

Compassion Fatigue

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Compassion fatigue, also known as secondary stress reaction, describes a type of stress from helping or wanting to help those who are traumatized or are under some type of emotional distress.

Compassion fatigue creates many issues in people's everyday lives. It used to be a problem that was commonly seen among health care professionals. Health care professionals' work puts them in situations where they commonly see or hear about suffering, so it is truly not uncommon to see these hard working and caring people fall victims into compassion fatigue.

In today's world, almost every 'big' tragedy, death, or accident is instantly broadcasted and we have access to it at anytime, anywhere and at any age. Due to this, compassion fatigue is no longer just unique to health care professionals.

How do you know if you may be experiencing compassion fatigue? According to Dr. Joseph Rieman, medical director of The Children's Home, here are a few signs of compassion fatigue:

- The suffering of others burdens you
- Blaming others for their suffering

- Trouble falling asleep/insomnia
- Physical and emotional exhaust
- Isolating yourself away from others
- Bottling up your emotions
- Loss of pleasure in normal activities/irritability
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling hopeless or overwhelmed when hearing of other peoples suffering
- Headaches

Although there is no 'magic pill' that can instantly stop you from feeling this way, Dr. Rieman suggests doing the following to help you:

- Accept the path of life that you are on
- Try to find some friends who can validate you and try to talk to them about how you are feeling
- Be kind to yourself!
- Take positive action to change that way you are feeling and change what is going on
- Limit the amount of daily news that you either watch or read about

A lot of people who are experiencing compassion fatigue will seek professional support to help them overcome their difficult thoughts and emotions and help them to focus on healthy coping mechanisms.

