

# COMPASSION FATIGUE & PROVIDER SELF CARE

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EMOTIONAL PPE PROJECT PROVIDER: [emotionalppe.org](http://emotionalppe.org)

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## OBJECTIVES

- knowledge of compassion fatigue (CF) and how it relates to the helping professions.
- Basics of self-assessing personal levels of CF and how to prevent and mitigate the consequences.
- Insight to the positive benefits of CF awareness and self-care related to improving wellbeing, reducing burnout, and ensuring continued ethical practice.
- importance of self-care for professional and patient wellness,.
- framework to approach self-care and integrate it into daily professional and personal life

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# TRAITS & SKILLS THAT MAKE US GOOD HELPERS ALSO MAKE US VULNERABLE TO THE TRAUMAS OF OTHERS

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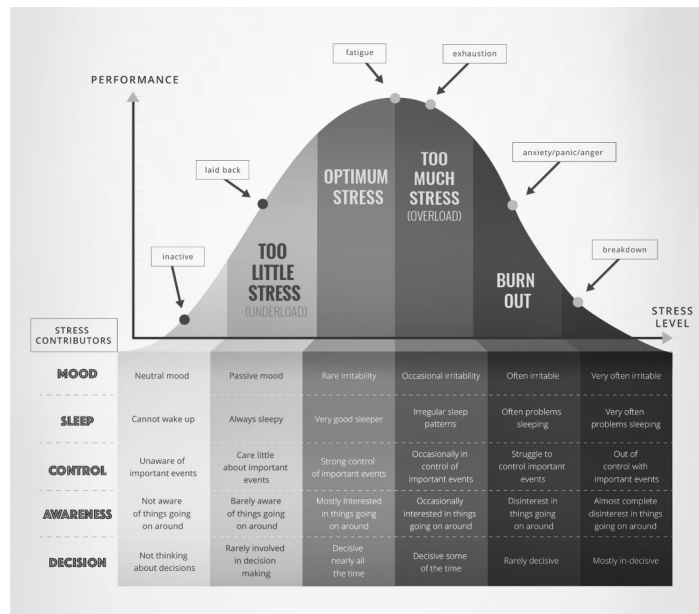
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## STRESS

- Eustress
- Distress
- Harmful Stress

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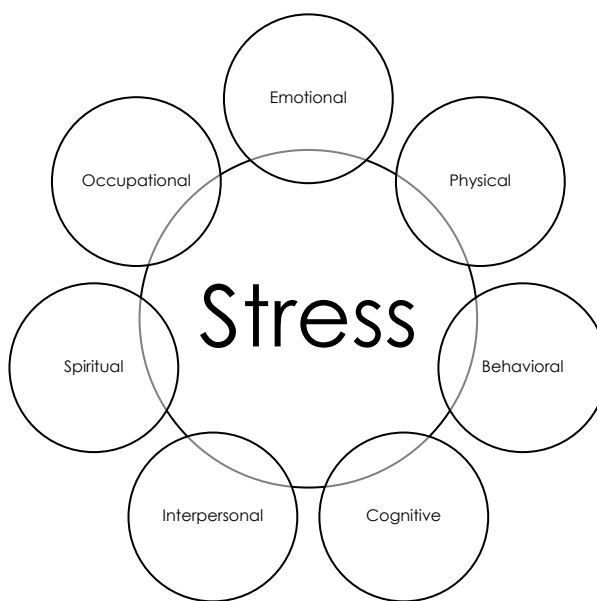
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## CHECK-IN

### • WHAT'S MY STRESS RIGHT NOW



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## STRESS & THE PROFESSIONAL

- Ethical Imperative
- Who we are
- Our environment
- Who we are as providers
- Resilience
- Unique Stressors
  - 1-year later & New roles

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## BEFORE WE GET TO CF

- Compassion
- Empathy

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## WHEN WE GET DEPLETED

- Direct/Indirect Trauma
- Burnout
- Secondary Traumatic Stress, Vicarious Trauma, Compassion Fatigue/ Empathy Strain

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## BURNOUT

- No standard definition
- A process/ systemic
- Strongly linked to working conditions
- Consequences
- Maslach's 3 dimensions of Burnout

