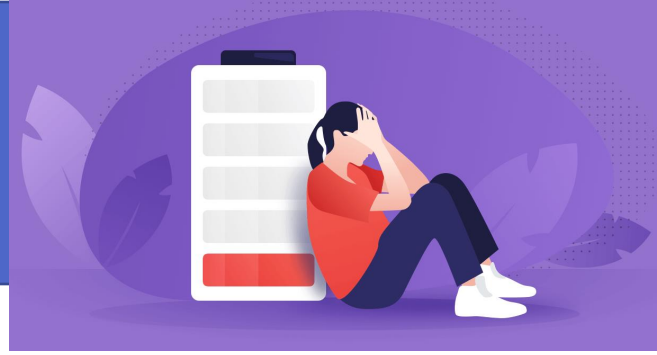


Compassion Fatigue Symptoms and Tips



When you overuse your compassion without taking time to regularly recharge, the ability to feel and care for others becomes worn down.

Common signs of compassion fatigue include:

- Physical and/or emotional exhaustion
- Reduced feelings of sympathy or empathy
- Loss of productivity
- Feeling irritable, angry, or anxious
- Headaches and/or intrusive thoughts
- Trouble sleeping
- Isolating yourself
- Feeling on edge/ jumpiness
- Reduced sense of accomplishment or meaning in your professional life
- Trouble making decisions
- Problems in personal relationships

Compassion fatigue can be a side effect of caring for others or taking on the suffering of patients experiencing stress and/or trauma. It causes physical and emotional exhaustion, reduces the ability to empathize, and can lead to burnout. It's very common in healthcare workers and is called secondary traumatic stress. If it's not managed, compassion fatigue can worsen your health and wellbeing.

Below are tips to help improve caregiver health:

Be aware of changes in your level of compassion fatigue. Stress levels change from day to day. Make time each day for a five-minute check-in to assess body tension and worries. Do this in the morning, not right before bed when the mind can race and get stuck on worry.

Make self-care a priority. If you don't take care of yourself, it is hard to take care of others. Practice good self-care strategies and coping techniques. Start by making each day predictable and include self-care in the areas of adequate sleep, healthy nutrition, physical activity, relaxation, and socialization with friends and loved ones.

Take time off. Don't feel guilty about taking time off and when you do, don't worry about work. Your manager will make sure your colleagues aren't overburdened by your time away and you'll return feeling recharged.

Create community. Connecting with other like-minded professionals can help prevent compassion fatigue. Talking about what your feeling with colleagues at Einstein or elsewhere, allows you to give words to your emotions and gives others permission to do the same. Knowing that others are feeling similar emotions helps us feel less alone. Give permission to each other to point out potential problems and report daily self-care rituals.

Find ways to experience positive emotion. Fun and laughter can renew your spirits. Play games, watch funny movies, be silly with friends and loved ones. Small things like noticing blooming flowers or feeling the warmth of the sun on your skin can help.

Write in a journal. An effective stress reduction technique that's perfect for caregivers is journaling. Getting your thoughts and feelings down on paper and out of your head can be very therapeutic. Try focusing on gratitude. Write down three things you are grateful for each day.

Use positive ways to cope with stress. After a tough day, it's tempting to plop down in front of the TV with a bag of chips or cookies and a drink; don't make this a habit. Instead, try doing things that will make you feel better in the short term and improve your health in the long term such as taking a walk, mediating, doing a quick workout, practicing deep breathing, taking a hot bath or shower, reading a book for pleasure, or catching up with a friend.

Speak with religious leader, chaplain, or therapist. If your compassion fatigue levels are increasing, talking with a professional and reflecting can bring relief. These professionals help people deal with negative thinking, stress, depression, anxiety, major life changes, and more. A helping professional can guide you toward effective ways to reduce compassion fatigue and manage the tough emotions that come with being a caregiver. (*article adapted from dailycaring.com and apa.org)

- **Employees can call Einstein's Outpatient Department of Behavioral Health at 215-456-9850 for new appointments. You can also call Carebridge, Einstein's Employee Assistance Provider (EAP) at 214-456-8484 then press #3 to speak with a behavioral health clinician skilled in your area of concern.**

To take a self-assessment of Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue please visit:

https://proqol.org/uploads/ProQOL_5_English_Self-Score.pdf