



Well-Being of Child Welfare Partners

A Candid Discussion

Introductions

The Terms

Stress

Compassion
Fatigue

Vicarious or
Secondary
Trauma

Burnout



What is stress?

The perception of pressure and the bodies response to it.

Those who work in child welfare
are at risk for...

Compassion
Fatigue

Vicarious or
Secondary
Trauma

Burnout

Professional Quality of Life

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graph TD; A[Professional Quality of Life] --- B[Compassion Satisfaction]; A --- C[Compassion Fatigue]
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Compassion
Satisfaction

Compassion
Fatigue

Helping Profession



Compassion Satisfaction

- The positive aspects of helping
- May be related to:
 - Providing care
 - To the system
 - Work with colleague
 - Beliefs about ourself
 - Altruism



Compassion Fatigue

- The negative aspects of helping
- May be related to:
 - Providing care
 - To the system
 - Work with colleagues
 - Beliefs about ourselves

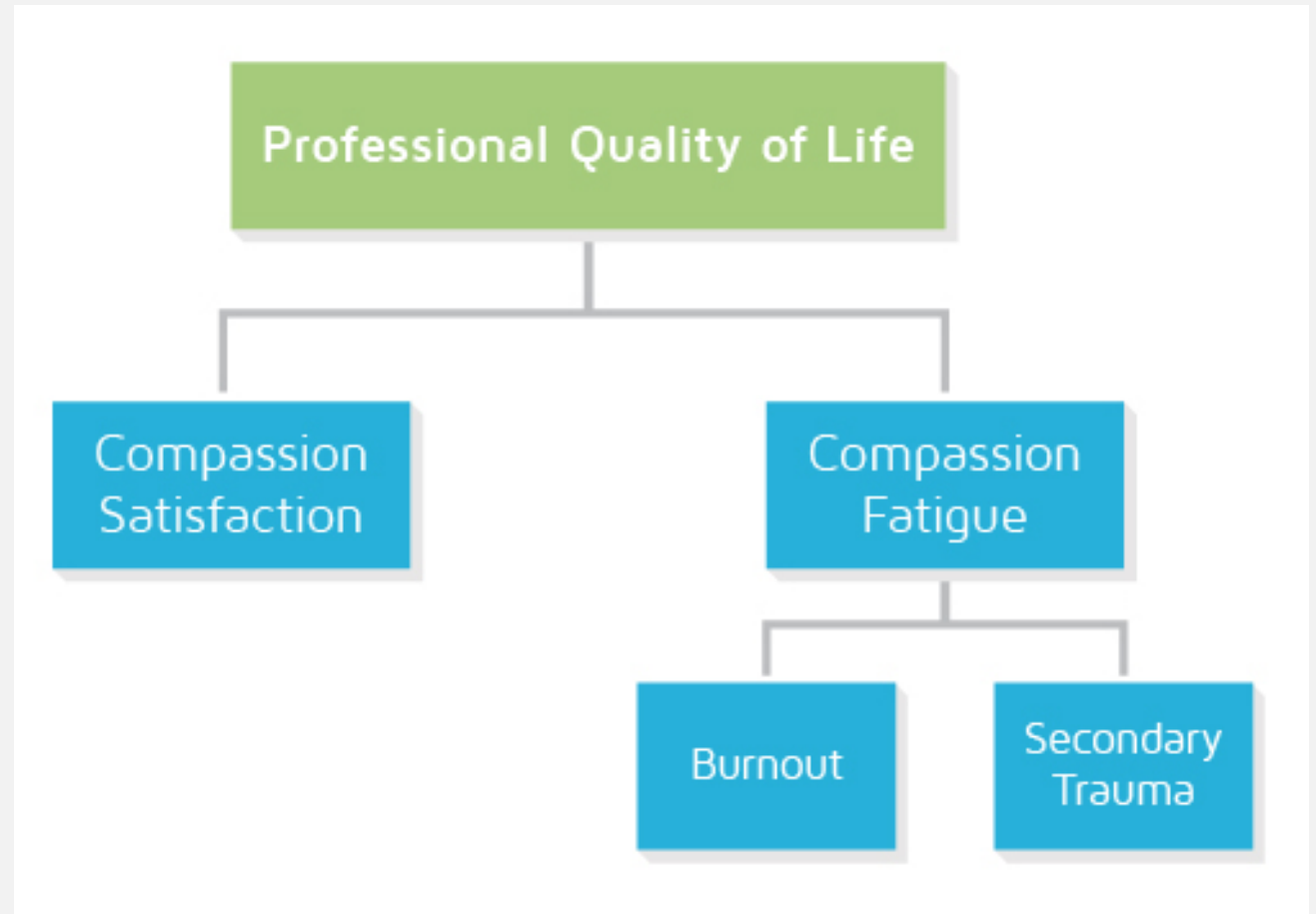


Compassion Fatigue Symptoms

| Physical | Emotional & Cognitive | Behavioral | Work Related | Spiritual |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Headaches• Digestive problems• Muscle tension• Sleep disturbances | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mood swings• Restlessness• Anger and irritability• Oversensitivity• Anxiety• Depression• Anger and resentment• Loss of objectivity• Memory issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Excessive use of substances: nicotine, alcohol, illicit drugs• Isolation/Introvers ion• Increased interpersonal conflict• Pessimism• Moodiness• Hypervigilance | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoidance or dread of working with certain patients or colleagues• Reduced ability to feel empathy towards patients or their families | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Questioning the meaning of life• Loss of purpose• Lack of self-satisfaction• Questioning religious beliefs• Loss of faith |

Can also include, lead to, or be a result of:

- Burnout
- Vicarious or Secondary Trauma





Burnout

Burnout is a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress.

