

**Online Class**

**Understanding and Preventing  
Compassion Fatigue**

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Compassion Fatigue Specialist, Founder of Caring Safely™

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**Tech Tips**

- Keep your link handy (from the email).
- Refresh page or close and use link to get back in
- Close other programs/browsers/pages
- Internet connection – ethernet – limit other streaming/downloads
- Chrome Browser is recommended
- If I disappear, don't leave, I will be back☺
- References on slides

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**Who am I?**

- Clinical Social Worker - Addictions and Mental Health
- Grief, Trauma, Compassion Fatigue
- Solution Focused, DBT, ACT, MBI and Yoga!
- Online Classes and Therapy [www.CharleneRichardRSW.com](http://www.CharleneRichardRSW.com)
- Founder of Caring Safely™ [www.CaringSafely.org](http://www.CaringSafely.org)
  - Personal Stream
  - Professional Stream

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## What you will learn today

- The difference between Compassion Fatigue, Vicarious Trauma and Burnout
- The Compassion Fatigue trajectory (how it begins)
- Signs of compassion fatigue and risk factors
- Three strategies to protect yourself
- What Caring Safely is all about

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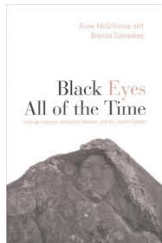
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## Black Eyes All of the Time (1999)



**Summary:** *The impetus for this book arose out of a 1995 Winnipeg study involving twenty-six Aboriginal women. The compelling accounts these women give of the domestic violence they experienced, first as children and later as wives and mothers, make it all too clear that any plan to implement diversionary reforms must first take into account this under-represented group. For survivors of domestic violence, jail terms for abusers allow time for healing, and the threat of criminal prosecution may quell violent outbreaks. Lax responses from an inconsistent criminal justice system often put Native women at risk.*

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## What is Compassion?

“Compassion is defined as the emotional response when perceiving suffering and involves an authentic desire to help” (Seppala, 2013)

“Compassion...involves the recognition and clear seeing of suffering. It also involves feelings of kindness for people who are suffering, so that desire to help – to ameliorate suffering – emerges.” (Neff, 2011)

**Two components:** identifying with human suffering and a desire or motivation to do something to relieve this suffering.

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## Hello Trauma Work!

### WOMEN'S CRISIS CENTRE:

- 24 hour Crisis Line
- 30 Days Emergency Shelter
- 6 Month Transition Program
- Follow Up Program

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## Risk Factors

- No awareness of compassion fatigue or how it develops – “burnout”
- Over exposure to trauma or pain/suffering
- Early in career
- Lack of adequate training/supervision
- Lack of organizational recognition/protective policies
- Lack of community resources to support people we are helping
- Lack of self-regulation skills
- Personal histories (Adverse Childhood Experiences)

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## The Zealot Phase

- Committed, involved, available
- Ready to problem solve and make a difference
- Willing to put in extra hours
- Tons of enthusiasm and volunteering
- Willing to go the extra mile “I’ll do that”

What did you do during the zealot phase?

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## Compassion Satisfaction

CS is about the pleasure you derive from being able to do your work well. For example, you may feel like it is a pleasure to help others through your work. You may feel positively about your colleagues or your ability to contribute to the work setting or even the greater good of society.

Professional Quality of Life Screening  
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## Compassion Satisfaction

*“The satisfaction of working with people and expressing your compassion and your empathy. The sense of doing the right thing, helping, people are responding to me. I’m doing the right things”*

C. Figley – Overexposed.

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## Other descriptions Compassion Satisfaction

I really like having people get better. It is really wonderful helping people

I did make a difference, I did make it better. I’m in the right profession. I should be here

The rewards outweigh the challenges by far

There is no other feeling that can compare to really helping someone who is struggling

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## Rewards of Compassion

Compassion leads to connection, which correlates to:

- Better mental and physical health
- Speeds up recovery of disease
- May lengthen our lifespan
- Strengthens our immune system
- Improves self-esteem
- Lowers anxiety and depression
- Increases empathy, trust and cooperation with others = more connection!

