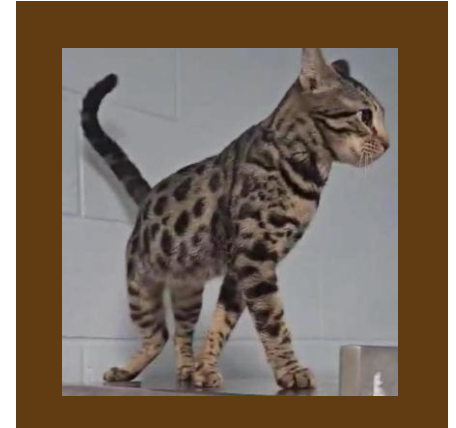
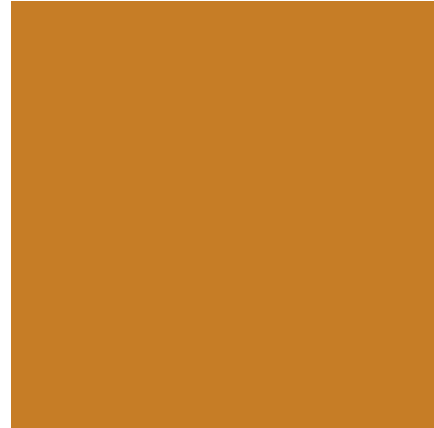




Compassion Fatigue: Supporting the Heart of Animal Care Presented by Gwen Hernandez RN



**Do you sometimes feel like you
care too much?**



Today's Agenda: Recognizing & Managing Compassion Fatigue



- Good Health and Wellness
- What is Compassion Fatigue?
- What are Stress & Burnout?
- Managing Compassion Fatigue
- Challenges in Animal Caregiving
- Strategies to Promote Wellness
- Resources

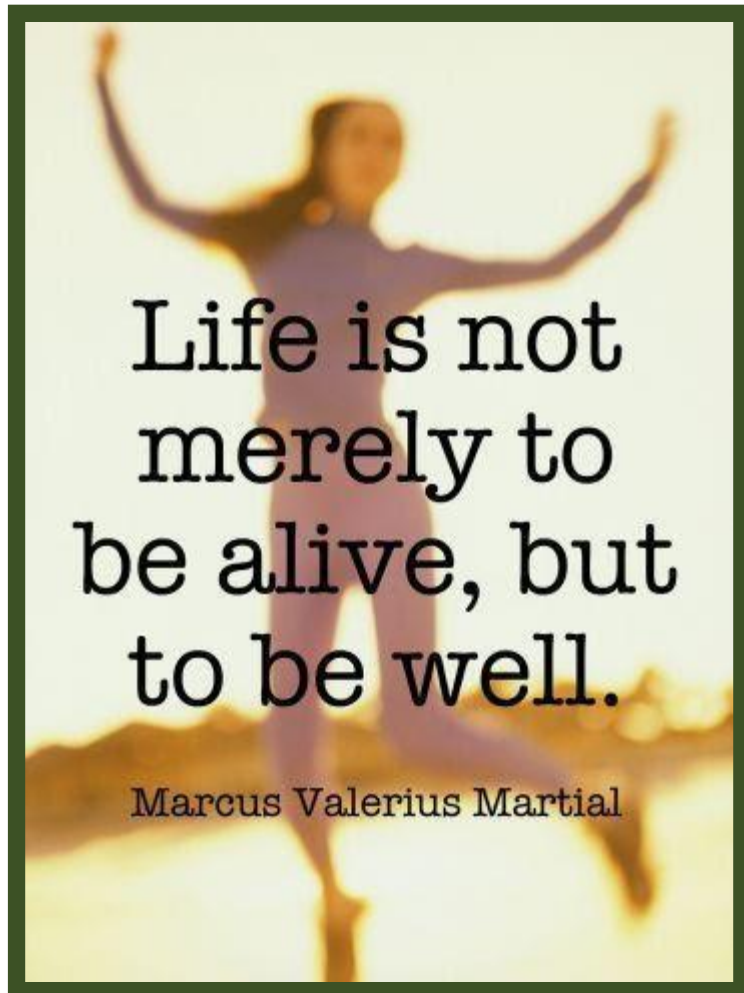


Healthy vs Unhealthy Caregivers



The ultimate goal in creating **healthy caregivers** is so we can master the art of resiliency and return quickly to high-functioning behaviors after enduring on-the-job trauma day after day.

