

## **Compassion Fatigue 101 Explained**

**"Compassion Fatigue is a state experienced by those helping people or animals in distress; it is an extreme state of tension and preoccupation with the suffering of those being helped to the degree that it can create a secondary traumatic stress for the helper." - Dr. Charles Figley**

### **The Facts**

Caring too much can hurt. When caregivers focus on others without practicing self-care, destructive behaviors can surface. Apathy, isolation, bottled up emotions and substance abuse head a long list of symptoms associated with the secondary traumatic stress disorder now labeled: Compassion Fatigue

While the effects of Compassion Fatigue can cause pain and suffering, learning to recognize and manage its symptoms is the first step toward healing. The Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project© is dedicated to educating caregivers about authentic, sustainable self-care and aiding organizations in their goal of providing healthy, compassionate care to those whom they serve.

### **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

Compassion Fatigue is sinister, as it edges on guilt and grows from a desire to maintain care of a loved one based on what we feel they may want. Remember, you can't take care of anyone, if you don't take care of yourself first!

### **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

#### **Some Points for Radio 7 Print Advertisement creation**

At Quail Park, we understand the most important process in helping with Compassion Fatigue – being there for you!

We understand the importance of providing care and joy for all our Resident's on their individual journey, while maintaining the same level of support to the Families we serve as well.

Let the Team at Quail Park Memory Care Residences know who they can help?

At Quail Park, we know that connecting Family Members with other Family Members experiencing like grief, stress and finding joy in the moment, is critical to being a comprehensive solution provider. It is our greatest honor to be given the opportunity to make the Dementia Journey as warm and compassionate as possible.

Stop by and meet the best Compassion Fatigue Support Team at Quail Park