

## Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

### Physical Symptoms

- I have had increased absenteeism “sick days”
- I have been feeling physically ill
- I have been feeling fatigued
- I have been feeling keyed up & nervous
- I am doing less rather than more exercise
- Normal sleep has been more difficult for me
- I have lost enjoyment in intimate and sexual activities

### Psychological Symptoms

- I have noticed myself being more cynical and pessimistic
- I noticed that I was trying to avoid feelings by numbing or shutting down
- I have had work related nightmares/bad dreams
- I have lost interest and enjoyment in activities
- I have difficulty in making decisions or am making poor decisions
- I feel like I have lost some of my self esteem

### Emotional Symptoms

- I have anger directed towards my supervisors or co-workers
- I have been feeling flat, depressed and hopeless more than I used to
- I have been more angry and irritable than normal
- I have moments of dread when thinking about going to work
- I am having trouble finding hope
- I am less connected to my spiritual and religious beliefs than I used to be
- I have felt overwhelmed more than three times the past week

## Spiritual Symptoms

- I have been avoiding spending time with my friends and family
- I have been avoiding spending time with God
- I fear for the safety of myself and my loved ones
- I have engaged less rather than more in activities that used to bring me pleasure
- I have had a lack of time for self
- I find it difficult to trust others
- I have feelings of despair and hopelessness

## Professional Symptoms

- I have been unable to get work or something specific to work out of my head
- I have had unwanted memories pop up in my head of past events from work
- My productivity at work has been reduced
- I have felt like quitting my job more than once
- I find paperwork and menial tasks getting in the way of my enjoyment of work
- Five or more checked could indicate that you are suffering from compassion fatigue symptoms.

## Symptoms of Secondary Traumatic Stress

### Intrusive Symptoms

- Thoughts and images associated with client's traumatic experiences
- Obsessive and compulsive desire to help certain clients
- Client/work issues encroaching upon personal time
- Inability to let go of work related matters
- Perception of survivors as fragile and needing the assistance of caregiver ("saviour")
- Thoughts and feelings of inadequacy as a caregiver
- Sense of entitlement or special-ness
- Perception of the world in terms of victims and perpetrators
- Personal activities interrupted by work related issues

### Avoidance Symptoms

- Silencing response (avoiding hearing/witnessing client's traumatic material)
- Loss of enjoyment in activities/cessation of self care activities

- Loss of energy
- Loss of hope/sense of dread working with certain clients
- Loss of sense of competency/potency
- Isolation
- Secretive self medication (alcohol, drugs, work, sex, food, spending etc)
- Relational dysfunction

## **Arousal Symptoms**

- Increased anxiety
- Impulsivity/reactivity
- Increased perception of demand/threat (both in job and environment)
- Increased frustration/anger
- Sleep disturbance
- Difficulty concentrating
- Change in weight/appetite
- Somatic symptoms

## **Self Care Worksheet**

### **Physical Self Care**

- Aerobic activity; exercise regularly (3x/week)
- Eat regularly (breakfast, lunch & dinner)
- Eat healthy foods
- Preventive medical care
- Medical care when needed
- Take time off work when sick
- Get massages
- Dance, swim, walk, run, play sports, sing, or other activity you enjoy
- Take time to be sexual in your marriage
- Get enough sleep
- Wear clothes you like
- Take holidays (mini breaks and longer vacations)

## Psychological Self Care

- Self-regulate at work (pelvic relaxation, peripheral vision, body scan & soften muscles)
- Self-regulate in personal life (pelvic relaxation, peripheral vision, body scan & soften muscles)
- Maintain intentionality in work
- Maintain intentionality in personal life
- Make time away from demands
- Write in a journal
- Read literature that is unrelated to work
- Do something at which you are not an expert or in charge
- Let others know different aspects of you
- Be curious
- Say no to extra responsibilities
- Decrease stress in your life

## Emotional Self Care

- Connect with others whose company you enjoy
- Love yourself
- Laugh
- Cry
- Play with animals
- Play with children
- Identify comforting activities, objects, people, places and seek them out
- Express anger is social action (ie letters to newspapers, donations, marches, gatherings)

## Spiritual Self Care

- Spend time with God
- Spend time in nature
- Find spiritual connection or community
- Cherish optimism and hope
- Be open to not knowing
- Sing
- Pray
- Spend time with children
- Be open to inspiration
- Have gratitude
- Meditate/pray

- Listen to music
- Engage in artistic activity/expression
- Have experiences of awe
- Be mindful of what is happening in your body and around you
- Make meanings from difficult periods
- Seek truth

## **Workplace Self Care**

- Take time to eat lunch
- Take time to connect with co workers
- Make quiet time to complete tasks
- Identify projects or tasks that are exciting/rewarding
- Set limits with clients and colleagues
- Balance your workload so that you are not overwhelmed
- Arrange your workspace so that it is comfortable and comforting
- Get regular supervision and consultation
- Negotiate for your needs (benefits, pay raise)
- Have a peer support group