



**Central London
Community Healthcare**
NHS Trust

**Barnet Safeguarding Adult Board
Lunch and Learn Webinar
13th December 2022
12.30-13.30pm**

Compassion Fatigue –the cost of caring?

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Compassion Fatigue-the cost of caring?

The session

- What is compassion fatigue?
- Compassion fatigue v burnout?
- Prevalence?
- Impact?
- Building resilience

Remember our thinking can make a difference

Compassion Fatigue –the cost of caring?

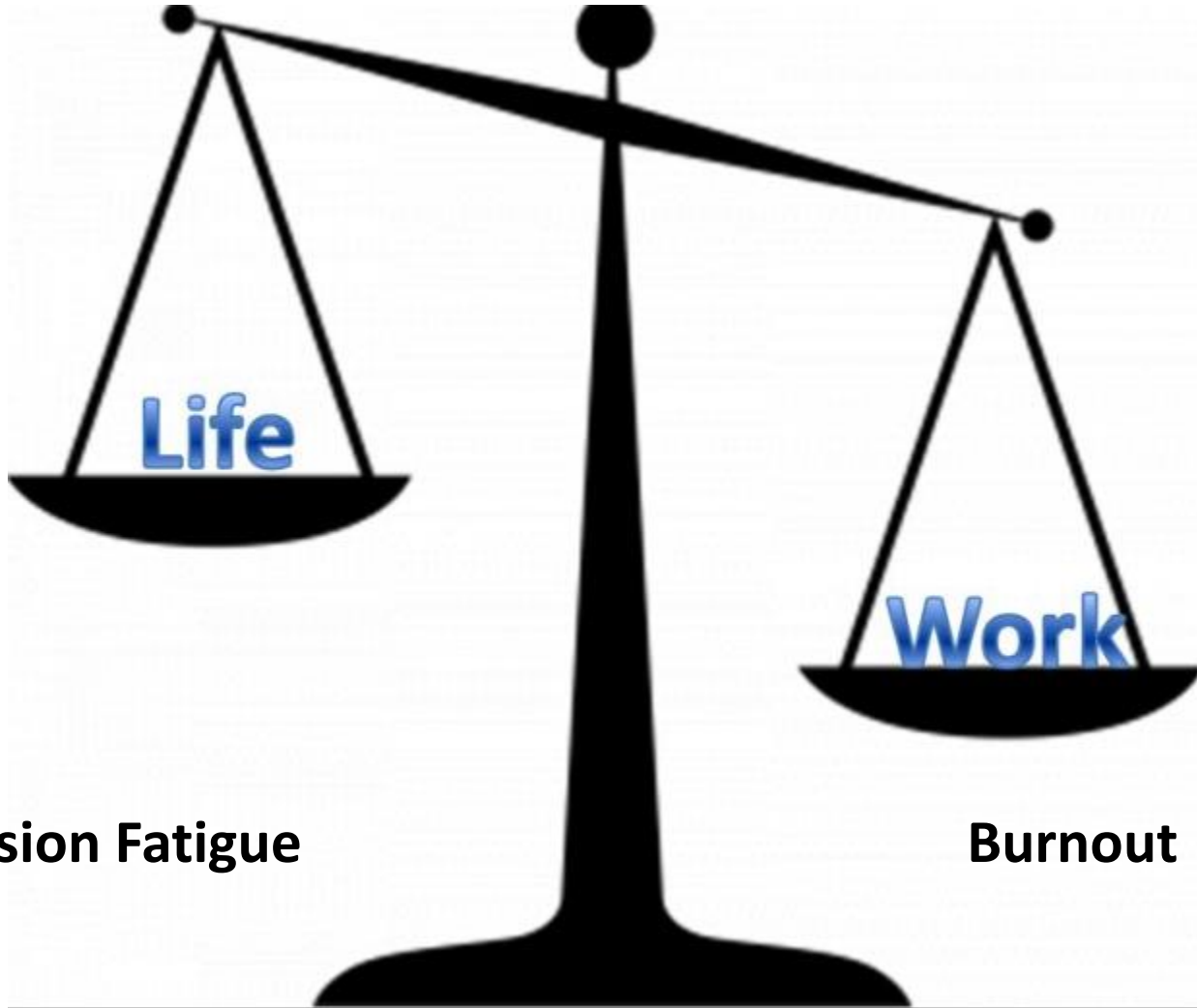
Staff in public services work with service users who may have complex health and social care needs

Prolonged exposure to the trauma of others can cause compassion fatigue.

This places workers at greater risk of psychological, and emotional stress



Compassion Fatigue-the cost of caring?



