

Self-care to Prevent Compassion Fatigue



Presented by the Military & Family Life Consultants

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Objectives

- Recognize the signs
- Learn to cope
- Call for help



Definitions

- The cumulative impact of hearing about, caring for, and helping to alleviate the suffering and misfortune of others.
- Characterized by feeling:
 - Trapped
 - Overwhelmed
 - Out of control



Vulnerability

- People who are very empathic
- People with unresolved personal traumas
- People going through the same thing



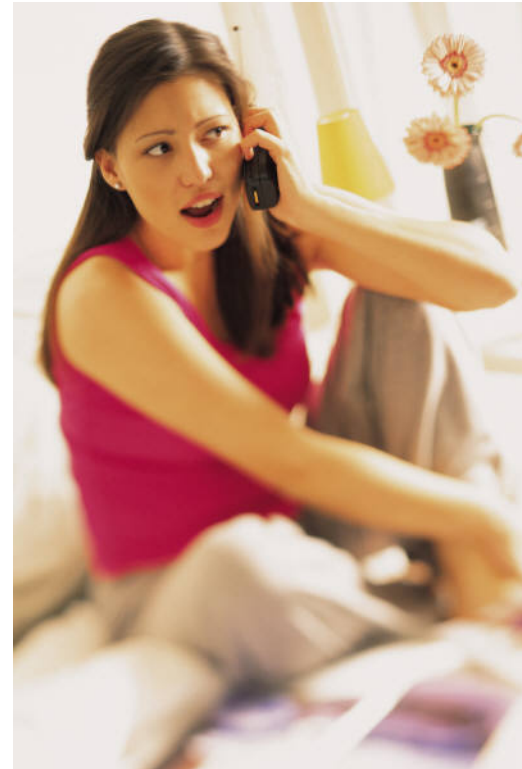
Recognizing the Signs

- Emotional and Physical
- Thoughts and Attitudes
- Social and Behavioral



Emotional & Physical

- Rapid changes in mood (esp. crying spells)
- Nervousness, Suspiciousness, Hyper-vigilance
- Worrying about your own safety
- Irritability, Agitation, Anger
- Insomnia and Nightmares



Somatic complaints

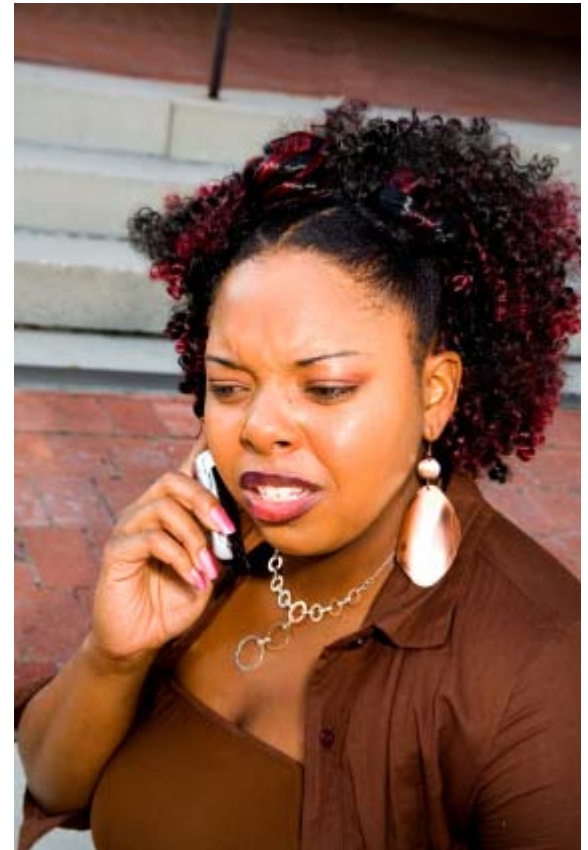
- Headaches or Stomach aches
- Racing or Pounding Heart,
- Shortness of Breath,
- Dizziness or Shaking

Thoughts & Attitudes

- Distractibility
- Confusion and Indecision
- Forgetfulness
- Self-doubt or blame
- Lack of confidence
- Lowered self-esteem

Social Behavior

- Isolation and withdrawal
- Angry Outbursts displaced on to “innocent bystanders.”
- Feeling jaded, cynical, or callous and suspicious toward others.



Coping Strategies

- Emotional and physical
- Thoughts and attitudes
- Social and behavioral

Emotional & Physical

- Feel what you feel – Bottled up feelings come out in negative ways.
- Watch emotionally powerful movies.
- Keep your sense of humor.
- Keep a journal or Scrapbook.
- Limit resentment, sadness, and grief
- Increase acceptance, resolve, and hope.

Thoughts & Attitudes

- Conserve your energy.
 - Deployment is a marathon not a sprint.
- Take care of yourself.
 - Put the O₂ mask on yourself first.
 - Getting in the water with a drowning person is a last resort.
- Think long term.
 - Success is a journey not a goal.

Thoughts & Attitudes

- Set boundaries
 - Know your role
 - Know your limitations
 - Know when to say "No."
- Work to Empower Others
- Under promise and Over deliver
- Enjoy the moment
- Give yourself credit
- Don't compare your self to others
- Do *your* best not THE BEST

Social & Behavioral

- Balance Work, Personal, Family, Social, and Spiritual aspects of your life
- Have a “battle buddy”
 - Someone you with whom you can vent and debrief
- Accept help and support
 - Communicate, Cooperate, Delegate
- Limit your exposure to news coverage
- Have some personal goals or projects



Social & Behavioral

Healthy Behaviors

- Nutrition:
 - 3 meals a day, Limit snacking and alcohol
- Sleep:
 - Develop a relaxing routine, Go to bed and get up at the same time every day, Don't stay in bed to toss and turn.
- Exercise:
 - 20 – 30 minutes 3 -4 days per week.
- Relaxation:
 - Unclench your mind and body
 - Take breaks: 15 min Morning, 30 min Lunch, 15 min Afternoon
- Recreation:
 - Have some activities that are just for fun.
- Friends:
 - Spend time with people who are just friends.



Summary

- Compassion fatigue results from the pressures of helping others who have experienced trauma, crisis, or tragedy
- It is characterized by troubling emotions, thoughts, and behaviors
- Knowing the signs of compassion fatigue can help you to prevent or limit its impact
- Developing coping strategies reduces the impact so the caregiver can maintain balance and remain effective as a helper and leader

Resources

- Military Family Support Services
- Chaplain and local clergy
- Military OneSource 800-342-9647
- Tricare www.tricare.osd.mil
- Behavioral Health Services

Questions

