Compassion Without Fatigue
*Mindfulness, Boundaries, and the Practice of Empathy*

Presented by
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Learning Objectives:

- Participants will delineate secondary trauma, compassion fatigue, and burnout, and identify at least 3 things that can contribute to compassion fatigue.
- Participants will identify the use of intra-personal boundaries as a protective practice.
- Participants will list at least 3 “Rapid Reset” strategies and identify ways to release secondary trauma.
- Participants will describe the relationship between mindfulness, boundaries, practicing empathy, and resilience.

Additional Trainings from the Center for Trauma Informed Innovation (CTII):


Contact the CTII: ctii@tmcmed.org
## Secondary Trauma

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Factors</th>
<th>Protective Factors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Pre-existing anxiety or mood disorders</td>
<td>• Male gender or older in age</td>
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<tr>
<td>• History of personal trauma</td>
<td>• Lack of personal trauma history</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Limited training in treating trauma-related conditions</td>
<td>• More years of experience</td>
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<td>• Younger in age, or new to the field</td>
<td>• Specialized training in trauma sensitivity</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Unhealthy coping (substance abuse, lack of self-care, lack of social support)</td>
<td>• Possessing high resilience, or the ability to find meaning in and bounce back from stressful life events or adversity</td>
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<td>• Lack of tolerance for strong emotions</td>
<td>• Personal autonomy in the workplace</td>
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<tr>
<td>• High caseload of clients with trauma-related disorders</td>
<td>• Positive personal coping styles</td>
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From: Trauma Informed Care Train-the-Trainer, TMC, 2017

## Signs that you are growing fatigued (Smith, 2013)

- Excessive blaming
- Bottled up emotions
- Isolation from others
- Receives unusual amount of complaints from others
- Voices excessive complaints about administrative functions
- Substance use or abuse to mask feelings
- Compulsive behaviors (overspending, overeating, gambling, sexual addictions)
- Poor self-care (i.e., hygiene, appearance)
- Legal problems, indebtedness
- Reoccurrence of nightmares and flashbacks to traumatic event
- Chronic physical ailments such as gastrointestinal problems and recurrent colds
- Apathy, sad, no longer finds activities pleasurable
- Difficulty concentrating
- Mentally and physically tired
- Preoccupied
- In denial about problems

## Red Flags for Burnout (National Child Traumatic Stress Network)

- Sleep disruption
- Feeling numb
- Inability to maintain healthy boundaries
- Physical ailments
- Ignoring/dismissing the people you serve
- Not being able to de-escalate
- Not listening or validating concerns
- Reinforcing harmful messages
- Creating hard/fast rules (lack of flexibility)
- Dual relationships
- Expecting people to be respectful/grateful
- Not recognizing your own attitudes, biases and discourse
- Black and white thinking
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Impact</th>
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</table>
| Compassion fatigue | We can experience emotional burnout without compassion. | I am out of compassion. | I remain exhausted; I feel emotionally and/or physically unwell. | EXHAUSTION FOR PHYSICAL/EMOTIONAL 
WITHDRAWAL, AND CURRICULUM STRESSORS LEAD TO OVERLOAD OF WORK | TIME |
| Personal protective factors | Increased risk of harm to others, and to self and personal function. | I still have compassion; my resilience is intact; I remain engaged. | I am overtime, and I am tired. | Wears Me Out. | TIME |
| Self-care practices | Requires restorative practices to enhance self-care, and to address some duties. | I still have compassion; my resilience is intact; I remain engaged. | I am overburdened. | WHAT HAPPENS TO ME/WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU/FITTH/FITTH/PRESSURE | TIME |
| Healing | Requires restorative practices to enhance self-care, and to address some duties. | I am out of compassion. | I remain exhausted; I feel emotionally and/or physically unwell. | TRAUMATIZES ME. | TIME |
| Secondary trauma | Requires emotional processing, and an empathetic relationship with those harmed. | Requires restorative practices to enhance self-care, and to address some duties. | Requires restorative practices to enhance self-care, and to address some duties. | TRAUMATIZED UPON BEING IMMEDIATE | TIME |
Mindfulness:
noticing the action of the mind

Stay aware of your sensory experience

Stay out of judgment

Stay in the present moment

The Importance of Practice

Under duress, we do not rise to our expectations.
We fall to our level of training.

