

# CLINICAL WEBINARS

## FOR HEALTH SERVICE PSYCHOLOGISTS

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TRANSLATING RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

# Compassion Fatigue Resilience: Taking Care of Yourself While Caring About Others

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Please review our webinar guidelines for frequently asked questions:  
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# Kerry A. Schwanz, PhD



Kerry A. Schwanz, PhD, is a Professor of Psychology at Coastal Carolina University. Before joining CCU, Dr. Schwanz worked as a school psychologist in South Carolina. She earned a PhD in 2001 from the University of Georgia. Her research interests are compassion fatigue, self-care, and compassion fatigue prevention and resilience. Along with a colleague, Dr. Schwanz is currently developing the Self-Care Behavior and Beliefs Scale (SCBBS) and an online intervention for compassion fatigue resilience called “ME FIRST.”

# Disclosures/Conflicts of Interest

- I have no conflicts of interest to disclose

# Learning Objectives

1. List signs and symptoms of compassion fatigue (CF).
2. Describe compassion satisfaction and self-care tools.
3. Identify skills and practices for preventing compassion fatigue and building compassion fatigue resilience (CFR).

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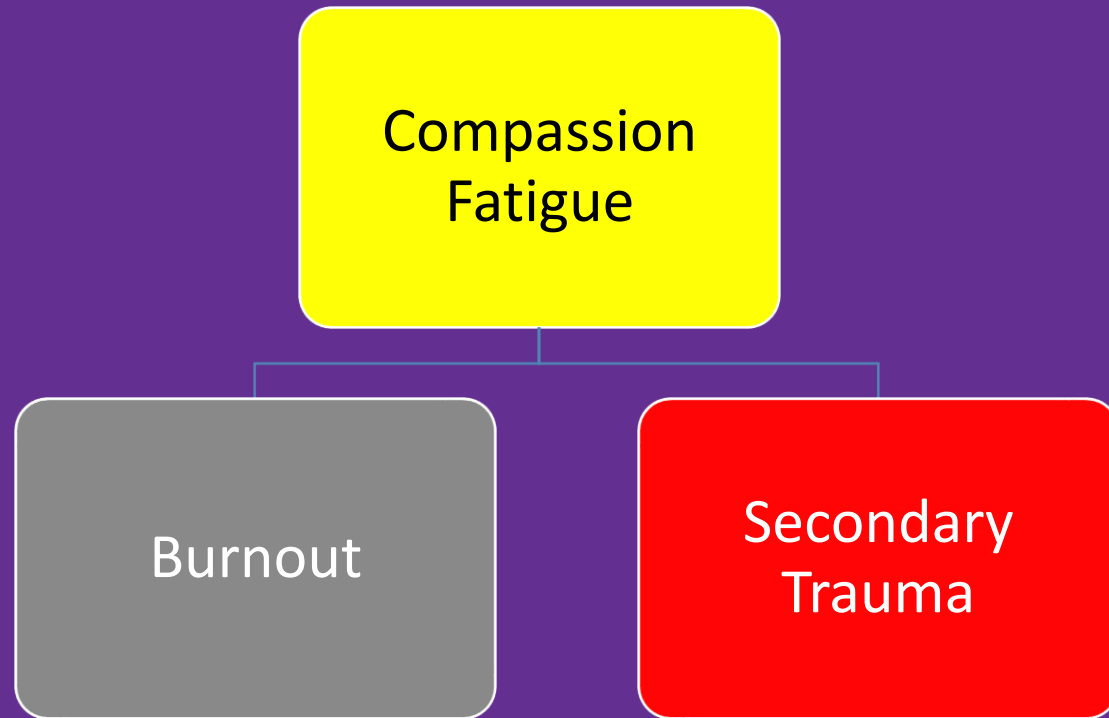
# Why Is It Important to Learn About Compassion Fatigue?

- Our society values and applauds those who engage in selfless acts of compassion and care towards others.
- However, decades of research on people in the helping professions has found some helpers pay a high cost for caring.
- Firefighters, police officers, and animal rescue workers have the highest suicide rate among American workers (Tiesman et al., 2015).
- What do all three of these occupations have in common?



