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# Caregiver Compassion Fatigue

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# Objectives

- ❑ Explore the feelings and experiences of caregivers
- ❑ Clearly define burnout and compassion fatigue
- ❑ Discuss signs and symptoms of compassion fatigue
- ❑ List coping mechanisms for self care and ways to decrease stress

# Role of Caregiver



- Many times caregivers develop or have the strongest connections with patient
- The first to notice changes that need medical attention
- Experience both the benefits and burdens of care giving

Rewarding

Exhausting

Physically

Mentally

Emotionally

# Be aware



- **Burnout:**  
A condition resulting from chronic work stress and characterized by physical and emotional exhaustion, sometimes presenting physical illness.
- **Compassion Fatigue:**  
A condition characterized by a gradual lessening of compassion over time. It was first diagnosed in nurses in the 1950s. Compassion means “to suffer with” and this is exactly what happens to those who practice great empathy. This can have detrimental effects on individuals, both professionally and personally.



# Compassion Fatigue

- Author Colleen Breen describes Compassion Fatigue as a “**soul sadness.**”
- There is an inner, core reality that closes down when people become so overwhelmed by the needs and concerns of others that they forget to take care of themselves.
- Absorbing and internalizing the emotions of others – patients, co-workers, family, etc.
- Secondary trauma stress  
No one lives in “a bubble”  
Once a caregiver... always a caregiver

# Normal Symptoms

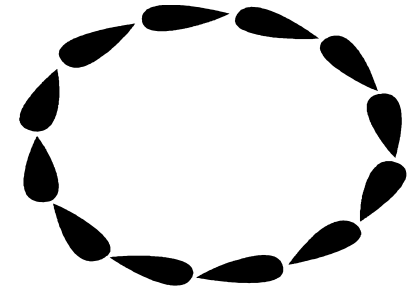
- Excessive blaming
- Bottled up emotions
- Isolation from others
- Receives unusual amount of complaints from others
- Voices excessive complaints about administrative functions
- Compulsive behaviors such as overspending, overeating, gambling, sexual addictions
- In denial about problems
- Poor self care
- Dread of working with certain patients
- Chronic physical ailments such as gastrointestinal issues and reoccurring colds
- Sad, no longer finds activities pleasurable
- Difficulty concentrating
- Mentally and physically tired
- Preoccupied



# Organizational Symptoms

- High absenteeism (Increase use of sick days)
- Constant changes in co-workers relationships
- Inability for teams to work well together
- Desire among staff members to break the rules
- Outbreaks of aggressive behaviors among staff
- Inability of staff to complete assignments, tasks, or meet deadlines
- Lack of flexibility among staff members
- Lack of vision for the future

# Signs and Symptoms



- Multifaceted

- Physical

Poor Self Care, Headaches, GI problems, exhaustion, aches, decreased immunity, heart palpitations

- Emotional

Irritability, withdrawn, unusual anger, excessive crying or feelings of depression, bottling of emotions, emotional fatigue, difficulty concentrating, and increased criticism toward self and others

- Spiritual

Withdrawn from faith

Feelings of nothingness

- Substance Abuse

# The Path to Wellness

- Awareness

Accept where you are on your individual path

Recognize that it can occur and can be managed. Enhance your awareness and education.

- Self-care

- Seek Support

Interact with other caregivers

Express your needs and clarify boundaries

Understand that others may not always support you or be there



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# Self-care Toolbox

- Engage in healthy activities

  - Exercise

  - Massage

  - Enjoy the outdoors (4 wheeling, walks, fishing, etc.)

  - Mediation

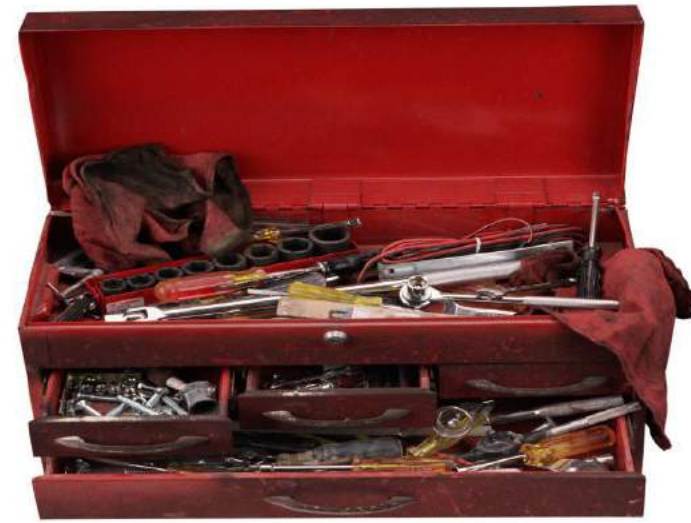
- Eat healthy foods

- Drink plenty of water

- Limit stressors

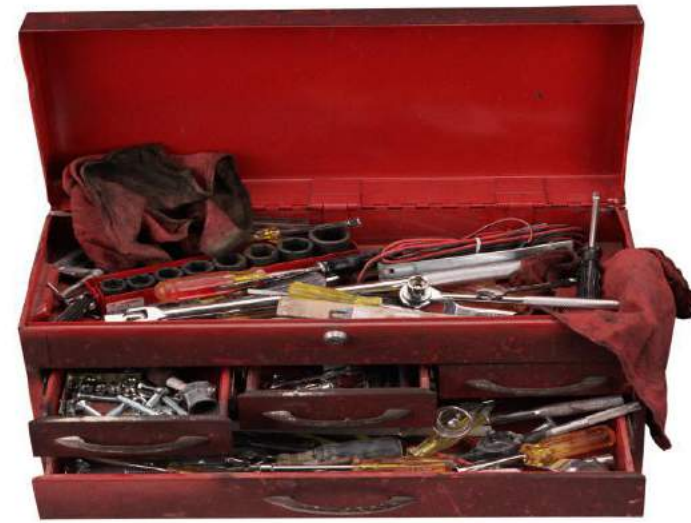
  - Prioritize tasks

  - Don't worry about what others think or trying to please others



# Self-care Toolbox

- Rest
- Alone time
- Listening to music or nature sounds
- Imagine yourself in your “Happy Place”
  - Relaxation techniques
  - Deep Breathing



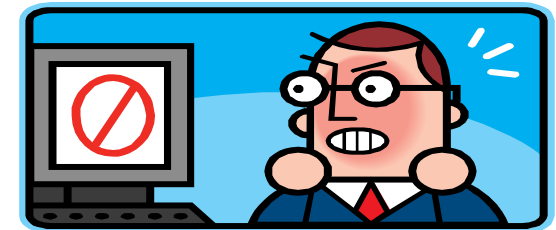
# Power Tools

- Self-management... Just say No!
- Develop healthy support system
- Conserve energy... Choose your battles!
- Proactive, not reactive
- Seek assistance from others
- Live a balanced life
- Stay connected to the outside world
- Don't get stuck in a routine



# Don't...

- Blame others
- Spend energy complaining
- Try to “quick fix”
  - New job or car
  - Divorce or affair
  - Self medicate
- Work harder or longer
- Neglect your own needs
- Over promise yourself



# Do...

- Spend quiet time alone
- Recharge your batteries daily
- Hold one focused, connected and meaningful conversation each day
- Find someone to talk to
- Understand the pain you feel is normal





**“There is this myth that we have unlimited energy; but we are not Energizer Bunnies,” says Colleen Breen. “We can’t just keep going and going and going, giving and giving and giving. Self-care is a way to charge our inner batteries so we can continue caring for others.”**

# Self Compassion

- Colleen Breen

*Making Changes: A Guidebook for Managing Life's Challenges*

- Dr. Kristin Neff

Book - *Self-Compassion*

Website - [www.self-compassion.org](http://www.self-compassion.org)



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