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## Compassion Fatigue

CF is characterized by a deep physical and emotional exhaustion and a pronounced change in the ability to feel empathy for clients, loved ones and co-workers.

A serious, but natural consequence of working with people who are suffering and traumatized.

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## Other descriptions of Compassion Fatigue

When you have nothing left to give, you have given so much there is nothing left.

The cumulative toll that we, as individuals, experience as a result of exposure to suffering, hardship, crisis and trauma.

Because of your kindness, compassion and empathy, you start to absorb the emotions and reactions of the people you are helping.

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### Other descriptions Compassion Fatigue

It's as though I don't have anymore to give emotionally, so I lose empathy for them. I become cynical or disbelieving in what they say.

Dealing with sick people and giving them what they need emotionally... you just give, give, give all the time.

Every time I'm at work, I feel dread. It's hard to fill my bucket.

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### Vicarious Trauma

The transmission of traumatic stress through observation and/or hearing others' stories of traumatic events and results in a shift in your world view and sense of meaning

Similar to PTSD including:

- Intrusive thoughts/memories
- Nightmares
- Psychological distress at exposure to cues
- Avoidance of thoughts/memories
- Change in Worldview – “no one can be trusted” “the world is completely dangerous.”

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### Strategy #1 Limiting Trauma Input

**The more trauma one is exposed to, the more likely they will experience vicarious trauma.** One strategy is to limit trauma input.

**Limit:**

- Number of people who have trauma per day
- Informal debriefing with colleagues
- Real trauma in news, TV, internet, social media

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## The Irritability Phase

Zealot, plus extra requests, plus limited boundaries = less self-care and lifestyle resiliency factors. Add more trauma = compassion fatigue symptoms begin.

- Begin to cut corners – avoid clients – hide
- Daydream or distracted when working with people
- Oversights, mistakes, hard to concentrate
- Distance ourselves from friends and co-workers

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## Irritability Phase

- Mock colleagues or the people you work with
- Unfair talk of medical or mental health problems
- Use of dark humor
  - Try to use as protective factors
  - Workplace culture
- How to respond:
  - Level of personal resiliency
  - Leave or Address it



Example of dark humor in social media

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## The Withdrawal Phase

- Enthusiasm turns sour – bubble bursts
- Clients become a blur – run together – seen as irritants and not individuals
- Complains made at work and personal life
- Tired all the time – don't want to talk about work or admit our profession (fake job)
- Neglect family – co-workers/friends/clients/self

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## The Zombie Phase

- Auto pilot
- Not connected to our thoughts and feelings
- Disconnected from colleagues/peers/family/friends
- Lost compassion for people you work with
- Hear but do not understand, lost our meaning and value as helpers

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## Pathology + Victimization (Burnout) OR Maturation and Renewal (Sustainable Caring)

- Overwhelmed and leave the profession
- Somatic Illness
- Symptoms are perpetual
- OR
- Hardiness
- Resiliency
- Transformation

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## Burnout

Extreme circumstances. It describes anyone whose health is suffering or whose outlook on life has turned negative because of the impact or overload of their work.

Signs and Symptoms have become chronic and physical illness has developed.

Brief interventions no longer help. Psychological and/or medical assistance is necessary.

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## Burnout

Associated with feelings of hopelessness and difficulties in dealing with work or doing your job effectively. These negative feelings usually have a gradual onset. They can reflect the feeling that your efforts make no difference or they can be associated with a very high workload or a non-supportive environment.

