Compassion Fatigue

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Brewing Awareness, Balance, and Resilience

☕ Brewing Our Time Together

- Welcome & connection
- Understanding compassion fatigue
- Symptoms, research, and impact
- Self Care Strategies
- Coffee cup activity.

A Strong Topic

Coffee is something that we instinctively reach for when we are depleted or need a “pick me up”. Today we will talk about emotional energy, compassion fatigue, and the importance of refilling ourselves.

What is Compassion Fatigue

Compassion fatigue is emotional and physical exhaustion resulting from prolonged caring for others in distress.

Often called the 'cost of caring.'

Research

Charles R. Figley, Ph.D.
Tulane University's Kurzweg Chair in Disaster Mental Health, Traumatology Institute and Professor

Charles Figley conceptualized compassion fatigue as the convergence of secondary traumatic stress (STS) and burnout, where caregivers internalize others' trauma through empathic engagement.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-4m35Gixno

Educators and Federal Programs Staff

- Work long hours
- Carry emotional labor home
- Juggle multiple roles
- Serve high-need populations

Stress: Short-term and situational

Compassion Fatigue: Emotional impact of caring for others' pain

What is the Difference?

Burnout: Chronic workload and systems issues

Stress vs Burnout vs Compassion Fatigue

Burnout comes from being overworked while compassion fatigue specifically refers to the distress that comes from dealing with trauma victims. It causes a deeper level of emotional exhaustion and can negatively impact your personal and professional relationships.

What Drains Us?

- Stress
- Trauma
- Workload
- Experiences
- Lack of Support

What Refills Us?

- Rest
- Connections
- Hobbies
- Boundaries

The Coffee Cup Metaphor

The Coffee Cup as a Visual Representation

What Happens When the Cup Runs Empty?

- Effectiveness is reduced
- Disengage
- Inconsistent Behaviors

An empty cup does not mean that you are broken. It means that you have been pouring.

What are the Symptoms?

Emotional Symptoms:	Physical Symptoms:	Cognitive Symptoms:	Behavioral Symptoms:
Anxiety	Fatigue	Poor concentration	Isolation/Withdrawn
Sadness	Headaches	Difficulty making decisions	Poor work-life balance
Guilt	Insomnia	Memory issues	Increased absenteeism
Irritability	Increased heart rate	Difficulty Disconnecting from Stressors	Agitation
Feeling Overwhelmed			

How will this Impact Your Work?

- Lower energy and focus
- Reduced job satisfaction
- Difficulty sustaining passion
- Increased risk of withdrawal

1. Compassion Experience (Early Stage)

- Passionate about teaching and student success
- Strong sense of purpose and impact
- High energy and engagement in the classroom

2. Compassion Decrement

- Increasing workload (grading, plannning, emotional s
- Less time for rest and personal life
- Feeling stretched trying to meet al student needs

3. Compassion Discomfort

- Self-doubt about effectiveness ass a teacher
- Feeling emotionally drained after schoot
- Increased sensitivity to student challenges

