

# Decreasing Compassion Fatigue in the Workplace : Journey to Compassion Satisfaction


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## Learning Objectives

- Define compassion fatigue and why healthcare workers are at risk
- Identify signs and symptoms of compassion fatigue and burnout
- Describe workplace wellness initiatives including the importance of self care to develop vicarious resiliency
- Explain what strategies you can initiate to foster your own compassion satisfaction in the workplace

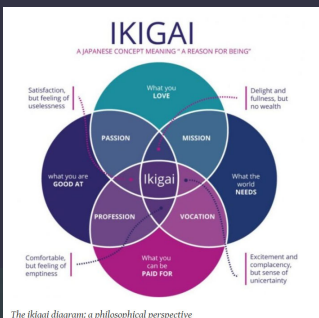


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## Ikigai


Japanese concept of finding your life's purpose through answering four questions:

- What you love to do?
- What the world needs?
- What you are good at?
- What you can be paid for?




*The ikigai diagram a philosophical perspective*

IKIGAI - the Japanese secret to creating a long and happy life - The Urban Chapter: <https://www.theurbanchapter.com/ikigai-the-japanese-secret-to-well-being/>




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## Employee Fulfillment Triangle



Like Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs it is important for highly functional teams and people to feel valued


- The job must connect the person their "why"
- Have a sense of pride in the work that they do and the difference that they make
- The environment supports interconnectedness among the team
- Must create an environment that makes the employee feel safe, both physically and psychologically
- Benefits and competitive pay that supports the employee



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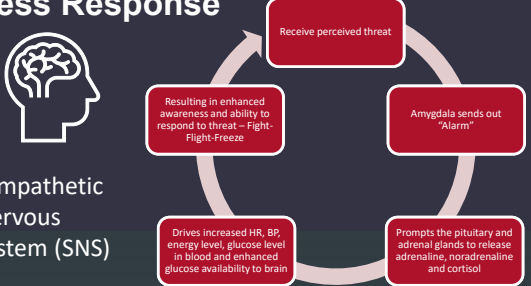
## Healthcare is inherently stressful

We face challenges each and every day that push us and stretch our physical, emotional and mental capabilities.




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## Stress Response



Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS)

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*“You can’t calm the storm, so stop trying.  
What you can do is calm yourself.  
The storm will pass.”*  
– Timber Hawkeye

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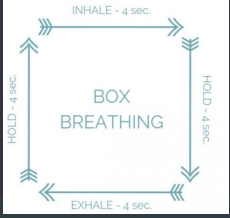
### How to calm yourself

- The vagus nerve is like a “chill out” button
- This is driver of the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS) controlling the lungs, heart and digestive tract.
- The vagus nerve is the tenth cranial nerve and is the pathway carrying information from the brain to the body
- When the vagus nerve is activated – the physiological stress response is tempered
- The primary function is to control breathing and heart rate

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### Acute Stress Response Calming Techniques

- Box Breathing
- Butterfly Taps
- Cold Exposure
- Psychological Sigh
- Five Senses
- Rosenberg – Basic Exercise



Box Breathing – Science of Connectedness;  
<https://scienceofconnectedness.com/box-breathing/>

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### Chronic Stress

Chronic stress can lead to physiologic manifestations such as:

- depression
- headaches
- digestive problems
- chronic pain
- fatigue
- poor sleep
- social disconnection
- high blood pressure
- heart disease
- obesity
- diabetes

Chronic Stress

- Physiological response to persistent perceived threat and remain in a heightened awareness for extended period
- Chronic stress often goes unnoticed as the stressors gradually build overtime
- Overtime, chronic stress can lead to burnout


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### Decreasing Chronic Stress

Vagal Tone – is the balance between the sympathetic and the parasympathetic activity in the body

- Poor Vagal Tone – results in a slower response to return to a stress-free state
- Increasing your vagal tone can improve your body’s ability to call on the PNS to respond to stress events

- Mindfulness Walk
- Exercise
- Meditation
- Singing/Music
- Connection
- Massage
- Yoga
- Laughing



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### Compassion Fatigue

“Is the diminished ability to feel compassion or empathize when providing care.” Blagov, Davis, & Coppell, 2021

“A state of exhaustion and dysfunction, biologically and emotionally as a result of prolonged exposure to compassion stress.” – Charles Figley

Sometimes referred to as the “Cost of Caring”


- Concern is that this fatigue can slip into depression
- Its important that caregivers recognize the signs and seek help
- Therapists can assist with treatment of acute secondary trauma to help prevent long term effects



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### Why are healthcare workers at risk for compassion fatigue?

Caregivers provide care on during the most difficult time in a person's life. Walking alongside patients and experiencing the pain of their circumstances. With that comes the risk of secondary trauma.



