
Stress: Yours, Mine and Theirs

Raising the Bar
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Balance...

When a
person's
ability to
cope...



...equals
his / her
level of
stress

There are times...

when the
stresses of
life...



...exceed
the ability
to cope

What are you seeing?

- What types of behaviors are your customers exhibiting as a result of their stress?
 - ❑ Short temper
 - ❑ Anxiety
 - ❑ More emotions (i.e. crying)
 - ❑ Desperation
 - ❑ Irritability
 - ❑ Hopelessness
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Customers may be experiencing...

- Physical stressors
 - Exhaustion, hunger, heat (cold), illness
- Psychological stressors
 - Loss of control, sense of helplessness and distress, loss of hope
- Life / environmental stressors
 - Decreased income, decreased quality of life, uncertain about the future

Employment / Unemployment

- Employment: structure helps society
 - Feel productive and valued
 - Develop financial independence
 - Establish hope for the future
- Unemployment: could be a trigger for some people that could lead to stress overload
 - Loss of job, income, social interaction, sense of worth, daily routine

Stress overload

- fatigue
- headaches
- loss of concentration
- difficulty making decisions
- inability to control anger
- increased use of alcohol, caffeine, cigarettes or drugs
- increased or decreased eating
- feeling overwhelmed
- thinking often about what needs to get done

Stress may contribute to...

- high blood pressure
- heart disease and stroke
- decreased immune defenses
- cancer
- stomach problems
- poor brain functioning

10 proven, healthy ways to deal with stress

1. Connect with others
2. Stay positive
3. Get physically active
4. Help others
5. Get enough sleep
6. Create joy and satisfaction
7. Eat well
8. Take care of your spirit
9. Deal better with hard times
10. Get professional help if you need it

What is more than stress?

- Clinical Depression
- Anxiety Disorders
 - PTSD and veterans
- What is needed?
 - May require treatment and medications
 - Must be treated by a physician or qualified mental health professional

Stress or more than stress?

- Either / or
 - May experience a crisis situation
 - Four levels of crisis development
 - Increased anxiety level
 - Defensive level
 - Acting out level
 - Tension reduction level
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Increased anxiety level

■ Customer

- ❑ Pacing
- ❑ Restlessness
- ❑ Increased tone / rapid speech
- ❑ Agitation, nervousness
- ❑ Hypervigilance
- ❑ Decreased eye contact

■ You

- ❑ Remain calm
- ❑ Active listening
- ❑ Supportive statements
- ❑ Indicate non-verbal understanding
- ❑ Non confrontational
- ❑ Non judgmental statements

Defensive level

■ Customer

- ❑ Verbal belligerence
- ❑ Projecting hostility
- ❑ Staring
- ❑ Challenging authority
- ❑ Testing limits
- ❑ Making accusations
- ❑ Talking louder

■ You

- ❑ Calm demeanor
- ❑ Don't argue; no battle of wills
- ❑ Use silence
- ❑ Remind customer of behavioral expectations
- ❑ You are there to help!

Acting out level

■ Customer

- Loss of control
- Yelling
- Threats
- Physical aggression
 - Towards environment (windows, chairs, etc.)
 - Or towards people

■ You

- Don't engage customer
- Don't try to subdue
- Recognize own limits
- Safety / escape
 - Move towards exit
- Leave and call for help

Tension reduction level

■ Customer

- Muscle relaxation
- Remorsefulness
- Embarrassment
- Physical exhaustion
- Crying / sadness
- Return to rational thought

■ You

- Avoid discussing triggering event
- Allow time for recovery before attempting to problem solve
- Initiate discussion with other staff
 - What triggered event?
 - What could have been done differently?

Creating calm through communication

- Appear centered and relaxed. Breathe! Control emotional responses. Be calm, but attentive.
- Allow time. Listen and acknowledge the feelings. Don't judge or belittle.
- Lower your voice, tone, pitch, tempo.
- Allow physical space.

Creating calm through communication

(continued)

- Allow expression of needs and grievances.
- Verbal venting releases energy and promotes calming.
- Clear up misunderstandings; respond to valid complaints.
- Don't be defensive, argue, take sides, or talk over the customer.

