

COMPASSION FATIGUE
AWARENESS PROJECT*

The Ten Laws Governing Healthy Caregiving

1. Sustain Your Compassion
2. Practice Authentic, Sustainable Self Care Daily
3. Build a Support System
4. Create a Work/Life Balance
5. Apply Empathic Discernment
6. Recognize the Humor
7. Learn to Let Go
8. Acknowledge Your Successes
9. Remain Optimistic
10. Elevate Levels of Compassion Satisfaction

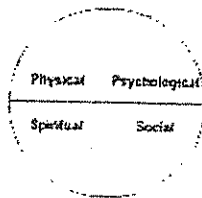
Definition of Wellness

Wellness Wheel

The wellness wheel provides a visual representation of the concept of wellness that demonstrates the need for "balanced" or "well-rounded" lives. To attain and maintain harmony and balance in our lives, we must pay attention to each of the four dimensions of wellness. To neglect or over-emphasize any of the four dimensions will result in an out-of-balance (out-of-round) wellness wheel.

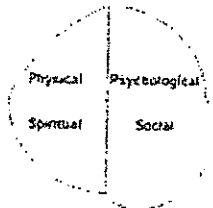
Imagine the wellness wheel as a tire made up of four separate air chambers – each one representing a dimension of wellness. If one or more of these air chambers is either over-inflated or under-inflated, the wheel will be unbalanced and the road of life will be a bumpy one. We roll along through life more smoothly when our lives are "well-rounded" or balanced. These ideas are represented visually through the three following graphics:

Balanced/Round Wellness Wheel



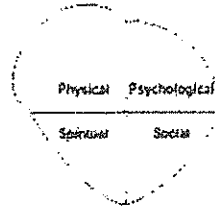
This wellness wheel belongs to a person who takes responsibility for achieving balance in his/her life. As a result, this person is rolling along smoothly through life – for whom everything is going "just right".

Out-of-balance/Out-of-round Wellness Wheel #1



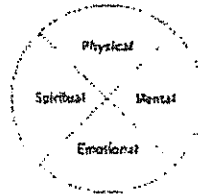
This wheel could represent a person who is overly concerned with having fun and socializing (social dimension), and neglects the physical dimension (e.g., has a low level of physical fitness, and/or is overweight, and/or does not have a healthy diet, etc.).

Out-of-balance/Out-of-round Wellness Wheel #2



This wellness wheel is that of a person who is obsessed with the physical dimension of wellness. He or she engages in physical activity for so many hours each day that there is no time for attending to elements of wellness in the other dimensions (e.g., meaningful relationships, reading).

Aboriginal Medicine Wheel

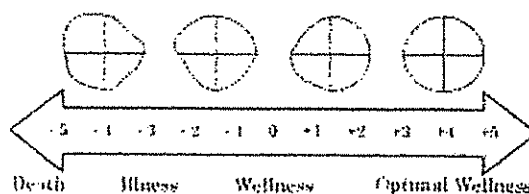


The Medicine Wheel is an ancient holistic approach to healing ailments of the mind, body, and spirit that explains illness as springing from an imbalance of being. The Medicine Wheel is a complex network of ideas, symbols, and philosophies depicted within a metaphorical circle. The Wheel is divided into north, south, east, and west doors, each associated with thoughts, feelings, time periods, and sacred elements.

A holistic approach to life where all things are connected is central to the Aboriginal world view. Illness is explained as an imbalance in life and restoring balance and harmony is achieved by examining the elements of one's life represented by the Medicine Wheel.

Understanding the Medicine Wheel is a challenge because the prevailing worldview of mainstream society, with its emphasis on measuring and quantifying, runs contrary to the holistic and esoteric principles on which the Medicine Wheel is based. In fact, some proponents of Medicine Wheel teaching are cautious about even discussing the Wheel because they are concerned that people will misinterpret the Wheel and start using it without really understanding what they are doing. Communities and individuals seeking healing usually look to respected Elders and facilitators, who have mastered the Medicine Wheel over many years. For more information you may wish to consult *The Sacred Tree* (1985) by Phil Lane, Jr., Judie Bopp, Michael Bopp, Lee Brown, and elders.

Illness-Wellness Continuum



THE LINK BETWEEN NEGATIVE THOUGHTS, NEGATIVE SELF TALK AND HARDENING OF THE ATTITUDE

Statistics on the content of most individual conversations show that 75% of our daily talk is negative. Aside from the media, which consistently reports bad news, we are also subject to co-workers, family, friends and our own need to complain, whine and worry. How much of our existence is spent in the validation and joy of what is versus awfulizing and catastrophising about what wasn't. If we took the energy we focused on negativity and channeled it into solution we would have a much greater capacity for joy. You can become mindful of the language you use and how it affects your feelings and behavior. The following exercise illustrates how thoughts transform our feeling and behavior.

