

TABLE OF CONTENTS

How to Use This Guide	4
Introduction	5
Caregiver’s Bill of Rights	7
Part I: What is Compassion Fatigue?	11
Symptoms.....	13
Causes.....	17
Stress & Burnout in Caregiving.....	21
Life Stress Test.....	22
Organizational Symptoms.....	33
Eight Laws Governing a Healthy Workplace.....	36
Part II: Breaking the Compassion Fatigue Cycle.....	39
Basic Human Needs.....	40
Your Window of Perception.....	41
Preparing to Heal: Challenges & Strengths.....	45
Healthy Caregiving vs. Unhealthy Caregiving.....	48
Eight Laws Governing Healthy Change.....	53
Part III: The Path to Wellness.....	57
Standards of Self Care.....	58
Creating Your Personal Self Care Plan.....	59
Transitions – New Beginnings.....	62
Eight Laws Governing Self Care.....	65
Part IV: The Future.....	69
WIIFM: What’s In It For Me?	70
Creating Your Personal Mission Statement	72
Eight Laws Governing Healthy Caregiving.....	73
Glossary.....	76
Compassion Fatigue Self Test.....	79
Resources.....	83
Suggested Reading.....	83
Caregiving Organizations.....	87

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

These materials have been compiled with you in mind. Whether you are a student, intern, professional, volunteer or home caregiver, one thing is for sure: your time is limited. In order to make the information user-friendly, the entire contents have been arranged in sections for quick reference purposes, but also to allow you to absorb, at your own speed, each phase of the learning process.

Whether you are studying this material to learn more about yourself, someone close to you, a colleague or volunteer in your organization, the fact remains that the majority of the information will be new to you. The information on these pages can be digested in small bites every evening before you retire, or all at once during a 3-hour workshop or presentation. Each training “pod” (i.e., Symptoms, Causes, Burnout & Stress, etc.) can stand on its own. Sections are equipped with tutorials, quizzes, suggestions and *Notes About ME* journal pages. A Glossary, included at the end of the Guide, introduces you to words that you will discover while reading the text. It is important to begin using the correct terminology when dealing with the symptoms, causes, and healing components of compassion fatigue.

It is highly recommended that you do take some time on a regular basis to enter your thoughts and feelings in the spaces provided. Not only does this serve as journaling, which is known to accelerate understanding and healing, but your words also serve as a historical perspective. At some point, most likely further down the road, you will be able to look back at where you were at the beginning of this process and be able to gauge how far you’ve come. And you will do some intensive inner “traveling” if you complete the work prescribed on the following pages.

Also, this Guide serves as a point of communication between you and others. You can easily contribute to discussions about compassion fatigue with your boss, colleagues, friends and associates by sharing the didactics (instructions to learn), while not sharing your personal writings. All *Notes About Me* pages are set apart from the instructive pages, as are any quizzes, tests, or other pages asking for your input. This design allows you the privacy you need to be open, honest and authentic about who you really are.

If you have any ideas, suggestions or thoughts on how to improve the layout, design or materials, please contact me. Most of all, I would love to hear about your success. Please email me at: patricia@compassionfatigue.org.

Patricia Smith

INTRODUCTION

Caring too much can hurt. Many caregivers are not aware that the stress they are experiencing in their lives has a name. The term Compassion Fatigue, coined in 1994 by internationally acclaimed psychologist and traumatologist Dr. Charles Figley, is not what many people believe it is. While the set of symptoms associated with this secondary traumatic stress disorder appear similar to burnout or depression, it is neither.

Compassion fatigue occurs when we focus on the needs of others without sustaining healthy self-care practices to balance our giving with receiving. Compassion fatigue originates from an internal place of depletion. Healthy caregivers fill themselves up and experience abundance. Those of us with Compassion Fatigue deplete our emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual resources. Ultimately, we are left with nothing to fortify and strengthen our resolve to be of service to others. Eventually, a wide range of destructive behaviors surface and create havoc in our lives.

Due to a lack of understanding about what Compassion Fatigue is and the inability to skillfully manage the symptoms, we often view ourselves in negative ways, applying such labels as over-reactive, unprofessional, or possessing a savior complex. Others see us as selfless, lacking in personal boundaries, and altruistic to a fault. With ill-fitting labels such as these, it isn't unusual for us to ask ourselves: What is wrong with me? What don't I feel happy? Why am I sad most of the time? Why doesn't anyone understand me?

If any of this sounds familiar, chances are that you might be experiencing Compassion Fatigue, or can identify someone who is. Either way, reading this material or attending this Compassion Fatigue workshop can improve your life. It takes as much skill to manage our own Compassion Fatigue symptoms as it does to communicate successfully with someone who demonstrates its draining symptoms. This is especially true of managers working with employees with high levels of Compassion Fatigue in environments such as animal care, hospice or social service agencies.

As you proceed through the pages of this workbook, make decisions that feel comfortable and safe. Share your story, or not. Question the information with

your group, or later in private with your facilitator. Whether you are here because it is a mandatory training or you are here out of choice, when the workshop is finished, you will walk out the door armed with new knowledge and skills that will serve you now and far into the future.

Your awareness will motivate you to learn more about Compassion Fatigue, incorporate your self-care plan into your life, and allow you to continue with the care giving work that is so necessary and noble in our world today.

Don't lose hope! New patterns and behaviors take time. Chances are that you've never acquired the necessary coping skills to create a life that fulfills your needs, dreams, and desires. You are now beginning an important phase in your life and if you follow it through, your hard work will reap benefits you never thought possible.

You've taken the first step toward a happier, healthier life either by attending this Compassion Fatigue workshop or reading this material on your own. Whichever path you've chosen... Congratulations!