

REAL LIFE SOLUTIONS



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Transforming Compassion Fatigue into Compassion Satisfaction: Ten Tips for Helpers

Whether you care for others or have responsibility for others through your employment, or provide care for a family member, those responsibilities can be overwhelming at times. Symptoms of stress and trauma may develop and what suffers is your health, relationships with others, your personal life and eventually those you care for.

Compassion Fatigue can strike anyone. The best strategy to address it is to develop excellent self-care strategies – ongoing ways to maintain your health and wellbeing.

- 1. Take Stock – What’s on your plate?**
Make a detailed list of all the demands on your time and energy (i.e. work, family, home, health, volunteering). What factors contribute to make your plate too full? What would you like to change most? Challenge yourself: What CAN you change?
- 2. Start a self-care idea collection**
Interview others on their best self-care strategies. Make a list and pick a few ideas to try. Ask a friend or colleague to support you in reaching your self-care goals (i.e. healthy food choices, exercise, proper sleep).
- 3. Find time for yourself every day – Rebalance your workload**
Do at least one thing for yourself each day. Check your idea collection. Take a walk, go to a movie, or simply take 10 minutes to relax. Take it when you can, and make the most of it. Even small changes make a difference.
- 4. Delegate – Learn to ask for help at home and at work; it’s “work sharing”**
You spend your time helping others; is there something others can do to help you? Consider holding a regular family meeting to review the workload and discuss new options.
- 5. Have a transition from work to home**
Do you have a transition process when you leave work or get home? Put on different or comfortable clothes after work and mindfully put work clothes away or have a 10 minute quiet period to shift gears.
- 6. Learn to say no (or yes) more often**
It can be draining to be the source of all help for all people. Are you good at setting limits? Can you think of one thing you could say no to more often? Maybe you have stopped saying yes to all requests because you feel so depleted. Have you stopped saying yes to friends or new opportunities? Take a moment to reflect on this: Do you need to learn to say no or yes more often? An easy guideline is: When you say NO to something, you say YES to something else.
- 7. Consider joining a supervision/peer support group**
Join a peer support group. Organize a small group on your own or find a formal group to participate in.
- 8. Attend workshops or professional training**
People with severe compassion fatigue speak of feeling de-skilled or incompetent. Professional training helps individuals stay renewed and healthy. Identify an area of expertise that you want to hone. Consider taking online courses or classes through community education.
- 9. Exercise**
If exercise isn’t already part of your regular routine, can you think small ways to increase it? Set realistic goals. If you don’t exercise at all, aim to walk around the block twice a week.
- 10. Think outside the box**
Develop a new interest. Be curious. Plan small things to look forward to. Challenge yourself to learn something new. Challenging your brain in new ways helps balance out chronic stress.

Study these tips and pick the issue that you can most easily improve upon. Making one small change to your daily routine can have tremendous results in the long term.

Compassion Fatigue is a serious, profound change that happens when helpers do their best work. If you are feeling overwhelmed, EFR counselors are here to help. Call us anytime, 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 800.327.4692.

Adapted from Transforming Compassion Fatigue into Compassion Satisfaction: Top 12 Self-Care Tips for Helpers by Françoise Mathieu; www.compassionfatigue.ca.

For related articles and support, visit your Better Living web resource at www.efr.org/myeap. To access EAP services, call 800.327.4692 or TTY 877.542.6488.

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