Take a few moments and read the words listed below very slowly to yourself:

GLOOM	TORMENT	HARDSHIP	REJECTION	DREAD
DARKNESS	FEAR	DESPAIR	PAIN	REGRET
DEPRESSION	TEARS	FRUSTRATION	ANGUISH	MISERY
MELANCHOLY	TROUBLE	SORROW	SUFFERING	HOPELESS

Now please read this list of words very slowly to yourself:

JOY	GIGGLES	SILLY	JOKING	FUN
BRIGHT	EXHUBERANT	CHEERFUL	GENTLE	PEACEFUL
LAUGHTER	AMUSEMENT	HILARIOUS	GLADNESS	PLEASURE
ENERGIZED	MERRIMENT	WARMTH	LIGHTHEARTED	CAREFREE

Most of us begin to feel the emotions attached to these words. The first list invokes feelings of loss and sadness. Our body responds by getting tense. The second list is like taking an antidote for our distress. In short, we feel better when we have pleasant thoughts.

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 this website 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.

Recognizing Compassion Fatigue

Compassion Fatigue symptoms are normal displays of stress resulting from the care giving work you perform on a regular basis. While the symptoms are often disruptive, depressive, and irritating, an awareness of the symptoms and their negative effect on your life can lead to positive change, personal transformation, and a new resiliency. Reaching a point where you have control over your own life choices will take time and hard work. There is no magic involved. There is only a commitment to make your life the best it can be.

Normal symptoms present in an individual include:

- Excessive blaming
- Bottled up emotions
- Isolation from others
- Receives unusual amount of complaints from others
- Voices excessive complaints about administrative functions
- Substance abuse used to mask feelings
- Compulsive behaviors such as overspending, overeating, gambling, sexual addictions
- Poor self-care (i.e., hygiene, appearance)
- Legal problems, indebtedness
- Reoccurrence of nightmares and flashbacks to traumatic event
- Chronic physical ailments such as gastrointestinal problems and recurrent colds
- Apathy, sad, no longer finds activities pleasurable
- Difficulty concentrating
- Mentally and physically tired
- Preoccupied
- In denial about problems

Manifestations of Compassion Fatigue

Emotional:

- Anger
- Apathy
- Breakdown
- Cynicism
- Desensitization
- Discouragement
- Dreams, flashbacks, preoccupation (r/t patient experiences)
- Feelings of being overwhelmed
- Attitude of hopelessness
- Irritability
- Lessened enthusiasm
- Sarcasm

Intellectual:

- Boredom
- Concentration impairment
- Disorderliness
- Weakened attention to detail

Physical:

- Increased somatic complaints
- Lack of energy
- Loss of endurance
- Loss of strength
- Proneness to accidents
- Weariness, sense of fatigue, exhaustion

Social:

- Callousness
- Feelings of alienation, estrangement, isolation
- Inability to share in or alleviate suffering
- Indifference
- Loss of interest in activities once enjoyed
- Unresponsiveness
- Withdrawal from family or friends

Spiritual:

- Decrease in discernment
- Disinterest in introspection
- Lack of spiritual awareness
- Poor judgment r/t existential issues

Work:

- Absenteeism
- Avoidance of intense patient situations
- Desire to quit
- Diminished performance ability (i.e., medication errors, decreased documentation accuracy/record-keeping)
- Stereotypical/impersonal communications
- Tardiness

The Path to Wellness

Once you realize that you are a candidate for compassion fatigue, or are already suffering its effects, exploring this new awareness can lead to insights concerning past traumas, pain, and defeating behaviors. A common and understandable coping mechanism in care giving is to simply stuff the overwhelming emotions that surface repeatedly in your work. How else can you keep going? Eventually, those emotions refuse to be ignored. All too often, psychological and physical crisis occurs.

With support, insightful information, and authentic self-care, you can begin to understand the complexity of the emotions you've been juggling and, most likely, suppressing. Most people never take the time to understand how their jobs affect them emotionally. Give yourself credit for moving forward and affecting change. Your hard work will pay off.

Authentic and Sustainable Self Care Begins With You:

- Be kind to yourself.
- Enhance your awareness with education.
- Accept where you are on your path at all times.
- Understand that those close to you may not be there when you need them most.
- Exchange information and feelings with people who can validate you.
- Listen to others who are suffering.
- Clarify your personal boundaries. What works for you; what doesn't.
- Express your needs verbally.
- Take positive action to change your environment.

