

Compassion Fatigue

Faith Sila RN, MSN

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Introduction

- Compassion satisfaction creates a sense of worth that has been described as the most rewarding part of what nurses do.
- It is “the positive feelings derived from helping others through traumatic events”.
- Compassion fatigue(CF): **COST OF CARING(Vicarious or secondary trauma)**
 - Emotional demands of constant exposure to human suffering, no matter how satisfying the outcome can lead to CF
- CF: emotional, spiritual and physical exhaustion
- Significantly affects well-being, job satisfaction, and quality of patient care.
- CF is a state of destructive emotional distress in which one feels isolated, confused and helpless in caring for others
- Personal & organizational coping strategies for continued compassionate connection & caring

Definition

- Decline in the ability to empathize, emotional exhaustion, and a reduced sense of accomplishment.
- It often results from frequent exposure to trauma, suffering, or high-stress situations, leading to emotional depletion.

Causes

- **Work Environment:** High patient-to-nurse ratios, inadequate support, and organizational stressors can exacerbate compassion fatigue.
- **Emotional Labor:** Nurses frequently manage their emotions while providing care, which can lead to emotional exhaustion over time.
- **Exposure to Trauma:** Frontline healthcare workers, especially in critical care or palliative settings, are more susceptible due to constant exposure to patient suffering and death.

Manifestations

- Chronic fatigue
- Mood swings: Irritability, ↓concentration, difficulties in decision making
- Feelings of hopelessness, overwhelmed, exhausted
- Decreased job satisfaction
- Reduced empathy and sensitivity: task and less emotion-focused
- Decreased productivity
- Withdrawal and self-isolation
- Addictions

Impact

Mental Health:

Compassion fatigue can lead to burnout, anxiety, depression, and even post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Job Performance: It can result in decreased motivation, lower quality of care, increased errors, and high turnover rates.

Patient Outcomes: Diminished emotional engagement can negatively impact patient satisfaction and treatment outcomes.

How to prevent & cope

Self-Care:

- Engage in self-care practices, including physical activity, adequate rest, and hobbies

Support Systems:

- Implementing peer support programs and access to mental health resources can help nurses cope with the emotional demands of their work

Training and Awareness:

- Providing education on recognizing signs of compassion fatigue and equipping nurses with coping strategies is crucial

Workplace Changes:

- Improving staffing ratios, offering flexible schedules, and promoting a supportive work culture can mitigate stressors that contribute to compassion fatigue

Tips

- Set a schedule that works for you
- Make time for yourself
 - Self care, self compassion, physical and mental well being,
 - Self-regulation refers to regulating and relaxing the body to maintain control when responding to a stressful situation.
 - Mindfulness techniques, such as breathing exercises, can help. Post code debriefs“ refill their cups”
 - Self care routine: eating healthy, getting more exercise and getting enough sleep.
- Create a Support System
 - Connection, safe space to share, Friends, family or peer support group
 - Adequate outlet to decompress or maintain a professional and emotional work-life balance.

Tips Ct..

- Make work an enjoyable place : “Learn how to respond to the heat of the moment”
- Reflective practice or reflection: Reflective practice breaks down elements in stages that define the overall situation, how the situation made you feel, why it happened, and what you could have done differently
- Move around to new positions
- Focus on compassion satisfaction
- Seek Help

Conclusions

- CF compromises patient and client care; reduces client satisfaction, risks medical errors & litigation; increases absenteeism and staff turnover; reduces productivity; promotes conflict, team dysfunction, and workplace toxicity; leads to job dissatisfaction; and reduces morale; practices are unable to sustain profitability or realize growth potential leading to dismissal and career loss.
- Addressing CF is crucial for the sustainability of nursing staff and the overall quality of healthcare delivery.
- Research and implementation of supportive practices within healthcare environments are essential steps in combating this issue.

Summary

- CF can be mitigated, transformed, and treated for a rewarding career
- Selfcare, a great support system and reflective practice can alleviate CF and improve compassion satisfaction
- Nurses and other administrative staff should be alert to the symptoms of compassion fatigue that present as profound, progressive, physical and emotional fatigue: a feeling that the nurse just can't go on and a sense of being disconnected and drained, **like a gas tank on empty**
- Keeping compassion fatigue at bay requires awareness of the **threat of compassion fatigue, symptoms of compassion fatigue, and the need for work-life balance and active self-care strategies.**

References

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Thank you

- “To lose something, one must first have it. The ability to feel empathy and compassion is a requisite to compassion fatigue.”