

# Compassion Fatigue

# Agenda

## *Compassion Fatigue*

- \* What it is
- \* What it does
- \* Who gets it
- \* What to do about it



# Definitions

- Indifference to charitable appeals on behalf of those who are suffering, experienced as a result of the frequency or number of such appeals. - [dictionary.com](http://dictionary.com)
- "Compassion Fatigue is a state experienced by those helping people or animals in distress; it is an extreme state of tension and preoccupation with the suffering of those being helped to the degree that it can create a secondary traumatic stress for the helper." - Dr. Charles Figley, Professor, Director Tulane Traumatology Institute, Tulane University
- I'm so tired! - Me

# Burnout or Compassion Fatigue

## *Burnout:*

- \* Enthusiasm
- \* Stagnation
- \* Frustration
- \* Apathy

## *Compassion Fatigue:*

Affect well-being

- \* Sleep disturbance
- \* Isolation and loss of moral
- \* Loss of hope and meaning
- \* Identity, worldview and  
Spirituality are impacted
- \* Loss of self-worth
- \* Depression and PTSD

# Who Gets It?

- \* Nurses up to 70%
- \* New doctors up to 90%
- \* Therapists and social workers up to 70%
- \* Child welfare workers 1 in 2 - extreme STS
- \* Parents- ??
  - Compassionate
  - Empathic
  - Taught to care for others first



# Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project

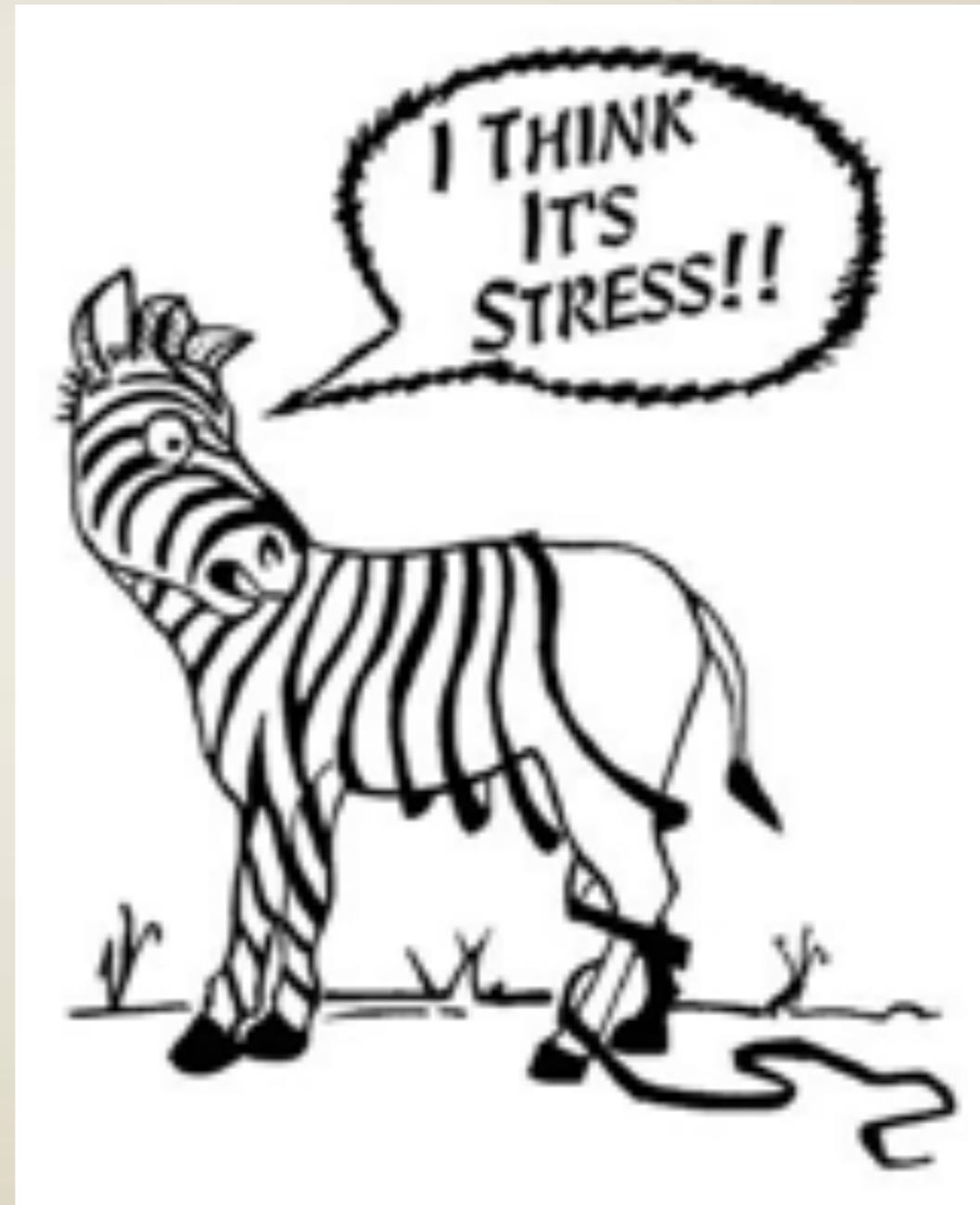
- \* Professional Quality of Life (ProQol) Self Test
- \* Life Self Test
- \* Empath Test

# What To Do

- \* Recognize, don't ignore it.
- \* Be kind to yourself.
- \* You do you, first. Always!
- \* Clarify your boundaries, express your needs.
- \* Eating, sleeping exercise, self care...
- \* Don't isolate.
- \* *Get help.*

# Resources

- \* [healthycaregiving.com](http://healthycaregiving.com)
- \* [compassionfatigue.org](http://compassionfatigue.org)



## PROFESSIONAL QUALITY OF LIFE SCALE (PROQOL)

### COMPASSION SATISFACTION AND COMPASSION 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.

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

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

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### 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.