Your Continuing Journey...

Healing the symptoms of compassion fatigue is an inside job. You've been loyal to your self-care plan, clarified personal boundaries in both your personal and professional life, and now understand your negative behaviors and their origins. As you continue to do the necessary internal work, you will reap the benefits. Your life will begin to change for the better.

In order to move forward on your path to wellness, you must continually commit to authentic self-care that includes:

- Health-building activities such as exercise, massage, yoga, meditation.
- Eating healthy foods
- Drinking plenty of water
- Use natural healing products to care for and heal your body
- Practicing the art of self-management. Just say no
- Developing a healthy support system: people who contribute to your self esteem, people who listen well, people who care
- Organizing your life so you become proactive as opposed to reactive
- Reserving your life energy for worthy causes. Choose your battles.
- Living a balanced life: Sing, dance, sit with silence

Self-Care Assessment

Adapted from Saakvitne, Pearlman, & Staff of TSI/CAAP (1996). *Transforming the pain: A workbook on vicarious traumatization*. Norton.

The following worksheet for assessing self-care is not exhaustive, merely suggestive. Feel free to add areas of self-care that are relevant for you and rate yourself on how often and how well you are taking care of yourself these days.

When you are finished, look for patterns in your responses. Are you more active in some areas of self-care but ignore others? Are there items on the list that make you think, "I would never do that"? Listen to your inner responses, your internal dialogue about self-care and making yourself a priority. Take particular note of anything you would like to include more in your life.

Rate the following areas according to how well you think you are doing:

- 3 = I do this well (e.g., frequently)
- 2 = I do this OK (e.g., occasionally)
- 1 = I barely or rarely do this
- 0 = I never do this
- ? = This never occurred to me

Physical Self-Care

- Eat regularly (e.g. breakfast, lunch, and dinner)
- Eat healthily
- Exercise
- Get regular medical care for prevention
- Get medical care when needed
- Take time off when sick
- Get massages
- Dance, swim, walk, run, play sports, sing, or do some other fun physical activity
- Take time to be sexual - with myself, with a partner
- Get enough sleep
- Wear clothes I like
- Take vacations
- Other:

Psychological Self-Care

- Take day trips or mini-vacations
- Make time away from telephones, email, and the Internet
- Make time for self-reflection
- Notice my inner experience - listen to my thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, feelings
- Have my own personal psychotherapy
- Write in a journal
- Read literature that is unrelated to work
- Do something at which I am not expert or in charge
- Attend to minimizing stress in my life
- Engage my intelligence in a new area, e.g., go to an art show, sports event, theatre
- Be curious

- Say no to extra responsibilities sometimes
- Other:

Emotional Self-Care

- Spend time with others whose company I enjoy
- Stay in contact with important people in my life
- Give myself affirmations, praise myself
- Love myself
- Re-read favorite books, re-view favorite movies
- Identify comforting activities, objects, people, places and seek them out
- Allow myself to cry
- Find things that make me laugh
- Express my outrage in social action, letters, donations, marches, protests
- Other:

Spiritual Self-Care

- Make time for reflection
- Spend time in nature
- Find a spiritual connection or community
- Be open to inspiration
- Cherish my optimism and hope
- Be aware of non-material aspects of life
- Try at times not to be in charge or the expert
- Be open to not knowing
- Identify what is meaningful to me and notice its place in my life
- Meditate
- Pray
- Sing
- Have experiences of awe
- Contribute to causes in which I believe
- Read inspirational literature or listen to inspirational talks, music
- Other:

Relationship Self-Care

- Schedule regular dates with my partner or spouse
- Schedule regular activities with my children
- Make time to see friends
- Call, check on, or see my relatives
- Spend time with my companion animals
- Stay in contact with faraway friends
- Make time to reply to personal emails and letters; send holiday cards
- Allow others to do things for me
- Enlarge my social circle
- Ask for help when I need it
- Share a fear, hope, or secret with someone I trust
- Other:

Workplace or Professional Self-Care

- Take a break during the workday (e.g., lunch)
- Take time to chat with co-workers
- Make quiet time to complete tasks
- Identify projects or tasks that are exciting and rewarding
- Set limits with clients and colleagues
- Balance my caseload so that no one day or part of a day is "too much"
- Arrange work space so it is comfortable and comforting
- Get regular supervision or consultation
- Negotiate for my needs (benefits, pay raise)
- Have a peer support group
- (If relevant) Develop a non-trauma area of professional interest

Overall Balance

- Strive for balance within my work-life and work day
- Strive for balance among work, family, relationships, play, and rest

Other Areas of Self-Care that are Relevant to You

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-
-

(Retrieved 8/6/2010 from
http://www.ballarat.edu.au/aasp/student/sds/self_care_assess.shtml and adapted by Lisa D.
Butler, Ph.D.)

