

# Compassion Fatigue: Managing Caregiver Stress

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## Today's Presenter: Danny Mack



Danny Mack attended the University of North Texas and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and holds a Bachelor of Arts and Master of Divinity degrees. With over fifteen years' professional experience, Danny has served as a bereavement coordinator and chaplain and regularly speaks on a variety of issues. He was named the 2008 Hospice Bereavement Coordinator of the Year by the Texas New Mexico Hospice Organization, is president

of the Bereavement Coordinators Association, has served on the board of Mesquite Social Services and Sharing Life Community Outreach, and has started two nonprofit organizations. He is a member of the Chaplain Development Committee of Texas New Mexico Hospice Organization and in 2013 became a member of their board.

Danny's compelling story of overcoming polio and navigating the grief from the death of his brother, mother, and father give him a unique ability to connect to his audience. His excellent speaking skills combined with creative presentations make him a sought after speaker in the field of bereavement and for motivating people to live their best lives.

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## Objectives

- Understand the difference between compassion fatigue and burn out
- Be aware of the warning signs of compassion fatigue
- Analyze the difference between selfishness and enlightened self interest
- Develop strategies to manage compassion fatigue

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## The Journal of Hospice and Palliative Nursing volume No.6, November/December 2006

- In 1992 246,000 hospice patients were served
- In 2002 885,000 hospice patients were served
- An increase of 259% in this time period
- In 2000 the average age of a registered nurse was 45.7 and has climbed steadily.
- It is projected that the nursing population will fall 29% below demand in the year 2020
- According to the NHPCO there will be direct impact on EOL care in the US

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- Multiple patients dying in a short period of time has a cumulative effect on hospice staff.
- Hospice staff will continuously be faced with difficult family dynamics creating emotional challenges.
- Increased demand to have more patients with less staff increases the possibility compassion fatigue

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## Effects of Compassion Fatigue on Hospice Staff

- Financial stress
- Diagnosed with depression/PTSD
- Sacrifice their own personal psychological needs for their patients
- Smoking behavior
- Headaches
- Hypertension

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## The Difference Between Burn Out & Compassion Fatigue

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Business and industry, with their progressive focus upon productivity in the last half of the twentieth century, have provided us with the concept of burnout (Fruedenberger, 1974; Maslach, 1976) to describe the deleterious effects the environmental demands of the workplace have on the worker.

- J. Eric Gentry

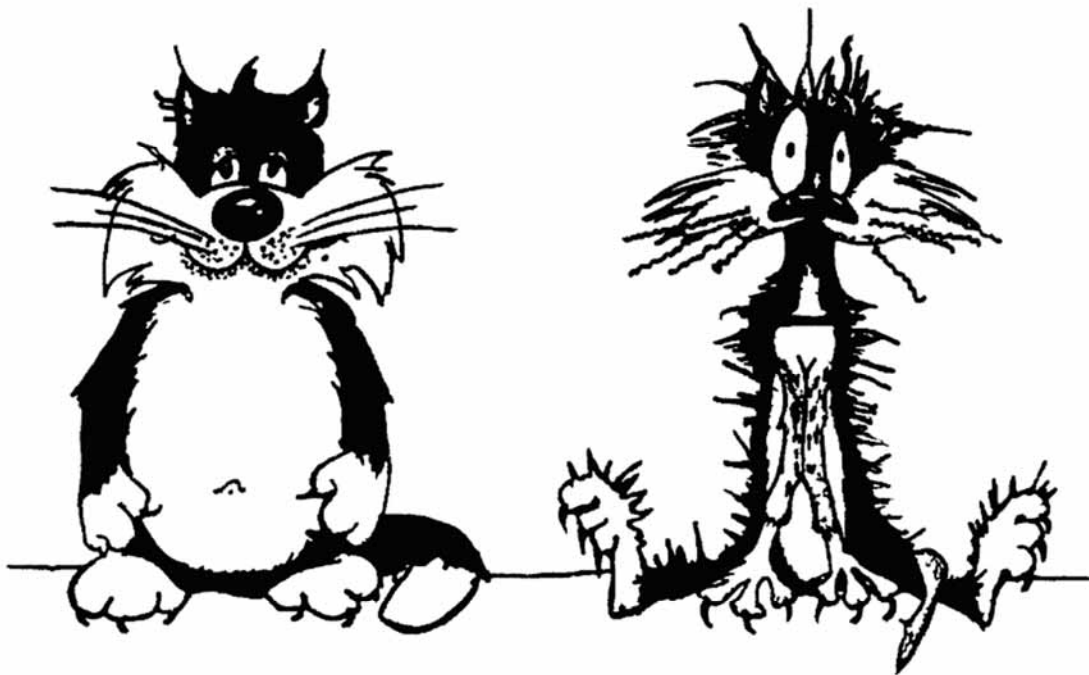
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## Burn Out

- Conflicts in the work setting
- Dissatisfaction with manager
- Salary issues
- Inadequate working conditions



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**Before Work**

**After Work**

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## Compassion Fatigue

Relational connections with patients and families

- Stems from emotional engagement
- Intensity of hospice care
- Engaging death, dying and grief regularly
- Running out of emotional energy

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“We have not been directly exposed to the trauma scene, but we hear the story told with such intensity, or we hear similar stories so often, or we have the gift and curse of extreme empathy and we suffer. We feel the feelings of our clients. We experience their fears. We dream their dreams. Eventually, we lose a certain spark of optimism, humor and hope. We tire. We aren’t sick, but we aren’t ourselves.”