Creating calm through communication

(continued)

- Don't offer solutions or attempt to bargain; instead, point out choices.
- Respond to valid complaints; ignore challenging questions.
- Find out what is really being said – what is behind the words?
- Know when to stop trying; exit the meeting, call for back up if necessary.

Mirror vs. Teflon

- Mirror: reflect back and match unpleasant behaviors
 - ❑ Staff and customers feed off of each other
 - ❑ Bad situation gets worse!
- Teflon: non-stick; non-absorbent
 - ❑ Negative words and behaviors slide off
 - ❑ Despite dealing with unpleasant behaviors, staff remains professional and polite

React vs. Act

■ React

- ❑ Others set the tone
- ❑ Others take control
- ❑ Others set example of good or bad behavior
- ❑ Others determine how you respond or behave
- ❑ Others prevent you from controlling your emotions or behaviors

■ Act

- ❑ You set the tone!
- ❑ You take control!
- ❑ You set the example of good behavior!
- ❑ You decide how to behave or respond!
- ❑ You decide to not let others control your emotions or behavior!

Win / Win vs. Lose / Lose

■ Win / Win

- ❑ Customer gets what he wants / needs.
- ❑ You feel sense of satisfaction with the way you handled things.

■ Lose / Lose

- ❑ Customer doesn't get what he wants / needs.
- ❑ You feel you failed somehow.

Win / Win

- Understand four stages of crisis development
 - Create calm through communication
 - Be Teflon, not a mirror
 - Act; don't react
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What are you experiencing?

- What are you feeling when working with customers?
 - ❑ Tired
 - ❑ Hopelessness
 - ❑ Ineffective
 - ❑ Anxious
 - ❑ Short temper
 - ❑ Overwhelmed
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Compassion

■ Definition

- A feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by suffering or misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the pain or remove its cause

Compassion Fatigue or Secondary Trauma Stress Disorder

■ Definition

- A state of tension and preoccupation with individual or cumulative trauma of clients as manifested in one or more ways
 - Re-experiencing the traumatic events
 - Avoidance/numbing or reminders of the event
 - Persistent arousal “A state experienced by those helping people in distress.”
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Compassion Fatigue or Secondary Trauma Stress Disorder *(continued)*