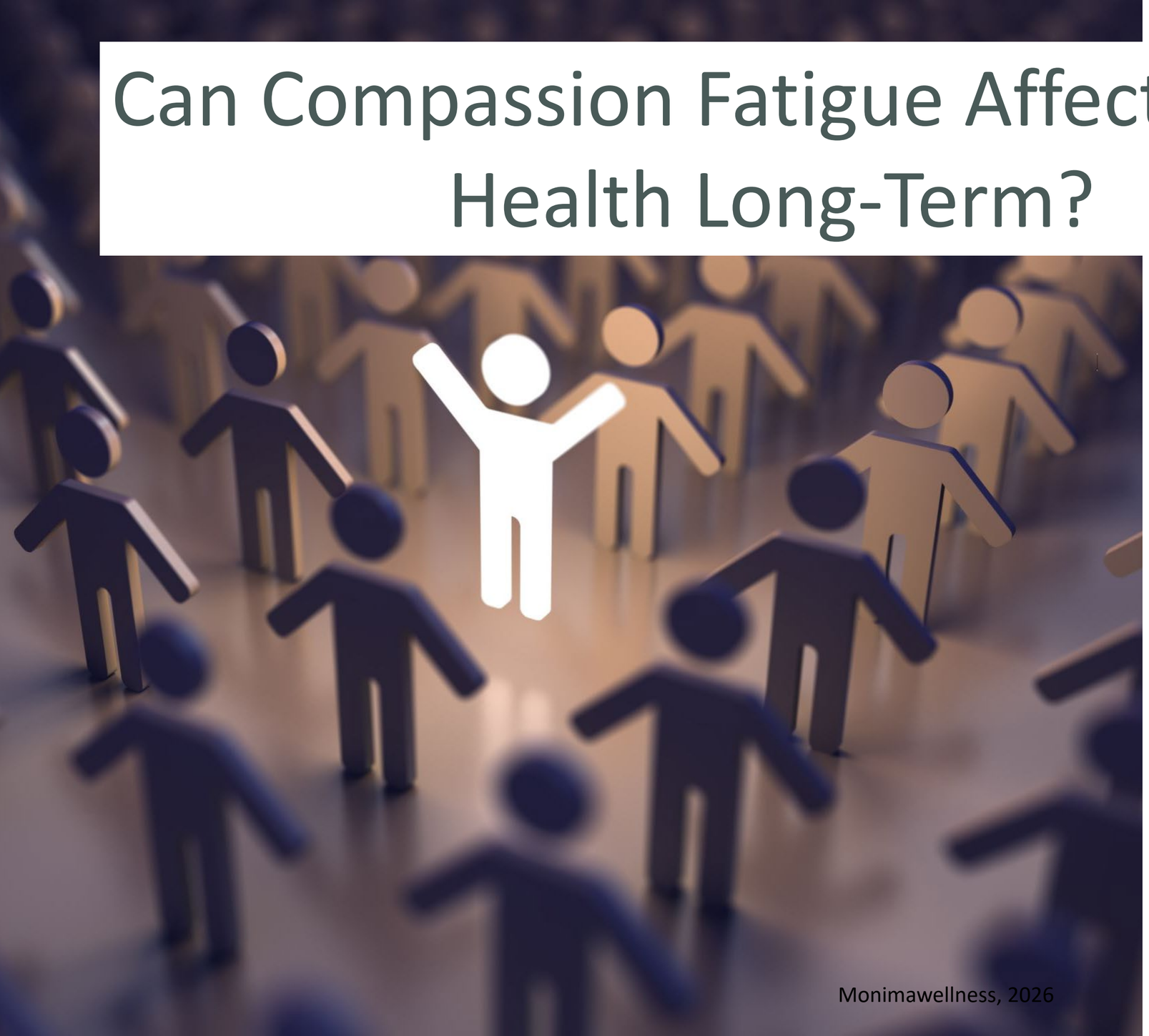
4. Compassion Distress

- Constantly thinking about struggling students
- Rising stress and anxiety about outcomes

5. Compassion Fatigue

- Exhaustion and loss of motivation
- Avoiding extra responsibilities or interactions

Can Compassion Fatigue Affect Mental Health Long-Term?



- When unaddressed, compassion fatigue can contribute to longer-term mental health challenges. Ongoing emotional exhaustion may increase vulnerability to anxiety, depression, or trauma-related symptoms. Some people withdraw socially or feel increasingly disconnected from themselves and others.
- Early recognition and support can significantly reduce these risks. Compassion fatigue is responsive to care, especially when addressed before it becomes deeply entrenched.

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The Coffee Culture Normalizes Needing a Break

We often feel guilty for resting, we minimize our own needs, and pride ourself in pushing through.

Let’s Try this….
We need a coffee break: “It’s ok to pause”
We need to get a coffee refill: “Refilling oneself is essential”
We need caffeine: “Our energy comes from rest, refills, and reflection.”