+ Why Healthy Caregiving?





Seven Forms of Human Wellness



Physical Emotional Spiritual Social
Intellectual Environmental Occupational

When creating a Self-Care Plan, choose one area of wellness to begin your journey. Which area of improved wellness will be most beneficial to you?





What is Compassion Fatigue?



“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.”

Normal Or Abnormal

The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet”



What are the Symptoms?



- Isolation
- Emotional outbursts
- Sadness, apathy
- Impulse to rescue anyone in need
- Substance abuse
- Denial
- Hypervigilance, hyperarousal
- Recurring nightmares or flashbacks
- Excessive complaints about colleagues, management, and/or those being helped
- Persistent physical ailments



Physical Ailments

“Society has not woken fully to the frequency with which people unconsciously think themselves ill. Psychosomatic disorders are physical symptoms that mask emotional distress. There are many people whose sadness is so overwhelming that they cannot bear to feel it. In its place, they develop physical disabilities. When words are not available, our bodies sometimes speak for us.”

-Suzanne O'Sullivan



+ When Helping Hurts

- “Compassion fatigue develops over time – taking weeks, sometimes years to surface. Over time, your ability to feel and care for others becomes eroded through overuse of your skills of compassion. You also might experience emotional blunting, lessening your usually high levels of compassion and empathy.” Frank Oshberg, MD





What is Compassion Fatigue?

