

# Compassion Fatigue

Filling up to avoid running  
on empty

Dr Michal Boyd, RN, NP, ND

NZNO Gerontology Conference 2016

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**WHY DID YOU GO INTO NURSING?**

What do you like best about  
gerontology nursing?

H



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# Front Line Care

We are working daily with *people* who many would see as tragic:

- Physical Decline
- Dementia
- Strokes
- Pain
- Immobility
- Incontinence
- Loss of independence/autonomy

- End of life
- Loneliness
- Bereavement
- Depression
- Multiple Chronic Illnesses
- Loss of purpose

# Front Line Care

We are working daily with *families* who often are:

- Grieving

- Guilt ridden

- About not being able to care their loved one
- About wishing the love one would die

- Overwhelmed

- Sandwiched between family and work responsibilities

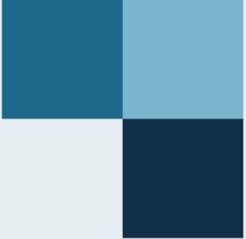
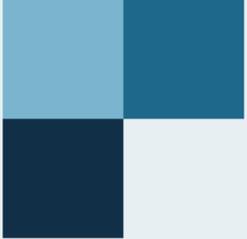
- Dissatisfied and frustrated with the system

- Angry

# Front Line Care

We are working daily in *environments* that are:

- Often under-resourced
- Bureaucratic
- Complex
- Difficult due to BPSD Sx
- Demanding
- Time pressured
- Under-valued



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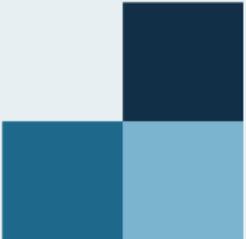
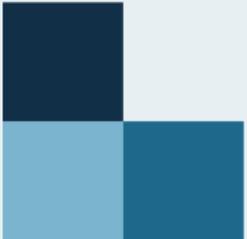
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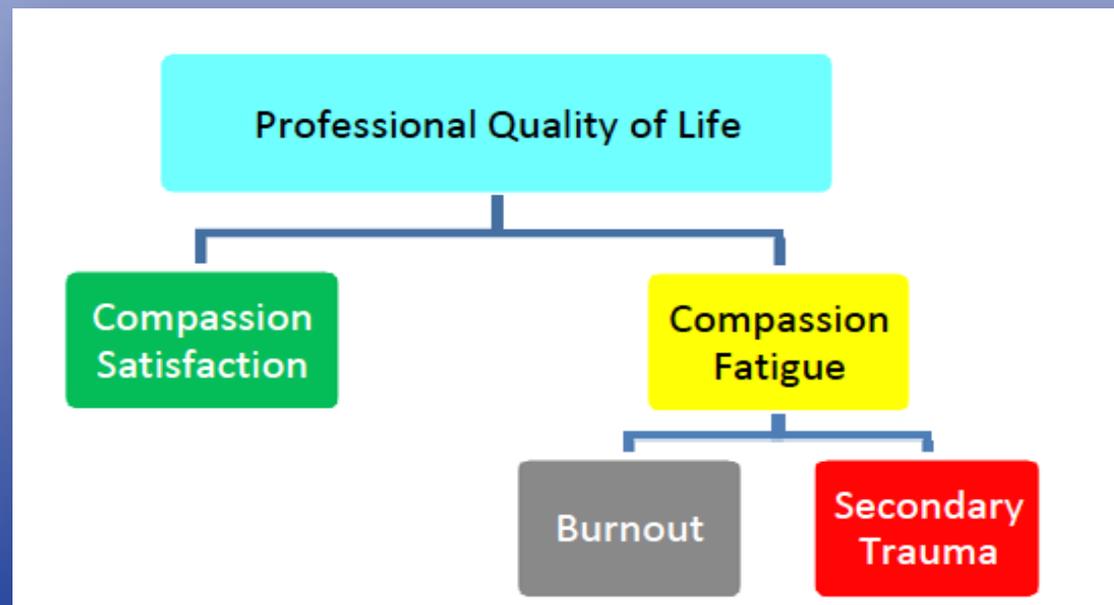
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# Compassion Fatigue

- Compassion Fatigue: occurs when you don't have the ability to provide care that you are satisfied with.
  - No longer get pleasure out of doing a good job

