



COMPASSION FATIGUE

An introduction- Jackie Williams UCLAN

Working with people is *very* demanding work !

- Compassion Fatigue has been described as “The cost of caring” for others in emotional pain
- ALL studies have the same conclusion :-
That Compassion Fatigue affects the most caring
(Figley 1995)

Understanding the cost of caring

- “The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it , is as unrealistic as expecting to walk through water without getting wet”
- (Naomi Rachel Remen)

Let's think about our absorption!

- Think about something from your work place that you have witnessed/absorbed in relation to another person's "emotional pain".
- Who are they? A client, A Patient, A family member, a member of staff?
- Keep it simple, and sum up what you noticed that was "emotional"
- In two groups share what the emotions were that you ended up absorbing/bearing witness to? Feedback to flip chart- share info, see similarities?

Where do these emotions go?

- At the end of the working day how do you put away difficult things you have experienced
- During the working day how do you process them?
- Thinking back to your example recently how did you manage that?

The cost of caring Job Description

What is written in small letters on the back of the tin/packet

So small it is hard to read and you are unaware when you first get product, as you look at the label, the advertising, the reviews,

An example

- Must take on board all that is thrown at you
- Get through the list quickly so you can reduce waiting list
- Do not show emotion or weakness in face of adversity

When we think about the emotions we witness

- Be strong
- Be reliable
- Be a safe pair of hands
- Always concentrate and focus
- Bounce back for next appointment
- Don't show your feelings
- Don't get upset
- Be a container
- Get through the day in tact

What is What? Terminology

- **Compassion Fatigue** refers to the profound emotional and physical exhaustion that helping professionals/caregivers can develop over the course of their career as helpers.
- It is a gradual erosion of all the things that keep us connected to others in our caregiving role: our empathy, our hope, and of course our compassion- not only for others but for ourselves too.
- When we are suffering from CF we start seeing changes in our personal and professional lives. (Francoise Mathieu)
- “A disorder that affects those who do their job well” (Figley)

What is What?

- **VICARIOUS TRAUMA/ SECONDARY TRAUMA** is a term coined by Pearlman and Saakvitne to describe the profound shift that workers experience in their world view when they work with clients who have experienced trauma. Helpers notice that their fundamental beliefs about the world are altered and possibly damaged by being repeatedly exposed to traumatic material.
- VT is a cumulative process; we are not referring to the the most difficult story you have ever heard; we are talking of the *thousands* of stories you don't even remember hearing.
- VT occurs when the stories we hear from our clients transfer onto us in a way where we are too traumatized by the images and the details even though we did not experience them ourselves. We then find it difficult to rid ourselves of the images and experiences they have shared with us. (Francoise Mathieu)

What is What?

- **BURNOUT** is a term that has been widely used to describe the physical and emotional exhaustion that workers can experience when they have low job satisfaction and feel powerless and overwhelmed at work.
- Burnout refers to “The chronicity, acuity, and complexity that is perceived to be beyond the capacity of the service provider” (Beth Stamm)
- People with Burnout are frustrated and depleted by their work environment , but they did not find that their view of world at large had been permanently transformed because of their work. Changing jobs can provide immediate relief from burnout (not so with CF and VC).

What is what?

- **Moral Distress** is a concept that comes from the field of medical ethics.
- “ when policies or routines conflict with ...beliefs about...patient care” (Gail Mitchell)
- Moral distress occurs when we are told to do things we fundamentally disagree with or to which we are morally opposed: eg cut corners as lists long, discharge early, not what you were trained for..etc

What is what?

- **Primary and Secondary Trauma**

- **Primary trauma** happens to you- From your own life or from Work-related exposure

- **Secondary trauma** is caused by *secondary* exposure to trauma. You are not at the actual event, but you are reading/hearing about it. Client retelling story, court report, tv documentary, news reports.

- **Both can lead to PTSD** eg nightmares, intrusive thoughts, avoiding triggers,

- emotional numbing, chronic tension and irritability, insomnia, difficulties with concentration and memory

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My attraction to certain cards was telling me something!

- It took me quite a while to separate all the layers out
- But I 'knew' there was something not quite right!
- I noticed more by other people's reactions to my suggestions

I found this poster at a student union poster sale!



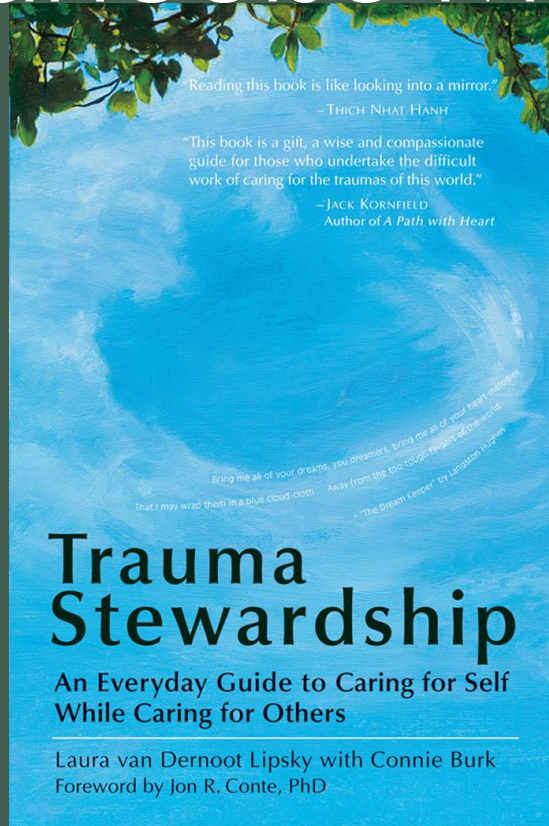
*Gardening, yoga,
bubble baths, medication ...
and I still want to smack somebody!*



I needed to “Take Stock” and make a “map”. I like maps and drawing things out in a “mind map way”

- Burnout
- Life/ work balance
- Primary Trauma / Recent events
- Support at work/ Management/ Uncertainty
- Moral Distress
- Secondary trauma/ work load/ clinical competence

The most helpful book I'd ever read
arrived in post from Canada-
Thankyou Francoise Mathieu !



I made some changes - but also ***allowed myself*** to see where I needed help.

- Made myself available to getting help- I bit the bullet of my 'pride' /expectations historical "script"
- Delegated tasks – less *"I'll have to end up doing it anyway in the end"* mentality
- Learnt new stuff eg *'unhelpful thinking styles'* and *neutralising negative thoughts'*
- Picked my battles more carefully
- Devised a short/medium/long term plan
- Felt more connected and in control- felt sense of fun again not just weariness

Uni Tasking and Top Tips

WHY WE CAME INTO whp

- Read out from cards- collected earlier
- While you listen to these think 1) How often can I resonate with that/those feelings?
- Occasionally / often/ never/ only if
- Evaluations and Q's