

COMPASSION FATIGUE IN CAREGIVING



caregivers

PREVENT  PROTECT  PROMOTE
abuse/neglect *clients* *dignity*

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

Developed by:

University of Wisconsin Oshkosh
Center for Community Development, Engagement and Training (CCDET)
www.uwosh.edu/ccdet/caregiver

Wisconsin Department of Health Services
Division of Quality Assurance (DQA)
www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/caregiver

Permission is granted to reproduce these training materials with proper attribution for internal use within healthcare organizations or government agencies at no cost to the training participants. Other reproduction is prohibited without written permission from UW Oshkosh CCDET. All rights are reserved. For information on reproducing these materials, please contact UW Oshkosh CCDET at

caregiver@uwosh.edu

www.uwosh.edu/ccdet/caregiver

Table of Contents

Overview	3
Learning Points	3
Introduction to Compassion Fatigue	3
Compassion Fatigue or Burnout?.....	3
Activity: What are the Signs?	4
Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue	5
Compassion Fatigue and Misconduct	5
Empathy vs. Sympathy	6
Activity: Brene Brown Video.....	7
Strategies to Reduce Compassion Fatigue	7
A Note About Journaling.....	9
Activity: Strategies to Address Compassion Fatigue and Misconduct.....	10
Wrap-Up	111
Review Learning Points	111
Resources	11
Training Materials Checklist	12

Overview

Providing quality care to clients requires meeting both their physical and emotional needs. But what about your needs as a caregiver? In this session we will focus on caregiver compassion fatigue, recognizing the red flags of compassion fatigue, finding empathy, and strategies for self-care so that you can better meet your needs as well as the needs of your clients.

Learning Points

Let's review the main learning points.

After completing this course, participants will be able to:

- Describe the impact of compassion fatigue on caregivers and clients receiving care in all provider types regulated by the Division of Quality Assurance
- Recognize the symptoms of compassion fatigue
- Practice empathetic responses for more successful interactions with others
- Demonstrate strategies to reduce compassion fatigue

Introduction to Compassion Fatigue



Most people are drawn to the profession of caregiving by a genuine desire to care for others. Caregivers make a real difference in the lives of their clients and experience a great sense of meaning and joy in doing so. Caregivers may also experience many losses and face challenges daily. These losses and challenges can lead to physical and mental exhaustion resulting in compassion fatigue. Compassion fatigue can reduce the caregiver's ability to empathize or feel compassion for others and if improperly managed, may lead to

caregiver misconduct.

Compassion Fatigue or Burnout?

Compassion fatigue may sound a lot like burnout. Sometimes these two may be confused for one another. Burnout typically results from some type of dissatisfaction. It might be dissatisfaction with our work or maybe those that we work with.

With burnout, you may feel frustrated, angry, loss of motivation or have an increasingly cynical or negative outlook.

Some professionals believe compassion fatigue is a form of burnout that continues to get worse until it leads to physical and mental exhaustion.

Compassion fatigue may result in feelings of exhaustion, emotional numbness and disconnect, anxiety or depression, insomnia or changes in physical condition.

Activity: What Are The Signs?

Caregiver Barb has worked at Merry Hills for 3 years. She takes great pride in her work and enjoys the clients. Barb has worked with several different caregivers over the past year and has been assigned the lead in training new caregivers. The administration at Merry Hills has thanked Barb for doing this but otherwise, she hasn't gotten any other form of recognition for her efforts. Barb is feeling more and more that she is not appreciated and has recently started to ignore some of the training details she normally would share with a new caregiver. They can figure it out on their own like she did when she started. Barb was scheduled to train a new caregiver tomorrow, but she has decided to call in. What do you think Barb is experiencing?

Let's visit Barb a few months later.

There have not been any new staff for Barb to train over the past few months, which has put a huge strain on the staffing at Merry Hills. Clients and families have been complaining about the level of care. Barb has been working many extra shifts. Several times she has put her personal life and needs on hold to make sure someone was there to care for the clients. Barb has been experiencing major headaches and has lost weight. Alice, who has always been one of Barb's favorite clients, has become increasingly ill. Barb has always tried to provide a little extra attention to Alice but lately, she just doesn't have the energy or the desire to do so. For that matter, Barb doesn't have the energy or drive to provide care to any of the clients. She feels she's just going through the motions. What do you think Barb is experiencing?

Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue



Compassion fatigue can affect your ability to do your work or complete daily activities. There are red flags that may indicate you might be experiencing compassion fatigue. Here are some of the signs and symptoms to watch out for:

- mood swings
- becoming pessimistic or overly negative
- feeling emotionally disconnected in your personal and professional life
- misuse/overuse of alcohol or other drugs
- anxiety or depression
- difficulty concentrating
- trouble sleeping
- physical symptoms such as headaches, digestive troubles, changes in eating habits

Compassion Fatigue and Misconduct



A caregiver's job is seldom easy. Encountering challenging situations day in and day out is exhausting. These challenges may cause caregivers to feel emotions that could lead to compassion fatigue. It's important to recognize these emotions. If not managed properly, these feelings may lead to caregiver misconduct.

Let's look at the following examples and see how compassion fatigue may lead to caregiver misconduct. Review the symptoms of compassion fatigue discussed above and identify what symptoms may have led to potential caregiver misconduct in the following examples.

Example #1

Caregiver Jessica works full time for a Home Health agency providing care to Emanuel who has Parkinson's disease. Emanuel requires assistance with ambulation, ADLs, and has become more demanding as his disease progresses. He has become

increasingly verbally abusive and says hurtful things to Jessica. He has been experiencing delusions and has accused Jessica of stealing from him. Emanuel has refused to eat several meals Jessica has prepared and has been refusing his medications because he feels she is trying to poison him. Jessica is exhausted trying to deal with Emanuel's behaviors. If he won't eat or take his medication, that's his problem. She's done everything she can. Jessica doesn't feel any compassion towards Emanuel anymore. She has withdrawn from her friends and has become increasingly depressed. She spends her nights thinking about what the next shift with Emanuel will bring. This morning Jessica received a call from her boss. Emanuel's doctor has admitted him to the hospital due to significant weight loss and alarming Complete Blood Count (CBC) results. Jessica's boss wants to know if Jessica has been providing assigned cares to Emanuel.

Example #2

Imani arrived at work to discover two staff had called in sick, leaving the provider short staffed again! This led to breakfast running late and client cares not being done timely. Clients were complaining they were hungry and were not getting needed assistance. One client was incontinent because Imani could not respond to his call light quickly enough. Another client was yelling out because another client had come into her room thinking it was hers. One client's family members were at the bedside of their loved one during her last hours. Imani couldn't even process this client's imminent passing and just felt numb. After 45 minutes into her shift, Imani found herself in the breakroom in tears. She couldn't prioritize which client needed assistance first. One of Imani's co-workers came into the breakroom and yelled at Imani for not being out on the floor helping out with the clients. Imani hasn't been sleeping well and feels exhausted. She has been experiencing headaches and has not been eating properly. Imani just felt she needed to escape. Without even realizing what she doing, Imani left the facility, got into her car and drove away. Her supervisor is thinking of reporting Imani to the state for neglecting her clients.

Empathy vs. Sympathy

Compassion fatigue also differs from burnout in that it causes caregivers to experience a weakened sense of empathy for those in their care. What is empathy? Is it the same as sympathy? People who are operating out of sympathy try to "make things better" or to "fix" things. They are not trying to be unkind or thoughtless. They are just coming from a thinking place. They may think "I'm glad it's not me" or "I feel sorry for them."

People who are being empathetic are coming from a “being” or “feeling place.” Remember earlier in the training when we talked about the effect of compassion fatigue reducing our ability to empathize or feel compassion for others? If I lose empathy, can I get it back? Sure you can. Let’s talk about 4 conditions to focus on to help regain our ability to be empathetic.