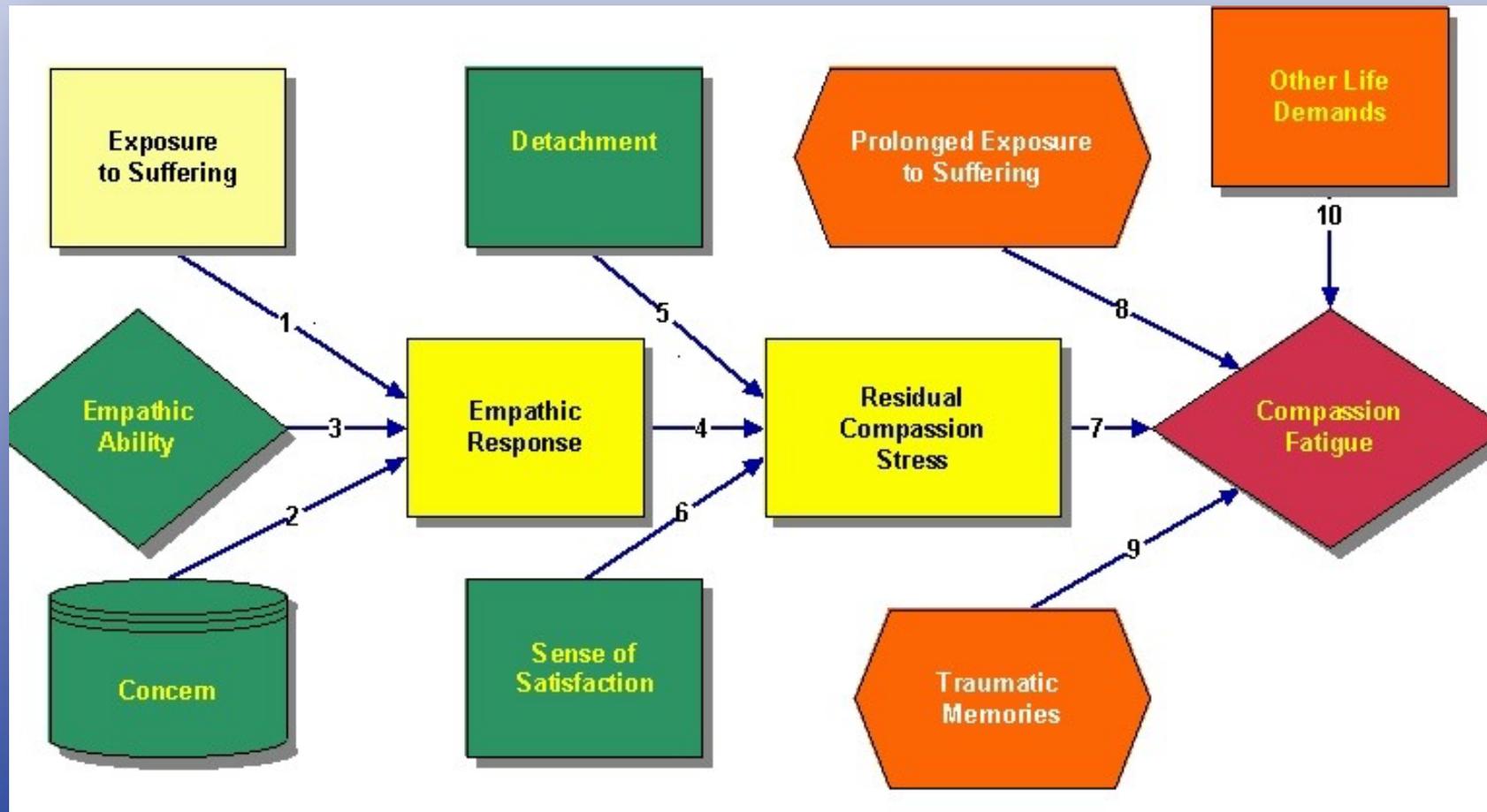


# Compassion Fatigue

*From the Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project:*

- *Compassion fatigue:*
  - *is characterized by physical and emotional exhaustion and a profound decrease in the ability to empathise*
- *Secondary traumatic stress:*
  - *stress occurs as a result of helping or wanting to help those who are in need*
- *Burn out:*
  - *feelings of hopelessness and difficulties in dealing with work or in doing your job effectively.*
  - *associated with a very high workload or a non-supportive work environment*

# Compassion Fatigue Process



F. Oshberg, MD *When Helping Hurts*

# Building Resilience

- Resilience begins with being realistic about what the challenges are.
- In order to heal it is important to recognise the signs and symptoms of compassion fatigue

