

## COMPASSION FATIGUE

Compassion fatigue occurs when an individual has prolonged exposure to others' trauma, where these struggles in turn become their own. It is a common condition, emerging due to direct exposure to distressing events and indirect exposure through others' emotional and physical suffering. This fatigue affects individuals who become overwhelmed by repeated exposure to trauma, leaving them unable to replenish their emotional resources to maintain their well-being. This depletion can be transferred to various aspects of their lives.

### *How can it impact someone?*

Compassion fatigue can impact individuals by manifesting symptoms affecting both their personal and professional lives.

Compassion fatigue can give rise to a gamut of challenging emotions where individuals may experience difficulty concentrating and making decisions, have a reduced tolerance for stress, become more irritable, and experience feelings of discouragement and hopelessness, among other symptoms. These individuals might display behaviours that are unusual due to feeling overwhelmed and fatigued by the demands of their job and life. Compassion fatigue is not considered a mental illness but may lead to more serious mental health injuries if left untreated. These symptoms may not always be apparent, which highlights the importance of regularly assessing personal limits.

The onset of compassion fatigue may be experienced in various workplace environments, it can manifest in any person exposed to a heightened level of suffering or trauma. It's important to recognize that compassion fatigue influences the physical, cognitive, and emotional well-being of individuals.

### *Workplace factors that may influence compassion fatigue:*

√ Trauma Exposure
√ Workload
√ Availability of Resources and Supports
√ Scheduling/Workday Structure
√ Organizational Culture/Boundaries and Demands
√ Role Expectations
√ Training and Education

### *How to manage compassion fatigue*

**Self-Awareness:** be mindful of the signs of compassion fatigue in yourself such as increased irritability, emotional exhaustion, and decreased concentration.

**Set Boundaries:** maintain boundaries between work and your personal life. Reduce exposure to distressing information and events outside of work such as the news or social media.

**Seek Support:** ask for help when you need it and remember that being human means that all of us are at risk of experiencing these challenging feelings. Having an open conversation about your experience can help you better understand and manage the onset of compassion fatigue. If you begin to experience symptoms, your manager is here to support you. In addition, consider speaking with your family doctor or a counsellor at [Homewood Health](#).

**Limit Exposure:** if your job requires continuous work in distressing situations, consider breaking up your exposure by taking breaks or rotating your workload to avoid overexposure to trauma. Speak with your manager or your department's Human Resources Advisor to discuss the possibility of these changes.

**Professional Development:** register for training that focuses on self-care such as [Stress Less: Smart Self-Management](#), [Building Resilience](#) and [Preventing Burnout](#) through CityLearn.

### MANAGERS/SUPERVISORS DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING WITH YOUR TEAM

- What is compassion fatigue?
- What are three symptoms of compassion fatigue?
- How can you support yourself and your peers when experiencing compassion fatigue?

### FINAL THOUGHTS

Compassion fatigue is the onset of cognitive, emotional, and physical symptoms as a result of prolonged exposure to suffering. Understanding and identifying the signs within ourselves and seeking help is an important part of maintaining our psychological well-being.

### RESOURCES

- Homewood Health: call 1-800-663-1142 or visit [Homeweb.ca](#)
- Homewood Health [Trauma Care Program](#)
- [Mental Health and Well-being Resources](#)
- [Mental Health and Well-being Resources](#) (Accessible to off-network staff)

### DID YOU KNOW...

The City's [Mental Health & Well-being](#) page on Currents has ready-to-print posters that teams can post around their worksite to help promote mental wellness in the workplace.

<b>Safety Talk Sign-in Sheet</b>
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<b>Business Unit:</b>	<b>Worksite:</b>
<b>Department:</b>	<b>Date</b>

**Topics Discussed:**

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**Record of those attending:**

NAME (Please print clearly)	Initials	NAME (Please print clearly)	Initials

**Absent: (ensure absent staff receive this safety talk upon their return)**

NAME (Please print clearly)	Initials	NAME (Please print clearly)	Initials

**Safety Concerns/Comments/Suggestions/Action Items**

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**Delivered By:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Print Name)

Save records of:  
 Safety talk sign in sheets in your department’s VanDocs **Safety Training Program Records** folder in 07-4000-40 Or your meeting minutes that include safety talks in your department’s VanDocs **Staff Meeting Records** folder in 01-2500-10 Or the TrackIT application, if your group uses TrackIt