CARING FOR YOURSELF IN THE FACE OF DIFFICULT WORK

How do we maintain our resilience so we can keep doing the work with care, energy, and compassion?

Here are 10 things to do each day:

1. Get enough sleep.
2. Get enough to eat.
3. Do some light exercise.
4. Vary the work that you do.
5. Do something pleasurable.
6. Focus on what you did well.
7. Learn from your mistakes.
8. Share a private joke.
9. Pray, meditate, or relax.
10. Support a colleague.

SWITCHING ON AND OFF

It is your empathy for others that helps you do this work. It is vital to take good care of your thoughts and feelings by monitoring how you use them. Resilient workers know how to turn their feelings off when they go on duty, but on again when they go off duty. It is a way to get maximum protection while working (switched off) and maximum support while resting (switched on).

How to become better at switching on and off:

1. Switching is a conscious process. Talk to yourself as you switch.
2. Use images that make you feel safe and protected or connected and cared for to help you switch.
3. Find rituals that help you switch as you start and stop work.
4. Breathe slowly and deeply to calm yourself when starting a tough job.



10 Ways to Become More Resilient

By Kendra Van Wagner, About.com

Research has shown that while some people seem to come by resilience naturally, these behaviors can also be learned. The following are just a few of the techniques you should focus on in order to foster your own resilience.

1. Build Positive Beliefs in Your Abilities

Research has demonstrated that self-esteem plays an important role in coping with stress and recovering from difficult events. Remind yourself of your strengths and accomplishments. Becoming more confident about your own ability to respond and deal with crisis is a great way to build resilience for the future.

2. Find a Sense of Purpose in Your Life

After her 13-year-old daughter was killed by a drunk driver, Candace Lightner founded Mother's Against Drunk Driving (MADD). Upset by the driver's light sentence, Lightner decided to focus her energy into creating awareness of the dangers of drunk driving. "I promised myself on the day of Cari's death that I would fight to make this needless homicide count for something positive in the years ahead," she later explained. In the face of crisis or tragedy, finding a sense of purpose can play an important role in recovery. This might involve becoming involved in your community, cultivating your spirituality or participating in activities that are meaningful to you.

3. Develop a Strong Social Network

Having caring, supportive people around you acts as a protective factor during times of crisis (Jones). It is important to have people you can confide in. While simply talking about a situation with a friend or loved one will not make troubles go away, it allows you to share your feelings, gain support, receive positive feedback and come up with possible solutions to your problems.

4. Embrace Change

Flexibility is an essential part of resilience. By learning how to be more adaptable, you'll be better equipped to respond when faced with a life crisis. Resilient people often utilize these events as an opportunity to branch out in new directions. While some people may be crushed by abrupt changes, highly resilient individuals are able to adapt and thrive.

5. Be Optimistic

Staying positive during dark periods can be difficult, but maintaining a hopeful outlook is an important part of resiliency. Being an optimist does not mean ignoring the problem in order to focus on positive outcomes. It means understanding that setbacks are transient and that you have the skills and abilities to combat the challenges you face. What you are dealing with may be difficult, but it is important to remain hopeful and positive about a brighter future.

6. Nurture Yourself

When you're stressed, it can be all too easy to neglect your own needs. Losing your appetite, ignoring exercising and not getting enough sleep are all common reactions to a crisis situation. Focus on building your self-nurturance skills, even when you are troubled. Make time for activities that you enjoy. By taking care of your own needs, you can boost your overall health and resilience and be fully ready to face life's challenges.

7. Develop Your Problem-Solving Skills

Research suggests that people who are able come up with solutions to a problem are better able to cope with problems than those who cannot (Jones). Whenever you encounter a new challenge, make a quick list of some of the potential ways you could solve the problem. Experiment with different strategies and focus on developing a logical way to work through common problems. By practicing your problem-solving skills on a regular basis, you will be better prepared to cope when a serious challenge emerges.

8. Establish Goals

Crisis situations are daunting. They may even seem insurmountable. Resilient people are able to view these situations in a realistic way, and then set reasonable goals to deal with the problem. When you find yourself becoming overwhelmed by a situation, take a step back to simply assess what is before you. Brainstorm possible solutions, and then break them down into manageable steps.

