

# Caring Safely®

Strategies to identify and mitigating your  
contributing factors for Compassion Fatigue

## Responsibility Pie

- It will help to know what specific dynamics contribute to your compassion fatigue so that you can learn how to manage them differently.
- The responsibility pie is a key tool for helping you identify your contributing factors as well as how to manage and respond to them in a sustainable way.
- This tool gives you a framework to assess all of the people and organizations who are both responsible for a person's current experience as well as helping that person improve their current experience, including your role.
- Who is responsible for your client's current experience? Who is responsible for helping your client improve his/her current experience?

## Responsibility Pie – Digging Deeper

- I asked people why they do some of the things that contribute to compassion fatigue, including:
  - Work (unpaid) overtime, work through meals/breaks
  - Stay attached to email/phone after work hours
  - Do things outside of their regular role that results in extra time with people and extra administrative tasks
- Here were some of the reasons:
  - Another service that is supposed to help them is not available, has a long wait list, has failed them in the past and that it will be emotionally painful to see the person experience this.
  - The person does not want to access/ask another person/service for support
  - Fear that that another person/service that is supposed to help wouldn't do it well enough
  - The perception that it is a hassle or would take more energy to involve another person/service
  - Worry that asking for collateral supports would make the helper seem incompetent

## Responsibility Pie – Reflective Questions

If your current practices are leading to compassion fatigue, or are not sustainable, then something needs to change.

The following reflective questions can help you shift into a more sustainable practice:

1. Who, or what organization, do you believe is not available/adequate that leads to you doing more than your regular role with the person you are helping, thereby impacting your ability to create time/energy for your well?
2. What is the long term impact if you regularly continue to take on more than your role and aren't able to add more time/energy to your well?

## Responsibility Pie – Reflective Questions

3. What thoughts/fears/emotions/grief do you experience if you stick to your role and you let the rest of the pie maintain responsibility for their roles?

4. What coping strategies do you have to deal with the thoughts/fears/emotions/grief you may experience by keeping your professional role/boundary and letting the rest of the pie handle their role/responsibility?

## Internal Vs. External Locus of Control

- People believe they have a varying level of influence or control over their daily experiences/situations. Some believe they have a lot, some a little and some feel as though they have no control and things are done “to” them that they can’t change.
- Helpers often empower people to take more influence and power in their own lives, to plan for potential barriers and how to overcome those barriers. Sometimes when compassion fatigue is high, we start to lose energy/belief in our own influence and power over our lives.
- The Locus of Control handout is designed to help you refocus your time and energy into what you do have control over and to foster empowerment.

# Internal Vs. External Locus of Control

How to use the Locus of Control handout:

- **Internal Locus of Control:** Things we do have control over
  - Thoughts, Feelings, Behaviors, Beliefs
- **External Locus of Control:** Things we do not have control over
  - Everything else

The goal is to reflect on situations and see where you are spending your energy. The more energy you spend focusing on your internal locus of control, the less stress you will experience and the more energy you will develop. This will also help you see if you have a tendency to go into a “rescuer” role in your external locus of control section.

# Locus of Control and the Workplace

- Some helpers/service providers will believe, or feel, that they don't have any control or influence over their workplace experience. They may believe that they have to say “yes” to everything that is presented to them in terms of work hours/tasks/events/committees/case loads etc.
- This may never be challenged or questioned, resulting in an unsustainable work environment and resentment in the helper.
- You may have opportunities to influence your workplace experience that could help you develop a sustainable caring practice.
- Watch to see if other people in your workplace say no, or negotiate, or do things differently, in order to make the job more manageable and see how they do it.

## How you identify your role as a helper

Keeping in mind your values, roles, innate talents and abilities, along with the responsibility pies and the internal/external locus of control, create a statement that you can adapt as your belief of your role as a helping professional.

“I, alone, did not create the situation my client is struggling with. I, alone, will not solve it. I will do whatever I can, within my limits, to help this person. I will trust that the others responsible will also do what they can. I will trust the universe to do what it needs to.”

## Role of Self-Esteem and Self-Worth

- There are many factors that contribute to our input and output, what locus of control we are spending time in and the roles and responsibilities we maintain, all of which impact our well and our compassion fatigue.
- Begin using the strategies in Caring Safely and see what small changes you notice. If you find yourself struggling with these strategies, please continue with the program.
- Self-esteem and self-worth can play a significant role in this and we will be exploring these later in the program.

## Guided Relaxation – Audio Download

- This week you will begin to increase your daily relaxation practice by activating the parasympathetic branch of the nervous system with a deep breathing technique.
- If you have any health conditions, please consult a physician before doing an extended deep breathing practice. Do not do if recent cardiac event, respiratory illness, injury that can be impacted by expansion of lungs, chest, rib, back or if you have low blood pressure.
- This practice is setting the stage for:
  - Increasing mind/body awareness
  - Protection and recovery from vicarious trauma
  - Self-Compassion
  - Sustainable Caring