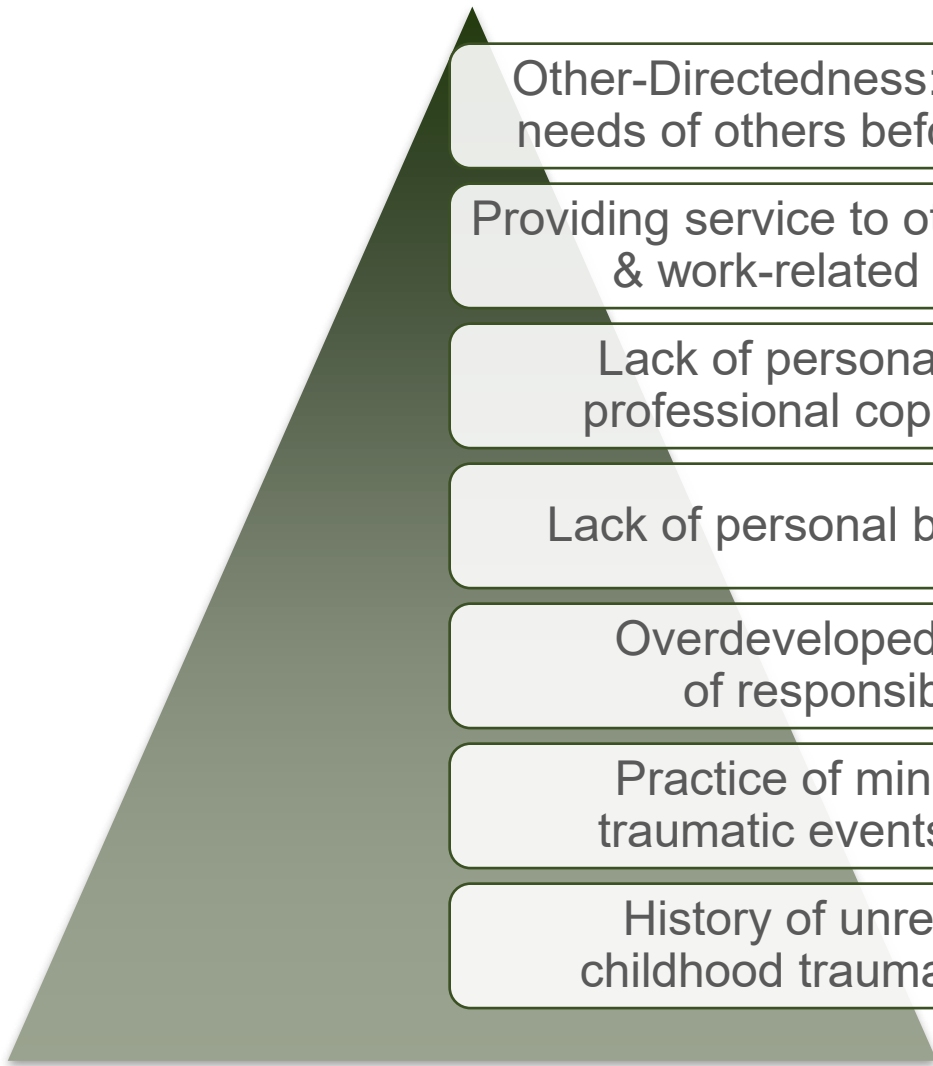


“I often wonder why I’m here. There really isn’t much success working with animals. The public is totally ignorant of the work we do, and how much we want the best for the animals. I work so hard and things never get better. Loss, after loss, after loss, leaves me empty and so sad. ”

- Gwen Hernandez Animal Rescuer



+ What are the Causes?

A large, dark green pyramid is positioned on the left side of the slide. It is partially obscured by a series of seven horizontal, rounded rectangular boxes that are stacked vertically and overlap each other. These boxes contain text describing causes. The pyramid's base is at the bottom left, and it tapers towards the top right.

Other-Directedness: Putting the needs of others before our own

Providing service to others w/stress & work-related trauma

Lack of personal and/or professional coping skills

Lack of personal boundaries

Overdeveloped sense of responsibility

Practice of minimizing traumatic events/Denial

History of unresolved childhood trauma (ACEs)



Managing Compassion Fatigue



- ✓ Accept that your situation is stressful
- ✓ Create balance between work, relationships & “me-time”
- ✓ Build a healthy support system
- ✓ Practice authentic, sustainable self-care daily
- ✓ Practice self-compassion
- ✓ Strengthen resiliency coping skills
- ✓ Listen to others with detached compassion
- ✓ Practice mindfulness on and off the job
- ✓ Take the Professional Quality of Life Self-Test regularly

+ Simply put...



- We remain present.
- We practice mindfulness.
- We acknowledge we're making a difference.
- We travel the path while letting go.
- We promote positive self-talk.

+ Managing Stress

- ✓ Identify and label your source(s) of stress
- ✓ Accept what you cannot change
- ✓ Focus on what you can change
- ✓ Learn to say no
- ✓ Tighten your personal boundaries
- ✓ Practice empathic discernment





On-the-Spot Self Care Practices



- Breathe deeply
- Laugh
- Journal
- Take a brisk walk
- Stretch
- Talk to a trusted friend
- Eat a nutritious snack
- Practice Letting Go ritual
- Read a favorite quote or Mission statement
- Listen to music
- Meditate/pray/Practice mindfulness
- Take the Professional Quality of Life Self-Test



+ Mindfulness...





What is Compassion Satisfaction?



- Knowing you are making a difference in the lives of the people you serve.
- Living the Mission of the organization.
- Carrying on the legacy of the organization.
- Working with dedicated colleagues.



One of the weapons
we have against
compassion fatigue is
the **satisfaction** we
get from our work.



+ An important question...



Big Panda and Tiny Dragon



“Which is more important,” asked Big Panda, “the journey or the destination?”

“The company.” said Tiny Dragon.