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## PREDICTORS OF BURNOUT

- Work life mismatches
  - Workload
  - Control
  - Rewards
  - Community
  - Fairness
  - Values

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## COMPASSION FATIGUE/SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS

- No standard definition
- Consequences
- Risk factors
  
- Newer models: Empathy Strain

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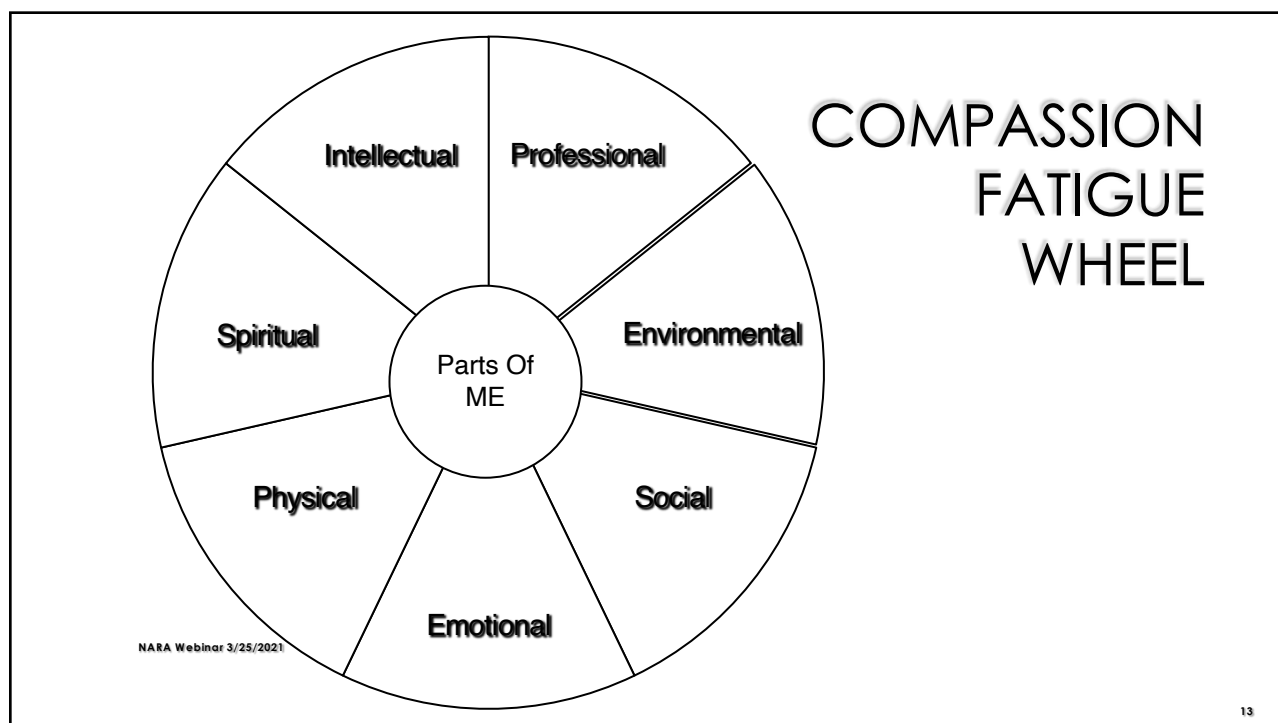
## WHO EXPERIENCES CF

- **Anyone who helps**
- **Anyone who leads helpers**

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## TRAITS OF THE VULNERABLE

- Highly dedicated individuals – the best & the brightest
- Those who work to achieve results even if results a risk
- Low self-compassion
- Excessive empathy leading to blurred boundaries
- Able to tolerate exhaustion for results
- Identifying with victims
- Poorly established/unavailable support
- Poor health (mental &/or physical)
- Avoidance of help

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## WHAT KEEPS US WELL?

