

# FIRST RESPONDER QUICK TIPS

## Self Care and Stress Management



### Compassion Fatigue

Compassion fatigue is a condition characterized by emotional and physical exhaustion leading to a diminished ability to empathize or feel compassion for others, often described as the negative cost of caring.

### Who is at Risk?

Compassion fatigue can affect a wide range of professions and caregivers. It tends to be most common among professionals who regularly work in a helping or healing capacity.

## COMPASSION FATIGUE

### What is it and What are the Risks

#### Signs You are Experiencing Compassion Fatigue

- Chronic physical and emotional exhaustion
- Depersonalization
- Irritability
- Feelings of self-contempt
- Feelings of hopelessness or powerlessness
- Weight loss
- Weight gain and overeating
- Nausea and dizziness
- Relationship conflict
- Headaches
- Poor job satisfaction
- Feelings of unfairness and anger towards the patient-caregiver relationship
- Insomnia or difficulty sleeping
- Poor self care
- Self isolation
- Loss of pleasure in life
- Difficulty concentrating
- Constant self-blame and negative thoughts

### Risks in the Workforce

Compassion Fatigue can lead to an increase in preventable medical errors due to an inability to react quickly to a situation

There is also a greater likelihood of poor communication in someone suffering from Compassion Fatigue which can lead to conflict and miscommunication among coworkers

Individuals are also more likely to be less sympathetic to a patients situation, retain less patient information, and feel increasingly dissatisfied with their work.

### What are the causes?

Compassion fatigue is often caused by the internalization of patient trauma, workplace trauma, and exhaustion due to a lack of self care

Exposure to trauma and individuals with trauma can weigh on caregivers and often will lead to Compassion Fatigue if the roots of the issue are not properly addressed and treated

### Action Items

ALWAYS   NEVER

- Agree  Argue
- Divert  Reason
- Distract  Shame
- Say "do what you can"  Say "you can"
- Ask or model  Command or demand
- Encourage and praise  Condescend
- Say "reminisce"  Say "remember"
- Say "repeat"  Say "I told you"
- Reassure  Lecture
- Reinforce  Force

Additionally, ALWAYS:

- Speak calmly & slowly, take your time.
- Make eye contact
- LISTEN & ask questions
  - Active listening and Reflective listening
- Be conscious of your body language
- Debrief with a trusted individual for your own mental & emotional health.

# SELF CARE AND STRESS MANAGEMENT

## What is Self Care?

Self care is about participating in activities that you find relaxing and healing for yourself. Self care places an emphasis on your personal health and promoting it positively throughout your life through a variety of approaches

Self-care can be defined as the practice of taking an active role in protecting one's own well-being and happiness, in particular during periods of stress. In other words, it is the practice of taking action to preserve or improve one's own health

## Resources for Self Care

### Mindfulness



### Guided Meditation



### Nutrition



### Stress and Relaxation



### Center for Healthy Minds



## Physical Self Care

Take care of your body by taking time to listen and address its daily needs. What are you feeling? Thirst, hunger, pain, stress, tension, fatigue?

Exercise through walking, running, aerobics, and yoga are a good way of working off stress while also ensuring your body is kept in shape

Eating well balanced meals that meet individual nutritional needs is essential to maintaining ones physical well being

Practice body calming activities such as reading, knitting, meditation, baking, bathing, or swimming that encourage a calm state of being

## Emotional Self Care

Ask for help when you need it. No one can do everything alone, and it is necessary to offload some of the feelings, hardships, and expectations in your life

Practice gratitude and reflection as a means of addressing points of positivity within your life and defining points of improvement to be worked on

See a therapist to work through difficult emotions or experiences, or simply to have someone to act as a filter for your thoughts and feelings

Talk about your emotions and address feelings of stress and hardship within your life in order to address negative feelings

## Psychological Self

Mental self care is the act of reducing stress levels and decluttering your mind as a means of addressing your overall mindset and improving your general state of being

Turn off your screens. Remove excess light, noise, and information and allow yourself a moment to decompress

Take time weekly to connect with friends and loved ones via phone, email, visits, or video calls. Connection is vital to maintaining a healthy emotional state

Get good quality sleep and establish a daily routine to create a balanced lifestyle

## References:

<https://www.uofmhealth.org/health-library/r1xsk>, <https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/selfcare.asp>,  
<https://www.apa.org/topics/self-care>

Printed Courtesy of AARP