



COMPASSION FATIGUE AMONG REGISTERED NURSES:

CARING THAT HURTS TOO MUCH TO CARE ANYMORE!

Work healthy, work smart-
self-care plan



WHAT IS COMPASSION FATIGUE?



Compassion Fatigue (CF) ...

- Is a deep physical, emotional and spiritual exhaustion accompanied by acute emotional pain that overtakes a person and causes pervasive declines in their energy to feel and care for themselves and others.
- Nurses suffer from a myriad of stress-related illnesses, and eventually leave the profession from the deleterious effects of CF.
- Not pathological in the sense of mental illness, rather considered a natural behavioral and emotional response resulting from helping or desiring to help relieve another's suffering or pain over a prolonged period, often not seeing patients get better. Not from busy work and related issues.

References:

(Pfifferling & Gilley, 2004; McHolm, 2008; Adkinson, 2005; Figley, 1995, 2007; Steven-Guille, 2003)



WHO IS AT RISK?

- Nurses by virtue of their caring natures and personalities.
- Working in various nursing practice settings such as emergency care, palliative care, mental health, counselors, public health, pastoral care, advocate, volunteers, etc...
- Working in unsupportive environments largely contributes to occupational stress fatigue, leading to CF and Burnout.
- Most assuredly CF is not Burnout!

References:

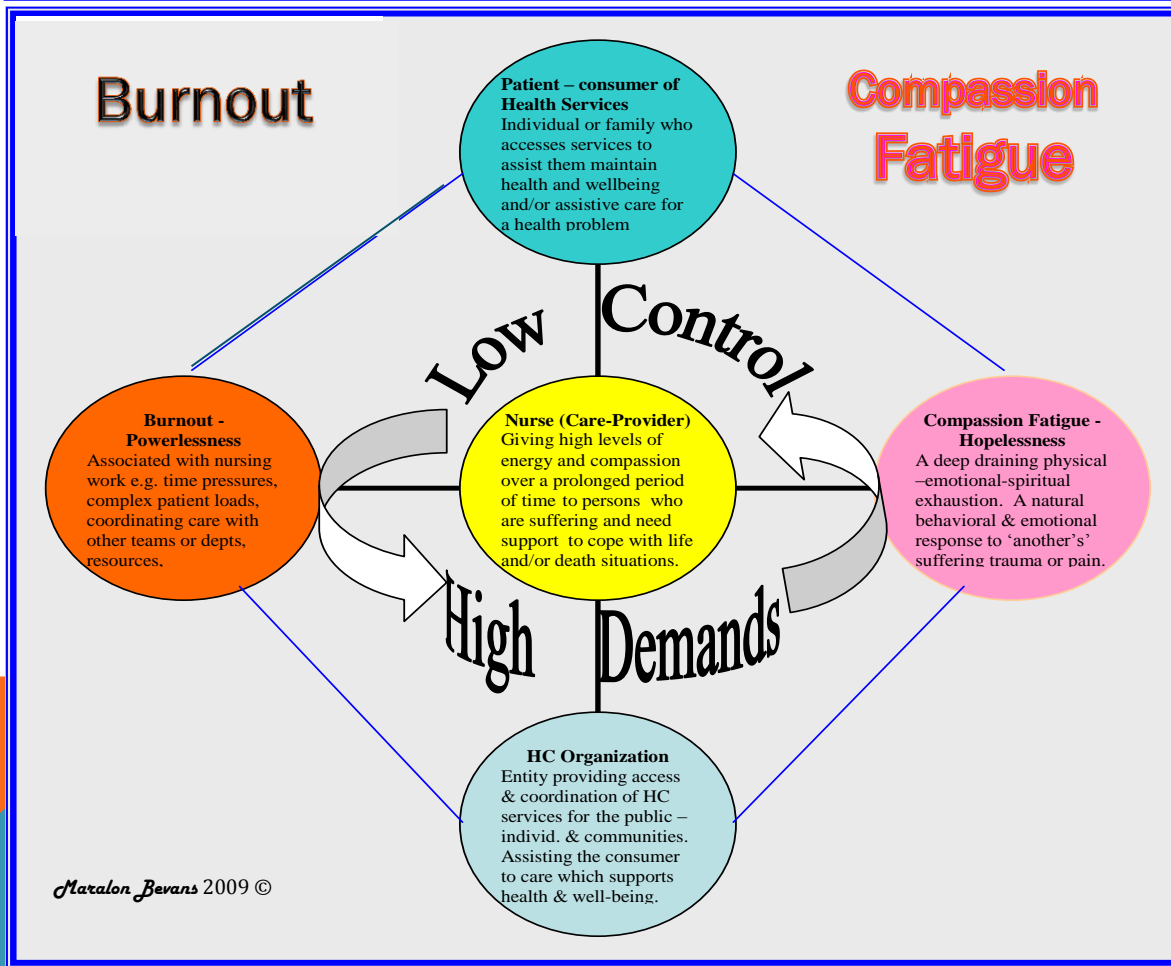
(McHolm, 2008; Mulder & Gregory, 2000; Adkinson, 2005; Roach, 1997)



