


Self-Care for the Advocate

Recognizing and Preventing Burn Out
and Compassion Fatigue



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Learning Objectives

- Understand why self-care is an essential part of advocacy
- Define burn-out, compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma
- Identify solutions to prevent and heal from burn-out and compassion fatigue
- Describe worrying – how it feels in our bodies, normal versus excessive worrying, and how to manage worry

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Why are we talking about this?

Domestic violence advocacy and taking care of others can be **difficult**.

Not taking care of ourselves can have a **negative impact** on our health and personal life.

Compassion fatigue and burnout can have a negative impact on the **survivors** we work with.

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Compassion

“A feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by suffering or misfortune; accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the pain or remove its cause.”
– Dictionary.com

Our sensitivity and understanding makes us compassionate and effective, but also makes us **vulnerable** to pain.

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Common Terms

Burnout

- A psychological term for the experience of long-term exhaustion and diminished interest

Compassion Fatigue

- Fatigue, emotional distress or apathy resulting from the constant demands of caring for others

Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder (STSD)

- Closely related to PTSD
- Empathic response to vicarious trauma left unresolved over time

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Compassion Fatigue vs. Burnout



Compassion Fatigue

The emotional residue or stain of exposure to working with those suffering from the consequences of traumatic events.

- Can occur due to exposure on one case or can be due to a cumulative level of trauma
- It differs from burn-out, but can co-exist



Burnout

Cumulative process marked by emotional exhaustion and withdrawal associated with increased workload and institutional stress.

- It is trauma-related
- Can occur in any profession



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Causes of Burnout


- Workload**
 - Having too much work and/or limited resources
- Control**
 - Being micromanaged and/or having less decision-making power
- Rewards**
 - Inconsistent and/or lack of pay, acknowledgement or benefits
- Community**
 - Experiencing isolation, conflict, and/or disrespect



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Causes of Burnout

- Fairness**
 - Experiencing discrimination and/or being impacted by favoritism
- Values**
 - Witnessing ethical conflicts, being assigned meaningless tasks, misalignment with agency mission
- Supervision**
 - Not receiving enough support and/or training
- Role in organization**
 - Unsure and/or not confident in current role




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What are signs of burn out and compassion fatigue?

With your group, think of one example of each sign:

- Physical signs
- Emotional signs
- Behavioral signs
- Interpersonal signs
- Work-related signs

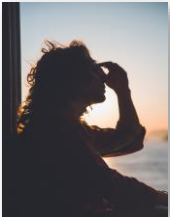


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Signs of Burnout and Compassion Fatigue

Physical Signs

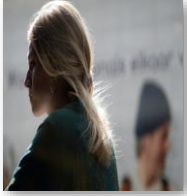
- Trouble sleeping
- Fatigue (Physical Exhaustion)
- Changes in appetite
- Stomach problems and/or aches and pains in muscles
- Hair loss and/or problems with skin
- Impaired immune response



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Signs of Burnout and Compassion Fatigue

Emotional Signs



- Changes in your personality
- Feeling powerless, overwhelmed or depleted
- Difficulty concentrating
- Decreased self-esteem
- Increased self-doubt and/or guilt
- Depression
- Anxiety and/or irritability

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Signs of Burnout and Compassion Fatigue

Behavioral Signs



- Cry easily and/or more often
- Over or under: sensitive, reactive, defensive
- Easily angered or stressed
- Aggressive and/or controlling
- Unrealistic expectations for self and/or others
- Blaming and judgmental of self and/or others
- Pessimistic and/or cynical
- Rigid to rules and processes
- Increased substance use to cope or numb self

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Signs of Burnout and Compassion Fatigue

Interpersonal Signs



- Unable to focus
- More socially withdrawn
- Lack of a sense of humor
- Poor, less engaging interactions
- Less intimate or trustful
- More interpersonal conflicts

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Signs of Burnout and Compassion Fatigue

Work-Related Signs



- Low morale and motivation
- More negative
- Task-avoidance
- Poor work performance
- Absenteeism
- Tardiness
- Risk-taking

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Solutions

Burn-out	Compassion Fatigue
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to your supervisor • Ask for supportive supervision • Appropriately reach out to co-workers • Attend trainings regularly • Take time away from work • Practice self check-ins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routinely reflect on overall way of being as an advocate • Practice self-care • Set healthy boundaries • Notice if former coping skills are no longer working • Pick your battles • Find joy and humor in your work

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your definition of a good day will look different from other people's.

slept 6+ hours
 cleaned room
 took a walk

finished 2 tasks in the morning
 scheduled next week
 high productivity

hung out with friends
 laughed a lot
 full of food

read a book
 learned a cool fact
 didn't worry too much

ckibird.com

Which self-care strategies are most helpful to you?

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More Self-Care Ideas:

- Debrief with people who can validate you.
- Clarify your boundaries: what works for you and what doesn't?
- Try health-building activities such as exercise, massage and meditation.
- Eat healthy foods and drink plenty of water as much as you can
- Regularly use your vacation and sick time.

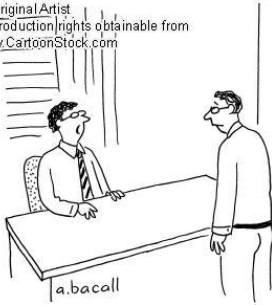
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More Self-Care Ideas:

- Find a spiritual outlet.
- When you have a problem, take it to the source.
- If you are unhappy at work, take action.
- Avoid over-committing to responsibilities and tasks.
- Negativity is easy to catch: try not to spread it or catch it!
- Develop a healthy support system.

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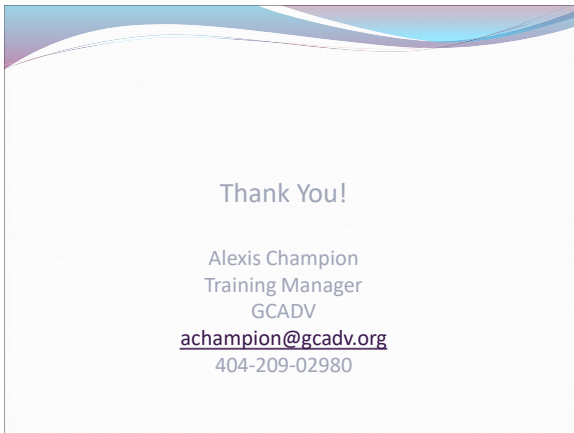
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"I moved the computer and phone off my desk. You wouldn't understand. It's a Feng Shui thing and it has successfully reduced my job related stress."

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