

Running On Empty

**AMERICAN IMMIGRATION
LAWYERS ASSOCIATION**
AUGUST 28, 2018

D.C. Bar
Lawyer Assistance Program

Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma – Signs and Symptoms

Physical Signs and Symptoms

- Exhaustion
- Insomnia
- Headaches
- Increased susceptibility to illness
- Somatization and hypochondria

Behavioral Signs and Symptoms

- Increased use of alcohol and drugs
- Absenteeism
- Anger and Irritability
- Avoidance of clients
- Impaired ability to make decisions
- Problems in personal relationships
- Attrition
- Compromised care for clients
- The Silencing Response
- Depleted parenting

Psychological signs and symptoms

- Emotional exhaustion
- Distancing
- Negative self image
- Depression
- Sadness, Loss of hope
- Anxiety
- Guilt
- Reduced ability to feel sympathy and empathy
- Cynicism
- Resentment
- Dread of working with certain clients
- Feeling professional helplessness
- Diminished sense of enjoyment/career
- Depersonalization/numbness
- Disruption of world view/ heightened anxiety or irrational fears
- Inability to tolerate strong feelings
- Problems with Intimacy
- Intrusive imagery – preoccupation with trauma
- Hypersensitivity to emotionally charged stimuli
- Insensitivity to emotional material
- Difficulty separating personal and professional lives
- Failure to nurture and develop non work related aspects of life

Sources: Saakvitne (1995), Figley (1995), Gentry, Baranowsky & Dunning (1997), Yassen (1995)

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EVALUATING YOUR CONTRIBUTING FACTORS:

Assess the following elements with this continuum in mind:

Annoying → Distressing → Traumatic

Nature of the work, the cases and the workplace; in your role:

- what events, incidents, cases, stories are the most difficult? Why?
- how much control do you have over your schedule?
- does this schedule work for you; can you adequately negotiate your workload?
- how has the workload changed over the years?
- do your work tasks vary from day to day; do you like the work you do;
- are you sufficiently trained to do the work you do?
- how much support do you have; is supervision adequate; helpful; supportive?

Nature of the clientele; in your role:

- how many clients do you have contact with each day?
- do you have variety with the types of clients you work with?
- what types of clients are the most difficult for you and why?
- how do your clients treat you?
- are you ever afraid of your clients? -ever been harmed by a client?
- how do you treat your clients?

Nature of the worker; for you personally:

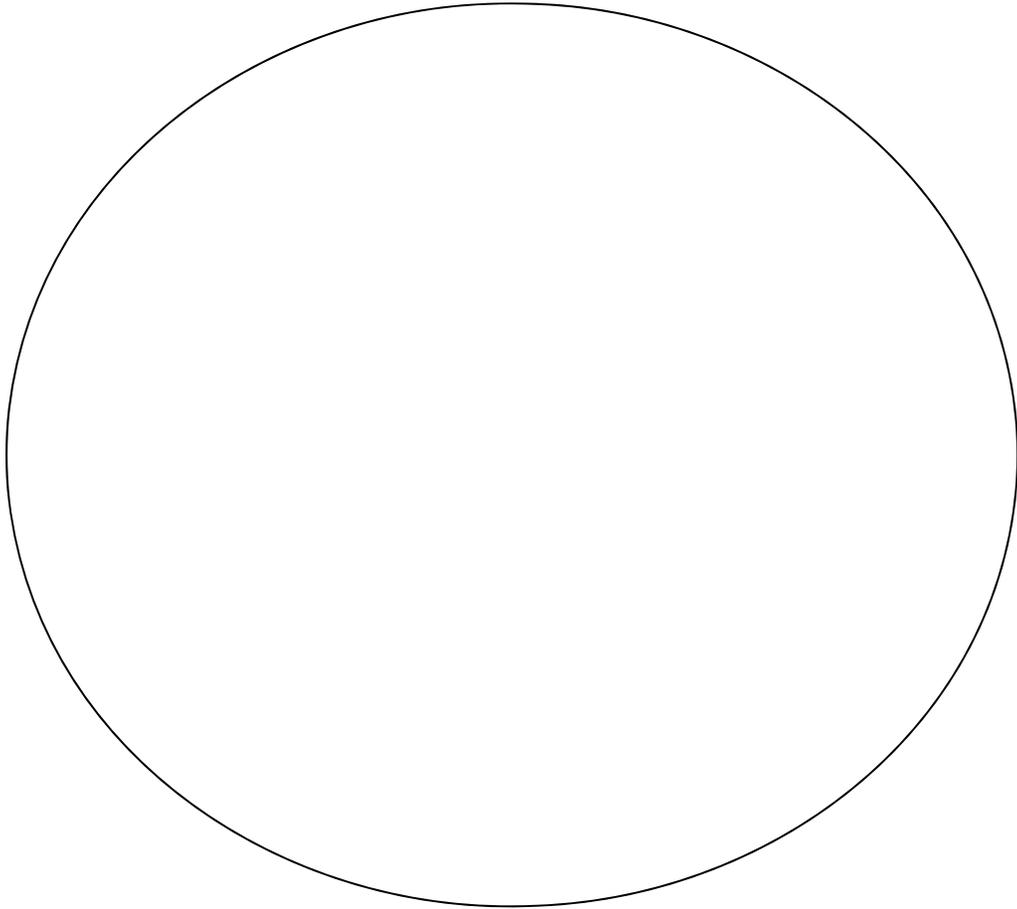
- how well suited are you personally for the work you do?
- how well does the work you do match your values and beliefs?
- what does your current stress index look like on a scale of 1(no stress) to 10 (extreme stress)?
- can you identify the factors in your life that produce the most stress?
- what coping mechanisms do you use to manage or decrease stress?
- do you have supportive interpersonal relationships?
- do you engage in a hobby or leisure activity every week?