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# Compassion Fatigue



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- The negative aspects of helping
- The high cost of caring
- A combination of ***physical, emotional, psychological*** and ***spiritual depletion*** associated with caring for others who are in significant emotional and/or physical pain or distress.
- Can occur due to exposure on one case or can be due to a “cumulative” level of trauma



# Burnout

- Also called “cumulative stress”
- Associated with feelings of difficulty in dealing with work or doing your job effectively
- Can be associated with:
  - Too much work
  - Not enough resources (time, money, people etc.)
  - Non-supportive work environment



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# Secondary Traumatic Stress

- Occurs when one is exposed to extreme events directly experienced by another
- Becoming overwhelmed by the secondary exposure to trauma
- PTSD-related symptoms due to working with clients and families who have trauma, grief, significant emotional and/or physical pain or distress

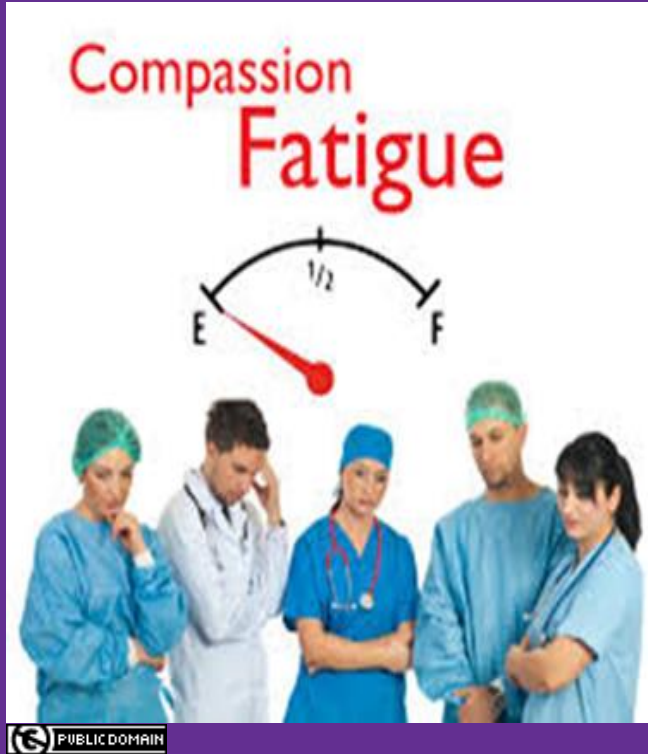


# Compassion Fatigue Signs & Symptoms

- Affects many dimensions of your well-being
- Physical & emotional exhaustion
- Depression and/or hopelessness
- Nervous system arousal
  - Anxiety, Sleep problems
- Bottled-up emotions
- Isolation and loss of morale



# Compassion Fatigue Signs & Symptoms



- Diminished sense of career/job enjoyment
- Increases in mistakes
- Substance overuse and abuse
- Poor relationships with co-workers
- Avoidance of clients/shifts
- Physical ailments
- Intrusive thoughts/nightmares



# Some Risk Factors for CF

- Negative coping skills
- High levels of stress
- Low levels of social support
- Previous history of one's own trauma
- Bottling up or avoiding emotions
- People who tend to be conscientious, perfectionistic and self-giving
- “Empathy overload”



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So, you think you may be at risk  
for compassion fatigue...

- What
- Do
- You
- Do
- Now ?????

