

Compassion Fatigue: What Is It?

2021 - 2022

**Kenneth Young Center and CCSD 62
Professional Development**



Your Presenters



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We partner with communities to support
people of all ages to navigate
life's challenges through personalized
Prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery.

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What is Compassion?

Compassion is the emotional response one has when perceiving suffering that involves an authentic desire to help.

I feel for you
+ I understand you
= I want to help you

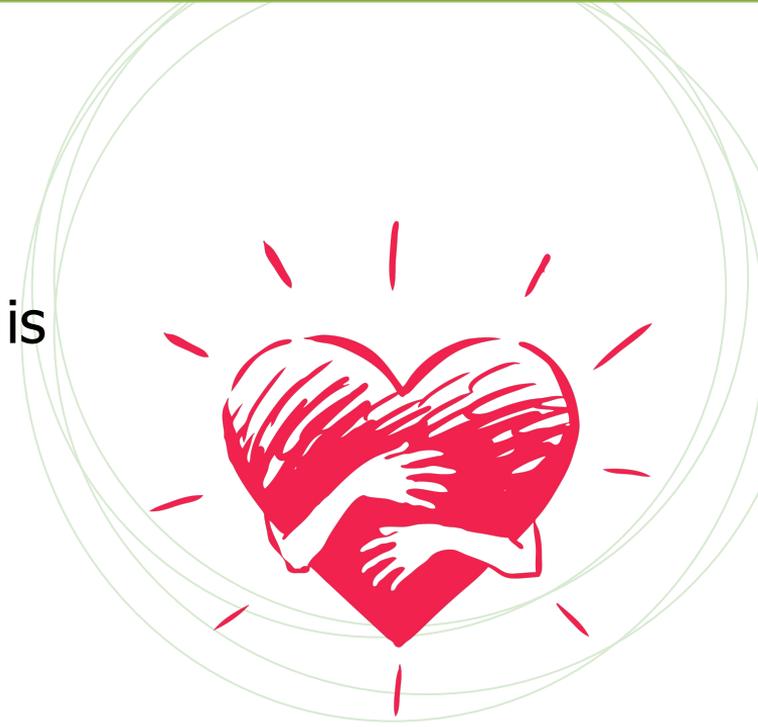


Compassion Satisfaction:

Getting joy out of doing a helping job is
Compassion Satisfaction

School staff are helpers. All jobs
in schools are helping professions.

Helpers are empathetic, kind,
and love what they do.



Compassion Fatigue

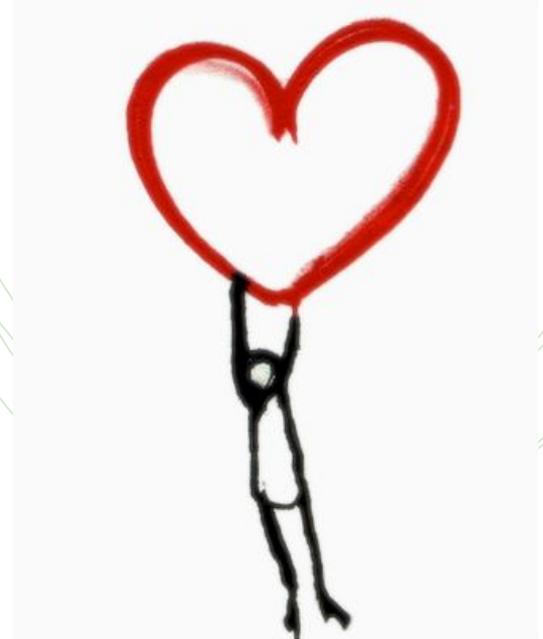
The opposite of Compassion Satisfaction is

Compassion Fatigue:

The profound emotional and physical strain that takes place when helping professionals are unable to refuel and rejuvenate.

Interactions with PEOPLE take an emotional toll.

A school staff member may not be able to stop thinking about students' struggles when they go home, but they are too tired to talk to a good friend about the difficult time they are going through.



Burnout and Vicarious Trauma



Burnout:

Exhaustion workers experience when they have low job satisfaction, feel powerless and overwhelmed at work.

