

Combating the Common Cold of Helping Professionals



How to Build an Immunity against Compassion Fatigue

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» Table of Contents

01

The Core of Self-Care

02

The Common Cold of Compassion Fatigue

03

Self-Awareness

04

Self-Awareness Activities

05

Self-Compassion

06

Daily Agreement

The Core of Self-Care

While many of us have been conditioned to believe that self-care is solely an act of self-indulgent activities, I have learned that the core of self-care must have a foundation of self-awareness and self-compassion. For an act of self-care to be meaningful and helpful we must be in a reflective mind while doing it.

The core of self-care is a way of thinking and a lifestyle that is rooted in a reflective and compassionate frame of mind.

In the following pages you will learn some strategies for building greater self-awareness and self-compassion to protect yourself from getting stuck in survival mode.

The Common Cold

Bearing witness to the traumas of other people on a daily basis places you at risk for compassion fatigue, the emotional distress experienced from helping traumatized people.

Most of us entered this profession because we care, we love to help others, and we wanted to make a difference. And most of us were ill-prepared for the realities of the helping profession, including the secondary trauma, vicarious trauma, and compassion fatigue associated with helping people navigate through their traumas.

After working in this profession for over 2 decades, it became clear to me that compassion fatigue was comparable to the common cold. Doing this work makes you prone to catching it. In the following pages of this book, you will learn how to build an immunity to protect yourself from this common cold and continue to do the work you love from a full well.

Recognize the subtle signs:

- Difficulty concentrating
- Apathy
- Daydreaming when meeting with clients/patients
- Overfunctioning in work
- Social Isolation
- Frequent headaches, body aches
- Difficulty recovering from illness

What subtle signs have you noticed?

Self-Awareness

Use the following strategies to create a foundation of self-awareness to combat the symptoms of Compassion Fatigue.

1

Low-Impact Debriefing

Following a stressful event, session, or at the end of the work day, ask a peer or supervisor to debrief with you. Prioritize focusing on your thoughts, emotions, reactions, reflections and sensations in your own body. The person listening does not need to give you advice or solve the problem. They just need to listen, support, and be empathetic. Use this debriefing opportunity to gain insight as opposed to just venting about the stressful situation.

2

Body Awareness

During interactions with the person you are helping, be aware of your body positioning. We can unconsciously mimic our client's behavior and this can change our frame of mind, causing us to mindlessly empathize with their pain. Notice if you have tension in your face, if you are clenching your jaws, frowning, and/or slouching. Try changing your body positioning to reflect openness and comfort by relaxing your eyebrows, unclenching your jaw, rolling your shoulders back to open your heart, relaxing your shoulders and taking a deep breath in through your nose and a long exhale through your mouth as you soften your body.

3

Reflective Journaling

Don't just put pen to paper and use free association to recap a difficult day. Take time to look at a stressful situation with a reflective mind. Use the ABC technique. Identify the activating event, your personal beliefs and thoughts about what happened, and the consequences that occurred within you (emotions, sensations, and behaviors). If you were in a reactive frame of mind at the time of the event, then explore what other options you had that you couldn't see at the time and try to learn from it.

Self-Awareness Strategy

ABC Technique

Activating Event

2

3

Low-Impact
Emotions

Body
Sensations

Reflective
Thoughts

Your Beliefs and Thoughts about what happened

Consequences that occurred within you (feelings, sensations, behaviors)

Daily Self-Awareness Tracker

On the following page, use the daily self-awareness tracker to bring awareness to your thoughts, feelings, and body sensations before, during and following interactions with clients, colleagues, and loved ones.

DAILY SELF-AWARENESS

Time of Day	Client Emotions/Reactions	Colleague Emotions/Reactions	Friends/Family Emotions Reactions	My thoughts, emotions, body sensations
Before Work				
Work Morning				
Lunchtime				
After Work				
Evening				

Self-Compassion

Use the following strategies to create a foundation of self-compassion to combat the symptoms of Compassion Fatigue.