Compassion Fatigue: Coping with Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder in Those Who Treat the Traumatized (Figley, 1995)

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## Warning Signs

- Avoidance of stressful patients
- Short patient visits
- Procrastinating documentation
- Missing obvious patient needs
- Conflict with coworkers

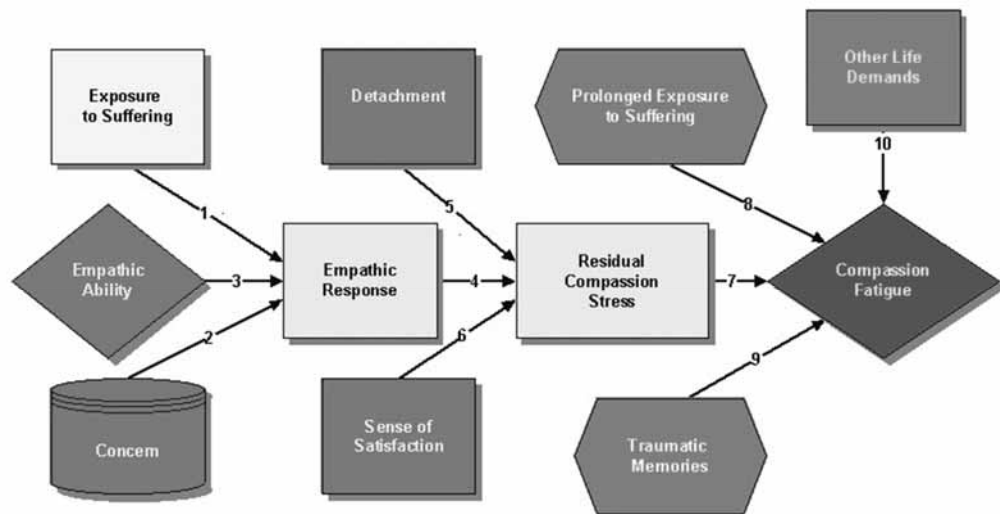
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## More Warning Signs

- Wondering how patients are doing instead of sleeping
- Extreme exhaustion
- Nightmares
- Anger/frustration/irritability
- Work/Play out of balance

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The Compassion Fatigue Process (Figley, 2001)

## Dos & Don'ts of Compassion Fatigue

Mother Teresa wrote in her plan to her superiors that it was MANDATORY for her nuns to take an entire year off from their duties every 4-5 years to allow them to heal from the effects of their care-giving work.



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## How to Be Human

- Eat properly
- Get plenty of rest
- Exercise
- Feel your emotions
- Talk to someone
- Create a well rounded life

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## Don't:

- Blame others
- Make major life decisions
- Complain to patients
- Try harder and work longer
- Self medicate
- Neglect your own needs

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## Understand the Difference Between Enlightened Self Interest & Selfishness

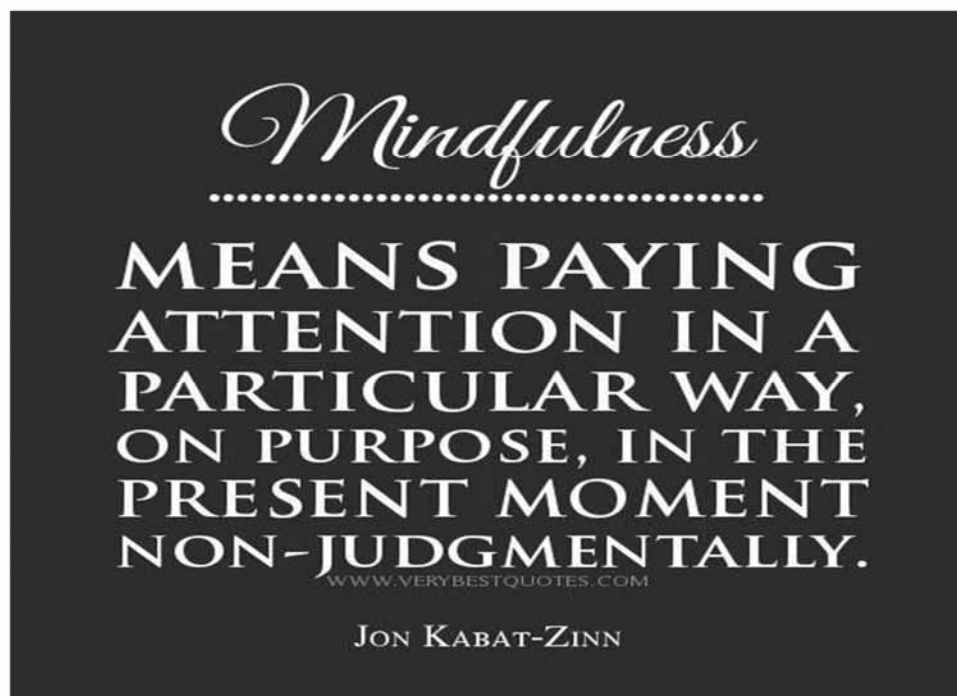
- Selfishness: I am going to do for me at the expense of you
- Enlightened self interest: I will take care of me so I can take care of you

