COMPASSION FATIGUE
VOLUNTEER INFORMATION SESSION
Session Agenda

- Compassion Fatigue - defined & symptoms
- The Four Phases
- Compassion Satisfaction - the anti-fatigue
- ABC’s of Self Care
- Resources
Who has heard of Compassion Fatigue?
Compassion fatigue is the natural consequence of stress resulting from caring for traumatized animals. Compassion fatigue is a secondary traumatic stress syndrome.

-Dr. Charles Figley Professor, Tulane University Director, Tulane Traumatology Institute

Compassion fatigue is a set of symptoms, not a disease.
What is Compassion Fatigue?

**Primary Trauma** - you are in harm's way or danger; grief

**Secondary Trauma** - bearing witness to the suffering of others; listening to stories; seeing evidence, pictures, videos; caring for abused; comforting the grieving

**Vicarious Trauma** - shifts our world view, as a result of secondary trauma
Who is affected by Compassion Fatigue?

Behavior Specialist  Advocate  Vet
Animal Care Tech  Intake Tech  Clinic Staff
Field Rescue Officer  Administration  Manager
CEO  Euthanasia Tech  Vet Assistant
Cruelty Investigator  Adoption Counselor  Foster Parent
Humane Educator  Volunteer  Dog Walker
Who is affected by Compassion Fatigue?

...but those most at risk are
• directly involved in euthanasia
• first responders to cruelty
• caregivers to our most at risk animals

It helps when we all practice...

Empathy
be aware, understand & identify with another’s feelings & experiences

Compassion
be kind, caring & thoughtful
Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

Physical
- Headaches
- Emotional Exhaustion
- Difficulty Concentrating
- Hypersensitivity to Emotional Stimuli
- Frequent or persistent illness / health issues

Behavioral
- Excessive complaints
- Bottled Up Emotions
- Lack of self-care
- Difficulty making decisions
- Hypervigilance
- Disruption of World View
- Isolation/Avoidance
- Difficulty sleeping

Psychological
- Anger/Irritability
- Alcohol/Substance abuse
- Sadness/Apathy
- Frequently late
- Exhausted
- Cynical
- Recurring nightmares or flashbacks
- Helpless/Hopeless
- Sense of Responsibility
- Resentment
Which compassion fatigue symptoms do you or have you recognized in your own life?
Contributing Factors

Compassion Fatigue

Occupational

Animal welfare work guarantees we will witness suffering and experience loss.

- “Other-directedness”
- Perfectionism
- Overdeveloped sense of responsibility
- Lack of personal boundaries
- Lack of healthy coping skills

Individual

- Caring-Killing Paradox
- Moral distress - tension created when what you think should be differs from what is
- Polarization and social media

Cultural
The Four Phases* By Doug Fakkema

ONE - “The Honeymoon” - Red hot and raring to go, we are out to change the world

TWO - “Depression” - The bubble bursts and we crash

THREE - “Anger” - Depression turns outward and we’re mad as hell

FOUR - “Resilience” - New determination and understanding of the real mission

*Attachment in your handouts
The “Anti-Fatigue”
What is Compassion Satisfaction?

Compassion Satisfaction is the pleasure we derive from being able to do our work well. High levels of Compassion Satisfaction are related to our ability to be effective caregivers.

- Dr. Beth Hudnall Stamm

The best way to lessen Compassion Fatigue symptoms is to raise Compassion Satisfaction levels.
JOT: JOURNAL ON THIS

Why did you choose this work?
What do you enjoy most about your work?
Why is it meaningful to you?
Who has heard of Self-Care?
What is it?
ABC’s of Self-Care

Awareness - learning about symptoms, learning about yourself, tuning into your triggers and individual responses

Balance - caring for others and caring for ourselves; finding and knowing our boundaries

Connection - maintaining and investing in relationships; finding the positives
Self-Assessments are a good tool. Know where you are and regularly assess yourself.

ProQOL* - Professional Quality of Life Self-Test by Dr. Beth Hudnall Stamm

MySelfCare.org* - Dennis Portnoy

Life Stress Test* - Dr. Tim Lowenstein, StressMarket.com

*Attachment in your handouts
Self-Care is crucial, and it takes a plan.

- Identify authentic, sustainable practices for yourself.
- Not optional!

Care “fuel tank”

- Fatigue
- Satisfaction

It is tough to provide care on an empty tank. Self-Care fills your tank!
Self-Care Plan Ideas

At “Work”
- Physical Care
- Emotional Coping
- Whatever gives you JOY!

Stress Release
- Stay Hydrated – drink WATER
- Sports
- Set Boundaries
- Get Back Up/Help

Take a Break
- Eat Well
- Baking
- Write – express your feelings

Emotional Coping
- Pray
- Deep Breathe
- Home Projects

Meditate
- Exercise
- Laugh

Physical Care
- Go for a Walk
- Go Kayaking
- Stretch
- Cry

Whatever gives you JOY!
- Play with Kids, Pets
- Read
- Gratitude List
Self-Care Assessment


The following worksheet for assessing self-care is not exhaustive, merely suggestive. Feel free to add areas of self-care that are relevant for you and rate yourself on how often and well you are taking care of yourself these days.

When you are finished, look for patterns in your responses. Are you more active in some areas of self-care but ignore others? Are there items on the list that make you think, "I would never do that"? Listen to your inner responses, your internal dialogue about self-care and making yourself a priority. Take particular note of anything you would like to include more in your life.

Rate the following areas according to how well you think you are doing:
3 = I do this well (e.g., frequently)
2 = I do this OK (e.g., occasionally)
1 = I barely or rarely do this
0 = I never do this
? = This never occurred to me

Physical Self-Care
- Eat regularly (e.g., breakfast, lunch, and dinner)
- Eat healthily
- Exercise
- Get regular medical care for prevention
- Get medical care when needed
- Take time off when sick

’s Self-Care Plan!

MIND

BODY

SUPPORTIVE PEOPLE IN MY LIFE

I WANT TO ACCOMPLISH

SPIRIT
Take-Aways & Next Steps

- Self-Care Goal – make it SMART!
- Self assessments
- Other ...
Resources

- Volunteer Resource Page
- PetSmart Charities - webinar series & articles
- Petfinder.com
- Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project
- Pet Loss Support - HSHV & Blue Dog Counseling
The Starfish Story

An old man was walking along the beach when he noticed a young woman off in the distance. As he got closer, he noticed that the woman was collecting starfish that had washed up on the beach and tossing them, one by one, back into the ocean. “Excuse me, young lady, but what are you doing?” the old man asked.

“All these starfish have been washed up by the tide. If I don’t throw them back, they will die,” she replied.

“But there are hundreds and hundreds of starfish on the beach,” the old man said. “You can’t possibly make a difference.”

The young woman listened politely, bent down, picked up another starfish, and tossed it into the ocean. She looked at the old man and replied, “It made a difference for that one.”

Adapted from “The Star Thrower,” by Loren Eisely