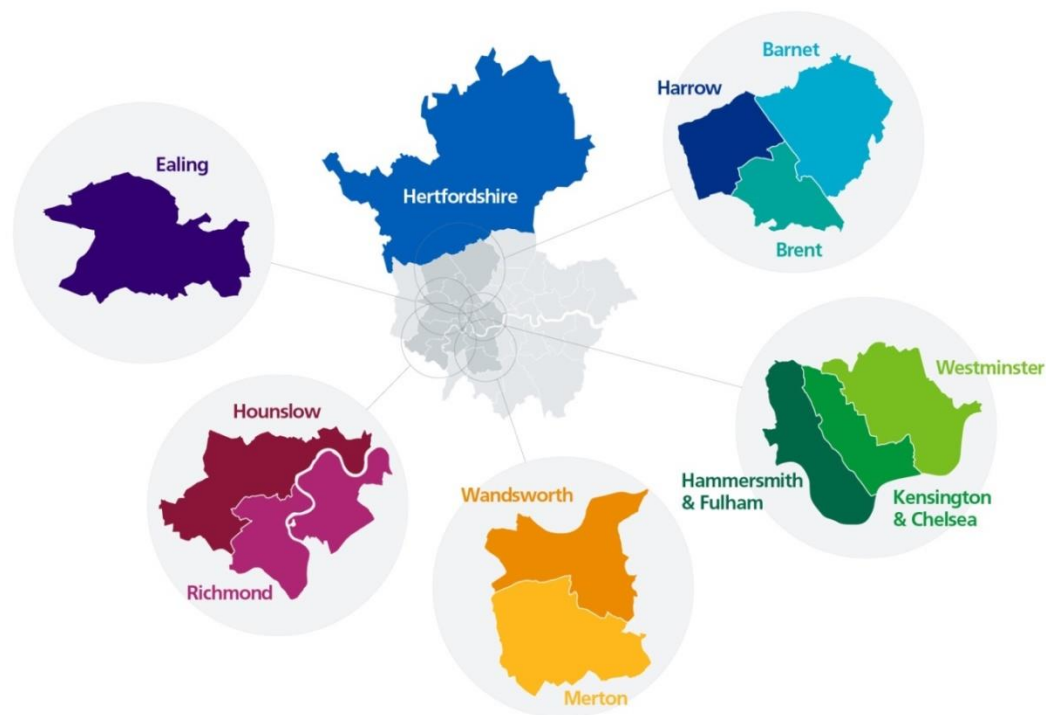
Compassion Fatigue

Burnout



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Compassion Fatigue



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Your healthcare closer to home

Definition

"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 and Paul Henry Kurzweg Distinguished

ANOTHER DEFINITION

Compassion fatigue occurs when the stories of our service-users become, overwhelmingly, our stories:

- The conscious mind is therefore preoccupied with stories of suffering and injustice.
- The conscious mind has less time and energy to focus compassionately and insightfully on the dilemmas of outside people.
- This does not mean we lose the ability to be compassionate. It means we become preoccupied with the images and emotions associated with suffering (real and imagined)

SUFFERING

Suffering is the distress or pain (psychological and/or emotional) we experience when we have to contend with emotional-images, thoughts (cognitions), or physical sensations that are contrary to our chosen or ideal versions of ourselves.

POSSIBLE CAUSES OF COMPASSION FATIGUE

- **Too many stories:** we begin to imagine, repeatedly, the emotions, cognitions and dilemmas of our service-users.
- **Work pressure:** we don't have the time to properly process the suffering-emotional-images that preoccupy us.
- **Personal traumas:** the stories of our service-users reignite our own trauma memories.
- **Our traumatised-mind (real and imagined traumas) becomes our focus.** Our professional-mind is allocated less time and attention.

NB: we move inward...losing time and space for the outer life.

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF COMPASSION FATIGUE

- Over-regulation and/or under-regulation of emotions.
- Flight. Fight. Freeze.
- Trauma-mind replaces adult/professional-mind: Power; Intimacy; Safety; Self-esteem; Trust.
- We become hostage to the job: Dependence; Identification; Isolation; Random acts of kindness.
- Being compassionate becomes exhausting because of our preoccupation with the trauma images.
- Our inward preoccupation with trauma impacts on our ability to maintain helpful external relationships (personal and professional).
- Links to PTSD (vicarious or secondary traumatisation).

THE WAY FORWARD

- You are as important, if not more important, as your service-users. You can't pour milk from an empty jug.
- You are the solution. Make a clear distinction between your private-self and your professional-self. Ensure you give time and energy to the private-self.
- Cultivate compassionate-indifference (i.e. boundaries)
- See exercises below.

What is Thinking?

Thinking is the same as speaking-to-ourselves. We speak to ourselves all day. It's how we solve problems; look into the past; and plan the future.

How we-speak-to-ourselves makes all the difference

In all likelihood, we will activate our flight/ fight/ freeze responses if we speak-to-ourselves in a critical/ blaming/ shaming/ hateful way. When we do this we are reprimanding ourselves. We become our own target. We punish ourselves. This can result in trauma, anxiety, and depression.

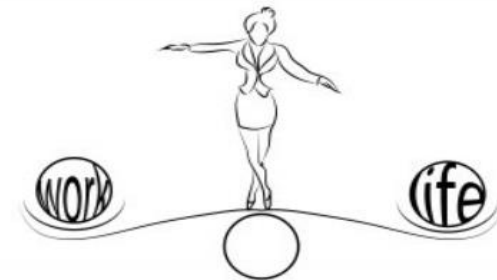
In all likelihood we will activate our soothing-self if we are mindful and compassionate toward ourselves. This manner of speaking-to-ourselves (i.e. thinking) is curious, compassionate, kind, wise, and strong. It helps to prevent us from being caught up in critical thoughts. It's liberating and freeing.

Short exercise

1. How do you speak-to-yourself when you're stressed?
2. How do you speak-to-yourself when you believe you haven't succeeded?
3. How do you speak-to-yourself when you look at your body?
4. How do you speak-to-yourself when you need to have a difficult conversation?

Questions to ask yourself

1. Am I self-Compassionate?
2. Is what I-say-to-myself actually true?
3. What needs to change in my thinking in order for me to become more compassionately-objective (curious as opposed to being swept away by thoughts and emotions)?
4. If I was being compassionate toward myself, what would I say and do?



Good reading and viewing

1. The happiness trap: Russ Harris
2. Wherever you go, there you are:
Jon Kabat-Zinn
3. YouTube: Prof Paul Gilbert | Dr
Kristen Neff