*The ENVIRONMENT is stressful.
Individual may dread going to
work each day.*

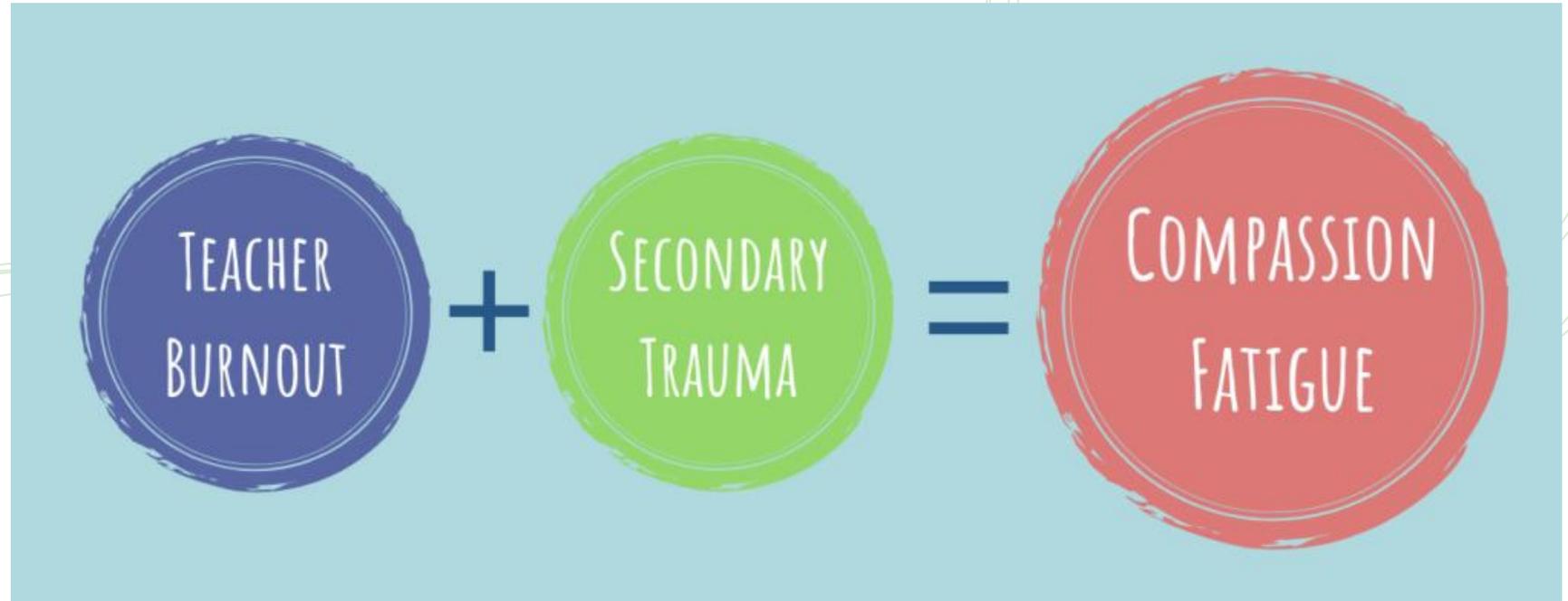


Vicarious Trauma:

Shift in worldview that happens when helping professionals work with clients who have experienced trauma.

*A teacher may witness a student's
difficult home life and that affects
the teacher's sense of safety for
their own children*

Compassion Fatigue

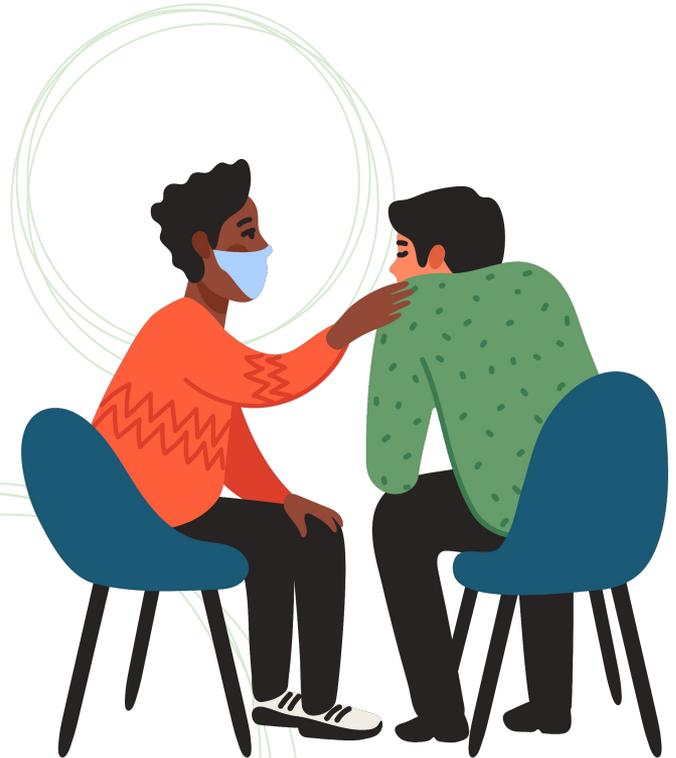


Why?

