

Do You Suffer from Compassion Fatigue?

Objective

To identify if you are experiencing compassion fatigue.

What to Know

Compassion fatigue refers to emotional and physical exhaustion leading to a diminished ability to empathize or feel compassion for others. It is sometimes called secondary traumatic stress (STS) or “burnout,” and it is the result of working directly with victims of disasters, trauma, or illness in the healthcare industry or other helping professions – such as child protection workers, veterinarians, clergy, teachers, social workers, police officers, animal welfare workers, and others. Family members and other caregivers of people with chronic illness may also experience compassion fatigue.

If you experience compassion fatigue, you might have a number of different symptoms, including reduced concentration, numbness, depression, anxiety, or feeling helpless or irritable. In addition, you might lack self-satisfaction, experience physical aches and pains, or miss work.

If you are overly conscientious, perfectionistic, self-sacrificing, or have a history of trauma, you are more likely to suffer from compassion fatigue. You are even more at risk if you have a low level of social support or high stress levels.

This worksheet will help you identify if you are suffering from compassion fatigue.

What to Do

Honestly answer the questions below. There are no right or wrong answers. Rate each statement from 1 to 3, where 1 = very true, 2 = somewhat true, and 3 = rarely true. Then, add up your score.

_____ When someone is upset, I try to smooth things over.

_____ It's difficult for me to listen to someone's problems without trying to fix them or take away their pain.

_____ My self-worth is based on how other people perceive me.

_____ When I am involved in conflict, I believe it's my fault.

_____ I feel guilty when others are disappointed with me.

_____ When I make a mistake, I am extremely critical of myself.

- _____ I have difficulty forgiving myself.
- _____ I have a hard time communicating how I want other people to treat me.
- _____ If someone treats me poorly, I have a difficult time confronting them about it.
- _____ My achievements define my self-worth.
- _____ I feel anxious in most situations involving confrontation.
- _____ In relationships, it's easier for me to give than to receive.
- _____ I can be so focused on someone I am helping that I lose sight of my needs, interests, and desires.
- _____ It's hard for me to express sadness.
- _____ I feel weak when I make mistakes.
- _____ It's best not to "rock the boat" or "make waves."
- _____ It's important to always put people at ease.
- _____ I'm at my best when I don't need others' help.
- _____ If I can't solve a problem, I feel like a failure.
- _____ I often feel used up or drained at the end of the day.
- _____ I frequently take work home.
- _____ I ask for help only if a situation is serious.
- _____ I'm willing to sacrifice my needs to please others.
- _____ When faced with uncertainty, it seems like things are out of control.
- _____ I'm uncomfortable when others do not view me as being strong and self-sufficient.
- _____ I'm drawn to people who are needy or need me.
- _____ I have difficulty expressing my opinions in the face of opposing viewpoints.
- _____ When I say no I feel guilty.
- _____ When others distance themselves from me, I get upset or feel anxious.

_____ When listening to someone's problems, I'm more aware of their feelings than I am of my own.

_____ It's hard for me to stand up for myself and honestly express my feelings when someone treats me in an insensitive manner.

_____ I feel anxious when I'm not busy or have downtime.

_____ Expressing resentments is wrong.

_____ I'm more comfortable giving than receiving.

_____ I become anxious when I think I've disappointed someone.

_____ Work dominates much of my life.

_____ I seem to be working harder and accomplishing less.

_____ I feel most worthwhile and alive in crisis situations.

_____ I have difficulty setting limits.

_____ My interests and values reflect what others expect of me rather than my own interests and values.

_____ People rely on me for support.

_____ I work to distract myself from my problems.

_____ **Total Score**

If you scored 100 or more points, you probably don't currently have compassion fatigue, but at least you are aware of the factors that indicate this might be a problem for you.

If you scored between 42 to 99 points, it's time to take a close look at your self-care because you are probably experiencing compassion fatigue.

If your score indicated you have compassion fatigue, what are some ways you can engage in self-care?

What are the benefits of increasing your self-care to cope with compassion fatigue?

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?
