



# **Emotional Resilience for Community Caregivers**

Material in this booklet has been adapted by the  
Trauma Healing Center, Inc. from:

Building Bounce

by Marcus Warner and Stefanie Hinman

and

Compassion Fatigue & Burnout: Prevention and Resilience  
for the Workforce

by J.Eric Gentry, PHD, LMHC

## SYMPTOMS OF COMPASSION FATIGUE

### Physical Symptoms

- I have had increased absenteeism "sick days"
- I have been feeling physically ill
- I have been feeling fatigued
- I have been feeling keyed-up and nervous
- I am doing less rather than more exercise
- Normal sleep has been more difficult for me
- I have lost enjoyment in intimate and sexual activities

### Psychological Symptoms

- I have noticed myself being more cynical and pessimistic
- I noticed that I was trying to avoid feelings by numbing or shutting down
- I have had work-related nightmares/bad dreams
- I have lost interest and enjoyment in activities
- I have difficulty in making decisions or making poor decisions
- I feel like I have lost some of my self esteem

### Emotional Symptoms

- I have anger directed toward my supervisors or co-workers
- I have been feeling flat, depressed, and hopeless more than I used to
- I have been more angry and irritable than normal
- I have moments of dread when thinking about going to work
- I am having trouble finding hope
- I am less connected to my spiritual and religious beliefs than I used to be
- I have felt overwhelmed more than three times the past week

### Spiritual Symptoms

- I have been avoiding spending time with my friends and family
- I fear for the safety of myself and my loved ones
- I have engaged less rather than more in activities that used to bring me pleasure
- I have had a lack of time for self
- I find it difficult to trust others
- I have feelings of despair and hopelessness

### Professional Symptoms

- I have been unable to get work or something specific to work out of my head
- I have had unwanted memories pop up in my head of past events from work
- My productivity at work has been reduced
- I have felt like quitting my job more than once
- I find paperwork and menial tasks getting in the way of my enjoyment of work

Five or more checked could indicate that you are suffering from compassion fatigue symptoms

## Symptoms of Secondary Traumatic Stress

<b>Intrusive Symptoms</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Thoughts and images associated with client's traumatic experiences</li><li>• Obsessive and compulsive desire to help certain clients</li><li>• Client/work issues encroaching upon personal time</li><li>• Inability to "let go" of work-related matters</li><li>• Perception of survivors as fragile and needing the assistance of caregiver ("savior")</li><li>• Thoughts and feelings of inadequacy as a caregiver</li><li>• Sense of entitlement or special-ness</li><li>• Perception of the world in terms of victims and perpetrators</li><li>• Personal activities interrupted by work-related issues</li></ul>
<b>Avoidance Symptoms</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Silencing Response (avoiding hearing/witnessing client's traumatic material)</li><li>• Loss of enjoyment in activities/cessation of self care activities</li><li>• Loss of energy</li><li>• Loss of hope/sense of dread working with certain clients</li><li>• Loss of sense of competence/potency</li><li>• Isolation</li><li>• Secretive self-medication/addiction (alcohol, drugs, work, sex, food, spending, etc)</li><li>• Relational dysfunction</li></ul>
<b>Arousal Symptoms</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased anxiety</li><li>• Impulsivity/reactivity</li><li>• Increased perception of demand/threat (in both job and environment)</li><li>• Increased frustration/anger</li><li>• Sleep disturbance</li><li>• Difficulty concentrating</li><li>• Change in weight/appetite</li><li>• Somatic symptoms</li></ul>

# Best Practices for Emotional Resilience

## Build Joy and Rest Rhythms

### Self-Care

- exercise: minimum walk 20 mins 4-5 times a week
- sleep: 7-8 hours per night
- engage in hobbies and activities that “fill you up” and bring you joy

### Practice Appreciation

- What are you grateful for?
- Neuroplasticity changes the brain

## Self-Regulation

**Bottom up:** Movement, awareness of the nervous system, feeling present in the body.

*How does my body feel?*

- **Breathing:** holding the breath deep into the belly engages the Vagus Nerve
- **Movement:** bringing awareness to how the body feels and where it is in space.
- **Relaxing muscles:** starting at your feet squeeze and relax each muscle group all the way to the top of your head.
- **Focus on relaxing** your core muscles and letting your shoulders melt.

**Top/down:** Cognitive awareness and reframes.

*What are my perceived threats?*

- Is there a new way to view that threat that would be more true or more helpful?
- Ask “what does that mean to me?” “Is it true?” Ask others to help you do narrative checks

**Horizontal:** Essential right brain engagement.

- Emotional, relational, art, music, journaling, and connection
- Build Community

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