CONCEPTS SIMILAR TO COMPASSION FATIGUE

• Secondary Traumatic Stress - Secondary experience to the victim’s story. Has 3 key elements - intrusive thoughts, avoidance, and negative arousal. Counsellors may take on symptoms of clients after hearing their stories and be affected by intrusive imagery.

• Burnout - The most common term. State of physical, mental and emotional exhaustion or dissatisfaction with work situation. Occurs in situations of inadequate resources related to the work.

• Vicarious Traumatization - transformation of the inner experience of the therapist through empathic engagement with the client’s trauma material i.e., the therapist’s view of the world changes

• Countertransference - therapists’ conscious or unconscious reaction to a client

I finally came to understand that my exposure to other people’s trauma had changed me on a fundamental level. There had been an osmosis: I had absorbed and accumulated trauma to the point that it had become part of me, and my view of the world had changed.

Laura van Dernoot Lipsky

To combat compassion fatigue and burnout, agency administrators and therapists may also wish to ask themselves, “How many cases are too many?”

Kyle D. Killian

Compassion Fatigue Defined

• The profound erosion, both physical and emotional, that occurs when helpers are unable to refuel and regenerate (Francoise, 2012)

• Affects professionals in any field who come into contact with people experiencing extreme emotional pain or trauma (Fingley, 1996; Hamilton, 2008)

• Adverse effects which can occur after working with traumatized people (Fingley, 2002)
When you’re in the red zone of compassion fatigue, a bath ain’t gonna cut it!

by Robin Cameron, 2003

Sophomore

HARM TO THE THERAPIST

• Heightened irritability and anger
• Disturbed sleep - hypersomnia, or insomnia
• Avoiding meetings
• Nightmares
• Impaired ability to make decisions
• Forgetfulness
• Numb to own emotions
• Negative self image
• Neglect own needs (engaging in own life, skip lunch, coffee breaks, work during time off)
• Physical exhaustion
• Headaches or migraines
• Substance misuse
• Addictions (shopping, workaholism, compulsive overeating)
• Attrition

HARM TO THE RELATIONSHIP

• Exaggerated sense of responsibility
• Reduced attentiveness
• Loss of empathy
• Depersonalization
• Unresponsiveness
• Cynicism
• Predictability of client issues

• Avoiding difficult topics with clients
• Feeling discouraged about lack of referral resources - moral distress
• Avoidance of clients
• Compromised care for clients

HARM TO CLIENTS

• Become intrusive/aggressive with the clients
• avoid trauma re-processing with clients

Key aspects to professional self care 1) Peer support - It is important for helpers to have the opportunity to give and receive support fro those in similar roles (Valent, 2002). Consultation should entail both difficult cases and the emotional reaction of the helper. 2) Empathy - Another key aspect to professional self care. Take the time to connect in a meaningful way with your colleagues.