- Self Care activities that feed Compassion Satisfaction
- Self Awareness / Self Assessment
- Social Supports
- Promoting healthier mindfulness attitude & coping strategies
- Managing cognitive perceptions
- Self Care

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## EXCUSES?!? I HAVE THOUSANDS

- When? I don't have enough time as it is
- It's too expensive
- I already (fill in the blank)
- I know, I know but I have to...
- If I don't do this, who will.
- Helping other makes me feel better
- I'm fine
- Stressed is just desserts spelled backwards

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## TOWARDS A CULTURE OF SELF CARE

- Benefits
- Central – not peripheral
- Unique to your professional culture
- Organizational
- Not about passive blame

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## SO, WHAT IS SELF-CARE?

- Measures taken against stress
- Intentional
- Not selfish
- Helps to:
  - Reconnect to equilibrium and mobility
  - Return to wellness
  - Enhance quality of life & sense of fulfillment
- Not a punishment

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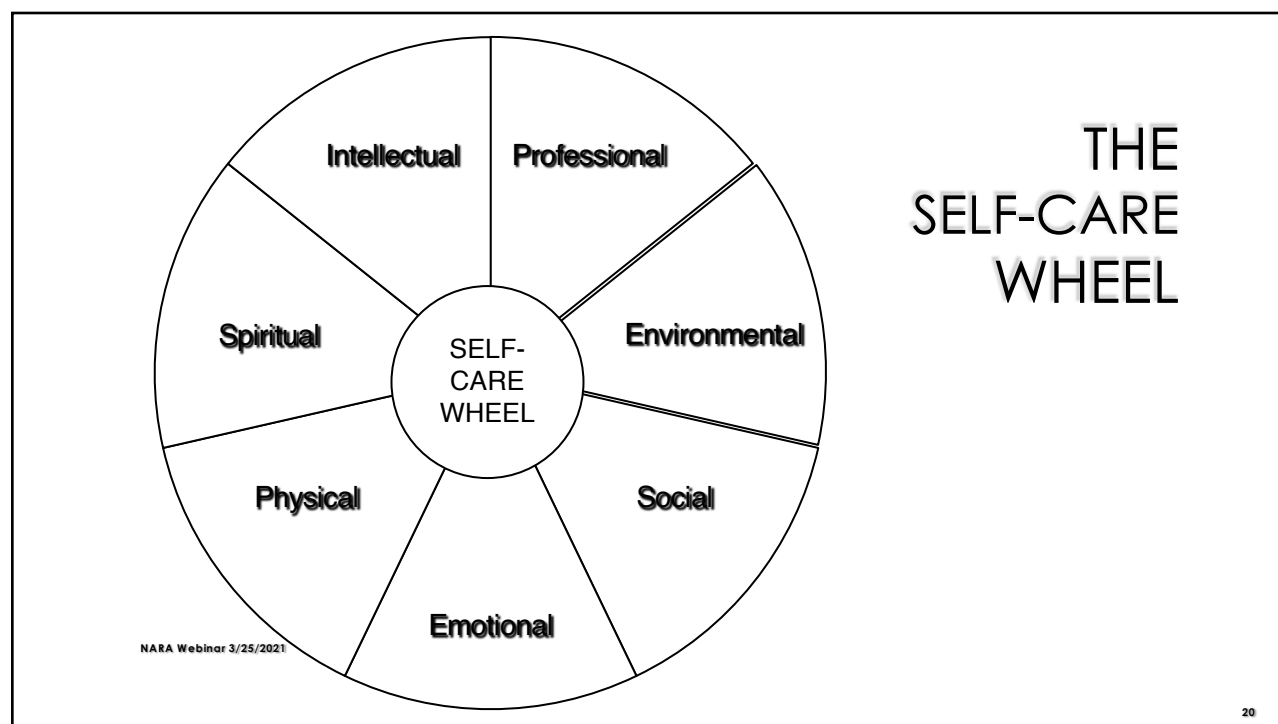
## YOUR SELF CARE

- Unique, individual, personal
- Learn by doing
- Organic – continually checking in
- Intentional
- Balancing
- Confronts dysfunctional thinking & self assessments
- Open to vicarious resilience
- Acknowledge how stress has changed you
- Micro self-care

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## Emotional

- Support
- Journal
- Emotional driven creativity
- Emotional body scan
- Emotional labeling