Professional Quality of Life Screening

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## The Day to Day Experience of Compassion Fatigue

- Dread for work (Sunday night dread)
- Day dreaming about new job
- Cancelling plans with family/friends
- Calling in sick – more illness
- If not trauma then “trivial” and “must be nice factor”
- Emotional Eating/Drinking
- Excessive TV/sleep
- Annoyance with patients/clients/students/colleagues (so needy)
- Higher generalized anxiety
- Numb. Just don’t care anymore. Lack of empathy
- Loss of hope – wondering if really making a difference – feel like a hypocrite (crying on way to work)

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## Sustainable Caring

- Caring is defined as things that are done to keep someone healthy and safe etc.
- Sustainable is defined as being able to be used without being completely used up or destroyed.
- Sustainable Caring is as being able to consistently provide compassionate care, with resilience, to the pain and suffering of others.

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## Sustainable Caring

Developing skills for sustainable caring:

- **Personal Protective Factors**
  - Lifestyle – monitoring and managing daily nourishment
  - Personal healing – past losses or traumatic experiences
  - Assertiveness and boundary skills – dealing with conflict or guilt of saying "no"
  - Emotional regulation skills – especially if background with ACEs or working with trauma
- **Professional Protective Factors**
  - Training and education in your field
  - Knowing how to protect yourself from emotional contagion and vicarious trauma
  - Clinical supervision that addresses compassion fatigue
  - Workplace policies promoting compassion fatigue protective factors
  - Peer support for professional support and personal empathy
  - Grieving the pain and suffering you see

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## The Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL)

Compassion Satisfaction

Burnout

Secondary Traumatic Stress (Compassion Fatigue)

Online Health Hub

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## Strategy #2 Emotional Regulation

- Watch for warning signs that your stress response has been triggered
- Deep Breathing Vs. Shallow Breathing
- Practice alone and with people you are helping (takes practice)
- Sticky note reminder

Deep Breathing Handout and Guided Audio

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### Strategy #3 Increasing Personal Awareness for Change

Our thoughts, feelings, urges and choices/behaviors impact our wellness and compassion fatigue many times per day. Higher stress = less clarity in these, higher perception of crisis, more reactive in behaviors.

Eg: Thoughts 'He has a history of stress around the holidays, I'm scared this stress will increase his risk factors', I have the urge to call him before I leave for holidays, I call him, he becomes distressed on the phone so now I have to call police for a safety check, I have to stay late to wait for them to check. I have to document it. I go home worrying about it and don't have the energy to go to my yoga class.

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### Strategy #3 Increasing Personal Awareness for Change

- Mindfulness Meditation – increase self-awareness, fosters empathy and reduces emotional reactivity to painful stimuli
- Yoga – increases mind/body awareness and triggers relaxation. Helps to move emotions through body
- Therapy – working with a therapist can help you understand work through any struggles related to boundaries and conflict.

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### Strategy #3 Increasing Personal Awareness for Change

With increased awareness...

Eg: Thoughts 'He has a history of stress around the holidays, I'm scared this stress will increase his risk factors', I have the urge to call him before I leave for holidays...

I have awareness of my thoughts/fears/urges but instead of reacting I pause and think 'I know I've been stressed wrapping things up for holidays. I met with him three days ago and we have a full safety plan in place for him over the holidays. I have no reason to suspect crisis. My behaviors – emotional regulation, leave on time, have energy for yoga.

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**Summary**

- Know the concepts
- Know the phases – determine which phase you are in
- Take the assessment
- Limit your trauma input
- Practice emotional regulation to prevent emotional contagion
- Increase personal awareness for change
- Get additional help if needed

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**Caring Safely Online Program**

- Workshops/Speaking/Coaching since 2008 – information and strategies

Why I developed the online program:

- Guided support for long-term change
- Personal growth program to explore deeper barriers (our beliefs, habits, urges)
- Connect people from around the world for peer support
- Teach managers/supervisors how to implement compassion fatigue protective factors
- Teach others how to specialize in compassion fatigue and how to develop training for their own field/niche

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**Caring Safely  
Begins May 8<sup>th</sup>**

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Questions about webinar or Caring Safely:  
Charlene Richard  
[info@charlenerichardsw.com](mailto:info@charlenerichardsw.com)

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