

Compassion Fatigue: Can We Care Too Much?

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In this very brief introduction to compassion fatigue and the accompanying video clip, I pose the question "Can we care too much?"

As occupational therapists, we are among many helping professions (and non-professional workers) who may be exposed -- and repeatedly so -- to the trauma experienced by others. In this presentation, I touch upon the trauma also experienced by our colleagues and other co-workers, the experience of whom may add to compassion fatigue.

After posing that question, I begin with Charles Figley's definition as, in my research, he was most often referred to when authors defined "compassion fatigue." (I note that, unfortunately, I was unable to access his early books; wanting to provide his definition, however, I eventually found a Medscape interview in which he provided one, as well as his "Green Cross Proposed Standards of Care.") Also in my research, I discovered the [Compassion Fatigue Solutions website](#), hosted by Françoise Mathieu. On that website, I found a number of resources that put "compassion fatigue" into very accessible language, including a 90-minute video of one of her workshops (<https://compassionfatigue.ca/video-the-basics-understanding-compassion-fatigue-and-vicarious-trauma>).

The accompanying video clip introduces the following:

- The importance of compassion fatigue and its potential effects on quality of care, the workplace, and the health of the therapist. Mathieu's term of "sliming"; i.e., the need for helpers to share, possibly inappropriately, with others what they have heard or how it affected them, without considering the potential impact for the other person.
- Suggestions for mitigating 'sliming'.
- Who may be susceptible (including families, as well as other populations that may be indirectly affected; i.e., support workers).
- Contributors to compassion fatigue and research that questions if personal traits, history, professional experience may be protective or contributory to compassion fatigue.
- Signs/symptoms of compassion fatigue (addressing those work-related, emotional, and physical).
- How compassion fatigue might be addressed, and suggestions for helping the "helpers", and suggestions regarding self care and things management might do.

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