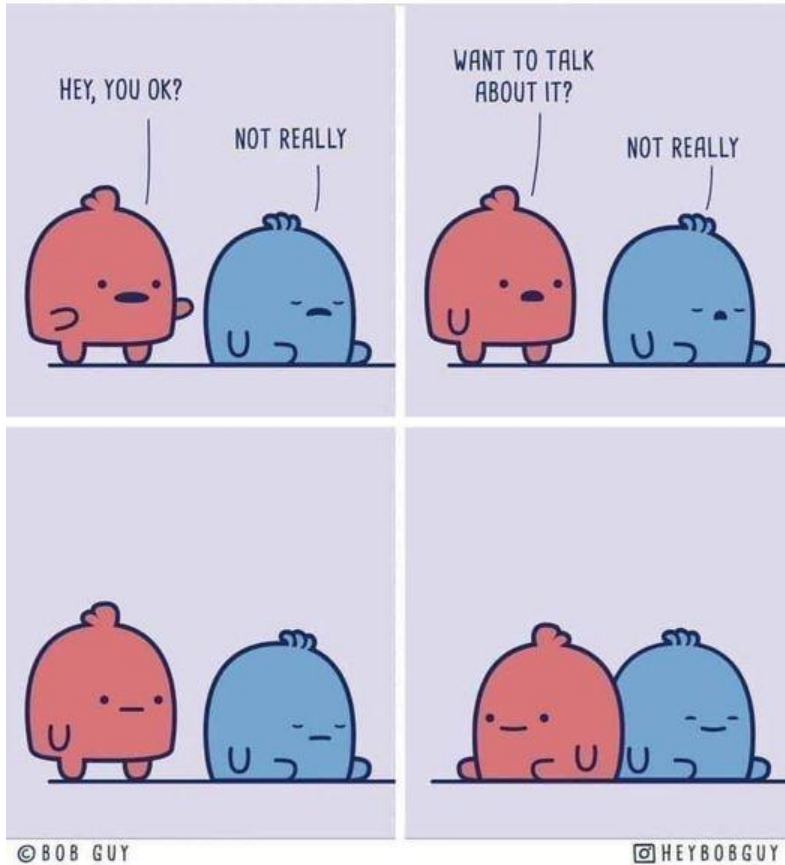
Supporting your Colleagues



- Listen effectively
- Avoid slimmIng
- Protect from emotional vampires
- Be inclusive
- Share your knowledge
- Be mindful
- Practice Psychological First Aid



+ Psychological First Aid





Stresses in Animal Welfare Environments



- Job requires high level of aptitude, sacrifice, education
- High levels of responsibility
- No room for mistakes
- Inability of veterinarians & staff members to seek help
- Unsuccessful outcomes lead to poor public opinion
- Long hours
- High client demand/Customer Service issues
- Chronic emotional trauma on the job
- Myriad rules and regulations
- Severity of the workload
- Short staff/high turnover rates
- Job burnout
- Moral & Ethical Distress

Source: Mental Health Daily

+ Self-Care On the Job

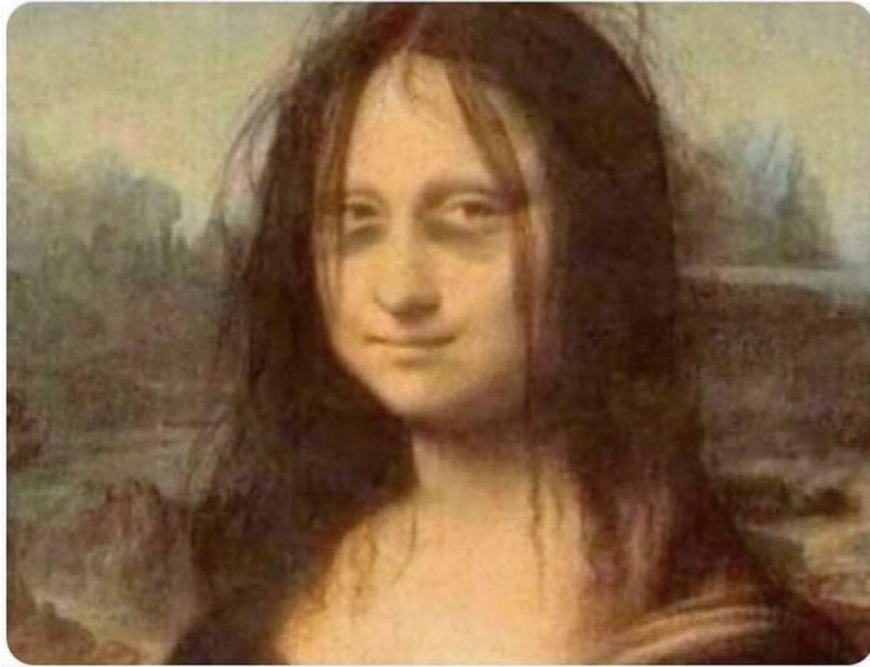


- Spend time identifying what would help.
- Talk to management about concerns. Use effective communication.
- Use On-The-Spot coping skills throughout the day.
- Take breaks/eat lunch away from the computer/visit with colleagues you enjoy/have walking meetings.
- Remind yourself of the Mission Statement and why you are there. Spend as much time with the animals as possible.
- Ask for help, when necessary.