1

Self-Compassion Break

Acknowledge the stressful situation. Get in touch with the feelings associated with the situation. Repeat the following words. "This is a moment of suffering." "This hurts." "This is hard." "Suffering is a part of life." "I'm not alone." "May I be kind to myself." May I be patient with myself."

Relief can come from affirming that you are experiencing suffering and pain, a very difficult yet natural part of life, and stating your intention to be kind, forgiving and accepting of yourself.

2

Leaning into your self critic

Do you struggle with an inner critical voice? These inner critic voices often serve a purpose for when they show up in our lives. Consider the following questions to help determine your inner critic's main responsibility. What is the critic's function in your life? How does it fulfill that role? How well is it at performing its job?

3

Laugh at your mistakes

Sometimes we can take ourselves too seriously in our roles as therapists, social workers, educators and healthcare professionals. Remember, we are human and we make mistakes. Sometimes the best learning experiences in life come directly from our mistakes. Instead of getting angry or responding with negative criticism, try looking at the humorous side of being human. Laugh and relieve the pressure you put on yourself to be perfect or right. The best helpers are ones that have had their own struggles and learned from them.

My Daily Agreement

Self-compassion also includes keeping our promises to ourselves. When you've focused on helping everyone else, oftentimes your needs get neglected because you don't have the capacity to do another thing...even if it's to improve your own well-being. Please take the time to reflect on your current schedule and how you might integrate that one non-negotiable self-care activity (eating lunch, movement, watching your favorite show, taking breaks in between sessions) as your daily agreement with yourself.

DAY

Non-negotiable

What non-negotiable(s) can you incorporate in your schedule today?

Times

What times of the day work best for your current schedule?

Barriers

What are the barriers that might get in the way of your commitment? Who can help you navigate these barriers?

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Thank You

Thank you for trusting me to share resources with you to use as you navigate ways to balance your own self-care needs with client/patient/family care. Remember, loom, doom, guilt, and exhaustion do not have to be waiting in the wings for you as a helping professional. You can do this work that you were called to do from a full well.

YOUR GO TO

RESOURCE LIST

WWW.FULLESTWELL.COM

TO PURCHASE THE ONLINE COMPASSION FATIGUE COURSE "THE FULLEST WELL: FROM FATIGUE TO FULFILLMENT." IF ENROLLING MORE THAN 20 STAFF FROM YOUR ORGANIZATION, CONTACT HELLO@FULLESTWELL.COM.



WWW.SHARISENANCE.COM/CORPORATETRAININGS

TO BOOK SHARISE FOR CORPORATE LIVE TRAININGS.



WWW.GROUNDBREAKERTHERAPY.COM/DIRECTORY

GET CONNECTED WITH A TRAINED EMDR OR CERTIFIED EMDR THERAPIST IN YOUR AREA. THERAPISTS SEEKING EMDR THERAPY TRAINING CAN GET CONNECTED WITH AN EMDR CONSULTANT.





Sharise Nance is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Trauma Specialist, Workshop Facilitator, Global Speaker, Serial Author, and Entrepreneur. She is the co-owner and founder of HandinHand Counseling Services, LLC and has over 20 years of experience assisting individuals, couples and families see beyond energy depletion, hopelessness, panic, guilt and feeling overwhelmed and assists them in making a shift to a place of peace, joy, clarity and satisfaction. Sharise also dedicates her efforts to running Vitamin C Healing, LLC an organization designed to promote life balance, satisfaction, and fulfillment among those throughout the helping profession and beyond.

With considerable experience speaking at keynotes, workshops, and seminars for helping professionals, mental health leaders and entrepreneurs across the globe, she strives to equip individuals with the tools to tolerate the high demands of work and life, imposter syndrome as well as manage and prevent compassion fatigue and burnout in order to live happy, fulfilled lives and careers.

With her depth of experience of working with a diverse population of people from all walks of life, Sharise is eager to share all that she's learned.

Thank you and keep in touch

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