## Intellectual (psychological)

- Cultural activity
- Creative activities
- Puzzles
- Journal

## Physical

- Exercise
- Sweat
- Eat/drink
- Water
- Sleep

## Professional

- Peer support / Supervision
- Professional development
- mission statement
- Home-work boundaries
- Take time off
- Routines

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## Spiritual

- Active in religious practice
- Mediations
- Visualization activities

## Social

- Walk with a friend
- Family dinner
- Zoom events
- Parallel activities
- Pets

## Environmental

- Go outside
- Breath in fresh air
- Walk barefoot
- Watch the ocean
- Listen to nature sounds
- Virtual tours online

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## SELF CARE IN THE TIME OF COVID

- Avoid the death scroll/ media
- Increase healthful behaviors
- If working from home – work-life balance
- Breathe real air
- Going home ritual
- Keep in touch
- Move

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## MICRO SELF-CARE/ MICRO STRATEGIES

- Self generated
- Grounding, energizing, relaxing
- Meet personal interests and needs
- Practiced
- Use current actions intentionally
  
- [Emotionalppe.org](https://emotionalppe.org)

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## OTHER IDEAS

- Daily positive debriefing
- Find the kernel of good
- Wall stand
- Set a positive intention for the day
- Fill your cup
- Hand to “seat” of you compassion
- “Let go” of difficult interactions

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## OTHER IDEAS

- Mantra / totem
- Anchor Items
- Workspace to home space (transitions)
- Digital detox
- Doodle
- Reach out
  
- Laugh

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## **COMPASSION FATIGUE SYMPTOMS CHECKLIST**

### **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 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

### **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 popup 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

## PROFESSIONAL QUALITY OF LIFE SCALE (PROQOL)

### Compassion Satisfaction and Fatigue (ProQOL) Version 5 (2009)

When you [help] people you have direct contact with their lives. As you may have found, your compassion for those you [help] can affect you in positive and negative ways. Below are some questions about your experiences, both positive and negative, as a [helper]. Consider each of the following questions about you and your current work situation. Select the number that honestly reflects how frequently you experienced these things in the last 30 days.

**1=Never**

**2=Rarely**

**3=Sometimes**

**4=Often**

**5=Very Often**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I am happy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I am preoccupied with more than one person I [help].
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I get satisfaction from being able to [help] people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I feel connected to others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I jump or am startled by unexpected sounds.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I feel invigorated after working with those I [help].
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I find it difficult to separate my personal life from my life as a [helper].
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I am not as productive at work because I am losing sleep over traumatic experiences of a person I [help].
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I think that I might have been affected by the traumatic stress of those I [help].
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I feel trapped by my job as a [helper].
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Because of my [helping], I have felt "on edge" about various things.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I like my work as a [helper].
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. I feel depressed because of the traumatic experiences of the people I [help].
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. I feel as though I am experiencing the trauma of someone I have [helped].
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. I have beliefs that sustain me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. I am pleased with how I am able to keep up with [helping] techniques and protocols.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. I am the person I always wanted to be.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. My work makes me feel satisfied.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I feel worn out because of my work as a [helper].
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. I have happy thoughts and feelings about those I [help] and how I could help them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. I feel overwhelmed because my case [work] load seems endless.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. I believe I can make a difference through my work.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. I avoid certain activities or situations because they remind me of frightening experiences of the people I [help].
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. I am proud of what I can do to [help].
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. As a result of my [helping], I have intrusive, frightening thoughts.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. I feel "bogged down" by the system.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 27. I have thoughts that I am a "success" as a [helper].
- \_\_\_\_\_ 28. I can't recall important parts of my work with trauma victims.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 29. I am a very caring person.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 30. I am happy that I chose to do this work.



## What is my score and what does it mean?

In this section, you will score your test and then you can compare your score to the interpretation below.

### Scoring

1. Be certain you respond to all items.
2. Go to items 1, 4, 15, 17 and 29 and reverse your score. For example, if you scored the item 1, write a 5 beside it. We ask you to reverse these scores because we have learned that the test works better if you reverse these scores.

You Wrote	Change to
1	5
2	4
3	3
4	2
5	1

To find your score on **Compassion Satisfaction**, add your scores on questions 3, 6, 12, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 27, 30.