Compassion fatigue is real and well -documented

Research consistently defines compassion fatigue as the “cost of caring” emerging from prolonged exposure to others’ distress and trauma. It is not a weakness, yet a occupational risk in professions of service.

It is common in helping professions

Studies show high prevalence among educators, healthcare workers, social workers, counselors, and support staff. Also, roles that involve constant emotional labor, trauma exposure, and high expectations.

Sustaining Your Work

Caring for yourself allows you to continue caring for others.

It also allows you to sustain your passion. Protect your cup.

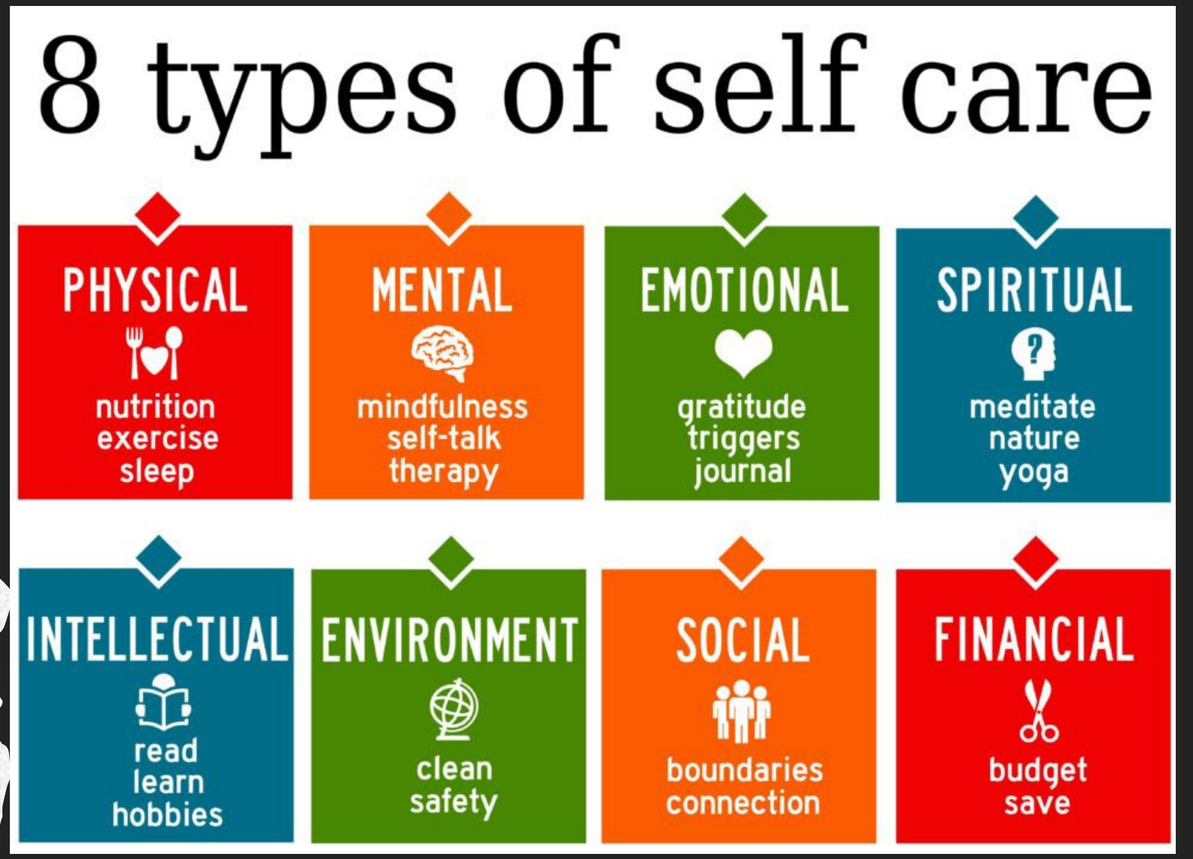
Enjoy Your Coffee

Rest. Relax. Reflect… Self-Care

Takeaways from the Coffee Shop

- **"You Can’t Pour from an Empty Cup":** Self-care is not selfish; it is necessary for continued caregiving.
- **"Come Fill Your Cup":** Take time for self-reflection and personal replenishment.
- **"Coffee and Kindness":** Self-care includes being kind to oneself, especially during exhausting times.
- **"Slow Down & Appreciate":** Slowing down to appreciate the quiet moments, rather than always being on the go.

