## Compassion Fatigue Symptom Examples

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<th>Personal Relationships</th>
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<td>Elevated startle response</td>
<td>Low morale</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Moody/ Irritable</td>
<td>Loss of purpose</td>
<td>Decreased interest in intimacy or sex</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Mistrust</td>
<td>Rapid heartbeat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anger/Rage</td>
<td>Sleep disturbance</td>
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<td>Isolation from others</td>
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<td>Obsession about details</td>
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<td>Accident proneness</td>
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<td>Losing things</td>
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<td>Projection of anger or blame</td>
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<td>Irritability</td>
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<td>Withdrawal from colleagues</td>
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<td>Low self-esteem</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from: Charles R. Figley, Ph.D., Florida State University Traumatology Institute, Tallahassee, Florida
A TRAUMA EXPOSURE RESPONSE

- Feeling Helpless and Hopeless
- Grandiosity: An Inflated Sense of Importance Related to One's Work
- A Sense That One Can Never Do Enough
- Addictions
- Hypervigilance
- Diminished Creativity
- Inability to Embrace Complexity
- Minimizing
- Chronic Exhaustion/Physical Ailments
- Inability to Listen/Deliberate Avoidance
- Dissociative Moments
- Guilt
- Sense of Persecution
- Inability to Empathize/Numbing
- Anger and Cynicism
- Fear
The nervous system with a neuroception of threat:

**FREEZE**
Collapse • Immobility
Conservation of Energy
- Dissociation
- Numbness
- Depression
- Raised pain threshold
- Helplessness

**DORSAL VAGAL**
(LIFE THREAT)
Hypocorusal
- Shame
- Shut-Down
- Hopelessness
- Preparation for death
- Trapped

**FIGHT**
movement towards
- Rage
- Panic
- Anger
- Fear
- Irritation
- Anxiety
- Worry & Concern

**FLIGHT**
movement away
- "I CAN'T"
- "I CAN"
- Hypercorusal

**SYMPATHETIC**
(DANGER)

**PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM**
DORSAL VAGAL COMPLEX

*Increases*
- Fuel storage & insulin activity • Immobilization behavior (with fear)
- Endorphins that help numb and raise the pain threshold
- Conservation of metabolic resources

*Decreases*
- Heart Rate • Blood Pressure • Temperature • Muscle Tone
- Facial Expressions & Eye Contact • Depth of Breath • Social Behavior
- Attunement to Human Voice • Sexual Responses • Immune Response

**SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM**

*Increases*
- Blood Pressure • Heart Rate • Fuel Availability • Adrenaline
- Oxygen Circulation to Vital Organs • Blood Clotting • Pupil Size
- Dilation of Bronchi • Defensive Responses

*Decreases*
- Fuel Storage • Insulin Activity • Digestion • Salivation
- Relational Ability • Immune Response

The nervous system with a neuroception of safety:

**SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT**
Connection • Safety
Oriented to the Environment
- Calmness in connection
- Settled
- Groundedness

**VENTRAL VAGAL**
(SAFETY)
- Curiosity/Openness
- Compassionate
- Mindful / in the present

**PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM**
VENTRAL VAGAL COMPLEX

*Increases*
- Digestion • Intestinal Motility • Resistance to Infection
- Immune Response • Rest and Recuperation • Health & Vitality
- Circulation to non-vital organs (skin, extremities)
- Oxytocin (neuromodulator involved in social bonds that allows immobility without fear) • Ability to Relate and Connect
- Movement in eyes and head turning • Prosody in voice • Breath

*Decreases*
- Defensive Responses

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Adapted by Ruby Jo Walker from: Cheryl Sanders, Anthony "Twig" Wheeler, and Steven Porges.
Self-care Inventory
Adapted from The Compassion Fatigue Workbook
By Francoise Mathieu

How frequently do you engage in the following?

0=never    1=rarely    2=sometimes    3=often    4=frequently

Physical Self-care

- Eat regular meals
- Eat food that is healthy for your body
- Exercise
- Preventative medical care
- Medical care when needed
- Take time off when sick
- Get massages
- Engage in fun physical activity (e.g. dancing, swimming, play sports, cycling, walking, running, etc.)
- Take time to be sexual-- with yourself or a partner
- Get enough sleep
- Wear clothes you like
- Take time off
- Make time away from telephones and computers
- Other: ____________________________

Psychological Self-care

- Make time for self-reflection
- Read literature unrelated to work
- Write in a journal

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- Work with a therapist/counselor
- Intentionally decrease stress
- Be curious
- Noticing your inner experience (e.g. thoughts, judgements, beliefs, attitudes, feelings)
- Practice receiving from others
- Say no to extra responsibilities
- Delegate responsibilities when possible
- Do something where you are not an expert or in charge
- Make time for creative expression
- Create time for rest
- Uni-task (vs. multi-tasking)
- Other: ____________________________

**Emotional Self-care**

- Connect with others whose company you enjoy
- Stay in contact with important people in your life
- Acknowledge your successes
- Encouraging “self-talk”
- Offer yourself compassion when you are struggling
- Laugh
- Allow yourself to cry
- Express anger through social action (e.g. letters, protests, marches)
- Play with children
- Play with animals
- Identify and seek out activities/people/places that bring you comfort
- Re-read favorite books or poems, re-watch favorite movies
- Identify and communicate your needs within your family and/or the workplace
- Other: ____________________________
Spiritual Self-care

- Spend time in nature
- Access spiritual connection or community
- Cherish your optimism or hope
- Be open to not knowing
- Sing
- Pray
- Meditate
- Have gratitude
- Have experiences of awe
- Be open to inspiration
- Listen to music
- Contribute to causes you believe in
- Read inspirational literature or watch inspirational videos
- Cultivate mindfulness of your own experience and of the world around you
- Make meaning from the difficulties you encounter

Professional Self-care

- Take time to eat lunch
- Take a short break during the workday
- Take time to connect with your co-workers
- Make quiet time to complete tasks
- Identify projects or tasks that are rewarding or exciting
- Set limits with clients and colleagues
- Engage in mindful debriefing
- Balance your workload so it is less overwhelming
- Create a workspace that is pleasing and comfortable
- Get regular supervision and consultation
- Negotiate for your needs (e.g. benefits, pay raise, etc.)
- Have a peer support group
- Other: ____________________________

**Balance**

- Strive for balance WITHIN your work-life and workday
- Strive for balance BETWEEN work, family, relationships, play and rest.

*Now, circle one item from each subheading that you’d like to raise one level (e.g. from “sometimes” to “often”) over the next couple of weeks.*