CONTRIBUTING CAUSES

Figure: 2

Model: “Caring Connections & Caring-Work”



WARNING SIGNS



- Cognitive:** Forgetfulness, shorter attention spans, self-doubt, decreased self-esteem
- Emotional:** Anger – rage out of proportion, less ability to feel joy, decreased sense of personal accomplishment
- Spiritual:** Pervasive hopelessness
- Interpersonal:** Projection of anger/blame
- Physical:** Headaches, fatigued, impaired immune system, stomach aches ...

EFFECTS ON NURSING PRACTICE



Performance of Tasks:

- decreased quality
- low motivation
- medication errors
- avoidance of job tasks
- poor documentation

Morale:

- decreased confidence
- low interest
- job dissatisfaction
- lack of appreciation
- detachment

Interpersonal:

- withdrawn from colleagues
- impatience
- decreased quality of work relationships

Behavioral:

- absenteeism
- tardiness, chronic
- exhaustion
- faulty Judgment
- overwork – no time for self...work-a-holism



Table (a): Personal Impact of Secondary Trauma *(Warning signs: *classic stress pattern*)

Cognitive	Emotional	Behavioral	Spiritual	Interpersonal	Physical
-Confusion -Spaciness -Forgetfulness -Trauma imagery -shorter attention span -Rigidity -Apathy -Self-doubt-decreased self – esteem. -Minimization -Thoughts of self-harm or harm to others -Disorientation	-Anxiety -Emotional rollercoaster -Anger/rage out of proportion -Numbness -Overwhelmed -Fear -Signs of Depression -Depleted -Sadness -Survivor’s guilt -Less ability to feel joy -decreased sense of personal accomplishment	-Clingy -Moody -Rigidity -Nightmares -Impatient -Appetite Changes -Hypervigilance -Elevated Startle Response -Use of negative coping -Sleep disturbances -Abusing drugs, alcohol, food or sex	-Loss of purpose -Anger at God -Questions Prior religious beliefs -Pervasive hopelessness -Believe major change necessary -Less ability to feel joy	-Withdrawn -Over protective -Mistrust -Decrease in Intimacy/sex -Isolation -Projection of Anger/Blame -Intolerance -Loneliness -Critical of others -Depersonalization of patients	-Aches /Pains -headaches -Dizziness -Breathing difficulties -fatigued -Somatic complaints -Impaired immune system -Rapid Heart beat -stomach aches -sleep disturbance

References: (Ingram, 2005; McHolm, 2008; Adkinson, 2005; Stevens-Guille, 2003; Merrill, 2008; Pfifferling & Gilley, 2000; Varner, 2004; Benson & Magraith, 2005; Stanley, 2001).

STRATEGIES TO PREVENT CF



* Compassion Fatigue is PREVENTABLE!!

- Establish a Self-Care Plan to keep a healthy balance between work and life – see *handout*
- Form a collaborative interdisciplinary team approach to identify and treat CF – develop a support group
- Establish a multi-stakeholder RN Occupational Wellness Coalition & Wellness Initiative to advocate, address, educate, and assist RNs to heal from CF
- Promote healthy work environments that support “*working healthy, working smart*” - act not talk!
- Support each other with kindness and high regard 😊

Helpful Websites: <http://www.compassionfatigue.org>
<http://www.proqol.org>

REMEMBER TO:



- Take time out for self
- Know when to take a break
- Develop a new talent
- Leave 'work' at work
- Learn to laugh, focus on positives

- Find Joy in the Journey
- Rediscover your humanness
- Reflect on your practice regularly
- Nurture your Hope!
- Become your best-self

You TOO Matter!!

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Maralon J . R . Bevans RN MN

Academic Assistant – Instructor

Faculty of Health Sciences

University of Lethbridge

4401 University Drive West

Lethbridge, AB. T1K 3M4



T: (403) 332-5242

E: bevamj@uleth.ca



Questions...

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