



Compassion Fatigue

Compassion fatigue is a form of burnout that manifests itself as physical, emotional, and spiritual exhaustion. Too much caring and not enough self caring; The absorbing of emotions of people who have suffered a trauma; an extreme state of tension and preoccupation with the suffering of those being helped to the degree that it is traumatizing to the helper; compassion fatigue happens when the milk of human kindness dries up. It is important for those caring for others that they also pay attention to their own needs. Taking care of your own needs means that you will be more healthy and therefore be more able to care for others. It is important to acknowledge that it may feel selfish to do so. It is equally important to recognize that it is "healthy selfishness". Helping others, that is, doing all you can for others, is important. That does not mean, however, that you must do EVERYTHING for another. Therefore, recognize your limitations and be careful not to label them as weaknesses or failures. Remember that as a caregiver you also have needs and that it is OK to take care of yourself. The signs and symptoms are similar for those that care for their loved ones it is important to allow family members the space to discuss how they feel.

Warning signs of Compassion Fatigue:

- Abusing drugs, alcohol or food
- Anger
- Blaming
- Chronic lateness
- Depression
- Diminished sense of personal accomplishment
- Exhaustion physical or emotional
- Frequent headaches
- Gastrointestinal complaints
- High self-expectations
- Hopelessness
- Hypertension
- Inability to maintain balance of empathy and objectivity
- Increased irritability
- Less ability to feel joy
- Low self-esteem
- Sleep disturbances
- Workaholism

It is important to recognize when you're wearing down and then get into a habit of doing something every day that will replenish you.

- Spend plenty of quiet time alone
- Recharge your batteries daily
- Hold one connected and meaningful conversation each day

DEVELOPING A SUPPORT NETWORK

A review of the literature suggests that social support is among the variables that appear to be very important to the emotional or psychological recovery of burn survivors (Anzarut, Chen, Shankowsky, & Tredget, 2004; Chedekel & Tolia, 2001; Patterson, et al., 1993). To illustrate, Muangman et al (2005) observed differences in level of social support for those patients who survived a large burn injury compared to those who did not, and suggested that social support may even impact survival. Kleve and Robinson (1999) found social support to be a promising predictor of post- burn adjustment in the studies they reviewed, and endorsed the importance of providing psychosocial interventions to burn survivors. Lawrence, Fauerbach, Heinberg, and Doctor (2004) found social adjustment to be among the stronger predictors of body esteem in their study of burn survivors, and called for the cultivation of interventions that address burn-related psychosocial issues. The definition of a **support system** is a network of facilities and people who interact and remain in informal communication for mutual assistance; a network that enables you to live in a certain style. Burn injuries are physically and emotionally traumatizing and have the potential for long lasting consequences. Each person experiencing this trauma is entitled to the highest level of care and support that can be provided through the collaborative efforts of dedicated medical staff and peer support networks. It is important to assess the support system that is in place for those with a burn injury and work with the support that they have available.

- Identify a main contact in which the medical staff can communicate
- Identify a main contact that will share information with the entire support system
- Explain the support that is available in you facility such as a social worker, or spiritual support.
- Begin to introduce the benefits of support and talking about what has happened.
- Introduce peer support and the benefits to the survivor and the support system. Be aware that survivors are not usually ready for peer support during the initial phase of injury but the support network is often ready immediately and seeking out support online and face to face.
- Introduce the family to support resources such as the Phoenix Society, local burn foundations, and community groups that are developed to handle trauma and provide resources.