Nature of the social/cultural context: in your role:

- what are the social obstacles to doing your work? (funding cuts, furlough days etc)
- how are you received within the community based on the work that you do and the work of your organization; do you feel respected?
- what does the community say about the clientele you serve?
- what effect, if any, does the above have upon you personally?

Excerpted from *Transforming the Pain* (1996) pp 53-55 and *Compassion Fatigue Train the Trainer Workbook* (2008) pp 42-43.

WHAT'S ON YOUR PLATE?



SELF CARE INVENTORY (Reprinted with permission)

Mark "X" for what you already do. Mark "O" for what you wish you did more often.

<p><i>Physical Self-Care</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Eat Regularly (e.g. breakfast, lunch, and dinner)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Eat healthily</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Exercise</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Get regular medical care for prevention</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Get medical care when needed</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Take time off when sick</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Get massages</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Dance, swim, walk, run, play sports, sing, or do some other physical activity that is fun</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Take time to be sexual – with yourself, with a partner</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Get enough sleep</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Wear clothes you like</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Take vacations</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Take day trips or mini-vacations</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Make time away from telephones</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other:</p> <p><i>Psychological Self-Care</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Make time for self-reflection</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Have your own personal psychotherapy</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Write in a journal</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Read literature that is unrelated to work</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Do something at which you are not expert or in charge of</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Decrease stress in your life</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Notice your inner experience – listen to your thoughts, judgments, beliefs, attitudes and feelings</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Let others know different aspects of you</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Engage your intelligence in a new area (e.g. go to an art museum, history exhibit, sports event, auction, theater performance)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Practice receiving from others</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Be curious</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Say no to extra responsibilities sometimes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other:</p> <p><i>Emotional Self-Care</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Spend time with others whose company you enjoy</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Stay in contact with important people in your life</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Give yourself affirmations, praise yourself</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Love yourself</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reread favorite books, re-view favorite movies</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Identify comforting activities, objects, people, relationships, places, and seek them out</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Allow yourself to cry</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Find things that make you laugh</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Express your outrage in social action, letters, donations, marches, protests</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Play with children</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other:</p>
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<p>Spiritual Self-Care</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Make time for reflection</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Spend time with nature</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Find a spiritual connection or community</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Be open to inspiration</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Cherish your optimism and hope</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Be aware of non-material aspects of life</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Try at times not to be in charge or the expert</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Be open to not knowing</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Identify what you is meaningful to you and notice its place in your life</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Meditate</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Pray</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Sing</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Spend time with children</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Have experiences of awe</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Contribute to causes in which you believe</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Read inspirational literature (e.g. talks, music)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other:</p>	<p>Workplace or Professional Self-Care</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Take a break during the work day (e.g. lunch)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Take time to chat with co-workers</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Make quiet time to complete tasks</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Identify projects or tasks that are exciting and rewarding</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Set limits with clients and colleagues</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Balance your caseload so no one day or part of a day is “too much.”</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Arrange your work space so it is comfortable and comforting</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Get regular supervision or consultation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Negotiate for your needs (benefits, pay raise)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Have a peer support group</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Develop a non-trauma area of professional interest</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other:</p> <p>Balance:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Strive for balance with your work life and work day</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Strive for balance among work, family, relationships, play and rest</p>
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Adapted from *Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization* by Karen W. Saakvitne & Laurie Anne Pearlman. Copyright (c) 1996 by the Traumatic Stress Institute/Center for Adult & Adolescent Psychotherapy. Used by permission of W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Compassion Fatigue Self Test for Practitioners

Please describe yourself: ___ Male ___ Female ___ Years as a Practitioner

Consider each of the following characteristics about you and your current situation.

Write in the number for the best response. Use one of the following answers:

1=Rarely/Never 2=At Times 3=Not Sure 4=Often 5=Very Often

Answer all items, even if not applicable. Then read the instructions to get your score.

