoes."

Ask yourself, "If I saw a video of my life and work, what would I say to me?"

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