



## What is Compassion Fatigue?

Studies confirm that caregivers play host to a high level of compassion fatigue. Day in, day out, workers struggle to function in care giving environments that constantly present heart wrenching, emotional challenges. Affecting positive change in society, a mission so vital to those passionate about caring for others, is perceived as elusive, if not impossible. This painful reality, coupled with first-hand knowledge of society's flagrant disregard for the safety and well-being of the feeble and frail, takes its toll on everyone from full time employees to part time volunteers. Eventually, negative attitudes prevail.

Compassion Fatigue symptoms are normal displays of chronic stress resulting from the care giving work we choose to do. Leading traumatologist, Eric Gentry, suggests that people who are attracted to care giving often enter the field already compassion fatigued. A strong identification with helpless, suffering, or traumatized people or animals is possibly the motive. It is common for such people to hail from a tradition of what Gentry labels: other-directed care giving. Simply put, these are people who were taught at an early age to care for the needs of others before caring for their own needs. Authentic, ongoing self-care practices are absent from their lives.

If you sense that you are suffering from compassion fatigue, chances are excellent that you are. Your path to wellness begins with one small step: awareness. A heightened awareness can lead to insights regarding past traumas and painful situations that are being relived over and over within the confines of your symptoms and behaviors.

With the appropriate information and support, you can embark on a journey of discovery, healing past traumas and pain that currently serve as obstacles to a healthy, happier lifestyle.

Many resources are available to help you recognize the causes and symptoms of compassion fatigue. Healing begins by employing such simple practices as regular exercise, healthy eating habits, enjoyable social activities, journaling, and restful sleep. Hopefully, the information on the website below will be of use to you and help you jump-start your process.

Accepting the presence of compassion fatigue in your life only serves to validate the fact that you are a deeply caring individual. Somewhere along your healing path, the truth will present itself: You don't have to make a choice. It is possible to practice healthy, ongoing self-care while successfully continuing to care for others.

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[www.healthycaregiving.com](http://www.healthycaregiving.com)

### "Fix-It Formula" for Improving the Relationship with Your Supervisor

Communication difficulties top the list of problems employees have with their bosses. Most boil down to five key issues. They include:

- Disparities in the amount of work assigned from one employee to the next.
- Minimal praise or no recognition for a job well done
- Dissatisfaction with pay and refusal to address it
- Personality style and performance style differences
- Minimal or no constructive feedback about performance

So, here is the Fix-It for Improving the Relationship with Your Supervisor.

- Prior to meeting with your boss, define the real issue that is creating problems in your relationship. Consider whether you played a role. Did communication issues play a role?
- Write down your concerns. Forget the small and petty stuff for now.
- Meet with your supervisor and explain in plain, unemotional language your observations and concerns about the relationship.
- Be positive in your energy and demeanor—not cocky, passive aggressive, or acting as if you are cornering your boss.
- Wait for your supervisor's response. He or she may agree or may have another opinion. Hang on every word. Do not be defensive.
- Own your "half" of the relationship problem. It is unlikely you will get very far if you don't accept the universal principle that each party in conflict plays a role in contributing to relationship problems.
- Your goal is an improved relationship, not to find fault.
- Ask for constructive feedback on your performance. Let your boss have the last word in this conversation.
- Initiate regular contact with your boss going forward.

**CAP Can Help—** Ask CAP about Compassion Fatigue and Resilience or Healthy Communication in the Workplace presentations. If you want to address your personal compassion fatigue, CAP counselor can help.  
**405.947.2688 or 800.677.2729**