The sum of my Compassion Satisfaction questions was	So My Score Equals	My Level of Compassion Satisfaction
22 or less	43 or less	Low
Between 23 and 41	Around 50	Average
42 or more	57 or more	High

To find your score on **Burnout**, add your scores questions 1, 4, 8, 10, 15, 17, 19, 21, 26 and 29. Find your score on the table below.

The sum of my Burnout questions	So My Score Equals	My Level of Burnout
22 or less	43 or less	Low
Between 23 and 41	Around 50	Average
42 or more	57 or more	High

To find your score on **Secondary Traumatic Stress**, add your scores on questions 2, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, 23, 25, 28. Find your score on the table below.

The sum of my Secondary Traumatic Stress questions	So My Score Equals	My Level of Secondary Traumatic Stress
22 or less	43 or less	Low
Between 23 and 41	Around 50	Average
42 or more	57 or more	High

## YOUR SCORES ON THE PROQOL: PROFESSIONAL QUALITY OF LIFE SCREENING

Based on your responses, your personal scores are below. If you have any concerns, you should discuss them with a physical or mental health care professional.

### **Compassion Satisfaction** \_\_\_\_\_

Compassion satisfaction is about the pleasure you derive from being able to do your work well. For example, you may feel like it is a pleasure to help others through your work. You may feel positively about your colleagues or your ability to contribute to the work setting or even the greater good of society. Higher scores on this scale represent a greater satisfaction related to your ability to be an effective caregiver in your job.

The average score is 50 (SD 10; alpha scale reliability .88). About 25% of people score higher than 57 and about 25% of people score below 43. If you are in the higher range, you probably derive a good deal of professional satisfaction from your position. If your scores are below 40, you may either find problems with your job, or there may be some other reason—for example, you might derive your satisfaction from activities other than your job.

### **Burnout** \_\_\_\_\_

Most people have an intuitive idea of what burnout is. From the research perspective, burnout is one of the elements of compassion fatigue. It is associated with feelings of hopelessness and difficulties in dealing with work or in doing your job effectively. These negative feelings usually have a gradual onset. They can reflect the feeling that your efforts make no difference, or they can be associated with a very high workload or a non-supportive work environment. Higher scores on this scale mean that you are at higher risk for burnout.

The average score on the burnout scale is 50 (SD 10; alpha scale reliability .75). About 25% of people score above 57 and about 25% of people score below 43. If your score is below 18, this probably reflects positive feelings about your ability to be effective in your work. If you score above 57 you may wish to think about what at work makes you feel like you are not effective in your position. Your score may reflect your mood; perhaps you were having a “bad day” or are in need of some time off. If the high score persists or if it is reflective of other worries, it may be a cause for concern.

### **Secondary Traumatic Stress** \_\_\_\_\_

The second component of Compassion Fatigue (CF) is secondary traumatic stress (STS). It is about your work-related, secondary exposure to extremely or traumatically stressful events. Developing problems due to exposure to other's trauma is somewhat rare but does happen to many people who care for those who have experienced extremely or traumatically stressful events. For example, you may repeatedly hear stories about the traumatic things that happen to other people, commonly called Vicarious Traumatization. You may see or provide treatment to people who have experienced horrific events. If your work puts you directly in the path of danger, due to your work as a soldier or civilian working in military medicine personnel, this is not secondary exposure; your exposure is primary. However, if you are exposed to others' traumatic events as a result of your work, such as providing care to casualties or for those in a military medical rehabilitation facility, this is secondary exposure. The symptoms of STS are usually rapid in onset and associated with a particular event. They may include being afraid, having difficulty sleeping, having images of the upsetting event pop into your mind, or avoiding things that remind you of the event.

The average score on this scale is 50 (SD 10; alpha scale reliability .81). About 25% of people score below 43 and about 25% of people score above 57. If your score is above 57, you may want to take some time to think about what at work may be frightening to you or if there is some other reason for the elevated score. While higher scores do not mean that you do have a problem, they are an indication that you may want to examine how you feel about your work and your work environment. You may wish to discuss this with your supervisor, a colleague, or a health care professional.

