Walking the Walk: 
*Self-Care in the Face of Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma*

Who we are and how we got here
The Compassion Fatigue Workbook

Available through Amazon and Caversham books

Prior Training on Compassion Fatigue / Vicarious Trauma?

Mathieu, Françoise (2012) www.compassionfatigue.ca
TODAY’S WORKSHOP

What to EXPECT

Understanding Compassion Fatigue, Vicarious Trauma, & Burnout
Low Impact Debriefing
Identifying Early Warning Signs
Self-Care Strategies

Mathieu, Françoise (2012) www.compassionfatigue.ca

What NOT to Expect

We will NOT be doing any Role Plays or Therapy
We will NOT be sharing our traumatic stories or experiences
"The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet."

Rachel Naomi Remen, *Kitchen Table Wisdom* 1996

The reality…

Ongoing challenges & cutbacks

Difficult stories

Losses

Mathieu, Françoise (2012) www.compassionfatigue.ca
Did I Do That???

Alex

Kyla

Reflection
An Occupational Hazard

We don’t get Vicarious Trauma and Compassion Fatigue because we screwed up, we get it because we care!

Definitions

Compassion Fatigue
Vicarious Trauma
Burnout

Mathieu, Françoise (2012) www.compassionfatigue.ca
Compassion Fatigue
(Figley, 1995)

- A deep erosion of our compassion, of our ability to tolerate strong emotions and difficult stories in others
- Evident in the professional and personal life
- Can also happen to caregivers ("caregiver fatigue")

Got Stress?
Vicarious Trauma

- The repeated exposure to difficult stories changes our view of the world (Saakvitne & Pearlman).
- Can cause nightmares, difficulty getting rid of certain images, an intense preoccupation with a particular story or event we’ve been exposed to.

Mathieu, Françoise (2012) www.compassionfatigue.ca

Burnout

- “Physical & emotional exhaustion as a result of prolonged stress and frustration” (Stamm)
- Depleted ability to cope with work demands
- Feel powerlessness to achieve goals
- Can happen in any occupation

Mathieu, Françoise (2012) www.compassionfatigue.ca
Multiple Exposure: Increased Risk

Prior Trauma

Burnout

Traumatic Grief/Loss

Systems Failure

Direct Exposure

Compassion Fatigue

Secondary Trauma

Image courtesy of Dr Leslie Anne Ross, Children’s Institute, Los Angeles

I’VE BEEN SLIMED!!
Low Impact Debriefing Strategies for anti-sliming

1) Increased Self Awareness
2) Fair Warning
3) Consent
4) Low Impact Disclosure

Mathieu, Françoise (2012) www.compassionfatigue.ca
WHAT NOW?

Understand *your* warning signs

Develop strategies and an early intervention plan

Physical Signs and Symptoms

- Exhaustion
- Headaches
- Somatization and hypochondria
### Behavioral Signs and Symptoms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alcohol/drugs</th>
<th>Anger</th>
<th>Avoidance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absenteeism</td>
<td>Inability to make decisions</td>
<td>Crying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overeating</td>
<td>Irritability</td>
<td>Forgetfulness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mathieu, Françoise (2012) [www.compassionfatigue.ca](http://www.compassionfatigue.ca)

### Psychological signs and symptoms

- Depression
- Lack of empathy
- Cynicism
- Resentment
- Dread of working with certain clients
- Feeling professional isolation
- Disruption of world view

Mathieu, Françoise (2012) [www.compassionfatigue.ca](http://www.compassionfatigue.ca)
The Warning Signs Continuum

Mathieu, Françoise (2012) www.compassionfatigue.ca

Strategies

Mathieu, Françoise (2012) www.compassionfatigue.ca
Step One
Take Stock: Track your Stress (at home and at work)

What’s On Your Plate?

From Françoise Mathieu www.compassionfatigue.ca

Step Two:
Enhancing Self Care and Improving work/life balance

From Françoise Mathieu www.compassionfatigue.ca
Step Three: Developing resiliency through relaxation training and stress reduction techniques

From Françoise Mathieu www.compassionfatigue.ca

Be Here Now

- Let Be...
- Let Go...
- Let In...
- Pay attention to the present moment, without judgement
- Release worries, anxiety and tiredness
- Focus on what works in our lives
Step Four: Making a Commitment

From Françoise Mathieu www.compassionfatigue.ca

Rewards of Being a “Helper”

Our prime purpose in life is to help others.  
Dalai Lama
Remember to take care of YOU!

THANK YOU!!!

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