

# Compassion Fatigue

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# Compassion Fatigue

- **Definition**: Compassion Fatigue is a state of exhaustion and dysfunction—biologically, psychologically, socially, and spiritually—as a result of working with victims of traumatic events. Prolonged exposure to someone else's struggle results in PTSD-like symptoms in the caregiver.

# Trauma, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, and Secondary Traumatic Stress

- **Trauma**
  - **Definition**
  - **Reactions**
  - **Risk factors**
- **Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Factors**
- **Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS), or Compassion Fatigue**

# Compassion Fatigue versus Burnout

- **Mixing of Terms: STS, Vicarious Traumatization, Burnout**
- **Burnout defined**
- **Compassion Fatigue's Empathy factor**

# The Missionary Distinctives

- **Characteristics of caregivers: Medical, Mental health, Social Workers, Clergy**
- **Calling, Preparation, Foreign context**
- **Field experience: uniqueness of missionary life**
- **Vulnerable personalities**

# Recognition, Prevention and Treatment

## Recognition

1. Indicators and cognitive shifts
2. Others' evaluation, intervention
3. Prior coping strategies

# Recognition, Prevention and Treatment

## Prevention

- 1. Education and training**
- 2. Self-Care practices build resilience**
- 3. Establish boundaries**
- 4. Social support**

# Recognition, Prevention and Treatment

## Treatment

- Proactive steps: (learn to say “no”)
- Healing Activities
  - Do’s
  - Don’ts



# Do:

1. Relax and rest
2. Eat nutritiously (avoid sugar)
3. Get more than enough sleep
4. Talk about what happened (to God and others)
5. Write about what happened (journaling, letters, emails)
6. Laugh when you can
7. Set small goals
8. Keep some sort of routine
9. If safe, stay in familiar environment
10. Spend time with those who are supportive and helpful
11. Cry if you can
12. Pray, reflect in the Word
13. Sing or listen to music
14. Educate yourself about traumatic reactions
15. Know that the intensity of the pain will not last forever
16. Anticipate difficult times to come
17. Search and find perspective and meaning in the event
18. Ask for help and let others help you

# Don't

- 1. Don't make big decisions**
- 2. Don't look for a new job, buy a new car, get a divorce or have an affair.**
- 3. Don't blame others (being adversarial will only exhaust you further)**
- 4. Don't spend your energy complaining (avoid commiserating with discontented colleagues).**
- 5. Don't work harder and longer**
- 6. Don't try a quick fix (CF can make you vulnerable to addictive behaviors and substance abuse).**

# Post Traumatic Growth

- **Recovered survivors of trauma can find themselves stronger than before.**
  - **Positive psychological changes**
  - **Paradoxes**

## The serenity prayer:

“God grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change;  
courage to change the things I can;  
and wisdom to know the difference.”

*(Reinhold Niebuhr)*

# CONCLUSION

Compassion is not ours; it emanates  
*from God through us.*

Every time we give out, we can  
renew our supply from the Source.

***“God’s compassions fail not. They  
are new every morning.”***

**(Lamentations 3:22, 23)**