

COMPASSION FATIGUE

It may seem like an oxymoron, but the truth is that you can care too much.

When caregivers care so much that they neglect themselves, it can create a downward spiral of self-destruction known as Compassion Fatigue. Understanding the symptoms of this condition is the first step managing it and moving toward a healthier state of being.

Do any of these sound familiar?

FEELING IMMUNE TO THE SUFFERING

OF OTHERS: Have you lost the ability to feel compassion for your loved one's pain?

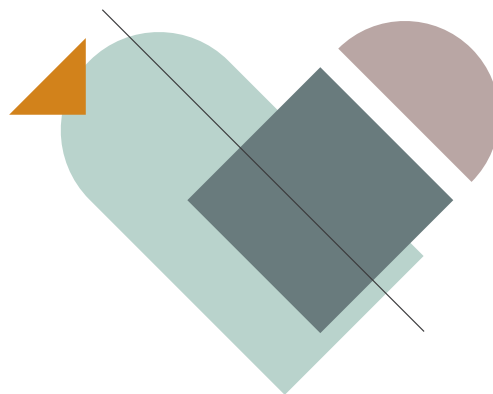
ADDICTION: Do you suffer from compulsive behaviors such as drug use or overeating? The behavior typically is a coping mechanism for managing difficult feelings.

EXCESSIVE BLAMING: Do you habitually look for someone to blame for you and your loved one's circumstances? Do you want to hold someone accountable for your troubles?

NEGLECTING YOURSELF: Do you have a disheveled appearance and/or personal hygiene?

PREOCCUPATION: Have you become preoccupied with your loved one's health and well-being? Do you neglect other people and other relationships?

BOTTLED UP EMOTIONS: Do you suppress your true emotions? There is a difference between your feelings and expressing them.



FEELING HOPELESS: Do you feel like your situation is hopeless and that nothing you do matters?

INSOMNIA: Do you lose sleep over your loved one's health and well-being? Are you having nightmares about the trauma associated with caring for your loved one?

FINANCIAL PROBLEMS: Have you neglected tending to your own financial matters, being so overwhelmed that you cannot face dealing with the details of managing your own life?

APATHY: Are you disinterested in activities that you once enjoyed?

CHRONIC PHYSICAL AILMENTS (such as GI issues and colds): Are you chronically sick or in pain?

ISOLATION: Do you feel estranged from others? Are you having problems sharing your feelings with others? Do you feel that you have no one to turn to?

VIOLENT THOUGHTS: Do you have violent thoughts as you move through your day taking care of your loved one?

Caregivers often cope by ignoring strong emotions, but eventually these emotions will become so intense they will not be ignored and a crisis can occur. Unidentified compassion fatigue causes a decline in health for caregivers and diminished care for their loved ones. In addition, caregiver who do not address their emotional problems are at risk for substance abuse and other self-destructive behaviors.

The path of healing from Compassion Fatigue will lead to a greater sense of well-being and make you a better caregiver. If you are fully

present when caring your loved one's care will improve and your interactions will be more positive. The first step is awareness and then you can begin to take better care of yourself, discover healing activities, find support and attend to your spiritual needs.

Once you suffer from Compassion Fatigue it is always in you. Healing is a process and staying healthy should be an ongoing priority. You need to diligently manage your Compassion Fatigue if it resurfaces and turn away from your old destructive habits