- **Perspective Taking** means that we try to see the situation from the other person’s point of view. Perception is reality. How they see things is real for them. We need to try to see things through their eyes.
- **Staying out of Judgement** reminds us that we don’t have all the facts. Judging completely interferes with our ability to feel/show empathy to another person. We must remind ourselves not to judge others.
- **Recognizing Emotion** is about trying to identify how the other person is feeling. It requires that we first recognize emotion in ourselves.
- **Letting the Other Person Know** that we recognize the emotion that person is experiencing.

When we do these things, we are well on the road to being empathetic in our relationships with others.

Activity: Brene Brown Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw>

Because we feel uncomfortable and are not quite sure what to say, we might say some of the things shown in the video. Think about some of the statements that you heard in the video. In our attempt to make ourselves feel better we say some of those “at least” statements we saw in the video.

Strategies to Reduce Compassion Fatigue

Many of us have checking or savings accounts. We try to keep a bit of extra money in these accounts to use for rainy days. The same is true when we think about our emotional status. We need to find ways to add to our emotional bank account so we can meet everyday challenges and reduce stress. A healthy emotional bank account helps us avoid compassion fatigue.

We all experience stress in our lives. Perhaps stress is caused by relationships with others, finances, kids, family caregiving, illness, and even our job as a caregiver. All

these things can take away our ability to maintain a physically and emotionally healthy lifestyle.

What are some common work-related stressors that caregivers may experience?



You may have heard the sayings “You can’t take care of others until you take care of yourself” or “You can’t pour from an empty cup.” As a caregiver, you are not being selfish by putting yourself first. By neglecting your physical and emotional needs, you cannot adequately care for others.

Let’s look at some techniques you can use to add to your emotional bank account and help reduce compassion fatigue.

- Journal your experiences and feelings
- Share your concerns with your supervisor
- Go for a walk
- Listen to music
- Read a book
- Get enough sleep
- Eat a healthier diet
- Spend time with supportive loved ones
- Practice yoga/meditation
- Use self-acupressure (applying pressure with your fingertips to certain points of the body) For example: <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/stressed-try-this-easy-9-minute-acupressure-exercise-video/>
- Go to your “safe place” in your mind (favorite spot, favorite sounds, favorite memories)
- Practice deep breathing exercises (In through the nose and out through the mouth)
- Share your thoughts and feelings with someone you trust (friend, family member, therapist)
- Seek counseling either through your employer or healthcare professional
- Pet a dog or cat
- Find a hobby
- Treat yourself to something special

What are some of your favorite ways to reduce your stress level/relax?

Remember Barb? Let's go back and see how she is doing.

After several months of experiencing both physical and emotional effects from her job as a caregiver at Merry Hills, Barb recognized she was heading towards compassion fatigue. Barb began journaling her thoughts and feelings. She began walking with a trusted friend and talked with her friend about her feelings. At work when Barb was feeling particularly stressed, she took a few minutes to go to a "safe place" in her mind and practiced some deep breathing. Barb also spoke with the administration of Merry Hills about her concerns. She began setting limits for herself and at work. Barb limited the amount of overtime she was willing to work. If she had family or personal obligations, Barb requested time off well ahead and attended the activities as planned. Merry Hills was able to hire a couple more caregivers which took some of the pressure off Barb. Although Barb's job is still stressful and challenging, she is finding the compassion, empathy and desire to help others that she so loved when she first began working at Merry Hills.

What are some of the tips Barb is using to reduce compassion fatigue?

A Note About Journaling

We learned that Barb started journaling about her feelings. Writing in a journal every day or two doesn't need to be time-consuming. It may be just a few words or sentences about an important event or feeling that day. Sometimes, writing down a situation allows us to examine it more clearly. Place the journal (or notebook) where you are likely to see it every day. Some people keep the journal next to their bed and try to write in it at bedtime. Others find it helpful to journal first thing in the morning and set an intention for the day. Setting intentions is a practice of gathering a word or words that act as a focus for the day. It can be as simple as one word like "peaceful" or a few words such as "today I will focus on being positive." Whatever time of day you choose to do so, journaling can give you space to sit back and evaluate your thoughts, behaviors, and

emotions. It can be a safe place to vent your frustrations, celebrate your successes and jot down your dreams. Give it a try!