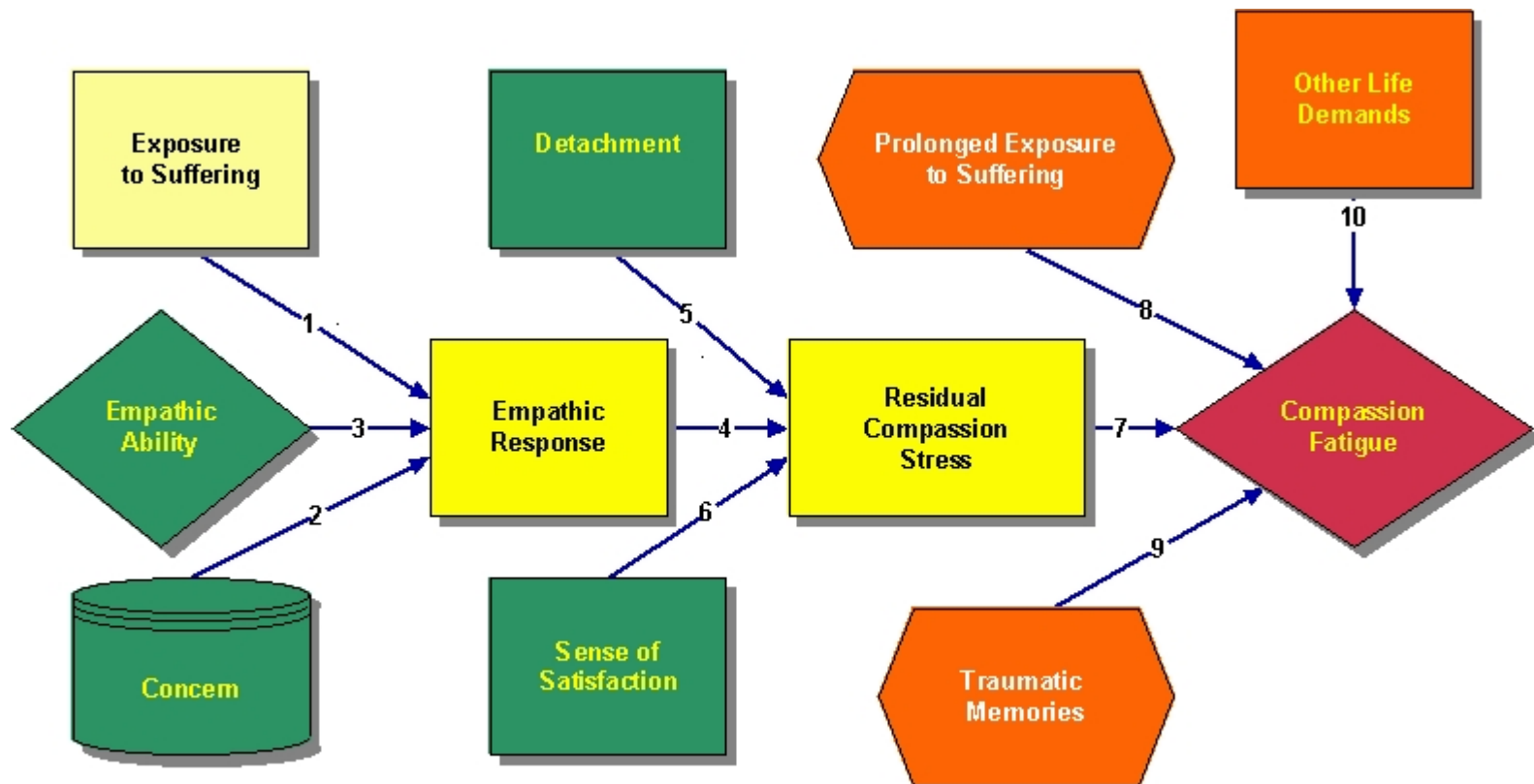
- Left untreated can lead to:
 - ❑ symptoms worsening
 - ❑ burnout
 - ❑ poor self-care and extreme self-sacrifice in the process of helping
 - ❑ Compassion Fatigue or symptoms related to PTSD
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Universal Vulnerability

■ Definition

- Working with people, especially people who are in need, who are hurting, who have special problems going on in their own lives, who have health issues, become more vulnerable to compassion fatigue
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Compassion Fatigue Process



What to look for

- sleeplessness
 - irritability
 - anxiety
 - emotional withdrawal, avoidance of certain tasks
 - isolation from coworkers
 - feelings of helplessness and inadequacy
 - lack of physical care
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Practical Interventions

- Acknowledge the problem and get support
 - Establish support systems
 - Encourage co-workers to talk about their feelings and possibly seek outside help
 - Look out for your own needs and encourage co-workers to do the same
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Practical Interventions