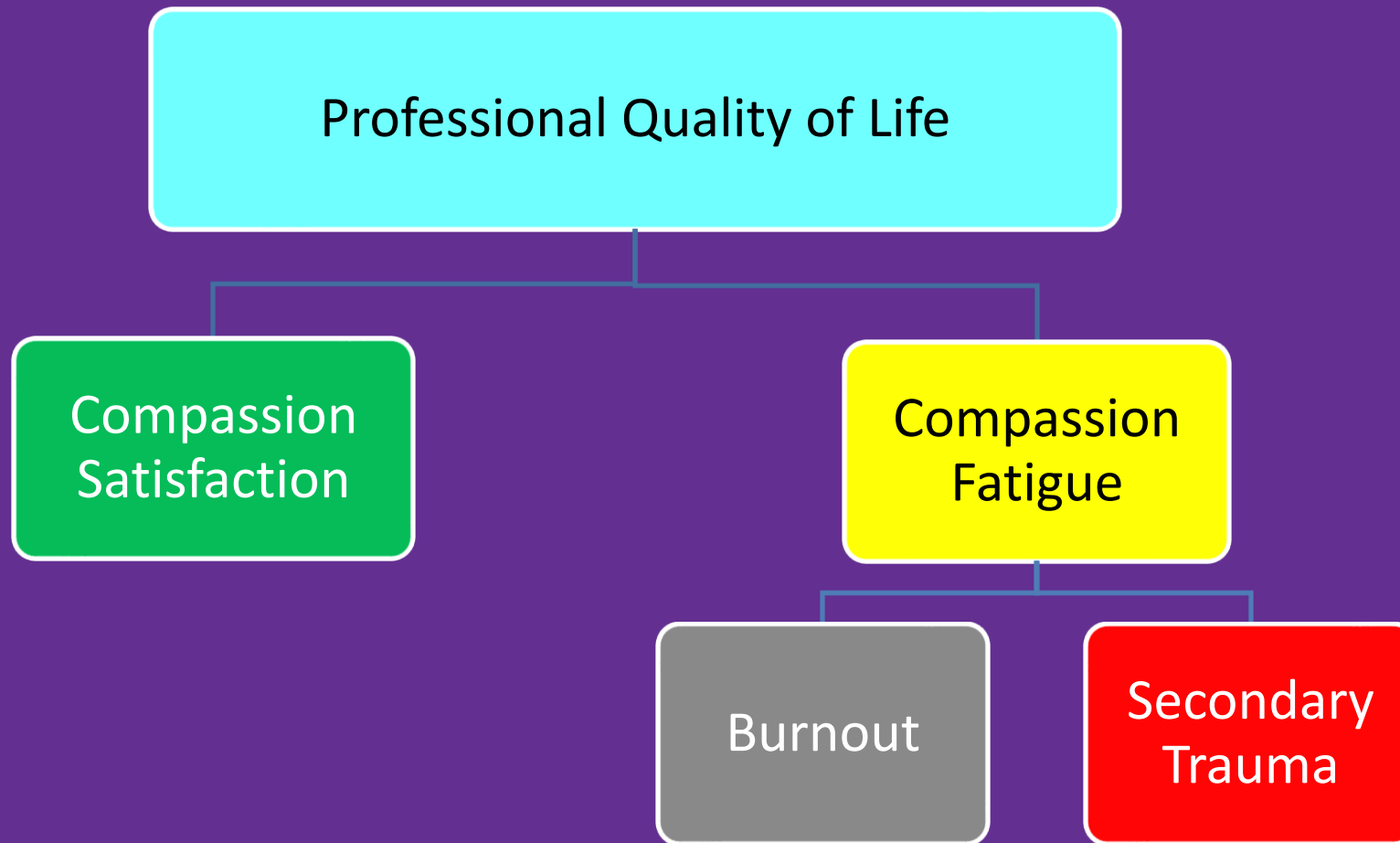


# Tools and Skills for Prevention & Building Resilience

- **Awareness**
  - Obtaining education/training about CF
  - Knowing your own level of risk
  - Monitoring and prevention (staying aware)
  - Increasing Compassion Satisfaction
- **Self-Care**
  - Reducing stress
  - Balancing work and personal/home life
  - Strong social support/connections
- **Resilience**
  - ME FIRST – proposed online intervention for CFR
  - Fostering lifelong habits for prevention and bouncing back from CF



# Professional Quality of Life



# Measuring CS & CF: The *Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL)*

- The ProQOL is free
- A 30 item self report measure of the positive and negative aspects of caring
  - The ProQOL measures Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue
  - Compassion Fatigue has two subscales
    - Burnout
    - Secondary Trauma
- Helps understand the positive and negative aspects of helping
- Not a “psychological test”
- Not a “medical test”
- Can be viewed as a screening for stress-related health problems

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For more information see [www.proqol.org](http://www.proqol.org)

# Compassion Satisfaction

- The positive aspects of helping
  - Pleasure and satisfaction derived from working in helping, care giving systems
- May be related to
  - Providing care
  - Helping others through your work
  - Working toward the greater good
  - Work with colleagues
  - Beliefs about self (feel like what you are doing makes a difference)
- High levels of CS may mitigate negative effects of CF and increase resilience



# Self-Care

- A positive form of coping that can help individuals deal with stress, a protective factor for CF and increases compassion satisfaction
- Includes activities where individuals devote time to focus on their own wellbeing and on re-fueling and revitalization
- Examples:
  - taking a bath
  - meditating
  - eating healthy
  - engaging in recreational sports
  - getting adequate sleep/rest



# Self-Care

- Natural Stress Reducers
  - Adequate sleep
  - Stay hydrated!
  - Being in nature, exercise hobbies, and playing games
- Awareness of positives in life increases our happiness
- Start your day off right with something that feels good!
- People are habit forming
  - Add positive habits and be aware of habits that may be negatively impacting you
- Acknowledge small accomplishments before just moving onto the next task