# Signs and Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

- Chronic exhaustion (emotional, physical, or both)
- Reduced feelings of sympathy or empathy
- Feelings of irritability, anger, or anxiety
- No patience
- Hypersensitivity or complete insensitivity to emotional material
- Decreased motivation

<http://www.compassionfatigue.org/index.html>

# Signs and Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

- Headaches
- Trouble sleeping
- Weight loss/weight gain
- Impaired decision-making
- Problems in personal relationships
- Poor work-life balance
- Diminished sense of career fulfillment

<http://www.compassionfatigue.org/index.html>

# Compassion Fatigue Test

- Professional Quality of Life: Compassion Satisfaction and Fatigue Version 5 (ProQOL)
- © B. Hudnall Stamm, 2009-2012. [www.proqol.org](http://www.proqol.org).

# Compassion Fatigue

1. Never 2. rarely 3. Sometimes 4 almost always 5.  
Always

1. I get satisfaction from being able to help people.
2. I feel invigorated after with those I help.
3. I like my work as a nurse.
4. I am pleased with how I am able to keep up with nursing techniques and protocols.
5. My work makes me feel satisfied.
6. I have happy thoughts and feelings about those I help and how I could help them
7. I believe I can make a difference through my work.
8. I am pleased with how I am able to keep up with nursing techniques and protocols.
9. I have thoughts that I am a "success" as a nurse.
10. I am happy that I chose to do this work

# ProQOL

## Results Interpretation

The sum of my Compassion Satisfaction questions is:	And my Compassion Satisfaction level is:
22 or less	Low
23 to 41	Medium
42 or more	High

# 1. Get educated

- Recognise compassion fatigue in yourself
- Recognise that you are at greater risk if you have many other stressors in your personal life as well
- Recognise it in your colleagues and ask them how they are feeling.

## 2. Practice Self Care

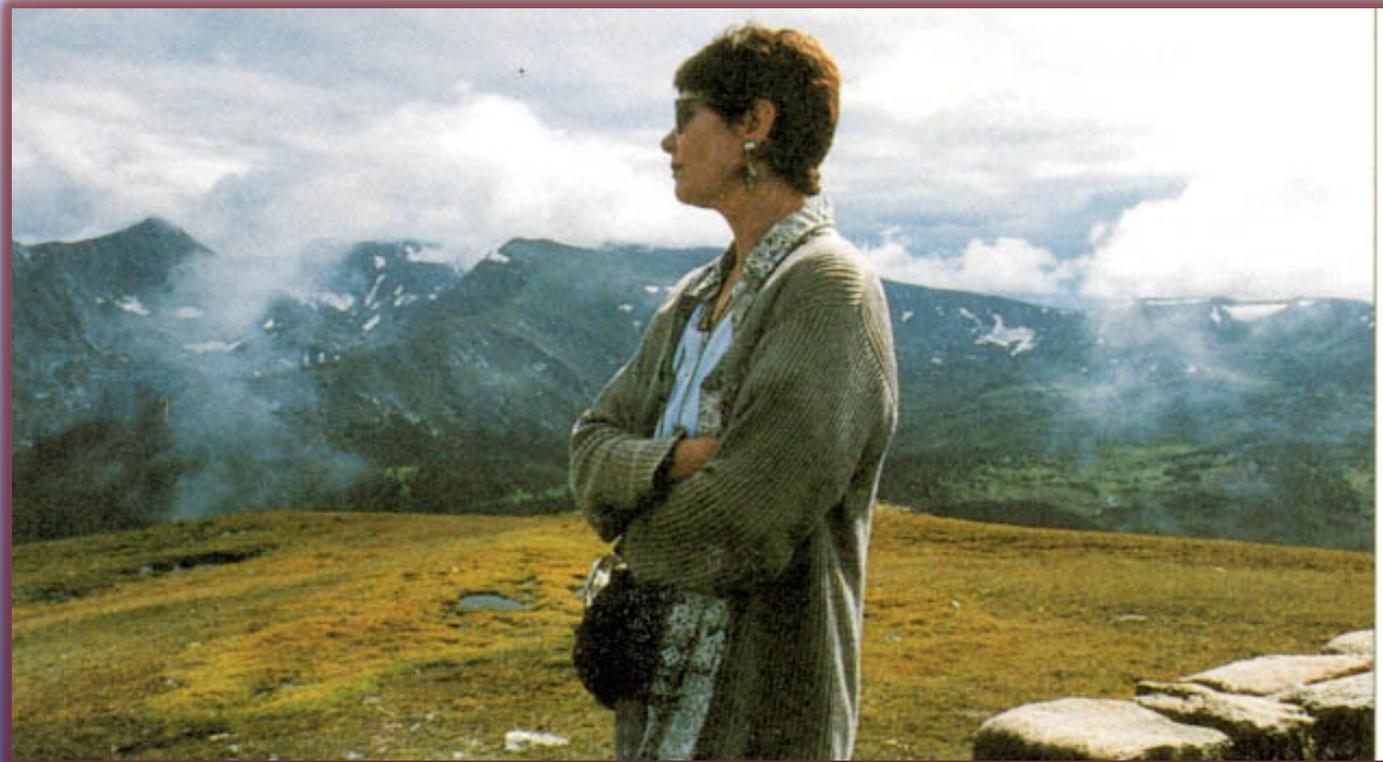
A good self-care regimen will look different for each person, but it should generally include:

- Balanced, healthy diet
- Regular exercise
- Routine schedule of restful sleep
- Balance between work and leisure
- Honoring emotional needs

## 3. Set Emotional Boundaries

- The challenge is to remain compassionate, empathetic, and supportive of others without becoming overly involved and taking on another's pain.
- Setting emotional boundaries helps maintain a connection while still remembering and honoring the fact that you are a separate person with your own needs.

# The Caring Moment



“Creative use of self and all ways of knowing as part of the caring process; to engage in the artistry of caring-healing practices” Jean Watson

## 4. Engage in Outside Hobbies

- Maintaining a solid work-life balance can help protect you from compassion fatigue.
- Leisure activities and personal hobbies outside of work lowers stress and improves overall life satisfaction.

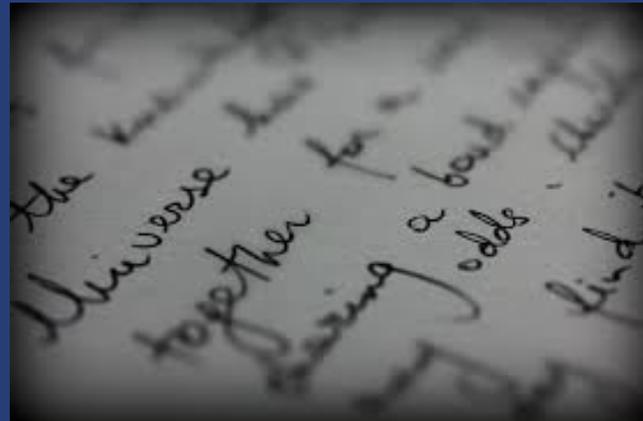


## 5. Cultivate Healthy Friendships Outside of Work

- While it is great to have strong relationships with your co-workers, it is equally important to cultivate and maintain healthy relationships outside of work.
- It is difficult for co-workers to avoid talking about work even outside the workplace.
- Connecting with friends who are not aware of the ins and outs of your work situation can provide much needed emotional and professional relief.

## 6. Keep a Journal

- Journaling is an excellent way to process and release emotions that may arise from work.



- Taking the time to cultivate self-awareness and connect with your personal thoughts and feelings can help prevent suppression of emotions, which can lead to compassion fatigue over time.

# 7. Boost Your Resiliency

- Resilience is our ability to bounce back from stress.
- Resilience is a skill that can be learned and cultivated.
  - Be positive
  - Live and learn
  - Helping others
  - Take care of yourself
  - Laugh together

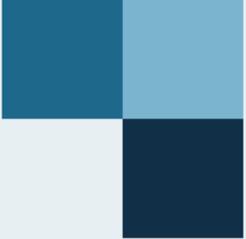
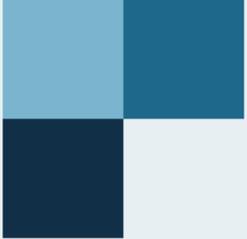


# 8. Use Positive Coping Strategies

- While it may be tempting to wash away the stress of your job with alcohol or drugs, this can actually work in the reverse and compound stress in the long run.
- Consider making a list of positive coping strategies to use in times of stress.
  - deep breathing
  - meditation
  - taking a walk
  - talking with a friend
  - watching a funny movie
  - relaxing in a hot bath.



Plot twist. Waldo finds himself.