8 Types of Self Care



If you feel like you're experiencing compassion fatigue, here are some self-care tips that can help:

- **Nurture Close Friendships** — Schedule time to hang out with friends. Be intentional!
- **Don't Bury Negative Feelings** — Share how you feel with someone you trust, such as a friend, family member, or counselor.
- **Develop Your Talents** — What else do you like to do besides your career? Become really good at it by taking classes, watching tutorials, or practicing with friends.

- **Listen to Inspirational Music** — Create a playlist of all your favorite songs and listen to them to and from work.
- **Evaluate How News Affects You** — If you feel worse after reading or listening to the news, consider taking a break from it or looking for positive news instead.

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Continued…

If you feel like you're experiencing compassion fatigue, here are some self-care tips that can help:

- **Practice Mindfulness** — Be mindful and clear your mind by
- focusing on your breathing or what you see, hear, feel, and smell.
- **Effective Journaling** — Writing down your thoughts and feelings can be very therapeutic. If you don't like writing, you can keep an audio or video journal using your phone or computer.
- **Get Enough Sleep** — Get a good night's sleep with at least 7-8 hours of sleep. Set alarms to help set boundaries.
- **Show Gratitude** — Don't just feel gratitude, express it!

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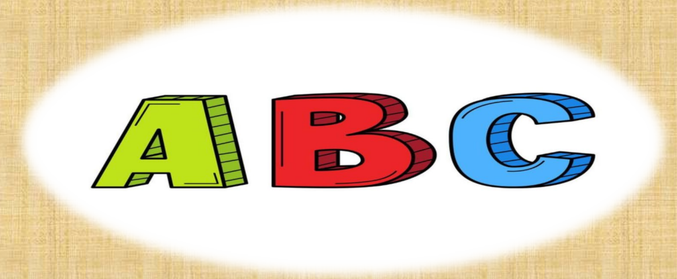
Coffee Shop Reflection

Reflective Activity at the Coffee Shop

- Quiet thinking
- Coffee Cup Activity
- Share



Let's Learn the ABC's of Compassion Resilience

Awareness, Balance and Connection

- **Awareness:** What can I feel in my Body? Breath? Emotions? What do I need?
- **Balance:** is my life balanced at work and at home? Do I make enough time for myself?
- **Connection:** Do I reach out to others? Am I intentional in connecting? Do I feel supported… at work… home… elsewhere?
- **Compassion:** Am I intentional for caring for my own needs? Can I identify my own needs?

- **The A-B-C of compassion resilience has another 'C' for Compassion.**
- **Without self-compassion, we might know something, but still not do anything about it! Compassion is also key to supporting one another and in sustaining self-care.**

Self-Care Brew: Your Daily Energy Ritual

Brew balance into your day—one mindful cup at a time."

- **1. Ground Your Energy → "Settle the Grounds"**

Just like coffee grounds need to be steady before brewing, take a moment to center yourself. *Pause, breathe, and be present.*

- **2. Release Negative Energy → "Filter the Bitter"**

A good filter removes what you don't want in your cup.
Let go of stress, tension, and anything weighing you down.

- **3. Re-charge Positive Energy → "Pour the Fresh Brew"**

Now comes the good part……..rich, warm, energizing.
Refill yourself with positivity, gratitude, and intention.

Take This With You:

"Caring for yourself is not a luxury—it's part of the work."

"What's one way you'll refill your cup today?"