## Self-Care Assessment

The following self-care assessment scale is by Saakvitne and Pearlman from the Traumatic Stress Institute. It is designed as a tool to measure how well you are addressing your own needs. It is useful to revisit this assessment regularly.

Rate the following areas in frequency:

5=frequently, 4=occasionally, 3=rarely, 2=never, and 1=it never occurred to me.

<p><b>Physical Self-Care</b></p> <p>___ Eat regularly (e.g. breakfast, lunch and dinner)</p> <p>___ Eat healthily</p> <p>___ Exercise</p> <p>___ Get regular medical care for prevention</p> <p>___ Get medical care when needed</p> <p>___ Take time off when sick</p> <p>___ Get massages</p> <p>___ Dance, swim, walk, run, play sports, sing, or do some other physical activity that is fun</p> <p>___ Take time to be sexual – with yourself, with a partner</p> <p>___ Get enough sleep</p> <p>___ Wear clothes you like</p> <p>___ Take vacations</p> <p>___ Take day-trips or mini-vacations</p> <p>___ Make time away from telephones</p> <p><b>Psychological Self-Care</b></p> <p>___ Make time for self-reflection</p> <p>___ Have your own personal psychotherapy</p> <p>___ Write in a journal</p> <p>___ Read literature that is unrelated to work</p> <p>___ Do something at which you are not expert or in charge of</p> <p>___ Decrease stress in your life</p>	<p>___ Notice your inner experience – listen to your thoughts, judgments, beliefs, attitudes and feelings</p> <p>___ Let others know different aspects of you</p> <p>___ Engage your intelligence in a new area (e.g. go to an art museum, history exhibit, sports event, auction, theater performance)</p> <p>___ Practice receiving from others</p> <p>___ Be curious</p> <p>___ Say no to extra responsibilities sometimes</p> <p><b>Emotional Self-Care</b></p> <p>___ Spend time with others whose company you enjoy</p> <p>___ Stay in contact with important people in your life</p> <p>___ Give yourself affirmations, praise yourself</p> <p>___ Love yourself</p> <p>___ Reread your favorite books, review favorite movies</p> <p>___ Identify comforting activities, objects, people, relationships, places, and seek them out</p> <p>___ Allow yourself to cry</p> <p>___ Find things that make you laugh</p> <p>___ Express your outrage in social action, letters, donations, marches and protests</p> <p>___ Play with children</p>
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Rate the following areas in frequency:

5=frequently, 4=occasionally, 3=rarely, 2=never, and 1=it never occurred to me.

<p><b>Spiritual Self Care</b></p> <p>___ Make time for reflection</p> <p>___ Spend time with nature</p> <p>___ Find a spiritual connection or community</p> <p>___ Be open to inspiration</p> <p>___ Cherish your optimism and hope</p> <p>___ Be aware of non-material aspects of life</p> <p>___ Try at times not to be in charge or the expert</p> <p>___ Be open to not knowing</p> <p>___ Identify what is meaningful to you and notice its place in your life</p> <p>___ Meditate</p> <p>___ Pray</p> <p>___ Sing</p> <p>___ Spend time with children</p> <p>___ Have experiences of awe</p> <p>___ Contribute to causes in which you believe</p> <p>___ Read inspirational literature (e.g. talks, music)</p>	<p><b>Workplace or Professional Self-Care</b></p> <p>___ Take a break during the workday (e.g. lunch)</p> <p>___ Take time to chat with co-workers</p> <p>___ Make quiet time to complete tasks</p> <p>___ Identify projects or tasks that are exciting and rewarding</p> <p>___ Set limits with clients and colleagues</p> <p>___ Balance your caseload so no one day or part of a day is “too much”</p> <p>___ Arrange your work space so it is comfortable and comforting</p> <p>___ Get regular supervision or consultation</p> <p>___ Negotiate for your needs (benefits, pay raise)</p> <p>___ Have a peer support group</p> <p>___ Develop a non-trauma area of professional interest</p> <p><b>Balance</b></p> <p>___ Strive for balance within your work life and work day</p> <p>___ Strive for balance among work, family, relationships, play and rest</p>
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From *Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization* by Karen W. Saakvitne and Laurie Anne Pearlman. Copyright 1996 by the Traumatic Stress Institute/Center for Adult and Adolescent Psychotherapy.