# Your poll will show here

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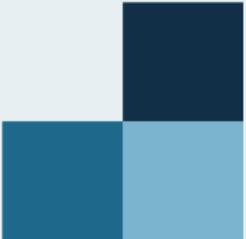
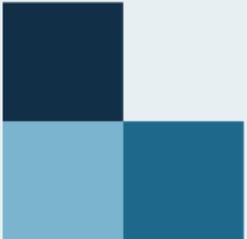
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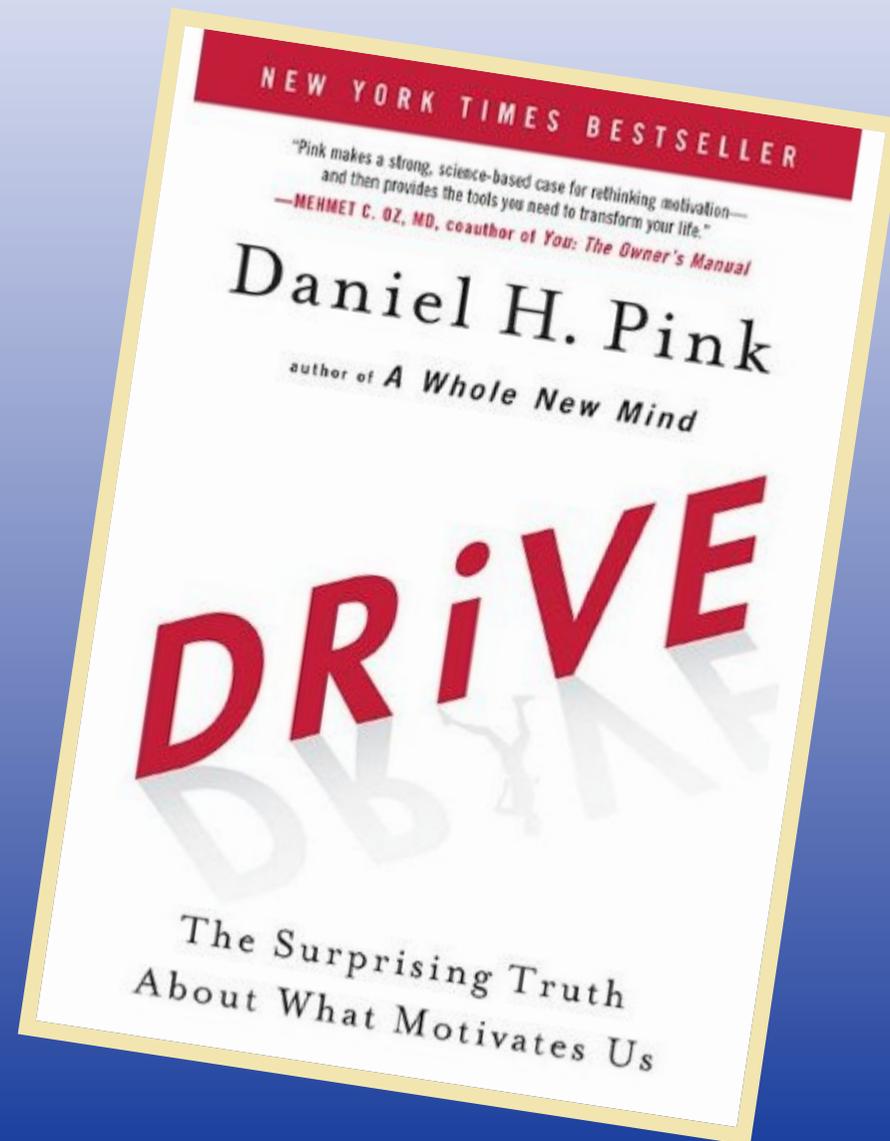


What is your favorite self  
management activity?

# 9. Identify Workplace Strategies

- Some workplace strategies that have been proven to be beneficial are:
  - Support groups and open discussions about compassion fatigue in the workplace
    - Regular breaks
    - Routine check-ins
    - Mental health days
    - Building a workplace culture of helping each other
    - No blame culture
    - Always seeking to improve environment

- Autonomy
- Mastery
- Purpose



# 10. Seek Personal Therapy

- If you find yourself feeling emotionally vulnerable, significantly stressed, or overwhelmed, consider seeing a therapy or counseling to help you process your feelings.
- They can also help you implement strategies to help you combat compassion fatigue and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

# The SENTENCE

- Clair Booth Luce to John F. Kennedy
  - What is your sentence?
  - Lincoln – “He united the nation and freed the slaves”
  - Sir Edmond Hillary – “He was a fearless explorer and built schools for the people of Tibet”
- What is your sentence?
- What is the sentence that describes your team?
- What is the sentence that describes your organisation?

Thank You.



[michal.boyd@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:michal.boyd@auckland.ac.nz)