Compassion Fatigue

MENTAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER



What is Compassion Fatigue?

Compassion Fatigue is the emotional and behavioral exhaustion that **naturally arises** from empathizing with someone experiencing trauma. It stems from the stress of wanting to help and, like any form of fatigue, it can **reduce a person's ability or desire to help others.** Often, it can be described as **"the cost of caring."**

What does this mean for parents?

Parents are often in direct contact with those who are suffering from mental illness, while also juggling their own life challenges. With responsibility to protect, support, and nurture their children, the constant pressure can lead to extreme stress. Even when giving their all, parents may feel emotionally drained, increasing their risk for compassion fatigue.

Empathy is essential for parents, but Compassion Fatigue can leave them exhausted and detached from their child's emotions. Child psychologist Nina Kaiser Ph.D., says it often lowers patience for everyday stressors. Comforting a child or handling a tantrum can feel like running a never-ending marathon.

9 SIGNS OF COMPASSION FATIGUE

1. Signs of physical anxiety such as breathing difficulties, muscle tension, and digestive problems
2. A sense of hopelessness
3. A decreased ability to empathize
4. Irritability and impatience
5. Decreased productivity and job satisfaction
6. A reduced ability to feel pleasure
7. Trouble sleeping
8. An urge to isolate yourself from others
9. Self-doubt and reduced self-esteem



Compassion Fatigue

Have you ever said to yourself?

I want to **empathize** with my child.
I am **not equipped** to handle the challenges my child is facing.
I want to be **"present" and attentive** when having serious conversations with my children.
I want to **help my family** improve its mental health.

If yes, you are likely to experience compassion fatigue.

To restore balance, one must first acknowledge their OWN needs

Compassion fatigue can cause feelings of shame, making parents feel guilty for being exhausted. But, it's important to recognize that compassion fatigue stems from exposure to suffering, not a "lack of love."

Practicing self-awareness and self-care can help ease the impact of compassion fatigue and these feelings of shame. Studies show that parents who use mindfulness and stress reduction techniques improve their well-being and relationships, and those reporting "excellent" physical and mental health experience less compassion fatigue.

To best support their children, parents must also focus on themselves by using coping resources, building social support, strengthening self-esteem, and practicing health promotion strategies. Finding balance and taking time to rest and nourish their mind, body, and spirit is essential.

Compassion Fatigue Risk Factors	Compassion Satisfaction Supporters
High expectations of work	Adjusting expectations in response to reality
Idealistic worldviews	Focusing on the good
The view that self-care is selfish	Accepting the bad
A lack of strong personal boundaries	Viewing self-care as essential to mental and physical health
An overdeveloped sense of personal responsibility	Setting compassionate boundaries

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Finding Yourself When You're Feeling Lost

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