9. Take Steps to Solve Problems

Simply waiting for a problem to go away on its own only prolongs the crisis. Instead, start working on resolving the issue immediately. While there may not be any fast or simple solution, you can take steps toward making your situation better and less stressful. Focus on the progress that you have made thus far and planning your next steps, rather than becoming discouraged by the amount of work that still needs to be accomplished.

10. Keep Working on Your Skills

Resilience may take time to build, so do not become discouraged if you still struggle to cope with problematic events. According to Dr. Russ Newman, "research has shown that resilience is not an extraordinary thing but is rather ordinary and can be learned by most anyone" (2002). Psychological resilience does not involve any specific set of behaviors or actions, but can vary dramatically from one person to the next. Focus on practicing some of the common characteristics of resilient people, but also remember to build upon your existing strengths.

The ABCs of Self-Care

Awareness:

Being in tune with one's needs, limits, emotions and internal/external resources including practicing mindfulness and acceptance. Awareness requires mindful attention to all aspects of our experience including thoughts, feelings, and our sensate experience. This kind of attention requires quiet time and space that supports self-reflection.

Balance:

Maintain a balance and diversity of activities at work. Balance your energies between work and play, between activity and rest, between focus on self and focus on others. Balance provides stability and helps us be more grounded when stress levels are high.

Connection:

Connection to oneself, to others, and to something greater decreases isolation and increases hope. Connection is supported by open communication. Connection to others both personally and professionally is essential and an ethical imperative for clinicians and human service providers. Connection provides an anchor that supports us to be able to witness tremendous suffering of our clients while not getting caught up in it. We cannot do this work alone.

Reference: Saakvitne, K. W. & Pearlman, L. A. (1996). *Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Comprehensive Self-Care Plan Worksheet

Name: Date:	Personal	Professional/Workplace
Physical		
Psychological/Mental		
Emotional/Relational		
Spiritual		

Use the following questions to help you engage in a self-reflective process and develop your comprehensive self-care plan. Be specific and include strategies that are accessible, acceptable, and appropriate to your unique circumstances. Remember to evaluate and revise your plan regularly.

Physical

- What are non-chemical things that help my body relax?
- What supports my body to be healthy?

Psychological/Mental

- What helps my mind relax?
- What helps me see a bigger perspective?
- What helps me break down big tasks into smaller steps?
- What helps me counteract negative self-talk?
- What helps me challenge negative beliefs?
- What helps me build my theoretical understanding of trauma and addictions?
- What helps me enhance my counseling/helping skills in working with traumatized clients?
- What helps me become more self-reflective?

Emotional/Relational

- What helps me feel grounded and able to tolerate strong feelings?
- What helps me express my feelings in a healthy way?
- Who helps me cope in positive ways and how do they help?
- What helps me feel connected to others?
- Who are at least three people I feel safe talking with about my reactions/feelings about clients?
- How can I connect with those people on a regular basis?

Spiritual

- What helps me find meaning in life?
- What helps me feel hopeful?
- What sustains me during difficult times?
- What connects me to something greater?

My Maintenance Self-Care Worksheet

Review the Self-Care Assessment that you just completed, which includes what you are doing now for self-care. On this maintenance self-care worksheet, list those activities that you engage in regularly (like every day or week) under "current practice" within each domain. Identify new strategies that you would like to begin to incorporate as part of your ongoing maintenance self-care—pay particular attention to domains that you have not been addressing in the past. On the last page identify barriers that might interfere with ongoing self-care, how you will address them, and any negative coping strategies you would like to target for change and how you will change them.

<u>MIND</u>	<u>BODY</u>
<p>Current practice</p> <p>New practice</p>	<p>Current practice</p> <p>New practice</p>
<u>EMOTIONS</u>	<u>SPIRIT</u>
<p>Current practice</p> <p>New practice</p>	<p>Current practice</p> <p>New practice</p>

My Maintenance Self-Care Worksheet

<u>WORK</u>	<u>RELATIONSHIPS</u>
Current practice New practice	Current practice New practice
OTHER: _____	OTHER: _____
Current practice New practice	Current practice New practice

My Maintenance Self-Care Worksheet

Barriers to maintaining my self-care strategies	How I will address these barriers and remind myself to practice self-care
Negative coping strategies I would like to use less or not at all	What I will do instead

(Adapted by Shirley Reiser, LCSW and Lisa D. Butler, PhD from materials provided by Sandra A. Lopez, LCSW, ACSW, University of Houston, Graduate School of Social Work.)