Activity: Strategies to Address Compassion Fatigue and Avoid Potential Misconduct

Let's revisit the situations with Jessica and Imani that led to the potential misconduct of neglect. What strategies can you identify that Jessica and Imani could have used to reduce the compassion fatigue they experienced?

Example #1

Caregiver Jessica works full time for a Home Health agency providing care to Emanuel who has Parkinson's disease. Emanuel requires assistance with ambulation, ADLs, and has become more demanding as his disease progresses. He has become increasingly verbally abusive and says hurtful things to Jessica. He has been experiencing delusions and has accused Jessica of stealing from him. Emanuel has refused to eat several meals Jessica has prepared and has been refusing his medications because he feels she is trying to poison him. Jessica is exhausted trying to deal with Emanuel's behaviors. If he won't eat or take his medication, that's his problem. She's done everything she can. Jessica doesn't feel any compassion towards Emanuel anymore. She has withdrawn from her friends and has become increasingly depressed. She spends her nights thinking about what the next shift with Emanuel will bring. This morning Jessica received a call from her boss. Emanuel's doctor has admitted him to the hospital due to significant weight loss and alarming Complete Blood Count (CBC) results. Jessica's boss wants to know if Jessica has been providing assigned cares to Emanuel.

Example #2

Imani arrived at work to discover two staff had called in sick, leaving the provider short staffed again! This led to breakfast running late and client cares not being done. Clients were complaining they were hungry and were not getting needed assistance. One client was incontinent because Imani could not respond to his call light quickly enough. Another client was yelling out because another client had come into her room thinking it was hers. One client's family members were at the bedside of their loved one during her last hours. Imani couldn't even process this client's imminent passing and just felt numb. After 45 minutes into her shift, Imani found herself in the breakroom in tears. She couldn't prioritize which client needed assistance first. One of Imani's co-workers came into the breakroom and yelled at Imani for not being out on

the floor helping out with the clients. Imani hasn't been sleeping well and feels exhausted. She has been experiencing headaches and has not been eating properly. Imani just felt she needed to escape. Without even realizing what she doing, Imani left the facility, got into her car and drove away. Her supervisor is thinking of reporting Imani to the state for neglecting her clients.

Wrap-Up

To be our best, we must feel our best. Being able to identify the signs of compassion fatigue and to properly address the symptoms helps ensure that as a caregiver you maintain the feelings of compassion and empathy to provide the best quality of care to clients and avoid the potential for misconduct.

The work that you do matters and you are valued!

Review Learning Points

Let's review the learning points from today's training:

- Describe the impact of compassion fatigue on caregivers and clients receiving care in all provider types regulated by the Division of Quality Assurance
- Recognize the symptoms of compassion fatigue
- Practice empathetic responses for more successful interactions with others
- Demonstrate strategies to reduce compassion fatigue

Resources

Compassion Fatigue: Symptoms to Look For

<https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/signs-compassion-fatigue#091e9c5e8207f70-2-5>

Tips for Reducing Compassion Fatigue Resource:

<https://dailycaring.com/8-ways-to-relieve-caregiver-anxiety-and-improve-well-being/>

Article: How to Relive Stress Now and in the Future. 18 Effective Stress Relief Strategies

<https://www.verywellmind.com>

Article: Stress Relievers: Tips to Tame Stress

<https://www.mayoclinic.org>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

<https://www.samhsa.gov/>

#1 Best Seller by Nick Trenton: Stop Overthinking: 23 Techniques to Relieve Stress, Stop Negative Spirals, Declutter Your Mind, and Focus on the Present (The Path to Calm)

Yoga with Adriene

<https://yogawithadriene.com/>

Training Materials Checklist

For this training, you will need:

- Laptop computer (recommended)
- MS PowerPoint (PPT Viewer can be downloaded for free at Microsoft.com)
- LCD Projector (recommended)
- Screen for viewing the PPT (recommended)
- Flip chart and markers
- Printed Participant Guides
- Pens or pencils
- Evaluation (optional)
- Certificate of completion (optional)

Note: It is strongly recommended that the PPT be viewed using an LCD projector. If that option is not available, the PPT may be downloaded and printed as a handout.