Things in our work and personal lives can contribute to compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue:

- Policies and procedures
- Social norms
- Culture
- Tasks at hand
- Management and colleagues

Each of these things can buffer us from stress, but also wear us down.



Why?

We also have internal factors that contribute to compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue:

- Temperament
- Personality and life experience
- Ability to self-regulate



COVID-19 Pandemic and Racial Unrest

Individuals who work in helping professions are already more likely than others to experience compassion fatigue.

Then, for the last 18+ months we have experienced twin pandemics - **COVID-19** and **Racial Injustice**.

In the *fall of 2021* the Surgeon General issued an advisory titled, "Protecting Youth Mental Health" - bringing to light what most of you already knew - ***our children and youth are in crisis right now.***

On *October 29, 2021*, the APA issued an ***apology to People of Color*** for the APA's role in promoting, perpetuating, and failing to challenge racism, racial discrimination, and human hierarchy in the U.S.

Roles of a school staff member:

Think about all of the roles you play each day at school:

- Educator
- Listener
- Helper
- Ally
- Custodian
- Techie

We are so many things to so many people - it is easy to forget to take care of ourselves.



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Compassion Fatigue: Signs and Symptoms

- Affects many dimensions of life
- Loss of sleep
- Decrease in productivity and effectiveness
- Decrease in cognitive ability or trouble concentrating
- May experience anger and/or resentment
- Change in worldview
- Change in sense of identity
- Loss of spirituality
- Loss of morale

Compassion Fatigue: Signs and Symptoms

- Impaired judgment
- Change in behavior
- Need to withdrawal from normal activities
- Isolation
- Overwhelmed with obligations
- Increased pessimism
- May begin to self-medicate

Compassion Fatigue: Signs and Symptoms

- Emotional numbness
- Apathy
- Feelings of failure and self-doubt
- Feelings of guilt and powerlessness
- Sadness or depression
- Loss of self-worth
- Loss of hope and meaning

NATIONAL
SUICIDE
PREVENTION
LIFELINE[™]

1-800-273-8255

**If you feel extreme sadness
or loss of hope please call
the Lifeline or text 741741**

Compassion Fatigue: Scenario

Alex:

Alex is a fairly new teacher at Very Real Middle School; they teach PE to 6,7,8th grade and love sports! Alex always participates in the lessons and loves interacting with their students. Alex has been working with students who are victims of abuse and trauma at home. Alex often talks to these students about their experiences at home and tries to provide support to them. Lately, Alex has been uninterested in participating in the lessons and has been extremely irritable and short tempered with the class. What can Alex do to combat their Compassion Fatigue?

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Compassion Fatigue: Prevention

Awareness

What contributes to your stress level?



Compassion Fatigue: Prevention

Awareness:

Take a minute right now to assess what is happening in your body in this moment:

- Are you tense or relaxed?
- Are you tired or alert?
- Is your breathing steady?

If you are tense - try to relax one muscle at a time.

Compassion Fatigue: Prevention

Balance

Find sources of energy and healing outside of work



Compassion Fatigue: Prevention

Balance:

There are other things that are key to maintaining some balance in life:

- Eat well and in moderation
- Sleep enough
- Limit news intake
- Have fun on purpose!

Compassion Fatigue: Prevention

Connections

Create and maintain support systems



Compassion Fatigue: homework

Before the next training,
February 7, 2022,
please take a moment
to fill out the ProQOL assessment.

The assessment can be found in the
Toolkit or at proqol.org,
under ProQOL measure and tools,
then choose proQOL5 self score.



Questions?

Please feel free to email us:

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Compassion Fatigue

Resources used for this presentation

<https://www.apa.org/topics/covid-19/compassion-fatigue>
proqol.org

<https://www.stress.org/military/for-practitionersleaders/compassion-fatigue>

<https://www.crisisprevention.com/Blog/Compassion-Fatigue-Symptoms>

<https://www.tendacademy.ca/what-is-compassion-fatigue/>

<https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-youth-mental-health-advisory.pdf>

<https://www.apa.org/about/policy/racism-apology>