## Making a Commitment to Yourself Action Plan

Write down three things you can do to address secondary trauma for each arena: professional and personal.

### ***Professional***

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Personal**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

# Positive Steps to Wellbeing

## Be kind to yourself



Our culture, genes, religion, upbringing, education, gender, sexuality, beliefs, and life experiences make us who we are. We all have bad days.

Be kind to yourself. Encourage rather than criticise yourself. Treat yourself the way you would treat a friend in the same situation.

## Exercise regularly



Being active helps lift our mood, reduces stress and anxiety, improves physical health, and gives us more energy.

Get outside, preferably in a green space or near water.

Find an activity you enjoy doing, and just do it.

## Take up a hobby and/or learn a new skill

Increase your confidence and interest, meet others, or prepare for finding work.



## Have some fun and/or be creative

Having fun or being creative helps us feel better and increases our confidence.

Enjoy yourself!



## Help others



Get involved with a community project, charity work, or simply help out someone you know.

As well as benefiting others, you'll be doing something worthwhile which will help you feel better about yourself.

## Relax



Make time for yourself. Allow yourself to chill out and relax. Find something that suits you – different things work for different people.

Breathe... (imagine a balloon in your belly, inflating and deflating as you breathe in and out)

## Eat healthily

Eat regularly, eat breakfast, eat healthily, eat fruit and vegetables, drink water.



## Balance sleep

Get into a healthy sleep routine – including going to bed and getting up at the same time each day.



## Connect with others



Stay in touch with family and friends - make regular and frequent contact with them.

## Beware drink and drugs



Avoid using alcohol (or non-prescribed drugs) to help you cope – it will only add to your problems.

## See the bigger picture

We all give different meanings to situations and see things from our point of view. Broaden out your perspective and consider the bigger picture ('the helicopter view')



What meaning am I giving this? Is this fact or opinion? How would others see it? Is there another way of looking at this? How important is it, or will it be in a year's time? What can I do right now that will help most?

## Accepting: 'It is as it is'

We tend to fight against distressing thoughts and feelings, but we can learn to just notice them and give up that struggle.



Some situations we just can't change. We can surf those waves rather than try to stop them.

Allow those thoughts and sensations just to be – they will pass.

# Help for the Helpers:

## Caring for Yourself when Assisting Others

Helping members of your community who have been through a traumatic experience can be very rewarding, but it also can take a toll on you both personally and professionally. While it's important to recognize the occupational hazards of assisting others, it's also important to remember that through regular self-care practices, the benefits of trauma work can outweigh the potential risks. How well do you take care of yourself? You can only be a competent helper if you're not stressed out personally, so your commitment to self-care and wellness is actually an ethical and professional responsibility. Of course this may be difficult to do immediately after a major event when demands are extreme, but it's essential to at least monitor your own stress level and practice self-care as much as you can. The following are some ways to make sure you're taking care of yourself so you can continue to take care of others.

### Rewards and Risks of Helping

Each helper experiences a unique combination of rewards from this kind of work, such as a feeling of personal growth and self-awareness, a belief one is serving one's faith, or a sense of emotional connection with survivors and the community. What is it that keeps YOU motivated to help those in need? One source of self-care is to be aware of the rewards and satisfactions you receive from this work – and to be conscious of signs that the costs of caring are starting to outweigh those rewards.

There are two main occupational hazards to be aware of. In the first, referred to as **Burnout** or **Compassion Fatigue** (a term more specific to the helping professions), workers continuously overextend their capacity to aid others and become emotionally exhausted by the work. This can limit their ability to be effective helpers, but it can usually be cured by taking a break and practicing effective coping methods like those described below. The second main hazard, referred to as **Vicarious Traumatization** or **Secondary Traumatic Stress**, can be far more serious. In this case, intense or repeated exposure to clients' stories of traumatic experiences can impact the helper as if he or she suffered the traumatic event personally. This can take a serious emotional toll, changing one's beliefs about fairness, justice, or good and evil in the world.