# Self-Care

- Nurture yourself by putting activities in your schedule that are sources of pleasure, joy and diversion
- Allow yourself to take mini-escapes- these relieve the intensity of your work
- More work does not always equal more reward
  - When we burnout, we will get less done overall
- Practice saying “No”
  - Literally, practice helps
  - Try rehearsing important “Nos” in the mirror





# Self-Care

- Transitioning from WORK to HOME
  - Stop at the store on the way home
  - Take a walk
  - Take off your name tag and change out of your work clothes
  - Do a mindful activity!
- Build a positive support system
  - Talk out your stress
  - ASK FOR HELP!!!
  - Play and laugh with others!
  - Experience fun and joy!



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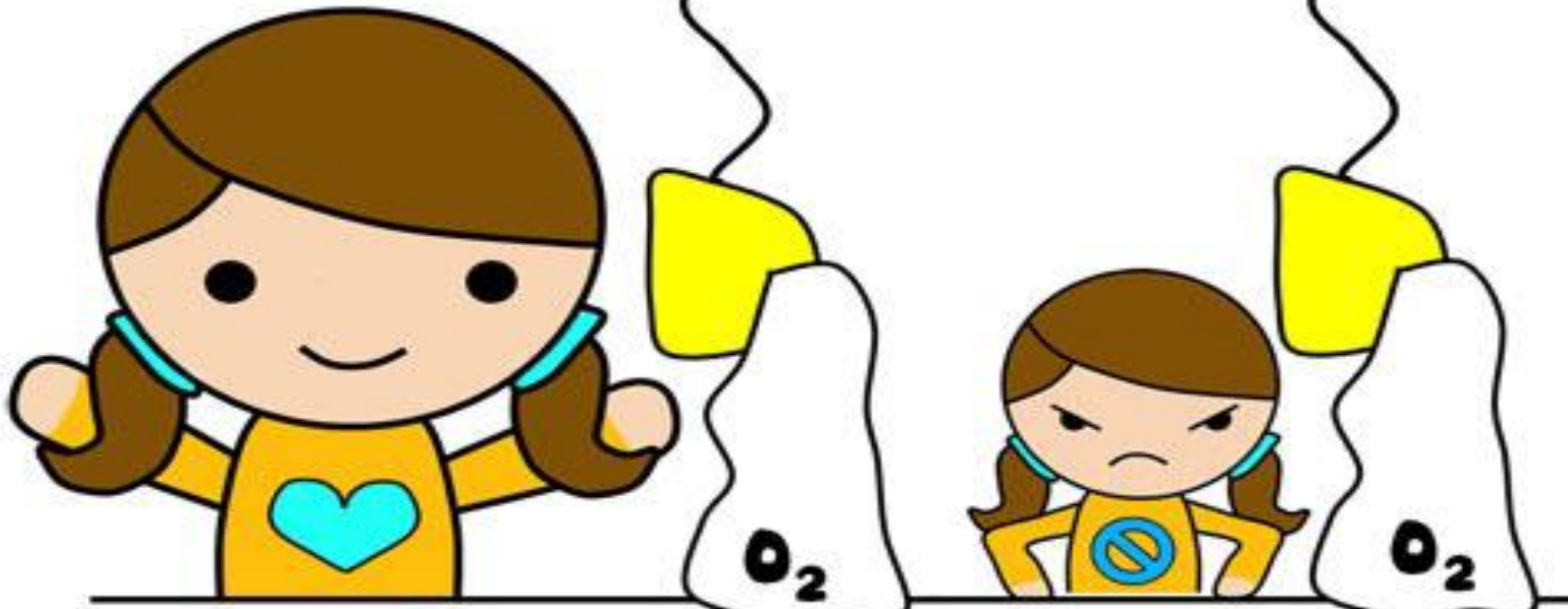


# Building CF Resilience

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- ME FIRST – proposed online intervention for CFR
  - M = Mindfulness
  - E = Education
  - F = Feelings
  - I = Identify
  - R = Respond
  - S = Self-Care
  - T = Together
- Fostering lifelong habits for prevention and bouncing back from CF

**Life Lesson: Put on your own  
Oxygen mask before assisting  
others.**



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# Q&A With Dr. Schwanz



- Dr. Sammons will read select questions that were submitted via the Q&A feature throughout the presentation.
- Due to time constraints, we will not be able to address every question asked.