--Bruce Lee

Intrapersonal Boundaries

• occur within the mind
• operate alongside interpersonal boundaries and determine how much of another’s “stuff” I will let lodge in my own being
• are deeply rooted in self-worth
• are sustained by self-care
• protect us from exhaustion

Reinforce Your Boundaries

• Determine your boundary and name it aloud
• Envision the consequences you experience when you break it
• Make a plan for self-care
• Commit to accountability and intentional support
**Practice the Shield**

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**Suffering is part of being human**

Self-compassion begins when we accept the reality and validity of our current pain and choose to be loving and gentle with ourselves.

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**Steps to Self-compassion**

- Mindfully identify your feelings
  - Stay aware of your body
  - Stay out of judgment
  - Stay present
- Acknowledge common humanity
  - Validate your feelings and experiences
- Practice loving-kindness
  - Gently consider the source of your feelings
  - Honor your needs
True self-care is not salt baths and chocolate cake, it is making the choice to build a life you don’t need to regularly escape. --Brianna Wiest

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<tr>
<th>Prepare</th>
<th>In the moment</th>
<th>Metabolize</th>
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**Self-Care Cards**

Planning ahead of time to sustain your wellbeing with a “Self-Care Card” will provide you a snapshot of specific activities that set you up for a good day, are useful when you experience a stress response, and help you release your stress at the end of the day.

You can create your own “Self-Care Card” using an index card folded in thirds. Label each section as follows:

**Prepare**: Reduce your stress each morning and as each new week begins with thoughtful, individualized practices that enhance your sense of calm.

**In the moment**: Know your triggers, notice when you have been triggered, and practice mindful tools to rapidly reset yourself to a place of calm.

**Metabolize**: Regularly pursue ways to break down and release the chemicals that stress produces in your body, allowing your nervous system to regain a state of calm.

In each column, list 3-5 practices or tools you can use to enhance your wellbeing.
Rapid Resets

5-4-3-2-1 Mindfulness Practice
In your mind, describe in detail:
  5 things you can see
  4 things you can touch
  3 things you can hear
  2 things you can smell
  1 thing you can taste

SBNRR Mindfulness Practice
Stop what you are doing
Breathe for a moment
Notice where in your body you feel tension or strong emotion
Reflect on why you may be feeling that way
Respond mindfully

Try These Rapid Resets:
• Press your toes into the floor
• Tense and relax your muscles
• Massage a pressure point
• Notice your breath and heart rate, take deep breath
• Notice things around the room, such as the colors or objects
• Visualize calm places and favorite things
• Think of something you are looking forward to
• Think of someone you love
• Silently repeat a prayer, mantra, positive affirmation, scripture verse
• Touch fabric or jewelry
• Take a drink of water
• Concentrate on an aroma
• Do some small stretches
• Mentally add a soundtrack
• Lean in and really focus on listening to each word
• Mentally count backwards from 100 by 3s
Using Grounding Strategies

When you get triggered, this means your stress response is active. Mindfully applying these sensory-based strategies can support personal emotional regulation.

What is grounding?
Grounding is a set of simple strategies to self-regulate, manage stress, detach from emotional pain, or disengage from self-harm impulses. Distraction works by focusing outward on the external world rather than inward toward the self. You can also think of it as centering, creating a safe place, looking outward, or healthy detachment.

Why use grounding?
When you are overwhelmed with stress or emotional pain, you need a way to detach, so you can gain control over your feelings and stay safe. Many people with PTSD or high levels of toxic stress struggle with feeling either too much (overwhelming emotions or memories) or too little (numbing and dissociation). In grounding, you attain balance between the two: you are conscious of reality and able to tolerate it.

How do you use grounding?
Grounding can be done any time, any place, anywhere. Three major ways of grounding are mental, physical, and soothing. Individuals may find that one type works better, or all types may be helpful. Turn this page over for a list of suggested strategies.
Ways of Grounding

Mental Grounding: helps focus your mind

Describe your environment in detail using all of your senses. Describe objects, sounds, textures, smells, shapes, numbers, and temperature.

Say a safety statement. "My name is ____; I am safe right now. I am in the present, not the past. I am located in ____; the date is ____.

Repeat positive affirmations or mantras.

Count to 10 or say the alphabet very slowly.

Play a categories game with yourself. Try to think of types of dogs, states that begin with A, cars, TV shows, writers, sports, songs, or cities.

Physical Grounding: focusing on your senses

Run cool water over your hands.