Anyone who is committed to helping trauma survivors may be vulnerable to these occupational hazards, especially if:

- You are exposed to multiple trauma and grief experiences
- The trauma causes injuries, death, or grotesque images or sounds
- The trauma impacts children
- There are many chronic stressors
- You have your own unresolved trauma or grief reactions from current or past losses
- You feel helpless to assist others

## Warning Signs for Occupational Hazards

Losing your sense of humor, being unable to balance a personal life with your work life, or thinking you cannot be replaced should be seen as warning signs in addition to the signs listed below. It's often harder to spot these signs in ourselves than it is for other people to recognize them, so be sure to listen to colleagues or loved ones who suggest you seem upset or stressed out or are not acting like yourself.

<b><u>Emotional</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anxiety</li><li>• Powerlessness</li><li>• Sadness</li><li>• Helplessness</li><li>• Depression</li><li>• Mood swings</li></ul>	<b><u>Health</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Headaches</li><li>• GI distress</li><li>• Fatigue or exhaustion</li><li>• Susceptibility to illness</li><li>• Muscular aches</li></ul>	<b><u>Behaviors</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sleep changes</li><li>• Irritability</li><li>• Hypervigilance</li><li>• Appetite changes</li><li>• Substance use</li></ul>	<b><u>Workplace</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Avoidance</li><li>• Tardiness</li><li>• Absenteeism</li><li>• Lack of motivation or initiative</li></ul>
<b><u>Relationships</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Withdrawal/Isolation</li><li>• Decreased intimacy</li><li>• Mistrust</li><li>• Misplaced anger</li><li>• Over-protectiveness</li></ul>	<b><u>Thoughts</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Disorientation</li><li>• Perfectionism</li><li>• Problems concentrating</li><li>• Thoughts of harm</li><li>• Rigidity</li></ul>	<b><u>Spirituality</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Loss of purpose</li><li>• Anger with your God</li><li>• Loss of faith</li><li>• Questioning meaning/ purpose of life and beliefs</li></ul>	

## Self-Care and Effective Stress Management

What can you do to prevent the risks and to maximize the rewards of helping others? The core of self-care is effective stress management, which requires continuous attention. **Good stress management activities both improve the way you feel *and* allow you to function more effectively.** Ineffective activities (like eating or smoking too much, or bullying people around you) might make you feel better temporarily, but they do not help you function in the long run.

The best self-care strategies include activities that you will actually do – not unrealistic goals you can't meet. It's also very difficult to start using new coping methods during the stress of a major event, so your best strategy at this time is to examine your current coping mechanisms and determine which are effective, which are not, and what you might do to increase the helpful ones.



The following are some strategies that are often recommended, but the most important point is to **know what works for you, and when you're stressed, remember to do it or do more of it.**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Get sufficient sleep</li><li>• Take regular breaks</li><li>• Exercise</li><li>• Eat a balanced diet</li><li>• Connect with others</li><li>• Have some time alone</li><li>• Pray or follow your other usual spiritual practices</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Take the time off that you are given</li><li>• Balance giving and receiving support</li><li>• Pay attention to the early warning signs of stress</li><li>• Utilize a self-care 'buddy' system</li><li>• Balance work, play, and rest</li><li>• Limit TV and internet exposure</li></ul>
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Some of the strategies listed may not be realistic at certain times in an emergency, but could be used later. Other strategies might be used from the start. For example, at the very beginning of a response you should not go home after working and watch television covering the event. You need a break! You should also remember that you have no obligation to speak to the media, however persistent their requests.

**Barriers to Self-Care:** There are many barriers to self-care, and many helpers tend to neglect their own needs while helping others. In emergency situations, there may be a lack of resources, time, or adequate supervision. The needs of community members can seem so great that your needs may seem small by comparison, and if others are suffering, you might feel guilty if you attend to your own needs. It's essential that you accept your own limits and do not see yourself as irreplaceable in the relief operation as that can quickly lead to burnout.

**And remember: Caring for yourself while helping others does not make you selfish or needy. The care that helpers provide others can only be as good as the care they provide themselves.**