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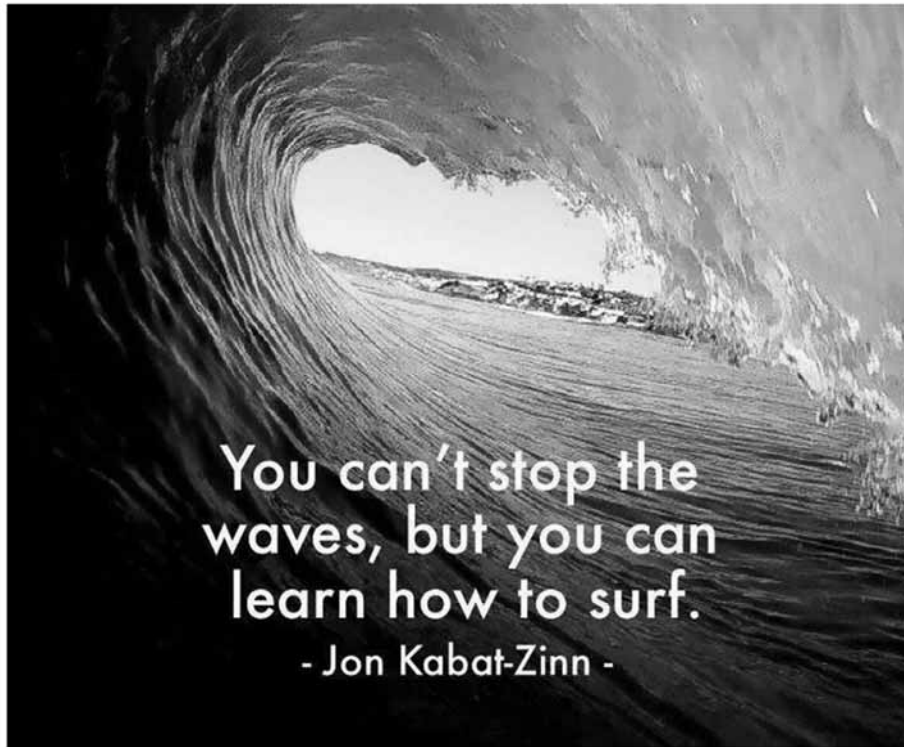
## The Two Ingredients of Stress

- Duration of the event – Hospice staff often are moving from one crisis to the next. Multiple crisis episodes can be a trigger for compassion fatigue.
- Intensity – Emotional intensity can occur at the time of the death when several family members are having a grief reaction.

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## Five Strategies for Managing Compassion Fatigue

- If you don't name it you can't change it - admit you are struggling
- Develop a plan - set goals for each day, week and month
- Ask for help – tell your manager you are overwhelmed
- Do something for yourself - have fun
- Lower your expectations - chose to be happy with progress rather than perfection

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# 959 PLAN

Less than ten minutes a day of self care

- Meditation/Prayer
- Listening to music
- Journaling
- Walking in nature
- Playing with a pet
- Discover what gives you life and spend time doing it

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People wait  
all week for friday,  
all year for summer,  
all life for happiness

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## Resources

- To Weep For A Stranger: Compassion Fatigue in Caregiving, Patricia Smith, Create Space Independent Publishing, 2009.
- Compassion Fatigue: Coping with Secondary Traumatic Stressing Those Who Treat the Traumatized, Charles Figley (Routledge Psychosocial Stress Series), May1, 1995.
- Predicting the Risk of Compassion Fatigue, A Study in Hospice Nurses, Maryann Abendroth MSN, RN, Jeanne Flannery DSN, ARNP, CNRN, CCH, The Journal of Hospice and Palliative Nursing, Volume No. 6, November/December
- Mindfulness for Beginners: Reclaiming Your Present Moment and Your Life, Jon Kabat - Zinn, Sounds True Inc, 2011

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## Websites

Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project

[www.compassionfatigue.org](http://www.compassionfatigue.org)

Figley Institute

[www.figleyinstitute.com](http://www.figleyinstitute.com)

The American Institute of Stress

[www.stress.org](http://www.stress.org)

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# Thank You for Attending!

## Questions?

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