

**Burnout and Compassion Fatigue are terms often used interchangeably, yet they describe *distinct (though related)* experiences, especially in caregiving, nonprofit or human services roles.**

### Burnout

A state of chronic physical and emotional exhaustion that results from prolonged work-related stress, especially when demands exceed one's capacity or resources.

Can happen in any profession.

### Compassion Fatigue

The emotional residue or strain of being exposed to the suffering of others – often called 'the cost of caring'.

Occurs in 'helping' professions.

### Characteristics of Burnout

Burnout is a state of emotional, mental and physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. Three primary symptoms of burnout are listed below:

- **Exhaustion** – feeling 'wrung out', drained and fatigued with nothing left to give
- **Depersonalization** – feeling detached, cynical and negative about your work
- **Reduced accomplishment** – feeling ineffective, inept or incompetent

<i>Am I experiencing burnout?</i>	Fairly Often	Sometimes	Not Usually
Do you feel more anxious or depressed?			
Are you less motivated to do your work?			
Are you always stressed and feel you never get a break?			
Do you find yourself becoming impatient or irritable?			
Are you less productive, or does it feel that way?			
Do you have difficulty concentrating and/or are you more forgetful?			
Do you feel hopeless or overwhelmed?			
Do you have difficulty planning or making decisions?			
Are you using food, alcohol or drugs to numb the stress you feel?			
Have your sleep habits changed (sleeping more or less)?			
Are you developing physical problems (headaches, neck pain, stomach issues)?			
Do you notice increased negative self-talk?			

*Sources: Burnout, The Secret of Unlocking the Stress Cycle, Emily & Amelia Nagoski; Mindful Self-Compassion for Burnout, Kristin Neff & Christopher Germer; Caitlin Donovan, FRIED Podcast*

**What do you notice about your behaviors / habits in regards to burnout?**

**Physical Signs**

- I have had increased absenteeism “sick days”
- I have been feeling physically ill
- I have been feeling fatigued/exhausted
- I have been feeling keyed-up and nervous
- I am doing less rather than more exercise
- Normal sleep has been more difficult for me

**Psychological Signs**

- I have noticed myself being more cynical and pessimistic
- I noticed that I was trying to avoid feelings by numbing or shutting down
- I have had work-related nightmares/bad dreams
- I have lost interest and enjoyment in activities
- I have difficulty in making decisions or making poor decisions
- I feel like I have lost some of my self-esteem

**Emotional Signs**

- I have anger directed toward my supervisors or co-workers
- I have been feeling flat, depressed and hopeless more than I used to
- I have been more angry and irritable than normal
- I have moments of dread when thinking about going to work
- I am having trouble finding hope
- I have felt overwhelmed more than three times in the past month
- I have engaged less rather than more in activities that used to bring me pleasure

**Spiritual Signs**

- I am less connected to my spiritual and religious beliefs than I used to be
- I have been avoiding spending time with my family and friends
- I fear for the safety of myself and my loved ones
- I have had a lack of time for self
- I find it difficult to trust others
- I have feelings of despair and hopelessness

**Professional Signs**

- I have been unable to get work or something specific to work out of my head
- I have had unwanted memories pop up in my head of past events from work
- My productivity at work has been reduced
- I have felt like quitting my job more than once
- I find paperwork and menial tasks getting in the way of my enjoyment of work

**Other Signs** (anything else that you notice?)**Five or more signs checked could indicate you are suffering from Compassion Fatigue**

(Reference: J. Eric Gentry, Compassion Fatigue – Prevention and Resilience)

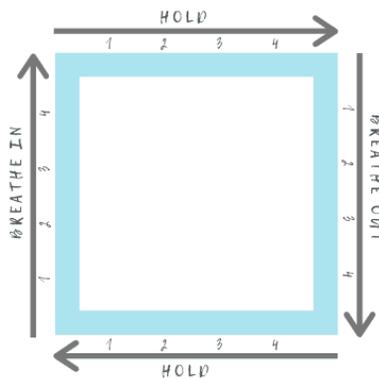
### Supporting Yourself



- Regularly tune in to your own physical, emotional and mental needs
- Move your body!
- Connect to your values, meaning, and purpose
- Set boundaries with family, coworkers and clients
- Minimize self-judgement and criticism
- Cultivate curiosity & self-compassion (be kind to yourself!)

**Box Breathing** is a simple technique that can ...

- Focus your mind
- Increase clarity
- Improve energy
- Reduce anxiety



### Connecting with Others



- Surround yourself with people who care about your wellbeing as much as you care about theirs
- Focus on maintaining and strengthening important relationships
- Engage in 'play-time', having fun and laughing
- When appropriate, hug for 20-seconds 'until relaxed'

*What specific strategies might support you in restoring and reconnecting within yourself?*



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