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

Most people have an intuitive idea of what burnout is. From the research perspective, burnout is one of the elements of Compassion Fatigue (CF). 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 43, 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.

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### 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. If your work puts you directly in the path of danger, for example, field work in a war or area of civil violence, this is not secondary exposure; your exposure is primary. However, if you are exposed to others’ traumatic events as a result of your work, for example, as a therapist or an emergency worker, 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.

## WHAT IS MY SCORE AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

In this section, you will score your test so you understand the interpretation for you. To find your score on **each section**, total the questions listed on the left and then find your score in the table on the right of the section.

### Compassion Satisfaction Scale

Copy your rating on each of these questions on to this table and add them up. When you have added them up you can find your score on the table to the right.

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
6. \_\_\_\_\_  
12. \_\_\_\_\_  
16. \_\_\_\_\_  
18. \_\_\_\_\_  
20. \_\_\_\_\_  
22. \_\_\_\_\_  
24. \_\_\_\_\_  
27. \_\_\_\_\_  
30. \_\_\_\_\_

**Total:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

### Burnout Scale

On the burnout scale you will need to take an extra step. Starred items are "reverse scored." If you scored the item 1, write a 5 beside it. The reason we ask you to reverse the scores is because scientifically the measure works better when these questions are asked in a positive way though they can tell us more about their negative form. For example, question 1. "I am happy" tells us more about

- \*1. \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_  
\*4. \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_  
8. \_\_\_\_\_  
10. \_\_\_\_\_  
\*15. \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_  
\*17. \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_  
19. \_\_\_\_\_  
21. \_\_\_\_\_  
26. \_\_\_\_\_  
\*29. \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

**Total:** \_\_\_\_\_

The sum of my Burnout Questions is	So my score equals	And my Burnout level is
22 or less	43 or less	Low
Between 23 and 41	Around 50	Average
42 or more	57 or more	High

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

the effects of helping when you are *not* happy so you reverse the score

### Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale

Just like you did on Compassion Satisfaction, copy your rating on each of these questions on to this table and add them up. When you have added them up you can find your score on the table to the right.

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
7. \_\_\_\_\_  
9. \_\_\_\_\_  
11. \_\_\_\_\_  
13. \_\_\_\_\_  
14. \_\_\_\_\_  
23. \_\_\_\_\_  
25. \_\_\_\_\_  
28. \_\_\_\_\_

**Total:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

## Life Stress Test

As caregivers, we are often stressed and don't know why. Without realizing the effects that life circumstances have on us, we tend to sweep our feelings of frustration, sadness and turmoil under the rug.

In the past **12 to 24 months**, which of the following major life events have taken place in your life?

Mark down the points for each event that you have experienced this year. When you're done looking at the whole list, add up the points for each event and check your score at the bottom.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Death of Spouse (**100 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Divorce (**73 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Marital Separation or from relationship partner (**65 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Jail Term (**63 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Death of close family member (**63 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Personal injury or illness (**53 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Marriage (**50 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fired from work (**47 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Marital reconciliation (**45 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Retirement (**45 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Change in family member's health (**44 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pregnancy (**40 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sex difficulties (**39 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Addition to family (**39 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Business readjustment (**39 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Change in financial status (**38 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Death of close friend (**37 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Change to a different line of work (**36 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Change in number of marital arguments (**35 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mortgage or loan over \$30,000 (**31 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Foreclosure of mortgage or loan (**30 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Change in work responsibilities (**29 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Trouble with in-laws (**29 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Outstanding personal achievement (**28 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse begins or stops work (**26 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Starting or finishing school (**26 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Change in living conditions (**25 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Revision of personal habits (**24 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Trouble with boss (**23 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Change in work hours, conditions (**20 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Change in residence (**20 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Change in schools (**20 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Change in recreational habits (**19 points**)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Change in church activities (**19 points**)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Change in social activities (**18 points**)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Mortgage or loan under \$20,000 (**17 points**)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Change in sleeping habits (**16 points**)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Change in number of family gatherings (**15 points**)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Change in eating habits (**15 points**)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Vacation (**13 points**)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Christmas season (**12 points**)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Minor violations of the law (**11 points**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Your Total Score

This scale shows the kind of life pressure that you are facing. Depending on your coping skills or the lack thereof, this scale can predict the likelihood that you will fall victim to a stress related illness. The illness could be mild - frequent tension headaches, acid indigestion, loss of sleep to very serious illness like ulcers, cancer, migraines and the like.

#### LIFE STRESS SCORES

0-149: Low susceptibility to stress-related illness

150-299: Medium susceptibility to stress-related illness:

Learn and practice relaxation and stress management skills and a healthy well life style.

300 and over: High susceptibility to stress-related illness:

Daily practice of relaxation skills is very important for your wellness. Take care of it now before a serious illness erupts or an affliction becomes worse.

Permission to reprint the Life Stress Test received from:

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