

## Caring for Yourself When You Care for Others

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### Strategies for addressing challenges:

**Support** – ensuring adequate support for yourself; identifying and utilizing supports already in the workplace; being a catalyst to help colleagues and organizations build in supports

**Knowledge** – becoming more aware of the workplace challenges and some of the evidence-based ways to address them; seeking knowledge for how to promote personal and workplace change

**Perspective** – sometimes changing our lens on the situation leads to a more positive outcome, which can include personal and professional growth and/or healing

### Compassion Fatigue/Empathic Distress

*Profound emotional and physical erosion that takes place when helpers are unable to refuel and regenerate*

### Staying healthy and Building Resilience:

**1. Self-care**

**2. Self-Awareness**

**3. Reducing Chronic Stress**

*Self-care is an intentional way of living where our values, attitudes and actions are integrated into our day-to-day routines – not one more thing to add to our growing 'to do' lists.*

### Caring for Yourself

Body	Mind	Spirit
Exercise – move; get outside Sleep – develop good sleep routine and get adequate rest Eat well; regular meals/healthy snacks Remember to play! See your own doctor regularly Be in tune with changes/issues in your body Seek out complementary therapies Take regular breaks Seek/accept help from others	Take stock of what's on your plate/prioritize/delegate/be selective/simplify Find time for yourself every day Quiet time; unplugged Time with family; friends Humour – don't take yourself too seriously! Seek out support - formal and informal Learn the words 'no' and 'enough' Give yourself permission to do this with no guilt Engage in hobbies; reading etc... Take time daily to reflect on what you have given/received 'Letting Go' of frenzied schedules; unrealistic expectations; things you have no control over	Living Mindfully – in the present Identify what refreshes you and build it in to your schedule Look for inspiration – daily emails/books/social media Enjoy nature, the arts Tend to your own spiritual needs/cultivate an inner life Decrease chronic stress: mindfulness; guided imagery; meditation; prayer; yoga; music Make time for reflecting on the day; happenings/gratitude

## Issues related to Compassion Fatigue

Vicarious Trauma; Moral Distress; Burnout

Those who suffer from low grade depression can be more susceptible to Compassion Fatigue

### Compassion Satisfaction

- The pleasure you derive from being able to do your work well
- Reconnecting with the rewards of your work

**Self-Awareness** – includes self-reflection, reviewing our own beliefs and biases; inner growth; becoming aware of our feelings and body's reactions to stress; reflecting on our own mortality; practicing mindfulness and self-compassion

#### Some Thoughts about Mindfulness:

##### **Mindfulness is not about what one *does* but how one *is***

- An awareness of the present moment with acceptance
- Regular attention to mindfulness helps us to be more attentive to ourselves and others
- Not about a 'calm', 'quiet' mind or other 'perfection seeking' – about reality; can be caught up in the chaos and not really be aware of what is going on in the moment; not about being happy and blissful
- Can be helpful in all aspects of our lives – savouring; eating more mindfully; walking more mindfully; working more mindfully; living more mindfully....
- Mindfulness is fostered in disciplines such as meditation, yoga, guided meditation, contemplative practice; Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) – Jon Kabat Zinn

##### **Self-Compassion – work of Kristin Neff and Christopher Germer**

- being a good friend to ourselves; managing expectations; allowing ourselves to be human and reminding ourselves of what we need; helpful in times of chaos and crisis

- includes the elements of Self-Kindness, Mindfulness and Common Humanity

##### **Compassion is about alleviating suffering – ours or someone else's**

##### **STRATEGIES FOR STAFF**

- debriefing with colleagues; ongoing conversations - staff meetings; shift change; regular gatherings
- formal debriefing, especially after a difficult situation
- watching out for each other; challenging each other to self-care; supporting each other; affirming each other; avoiding gossip and negative talk
- enjoying some social time together; smaller networks; support groups

- staying connected through social media; newsletters; gatherings
- ways of sharing memories; rituals; celebrating lives
- ongoing engagement and evaluation – providing feedback and suggestions
- engage in good self-care and self-awareness practices – personal responsibility
- boundaries between personal and professional lives

### **STRATEGIES FOR THE ORGANIZATION**

- Naming and discussing issues and Compassion Fatigue in the work place; availability of EAP/Support
- Supportive work environment; proper opportunities for debriefing and decompressing; frequent engagement with staff
- Professional development; peer support/mentoring; building leadership
- Adapting workloads when necessary
- Staff appreciation events; team building exercises/events
- Arrange for adequate resources; develop strong, compassionate teams
- Provide opportunities for supporting ‘self-care’ – complimentary therapies; flexibility; attend to the physical setting being conducive to wellness
- Ongoing education, training, support; encourage feedback and input
- Developing a ‘no blame’ workplace culture and encouraging input, ideas, reporting of risks

### **Helpful Resources**

Compassion Fatigue – [www.tendacademy.ca](http://www.tendacademy.ca) - books, articles, resources – work of Francoise Mathieu

Mindfulness – [www.mindful.org](http://www.mindful.org)

Self-Compassion – [www.self-compassion.org](http://www.self-compassion.org) – Kristen Neff

