### Compassion Fatigue

The profound emotional and physical exhaustion that helping professionals and caregivers can develop over the course of their career.

| Helping professionals: 40–85% | Hospice nurses: 79% | Social workers: 85% |

### Warning Signs

- **Physical**
  - Physical exhaustion
  - Insomnia/hypersomnia
  - Headaches/migraines
  - Getting sick more often
  - Emotional stress becomes physical symptoms (Somatization and hypochondria)

- **Behavioral**
  - Increased use of alcohol/drugs
  - Other addictions
  - Absenteeism
  - Anger/irritability
  - Exaggerated sense of responsibility
  - Avoidance of clients/family/friends

- **Psychological**
  - Emotional exhaustion
  - Distancing/avoiding friends/family
  - Isolated
  - Negative self-image
  - Insensitivity to emotional materials
  - Problems with intimacy
  - Hypervigilance

### Factors Increasing Risk:
- Working in isolation
- Lack of social support
- Longer exposure to vicarious trauma
- Personal trauma history (60% of helpers)
- Act of human cruelty vs accidental or impersonal
- Several other stressors in helper’s life at the time of secondary trauma
- Anxiety-prone or habitually negative
- Idealistic expectations of ability to help others without consequence to self

### Factors Reducing Risk:
- Reduced dose or intensity of exposure
- Older age
- Strong social support
- Impersonal rather than interpersonal trauma
- Calm, non-anxious temperament
- Willingness to look for meaning in suffering
- Greater experience dealing with traumatized people
- Close connections with colleagues

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"Everything you do in life stems from the relationship you have with yourself"  
- Michelle Maros

Data adapted from "Healing the Helpers: Supporting Family Caregivers", a webinar originally held on 6/5/2021. Presented by Jesse Fairchild, LCPC.
What to Do

- **Stewardship**: the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one’s care
- **Trauma stewardship**: the overall practice of caring for oneself in order to remain effective at-and to avoid the negative effects of caring for others

**Making the Caring Cycle Sustainable**

- Compassion for self and others
- Empathy for self and others
- Understanding of values/purpose
- Self-knowledge
- Self-awareness

**Returning to Self: Self-Awareness**

- Being in tune with stress signals
- Current feelings, actions, and reactions
- Dynamics from our past influencing present
- How do we deal with anger, hurt and resentment?
- Is there a balance between nourishing and depleting activities in your life?
- Exercise, interests, personal debriefing?
- Counseling? Social support?
- How do you sabotage self-care?

Self-Care Toolbox

**What are my warning signs?**

- Regular check-in
  - Set a regular time
- Over what do I have:
  - Control
  - Influence
  - Concern
- Enjoyable stress relief strategies?
- Stress reduction strategies?
- Stress resiliency strategies?

Breathing Meditations

- Breathing Meditation
- Metta Meditation
- Tonglen Meditation
- Body Scan Meditation

Resources

**Calm**

Application used for meditation

**Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL)**

A self-report for those experiencing extremely stressful events

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