Items about you:

1. ___ I force myself to avoid certain thoughts or feelings that remind me of a frightening experience.
2. ___ I find myself avoiding certain activities or situations because they remind me of a frightening experience.
3. ___ I have gaps in my memory about frightening events.
4. ___ I feel estranged from others.
5. ___ I have difficulty falling or staying asleep.
6. ___ I have outbursts of anger or irritability with little provocation.
7. ___ I startle easily.
8. ___ While working with a victim I have thought about violence against the person or perpetrator.
9. ___ I am a sensitive person.
10. ___ I have had flashbacks connected to my clients and families.
11. ___ I have had first-hand experience with traumatic events in my adult life.
12. ___ I have had first-hand experience with traumatic events in my childhood.
13. ___ I have thought that I need to "work through" a traumatic experience in my life.
14. ___ I have thought that I need more close friends.
15. ___ I have thought that there is no one to talk with about highly stressful experiences.
16. ___ I have concluded that I work too hard for my own good.

Items about your clients and their families:

17. ___ I am frightened of things traumatized people and their family have said or done to me.
18. ___ I experience troubling dreams similar to a client of mine and their family.
19. ___ I have experienced intrusive thoughts of interactions with especially difficult clients and their families.
20. ___ I have suddenly and involuntarily recalled a frightening experience while working with a client or their family.
21. ___ I am preoccupied with more than one client and their family.
22. ___ I am losing sleep over a client and their family's traumatic experiences.
23. ___ I have thought that I might have been "infected" by the traumatic stress of my clients and their families.
24. ___ I remind myself to be less concerned about the well-being of my clients and their families.
25. ___ I have felt trapped by my work as a helper.
26. ___ I have felt a sense of hopelessness associated with working with clients and their families.
27. ___ I have felt "on edge" about various things and I attribute this to working with certain clients and their families.
28. ___ I have wished that I could avoid working with some clients and their families.
29. ___ I have been in danger working with some clients and their families.
30. ___ I have felt that some of my clients and their families dislike me personally.

Items about being a helper and your work environment:

31. ___ I have felt weak, tired, and rundown as a result of my work as a helper.
32. ___ I have felt depressed as a result of my work as a helper.
33. ___ I am unsuccessful at separating work from personal life.
34. ___ I feel little compassion toward most of my coworkers.
35. ___ I feel I am working more for the money than for personal fulfillment.
36. ___ I find it difficult separating my personal life from my work life.
37. ___ I have a sense of worthlessness/disillusionment/resentment associated with my work.
38. ___ I have thoughts that I am a "failure" as a helper.
39. ___ I have thoughts that I am not succeeding at achieving my life goals.
40. ___ I have to deal with bureaucratic, unimportant tasks in my work life.

SCORING INSTRUCTIONS

- Make sure you have responded to ALL questions.
- Next, circle the following 23 items: 1-8, 10-13, 17-26 and number 29.
- Now ADD the numbers you wrote next to the items circled.

Note your risk of Compassion Fatigue

26 or LESS = Extremely LOW risk
27 to 30 = LOW risk
31 to 35 = Moderate risk
36 to 40 = HIGH risk
41 or more = Extremely HIGH risk

- To determine your risk of Burnout, ADD the numbers you wrote next to the items NOT circled.

Note your risk of Burnout

19 or less = Extremely LOW risk
20 to 24 = LOW risk
25 to 29 = Moderate risk
30 to 42 = High risk
43 or more = Extremely high risk

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First Self Assessment Exercise

Observe the work that you do. Does it have:

- A large volume of demand (and often increasing demands, such as more and more clients to see or more and more paperwork to do)?
- Continually dwindling resources?
- Exposure to difficult stories of loss, pain, death and suffering?
- Do you work with clients who face seemingly insurmountable obstacles, have chronic needs or even clients who get worse rather than get better?

All of these elements can contribute to compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma.

Ask yourself the four following questions:

1) Where do the stories go?

What do you do at the end of a work day to put difficult client stories away and go home to your friends and family?

2) Were you trained for this?

Did your training offer you an education on self care, compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma or burnout? If it did, how up to date are you on those strategies? If it didn't, which is still true for the majority of us over a certain age, how much do you know about these concepts?

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3) What are your particular vulnerabilities?

Two things we know for sure about the field of helping: one, that a large percentage of helpers have experienced primary trauma at some point in their past, which may have led them to being attracted to the field in the first place. Two, that personality types who are attracted to the field of helping (rather than, say, mechanical engineering) are more likely to feel highly attuned and empathy towards others, which makes them good at their job and also more vulnerable to developing CF, VT and Burnout.

4) How do you protect yourself while doing this very challenging work?

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Developing a Compassion Fatigue Protection Plan

What components will go into my plan?

What are my warning signs and symptoms?

Who will I check in with to hold me accountable or to cue me?

What things do I have control over in my life?

How will I relieve stress in a way that works for me?
(Intervention)

What stress prevention/reduction strategies will I use?
(Prevention)

Adapted from Francoise Mathieu: Compassion Fatigue Train the Trainer Workbook (2008)

IDEA FACTORY

Commitment to Changes I could make in the next...

Week:

Month:

Year: