


HELP FOR HR PROFESSIONALS

Understanding and Overcoming Compassion Fatigue



Areas Covered

-  **Why Compassion Fatigue Matters**
-  **How This Topic Affects You and Others**
-  **What You Can Do**
-  **Key Takeaways**





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Anonymous Poll Question:

How concerned are you about coping with stress and anxiety?



Why talk about compassion fatigue?

Sometimes when we care too much, we experience compassion fatigue (CF)

“The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet.”

- Dr. Rachel Remen

What is Compassion Fatigue (CF)?

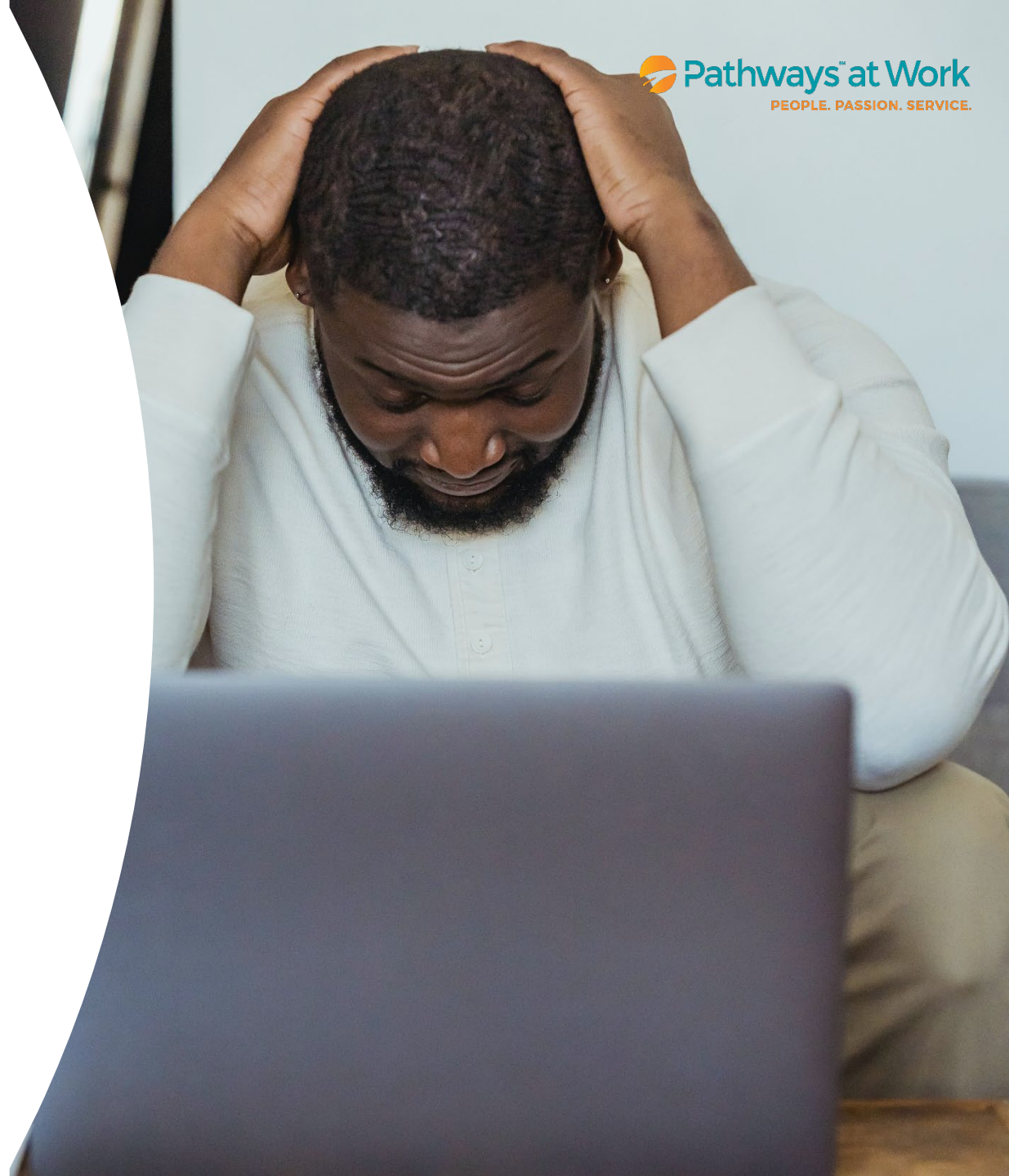
- Weariness because of repetitive, empathic responses to pain
- Gradual lessening of compassion
- Taking on others' suffering
- Lack of adequate self-care resources



Who is More Likely to Develop CF?

People who:

- Have capacity for true compassion, empathy, concern and caring.
- Lack of social resources and support.
- By nature, have lower emotional resiliency than others.
- Are bound by rules/obligations.





Who is More Likely to Develop CF? Helpers.

- A helper is anyone who provides a service or listens to another person.
- A helper can be a
 - Teacher,
 - Therapist,
 - HR Professional,
 - Friend,
 - Family Member,
 - First Responders, etc.



Burnout vs. Compassion Fatigue

- Burnout stems from dissatisfaction with the work environment.
- Compassion Fatigue stems from absorbing the suffering of your clients or patients.

Ask yourself:
“Do I Love My Job?”



NO



Burnout



YES



**Compassion
Fatigue**



How Compassion Fatigue Affects You and Others



Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

- Sleeping problems or nightmares
- Intrusive thoughts, memories and flashbacks
- Hyper-vigilance
- General anxiety and anxiety attacks
- Isolation and disconnection
- Substance abuse and high risk behaviors
- Changes in appetite
- Irritability and depression
- Increased cynicism, negativity, and apathy

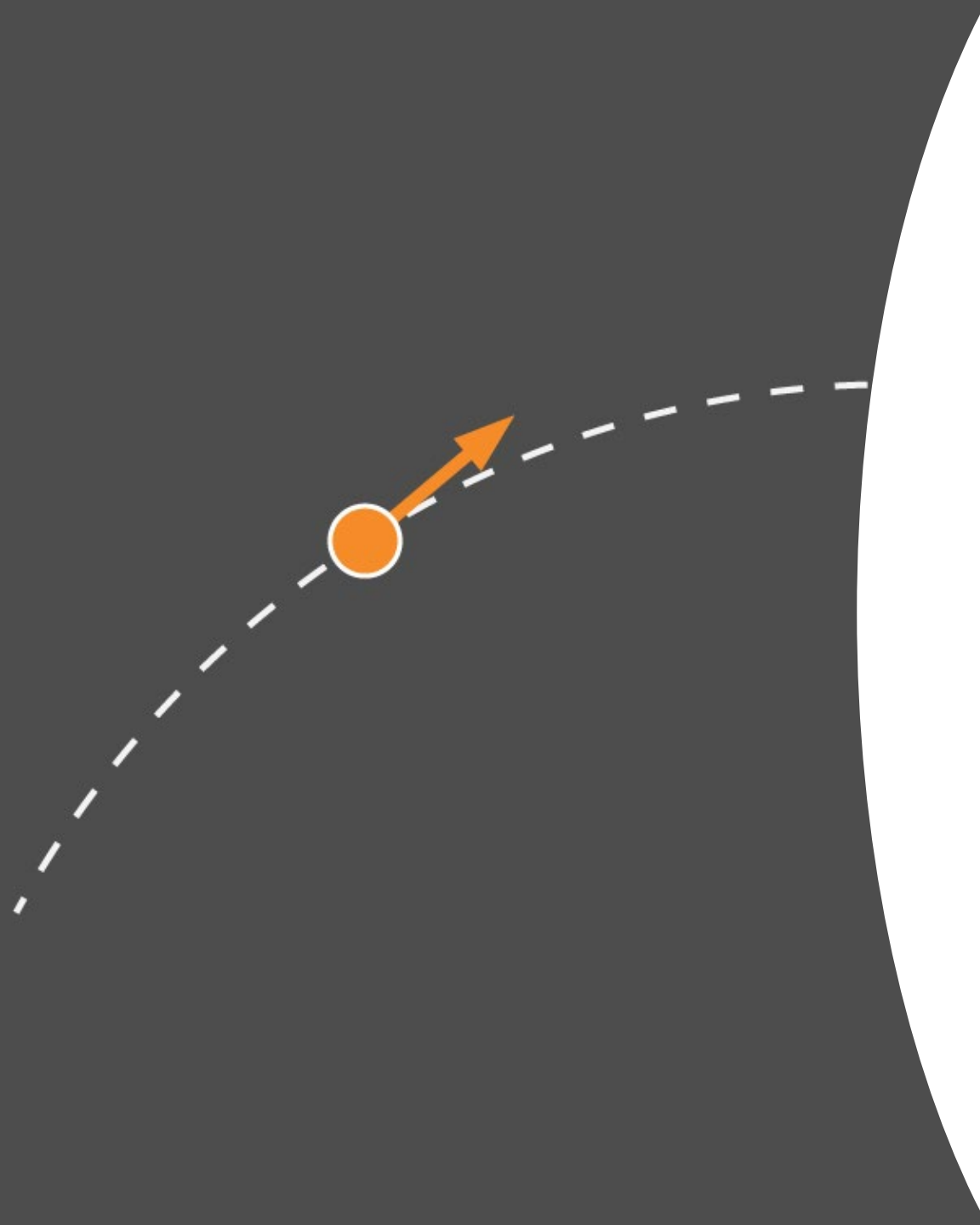
Compassion Fatigue Misperceptions

- “I will ‘fix’ the problem...make everything OK...save the world.”
- “I am responsible for outcomes.”
- “If I care enough, everything will be OK.”
- “My colleagues I help will appreciate everything I do for them.”
- “I will be fair and equitable to all.”
- “If we just provide enough support and coaching.”



The Compassion Fatigue Trajectory

1. Zealot Phase
2. Irritability Phase
3. Withdrawal Phase
4. Zombie Phase
5. Victimization



Anonymous Poll Question:

Based on the information provided, do you feel like you are suffering from compassion fatigue?



What You Can Do About It

Start Close In

- Recognize the symptoms
- Educate yourself
- Recognize contributors:
 - Prolonged exposure
 - Working long hours
 - Excess personal demands
 - Personal Isolation



How do you bring your caring and giving nature back into focus?

1. Reframing

2. Rethinking



Reframing

Recognize that you are doing some of the most difficult and most important work in your company.

Honor yourself and feel proud of the difference you are making.

Know and recognize that you are an active part of the solution.

Rethinking

Think about why you're so dedicated to helping others.

- What is the personal meaning?

Think about whether you put your colleagues' welfare before your own.

Realize that you need to take care of yourself first, or you'll have nothing left to give to your colleagues.



How does CF impact us?

Physical needs

Mental needs

Occupational needs

Relational needs

Spiritual needs

Physical Needs

- Eat meals at a relaxed pace
- Develop breathing exercises to calm you
- Find a quiet place (emotionally and physically)
- Develop and stick to an exercise plan
- Don't self-medicate with alcohol or drugs
- Take time off!
- Seek medical treatment for symptoms that interfere with daily functioning

Mental Needs

- Assess what's on your plate
- Make a list of your stressors to see what is making your plate too full
- Try to reduce or eliminate multi-tasking
- Identify stressful thinking (e.g. “always” “never” “should” “ought”)
- Reframe failures as mistakes and learning opportunities



Occupational Needs

- Assess your current job and work environment
- Ask yourself :
 - Does your work fit your interests?
 - Are you passionate about your work? Do you love what you do?
 - Does it allow you to use all of your strengths?
 - Does it allow you sufficient leisure time?







Relational Needs

- Create a self-care plan (e.g. walk on the beach, massage, watching sports on TV)
- Plan time to connect with family and friends
- Keep a feelings journal
- Have one good conversation a day
- Find someone who cares – You will be surprised!





Spiritual Needs

-  Practice prayer or meditation
-  Practice intentional silence
-  Listen to music
-  Read uplifting material

Questions to Ponder

Ways to keep the discussion going

- Do you recognize any warning signs of compassion fatigue in your life?
- What areas of your life are causing you to feel fatigued?
- What steps can you to take to avoid and overcome compassion fatigue?

Take Action

- Consider whether what you are experiencing is compassion fatigue or burnout by asking yourself the question discussed in this training.
- Identify the true source of your feelings.
- Once you have identified the source of the issue, you can begin to implement ways to overcome them and take care of yourself.
- If compassion fatigue is becoming severe and is affecting your ability to function properly, talk to your health care provider or a mental health professional.





About Pathways at Work

- Our Pathways at Work program, offered by Pathways, is a series of highly-customized live and **on-demand training workshops, tools, and interactive discussion groups** designed to help employees manage mental and behavioral health issues before costly 1-to-1 interventions are needed.
- Each training **is tailored to the specific needs** of the employees.
- Our trainers are all **licensed, full-time** behavioral health experts.

Q&A



FIRST REPUBLIC

“The Pathways at Work process identified where we should focus our mental health and well-being efforts. Their customized approach has been effective and the employee feedback has been really positive. I highly recommend working with Pathways!”

Karen Fukuda

Human Resources | First Republic Bank



No one has all the answers. Together, we can help you and your company get through these difficult times and help develop an even stronger, healthier workforce.

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