Secondary trauma is when a person is exposed to the trauma experienced by others. Through the vivid descriptions and witnessing the impact on the survivor the individual is traumatized themselves. Symptoms are similar to PTSD.

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### Develop a Critical Incident Response Plan

Identify situations that are particularly traumatizing for the team. Some examples include:

- Unexpected death of a patient
- Death of a coworker
- Workplace violence/threat

Develop response plans to support staff during/after event

- Critical incident debriefing
- Peer support
- EAP programs
- Chaplain support
- Time away

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### Ideas to prevent compassion fatigue

Know your limits	Set boundaries	Make self care a priority	Acknowledge your emotions
Seek professional help when needed	Give yourself grace	Participate in workplace wellness programs	Celebrate your unique skills and contributions
Practice gratitude	Develop sleep hygiene	Take time away	

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### Burnout

Burnout is emotional, physical and mental exhaustion caused by environmental factors such as prolonged stress.

Resources:

- Identify stress triggers
- Develop coping strategies that work for you
- Develop a support network "battle buddy"
- Professional Counseling
- Peer Support Programs
- Suicide Hotline 988

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### Signs and Symptoms

Feeling numb or disconnected	Emotional exhaustion	Disrupted sleep	Reduced sense of personal accomplishment	Decreased interest in social interactions
Depersonalization	Physical exhaustion	Lack of energy to care	Not able to relate to others	Inability to concentrate
Avoiding work or other activities	Intrusive thoughts of work	Anxiety	Depression	

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### Negativity Bias

The concept is that the mind tends to notice and give more weight to negative experiences more than positive or neutral experiences. We are hardwired to notice the negative.

**Battle Negative Bias:**  
Your mind will look for what it expects

**Flip the Narrative**  
Challenge yourself to look for the good and you will find it

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***"It's not the happy people who are grateful. It is the grateful people who are happy."***  
-Francis Bacon

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## Gratitude

One of the best ways to combat negative bias is to practice gratitude. Make gratitude a part of your daily practice.

Gratitude Journal  
Gratitude Cards  
Look for what you want to see more of

*"No matter what is going on in your life, if you focus on what you have, you'll have more. If you focus on what you don't have, you will never, ever have enough."*

-Oprah Winfrey



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## Neuroplasticity

The ability of the brain's neural network to change through consistent and persistent habit formation.



Ever wonder how some people jump in and act without hesitation in emergency situations, like nurses, EMS, police? They have rewired their brains to control the stress response. They do this through experience and repetition.

### Why is this important?

- Overcome negative bias
- Hardwire gratitude to improve satisfaction
- Exercise resiliency to improve ability to recover from adversity

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***"Challenges are what makes life interesting and overcoming them is what makes life meaningful."***  
- Joshua J Marine

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## Workplace Wellness What can a leader do...

- Create a gratitude program
- Send messages of support
- Cultivate a culture that recognizes wellness and support as a priority
- Develop a robust and well-structured orientation
- Support mentoring to foster professional development tailored to the individual
- Promote self care as a priority for a well-rounded work environment
- Empower staff to make decisions that impact work environment and wellness
- Normalize compassion fatigue – call out if you are struggling and make it ok to ask for help

[Commit to the change! Take the journey with your team and let them guide what wellness looks like!](#)

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***"The easy days ahead of you will be easy. The hard days – the times that challenge you to your very core – that will determine who you really are! You will be defined not just by what you achieve, but by how you survive."***

- Sheryl Sandberg

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## Why is Workplace Resiliency Important in Healthcare?

- Improve job satisfaction
- Decrease turnover
- Improve patient outcomes
- Create positive culture of safety and support
- Improve innovation



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## Self Care

- Identify your stress triggers
- Prioritize exercise
- Identify your relaxation habits
- Take time to enjoy the down time
- Develop sleep hygiene
- Invest time in a hobby that brings you joy



Avoid self destructive behaviors:

- Alcohol
- Drugs
- Lack of Sleep

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## Compassion Satisfaction

“The pleasure derived from alleviation of patient suffering and positive work experience.”

(Baqeas, Davis, & Copnell, 2021)



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## Vicarious Resiliency



The secondary joy a person feels from helping and witnessing the healing, recovery and resilience of someone who has experienced trauma

- Flip the negative narrative – call out the positive experiences

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## What's the Goal?

### Finding Compassion Satisfaction Again

- How do we help our healthcare workers find compassion satisfaction again after compassion fatigue?
  - Connect to your “Why”
  - What drives you to do the work you do?
  - Where do you find curiosity in your work?
  - Where do you find growth in your professional development?
  - What provides you satisfaction after a workday?
  - Did you connect with someone or make an impact?
  - Celebrate those moments!

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## Resources

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## Questions?

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