

BAPTISTS ON MISSION

Compassion Fatigue

The American Institute of Stress defines **Compassion Fatigue** as the emotional residue or strain of exposure to working with those suffering from the consequences of traumatic events.

The daily challenges faced on a personal level when helping others can begin to wear us down, emotionally, physically, and mentally, and it is important to recognize the signs and learn to manage those feelings. It is imperative that we learn to help the helper as we meet the needs of so many effected by COVID-19.

Some Signs of Compassion Fatigue:

- Chronic exhaustion (physical, emotional, mental)
- Reduced feelings of sympathy or empathy
- Feelings of irritability, anger, or anxiety
- Trouble sleeping
- Health issues (headaches, weight loss/gain, stomach issues)
- Impaired decision making
- Depersonalization
- Poor work/life balance
- Isolation and loss of morale

Tips for Managing Compassion Fatigue:

- Practice self-care (eating properly, exercise, sleep, etc.)
- Quiet time with God
- List the things in your life you are grateful for
- If you must blame something, blame the situation, not the person
- Focus on what you can control
- Take a break – talk with someone, take a walk, etc.
- Recognize what brings you joy
- What made you laugh today?

“We have not been directly exposed to the trauma scene, but we hear the story told with such intensity, or we hear similar stories so often, or we have the gift and curse of extreme empathy and we suffer. We feel the feelings of our clients. We experience their fears. We dream their dreams. Eventually, we lose a certain spark of optimism, humor and hope. We tire. We aren’t sick, but we aren’t ourselves.”

– C. Figley, 1995 (American Institute of Stress, <https://www.stress.org/military/for-practitionersleaders/compassion-fatigue>)

For more information and additional ways to handle Compassion Fatigue:

The American Institute of Stress <https://www.stress.org/military/for-practitionersleaders/compassion-fatigue>

Good Therapy (article 3/26/20) <https://www.goodtherapy.org/for-professionals/business-management/human-resources/article/cost-of-caring-10-ways-to-prevent-compassion-fatigue>

Psychology Today (article 7/28/2014) <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/high-octane-women/201407/are-you-suffering-compassion-fatigue>

Psychology Today (article 7/4/2012) <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/somatic-psychology/201207/compassion-fatigue>