Ask for Help!

me after doing everything by myself
instead of simply asking for help





Self-Care Coping Strategies



- Accept your situation is stressful
- Share your feelings with a trusted friend or relative
- Acknowledge others who are feeling the same
- Enhance your communication skills to lessen feelings of being unheard
- Initiate positive action to change your situation
- Care for your personal needs first
- Take time away from stressful situation
- Allow others to help – professional help if necessary
- Take ownership of your personality traits.



The Starfish Story

An old man was walking on the beach one morning after a storm. In the distance, he could see someone moving like a dancer.

As he came closer, he saw that it was a young woman picking up starfish and gently throwing them into the ocean. “Young lady, why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?”

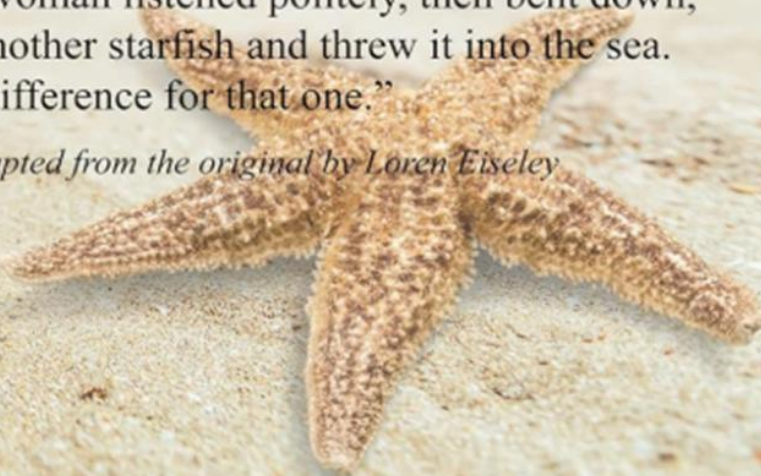
“The sun is up, and the tide is going out, and if I do not throw them in they will die,” she said.

“But young lady, do you not realize that there are many miles of beach and thousands of starfish? You cannot possibly make a difference.”

The young woman listened politely, then bent down, picked up another starfish and threw it into the sea.

“It made a difference for that one.”

- Adapted from the original by Loren Eiseley



Develop a Relationship with Your Higher Power

Good Reads

- Accept that you are not in charge
- Internalize that the “Universe” is going help you as much as it can
- There is a “next step in life”
- Seek support from others who can help, counselors, clergy, friends
- The Art of Racing the Rain
- Life After Life
- Embraced By the Light
- The Amazing Afterlife of Animals
- The Soul of Your Pet
- The Incredible Animal Afterlife Book
- Evidence of Animal Afterlife: the Book



+ Loss & Grief on the Job



- Hold debriefings following traumatic events.
- Be honest about your feelings with yourself and others (vulnerability is healing).
- Know you are not alone.
- Take the time you need to grieve. There is no time limit on grief.
- When ready, fill the loss with something new and nurturing.
- Act. Create a memorial or other remembrance.

+ Creating a Self-Care Plan

- Take the time to create a plan for yourself.
- Write ONE measurable, accountable goal**

**DOT





Set One Measurable, Accountable Goal



- I will go to the gym Monday, Wednesday and Friday for 45 minutes
- I will take a nutrition class this spring and apply what I learn to my daily diet
- I will lose 10 lbs in 3 months by keeping my calorie intake at 1500 calories daily

Hold yourself accountable!



Six Steps to Healthy Caregiving



1. Build Resiliency

2. Cultivate Compassion

3. Improve Coping Skills

4. Support Your Colleagues

5. Embrace Self-Confidence

6. Manage Change



+ Next Steps...

- Create a Self-Care Plan.
- Continue to educate leadership and staff about compassion fatigue, stress and burnout.
- Build an organizational Wellness Program.
- Support your leadership and colleagues. Be kind.





A thought from author Henry James...



- “Three things in human life are important: the first is to be kind; the second is to be kind; and the third is to be kind.”





What Kindness Doesn't Look Like...



THE BEATINGS
WILL CONTINUE
*UNTIL MORALE
IMPROVES!*





Compassion Fatigue Resources

- www.compassionfatigue.org/TEDx
- www.facebook.com/compassionfatigue
- www.proqol.org
- www.drjudithorloff.com
- www.brenebrown.com
- www.greatergood.berkeley.edu
- www.coursera.org/learn/psychological-first-aid/#
- www.healingtrust.org (Self-Care Plan Templates)