- Step 1
 - Realize that you have symptoms of compassion fatigue and accept that the situation needs to be addressed.
 - Step 2
 - Set clear boundaries with yourself and others and maintain those boundaries. Learn the art of saying NO through your new boundaries.
 - Step 3
 - Develop a healthy support system.
 - Step 4
 - Attend a support group that deals with compassion fatigue or burnout. Support groups offer an affordable alternative to counseling.
 - Step 5
 - Take care of yourself; put yourself first. Eat correctly, get plenty of rest and relaxation, meditate, and practice the art of time management to ensure a healthier happy you.
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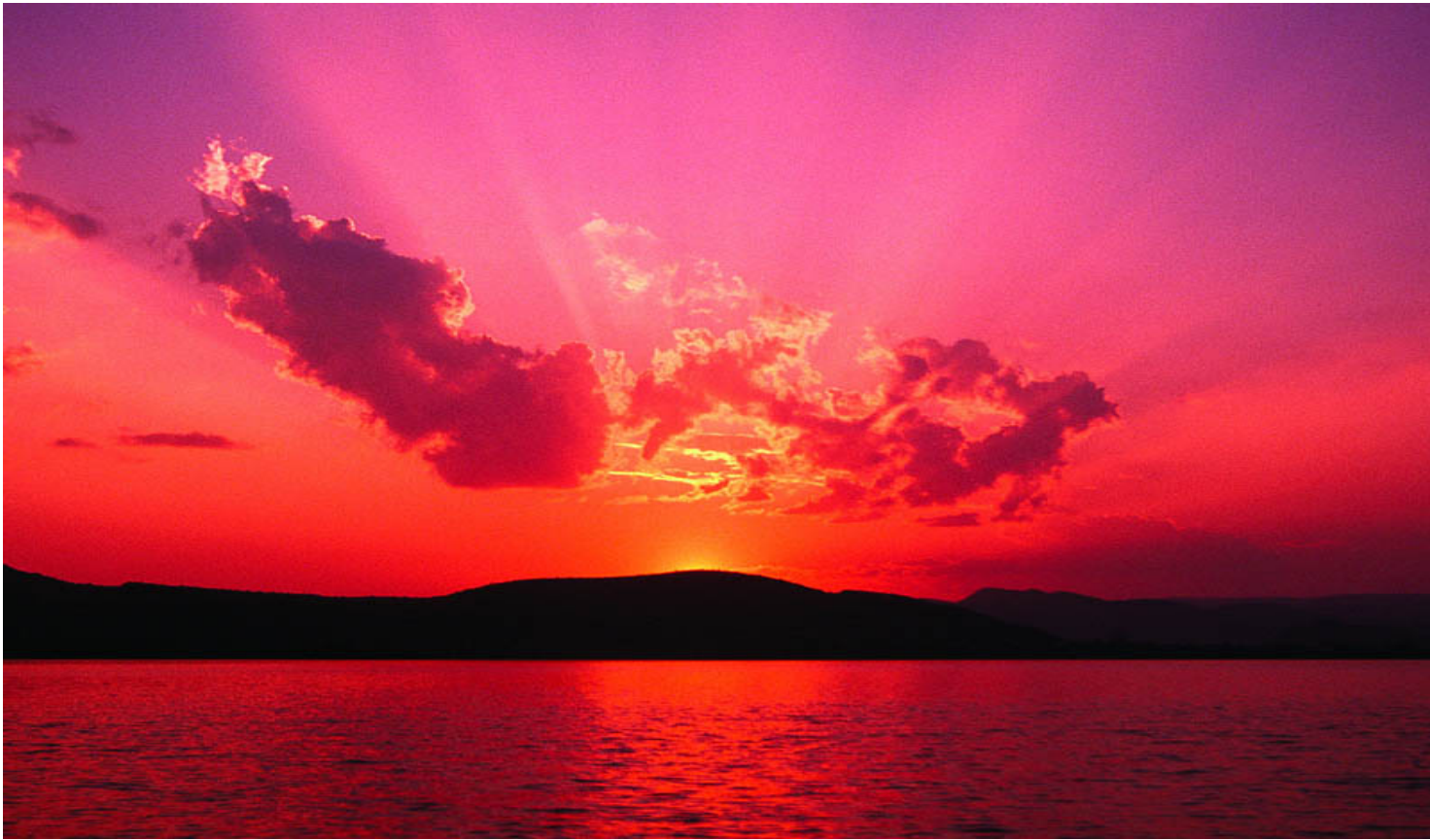
Compassion Fatigue Self-Test

- Overview
- Only a tool
 - If high – what does that mean?





Practice



Breathing Exercise and Relaxation Technique

Mental Health Resources

- **Mental Health America.** www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/live-your-life-well/ways www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/information
 - **High Quality Customer Service for One-Stop Career Center Clients in Stressful Situations.** *University of Illinois at Chicago, Center on Mental Health Services Research and Policy.*
www.psych.uic.edu/mhsrp/ACE.CustomerService.pdf
 - **Wellness Module 1: Mental Health Matters.**
BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information.
<http://heretohelp.bc.ca/sites/default/files/images/wellness1.pdf>
 - **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)**
<http://www.nami.org>
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Compassion Fatigue Resources

- Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project
www.compassionfatigue.org
 - Compassion Fatigue: Coping With Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder in Those Who Treat the Traumatized, edited by Mr. Figley (Brunner/Mazel, 1995)
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