Mental Health Commission of Canada - [www.mentalhealthcommission.ca](http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca)

Moral Distress:

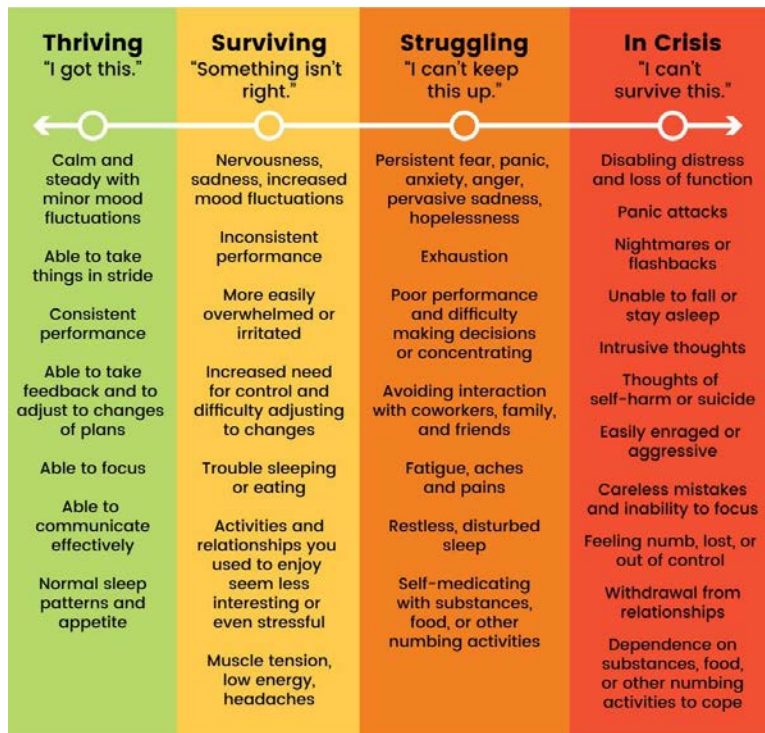
- Cynda Rushton - Cultivating Moral Resilience:  
[https://journals.lww.com/ajnonline/fulltext/2017/02001/cultivating\\_moral\\_resilience.3.aspx](https://journals.lww.com/ajnonline/fulltext/2017/02001/cultivating_moral_resilience.3.aspx)
- Team Care Connections Magazine - whole issue on Moral Distress -  
<https://teamcareconnections.org/books/exou/#p=1>
- Winnipeg Regional Health Authority Ethics document on Moral Distress -  
<https://wrha.mb.ca/files/ethics-moral-distress.pdf>

*The Compassion Fatigue Workbook*; Francoise Mathieu; Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2012

*The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook*; Kristin Neff and Christopher Germer, 2018, The Guilford Press

Michelle O'Rourke's Books – *Embracing the End of Life* (2012) and *Healthy Caregiving: Perspectives for Caring Professionals* - (2020) - (both available from Amazon or [www.selahresources.ca](http://www.selahresources.ca) )

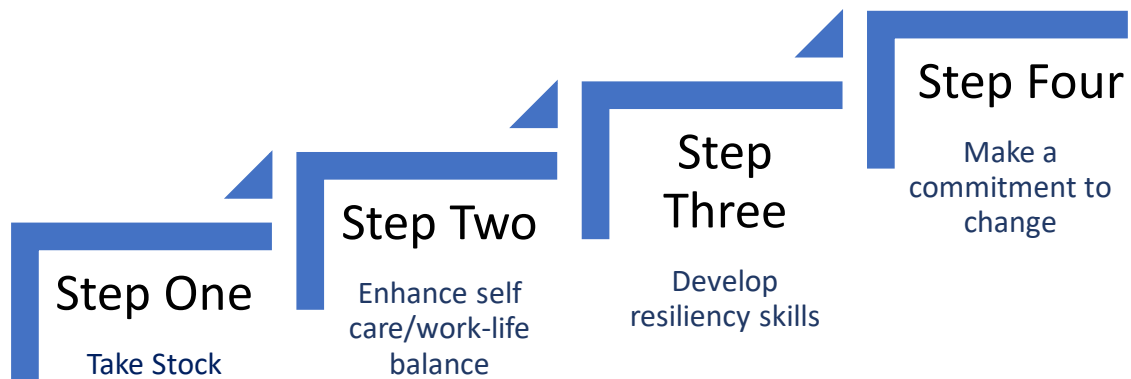
The Mental Health Continuum - Originally developed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada



Adapted from: Watson, P., Gist, R., Taylor, V., Evlender, E., Leto, F., Martin, R., Vaught, D., Nash, W.P., Westphal, R., & Litz, B. (2013). Stress First Aid for Firefighters and Emergency Services Personnel. National Fallen Firefighters Foundation.

## Wellness Work Plan

From Francoise Mathieu; *The Compassion Fatigue Workbook*



### **Step Four – Making a Commitment to Change**

Reflect on the work done today and come up with a plan; Consider sharing your plan with a friend, coach, colleague who can gently but firmly hold you accountable

One Change I could make in the next **WEEK; MONTH; YEAR**; what do I need to do to make that happen?