Press your toes or dig your heels into the floor—literally “grounding” them. Notice the tension centered in your toes or heels as you do this.

Carry a small grounding object in your pocket.

Stretch. Extend your fingers, arms, or legs as far as you can; roll your head around.

Focus on your breathing: notice each inhale and exhale. Repeat a pleasant word to yourself on each breath.

Put on lotion, massaging pressure points and inhaling the scent of the lotion.

Walk slowly, noticing each step.

Soothing Grounding: treating yourself with compassion

Say kind statement, as if you were talking to a small child; fill your voice with calm and confidence. For example: “You are a good person going through a hard time. You’ll get through this.”

Place your hand on your heart.

Remember a safe place. Describe a place that you find very soothing (perhaps a beach, or mountains, or favorite room) and focus on everything about that place—sounds, colors, objects.

Say a coping statement: “I can handle this. This feeling will pass.”

Visualize calm places and favorite things.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Directed toward</th>
<th>Emotional load</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy</td>
<td>Feeling sorry for another</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Empathy</td>
<td>Understanding motives and drives</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Empathy</td>
<td>Feeling emotion with another</td>
<td>Other &amp; Self</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate Empathy</td>
<td>Being mindfully present alongside another</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Balanced and galvanized</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Practice the Skill Set of Empathy**
- actively listen to the person
- remain nonjudgmental
- explore the other person’s perspective
- identify the person’s feeling(s)
- validate the person’s feeling(s)
- let the person know they are not alone

**Self-compassion**
- actively listen to your body
- remain nonjudgmental
- explore your body’s perspective
- identify your feeling(s)
- validate your feeling(s)
- stay present / mindful
References for Compassion Without Fatigue


Mindfulness Scripts and Prompts

Mindful Breathing Exercises

Balanced breathing exercise:
For a minute or more, breathe in such a way that your inhalation and exhalation are equally long. Count mentally to 4 for each inhalation and each exhalation. This balanced breathing creates small but smooth changes in the interval between heartbeats—since the heart speeds up slightly with inhalation and slows down slightly with exhalation—which is associated with relaxation and well-being (Kristal-Boneh et al. 1995)

Extended exhale breathing exercise:
The parasympathetic nervous system handles exhaling. So to stimulate the PNS, exhale for longer periods than you inhale. For example, inhale for 3 counts and exhale for 6 counts. You can also add a pause between each inhale and exhale to make this exercise even more deeply relaxing.

Loving-Kindness Meditation
(thinking of yourself) May I be safe . . . May I be happy . . . May I be healthy . . . May I live with ease
(thinking of someone you love) May you be safe . . . May you be happy . . . May you be healthy . . . May you live with ease (repeat, thinking of someone who is neutral then thinking of someone with whom your relationship is difficult)
(last time) May all be safe . . . May all be happy . . . May all be healthy . . . May all live with ease

Peace to me . . . Peace to you . . . Peace to all

Head-Heart-Gut Check-In

Step 1: Get comfortable; close your eyes if you like, or allow your gaze to drift down and soften.

Step 2: Take a few deep, slow, conscious breaths as a way of gathering your awareness to the present moment.

Step 3: Bring to mind a decision you need to make or a situation in your life.

Step 4: Now, bring awareness to your head. You may want to place a hand on your head. With your awareness in the head, acknowledge what kind of thoughts are present in relation to the current situation. Ask yourself if there is another way to look at the situation. (Pause) Breathe in. As you breathe out . . .

Step 5: Drop awareness down to your heart. You may want to place a hand over your heart and take a moment to attend to what values you have in this situation, what you care about, and what your deepest intention is. (Pause) Breathe in. As you breathe out . . .

Step 6: Drop awareness down to your gut. You may want to place a hand over your abdomen. Tune into any hunches, intuitions, or emotions that are present in relation to the current situation. (Pause) Breathe in. As you breathe out . . .

Step 7: Collect all this information. Take one deep, slow, conscious breath in and out as you have a sense of collecting all this information from the body and mind. Then, mentally ask yourself this question, “What shall I do now?” Listen for the answer. (Pause)

Step 8: As you are ready, you may open your eyes and release this practice.

Mindful Journaling

• set a timer
• use one or more prompts:
  o Things that annoy me . . .
  o Things that make me feel fully alive . . .
  o When I’m at my best . . .
  o Anything else
• don’t let your pen stop writing
• pause at the end for a few moments
• then review what you have written, noting any insights, surprises, or next steps