The background features decorative curved lines in shades of green and blue, positioned in the top right and bottom left corners. The text is centered and reads:

A general wearing out from
the pressures of work.

Burnout vs. Stress

Stress

- Characterized by over engagement
- Emotions are reactive
- Produces urgency and hyperactivity
- Loss of energy
- Leads to anxiety disorders
- Primary damage is physical
- May kill you prematurely

Burnout

- Characterized by disengagement
- Emotions are blunted
- Produces helplessness and hopelessness
- Loss of motivation, ideals, and hope
- Leads to detachment and depression
- Primary damage is emotional
- May make life seem not worth living

Symptoms of Burnout

| Physical | Emotional and Cognitive | Behavioral |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Frequent headaches• Getting sick more often than usual• Exhaustion• Stomach and digestive issues• Restlessness or sleeplessness• Heart palpitations• Chest pain | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Panic attacks• Increasing feelings of anger, frustration, and irritability• Feeling hopeless, helpless, and pessimistic• Loss of enjoyment for activities you once loved | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drop in productivity• Increased absenteeism• Isolation (wanting to eat lunch alone or just be alone)• Becoming a poor team player• Increased alcohol or drug use |

Risk Factors for Burnout at Work



Unfair
Treatment



Unmanageable
Workload



Lack of Role
Clarity



Lack of
Communication or
Support



Unreasonable
Time Pressures

Lifestyle Risk Factors For Burnout

Working too much,
without enough
time for relaxing
and socializing

Being expected to
be too many things
to too many people

Taking on too many
responsibilities,
without help from
others

Not getting enough
sleep

Lack of close
supportive
relationships

Personality Traits That Can Contribute

Perfectionist tendencies

Pessimistic view of yourself

The need to be in control

High-achieving or type A personality



Trauma

- **Direct Trauma** – direct personal exposure to trauma
 - exposure includes experiencing a trauma firsthand or witnessing a trauma as it occurs to others
- **Secondary (Vicarious) Trauma** - Secondary exposure to extremely or traumatically stressful events
 - Continued frequent or close contact with persons who have experienced trauma
 - Exposure to reports, descriptions, and photos of horrific events



Vicarious Trauma

It can have a significant mental health impact and, if not mitigated against or treated effectively, can be a pathway to post-traumatic stress disorder.

Common Symptoms

| Physical | Emotional & Cognitive | Behavioral |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulty sleeping• Increased severity of medical concerns | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feeling afraid• Anxiety• Irritability / anger• Feeling numb and/or detached• Images and thoughts of the traumatic event(s) popping into your mind without your being able to control these• Avoiding thinking about the traumatic event(s)• Disrupted beliefs | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Heightened startle response• Avoiding places, people, things that remind you of the traumatic event(s)• Increased use of substances: nicotine, alcohol and/or illegal drugs• Hypervigilance• Reduced productivity |

Risk Factors for Vicarious Trauma


Organizational

- Exposure to traumatic cases
- Adversarial system
- Lack of appreciation and support
- Work overload
- Inadequate resources
- Being newer employees and less experienced at their jobs
- Having limited training about vicarious trauma and its prevention


Personal

- Personal history of previous trauma
- Social isolation, both on and off the job
- a tendency to avoid feelings, withdraw, or assign blame to others in stressful situations
- difficulty expressing feelings
- Unhealthy coping mechanisms

The Research

- A report of workforce health found that, among 2,000 child welfare caseworkers, almost half met the threshold for secondary trauma, indicating they experienced PTSD-level symptoms related to secondary trauma.
 - A study of social workers in California found that those employed in the public child welfare field reported higher levels of depersonalization (i.e., cynicism) and lower levels of personal accomplishment (i.e., self-efficacy) than those in other settings.
 - Among a small sample of foster parents, it was revealed that 20% reported moderate to severe secondary traumatic stress symptoms, and 12% met criteria for PTSD related to their exposure to the details of their children's traumatic experiences while in the caregiving role.
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The Research

- Research suggests that attorneys suffer from higher levels anxiety, depression, and substance use-disorder when compared to other professions, and they are also at risk for secondary trauma and burnout, with some studies suggesting almost half of lawyers considered leaving their legal employer or the legal profession due to burnout or stress within the last 3 years.
 - A recent American Bar Association study revealed that 30% of judges attributed their stress related difficulties to being exposed to dockets involving evidence of severe trauma.
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Discussion



What can we do?



Organizations

- Is well-being a part of your culture?
- Are your organizational values laying the foundation for your culture?
- Are you taking a top-down approach?
- Are you collaborating effectively?

Self-Care

- Prioritize your sleep
- Get enough to eat, make smart eating choices
- Do something you enjoy
- Practice gratitude
- Start a journal
- Practice positive self-talk
- Reach out to your support system
- Participate in or volunteer for causes that matter to you
- Learn something new
- Commit to taking breaks
- Practice meditation and mindfulness



Seek Help



What sustains you
in your work?