Coping with Compassion Fatigue

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Defined

- **Compassion** – sympathetic consciousness of others’ distress together with a desire to alleviate it
- **Fatigue** – a state or attitude of indifference or apathy brought on by overexposure
COMPASSION FATIGUE
* Apathy or indifference due to overexposure to being sympathetic to others’ distress
* Usually includes a feeling of tiredness

The early days…
- 1992 - Carla Joinson, RN
- Compassion fatigue in Emergency Department nurses
- “compassion fatigue is a unique form of burnout which affects people in caregiving professions; this burnout is overpowering, invasive stress that can begin to dominate us and interfere with our ability to function.”
Review articles

A systematic review of the effects of euthanasia and occupational stress in personnel working with animals in animal shelters, veterinary clinics, and biomedical research facilities

Rebekah L. Scottney, GCVS; Deirdre McLaughlin, PhD; Helen L. Keates, BVSc, PhD

https://doi.org/10.2460/javma.247.10.1121

Compassion Fatigue, Euthanasia Stress, and Their Management in Laboratory Animal Research

https://doi.org/10.30802/AALAS-JAALAS-18-000092

When the caring gets tough


WHEN THE CARING GETS TOUGH
Compassion Fatigue and Veterinary Care

Peter Huggard
Jayne Huggard

“One of the biggest favours any veterinarian can do for his or her patients, colleagues, and family, is to take self-care and stress control seriously”.

Dr Lisa Miller (JAVMA News, 2004)
TedxFargo

- Compassion Fatigue: What is it and do you have it?
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-4m35Gixno](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-4m35Gixno)

YouTube

- University of Tennessee video
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6TCVZ9ONn4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6TCVZ9ONn4)
So many questions

- Do I have compassion fatigue?
- Do those that work for/with me have compassion fatigue?
- How can I determine if I have compassion fatigue?
- What do I do about it?
- Should I be worried if I don’t have it?
Dealing with CF

- Self-care
  - Develop a plan
  - Implement plan
  - Adjust as necessary
- Ask for help
- Work to improve your resiliency
  - an ability to recover from or adjust easily to adversity or change
Contributing Factors

- Family obligations
  - Spouse
  - Parent(s)
  - Children
  - Pets
- Friends
- Societal
- Media/News

3-pronged approach

Organization

Peers/Staff

Self
Don’t try to be everything to everyone

Nothing is sustainable without boundaries.
- Brené Brown

Conclusions

- It is ok to talk about Compassion Fatigue
  - Create a space to allow this to happen
- It may or may not occur depending on a lot of factors
- There is increasing research and resources available
- If you encounter a situation beyond your capability, ask for expert help
Thank You!
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