

# FIRST RESPONDER QUICK TIPS

## Compassion: Growth & Maintenance



### EMPATHY is key:

#### Cognitive Empathy:

In cognitive empathy, a helper will conscientiously listen and strive to understand the opinion of the person in need. It is the ability to respect all sides of a position and can increase the recipient's respect.

#### Compassionate Empathy:

Of all forms of empathy, compassionate empathy is generally the ideal for any setting. A helper shows they are truly listening when they exhibit compassion. Their words and actions convey they not only understand the those in need's point of view, but they genuinely care.

#### Emotional Empathy:

Emotional empathy occurs when the effort to understand and sympathize with another person makes the other person's opinion contagious. The helper isn't just listening, but begins to feel what the other person is feeling in an emotional and personal way.

Studies show, compassion promotes positive emotions, traits, and behaviors that ultimately foster positive well-being for everyone involved in the exchange of compassion. If you ever feel you can't help in any other way, you can help by always showing compassion.

### UNIVERSAL ACTION ITEMS

#### ALWAYS

Agree	→	Argue
Divert	→	Reason
Distract	→	Shame
Say "do what you can"	→	Say "you can't"
Ask or model		Command or demand
Encourage and praise	→	Condescend
Say "reminisce"	→	Say "remember"
Say "repeat"	→	Say "I told you"
Reassure	→	Lecture
Reinforce	→	Force

#### NEVER

#### Additionally, **ALWAYS:**

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

### PERSONAL ASSESSMENT RESOURCES:

There is no shame in helping yourself be at your best!

[Compassion Fatigue Personal Assessment](#)



[Harvard Implicit Bias Assessments](#)



Hover smartphone camera over QR code to access assessments.

### ARE YOU EXPERIENCING COMPASSION FATIGUE?

**Compassion Fatigue** is the profound emotional and physical erosion that happens when helpers are unable to refuel and regenerate.

**"Dedicating yourself to the service of others is hard work. It can become very draining. It is even harder to pour from an empty cup. It takes time & energy to realize that your cup may no longer be full, and then take the time refill it. Make sure you take time to refill your cup."**

### RECOGNIZE the signs of Compassion Fatigue:

- Feeling burdened by the suffering of others
- Blaming others for their suffering
- Isolating yourself
- Loss of pleasure in life
- Difficulty concentrating
- Insomnia
- Physical and mental fatigue
- Bottling up your emotions
- Increased nightmares
- Feelings of hopelessness or powerlessness
- Frequent complaining about your work or your life
- Overeating
- Excessive use of drugs or alcohol
- Poor self-care
- Beginning to receive a lot of complaints about your work or attitude
- Denial

# How to find the the **WHY** behind the **WHAT**... building compassion and using it to save lives.

**What:** What is the reason behind the issue? What is causing the person's distress? Why are they reacting the way that they are? Are they in pain? Are their needs met?

- For example: Drug use and addiction can often stem from life trauma or lack of resources.

**How:** How are you able to help the person in need? Identify strategies to meet the persons individual needs. Take your time and ask questions. Open ended questions can give you more than yes or no, questions what start with *how* or *what* can give you more information if needed.

**You:** As the caregiver check in with yourself, what is your role in their care? What are you doing to create the desired or possibly undesired outcome?

- For example, if they are exhibiting anxiety, what can you do to ensure they become more calm?

## BRAINSTORM IT... *Practicing Compassion*

**James** has dealt with persistent mental illness all of his life. In the past, he has been diagnosed with schizophrenia and bi-polar disorder. Currently, he is homeless and living on the streets. James has not had his medication or seen his counselor in over 3 months. James often becomes agitated by the sounds that he hears, loud noises on the street, in particular, the sounds that come from large garbage trucks. As James lives on the street, he does not get to sleep on a regular basis and therefore experiences more agitation.

When walking down the street, James often responds to the loud noises by yelling out. While he can be loud, he has never hit anyone or caused any damage to property when agitated. This is his way of expressing his frustration. A local shop owner witnessed this behavior and called the police because she was fearful of James's behavior. When the cops arrive, they end up arresting James because he is unresponsive to their requests to stop yelling.

**What can you do to help James? Explore the WHY (what, how, you)...how can you use the WHY to respond with compassion and evoke awareness and understanding as well as a positive outcome?**

**Alexa** is a young adult with Autism and OCD. She has lived with her parents her entire life because she cannot take care of most of her activities of daily living on her own. However, Alexa is able to do some things on her own, like walking to the local coffee shop, buying coffee and a snack, and making her way back home. Due to some of her compulsions, Alexa does not like to take left turns when walking down the street. Instead, Alexa will take a longer route to the coffeeshop so she does not have to take left turns when walking.

Recently, on a walk back home from an outing, Alexa was lost in her thoughts about an interaction that made her anxious. She got turned around and lost during her walk. She tried retracing her path to no avail and continued to get further and further away from home.

Anxious and upset with herself, Alexa sat down to count. When Alexa is anxious or upset, counting out loud helps her feel less stressed. Sometimes she can become very loud when doing this. Several people walking in the neighborhood saw Alexa and were alarmed by her talking out loud and called the police.

**What can you do to help Alexa? Explore the WHY (what, how, you)...how can you use the WHY to respond with compassion and evoke awareness and understanding as well as a positive outcome?**

### References:

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