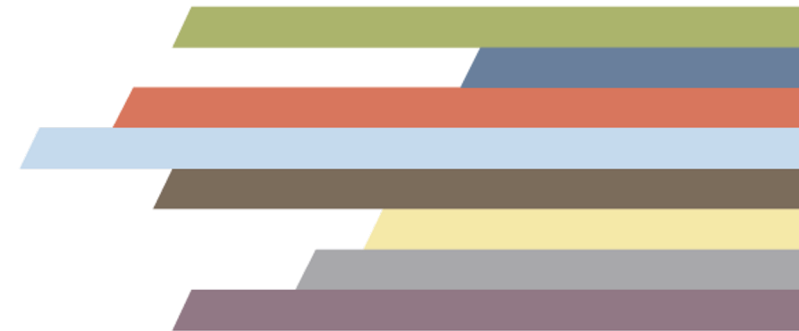


The Indian Country Journey to Health ECHO Program November 9, 2023

Compassion Fatigue and Self-Care

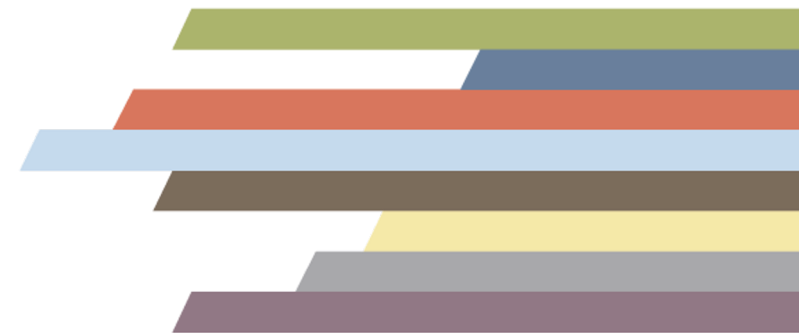
Presented by:

Marvis Doster, CARN



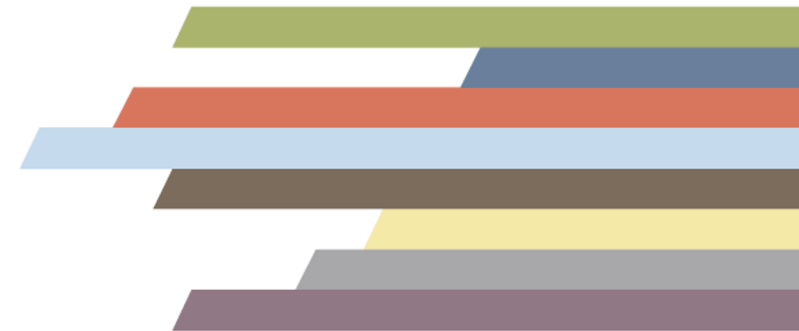
Objectives

- **Raise Awareness about Compassion Fatigue and Secondary Traumatic Stress, how they happen and who is susceptible**
- **Help individuals and organizations to understand and address these conditions**
- **Identify steps for prevention and reversal of Compassion Fatigue through self care**



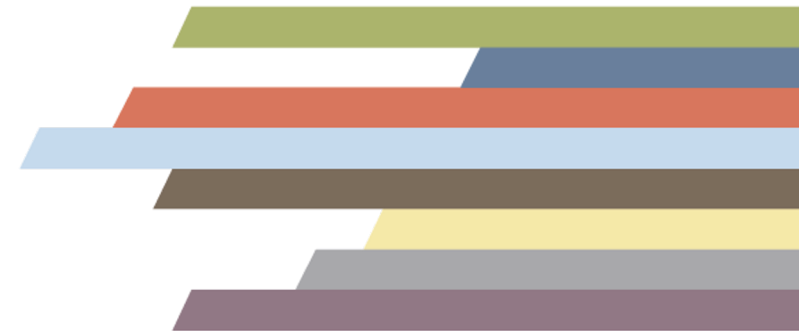
Compassion Fatigue

What it is and How it Happens



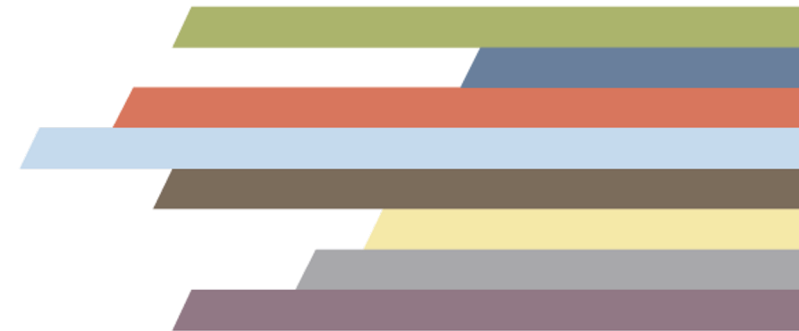
Compassion

A feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by suffering a misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the pain or remove its cause



Fatigue

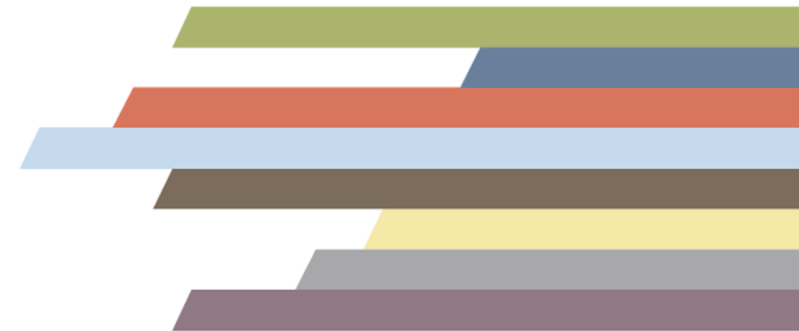
Extreme tiredness, typically resulting from mental or physical exertion or illness



Compassion Fatigue: What is it?

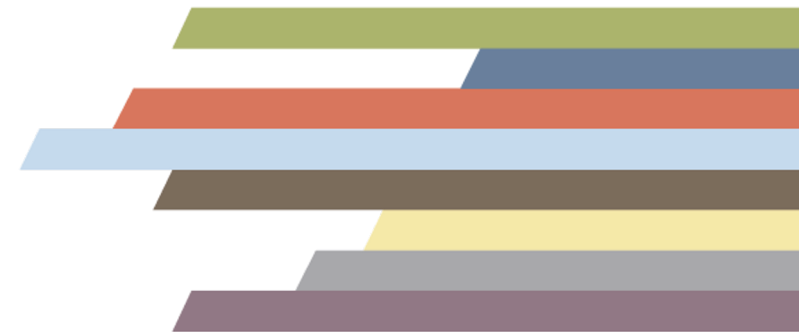
- **Caregivers play host to a high level of secondary traumatic stress that may lead to compassion fatigue.**
- **Workers struggle to function in care-giving environments that constantly present heart wrenching, emotional challenges.**
- **A mission of affecting positive change in society can become elusive, if not impossible.**
- **This coupled with first-hand knowledge of disregard for the safety and well-being of others, takes its toll on everyone from full time employees to part time volunteers.**
- **Eventually, negative attitudes can prevail if we don't care for ourselves.**

Adapted from The Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project



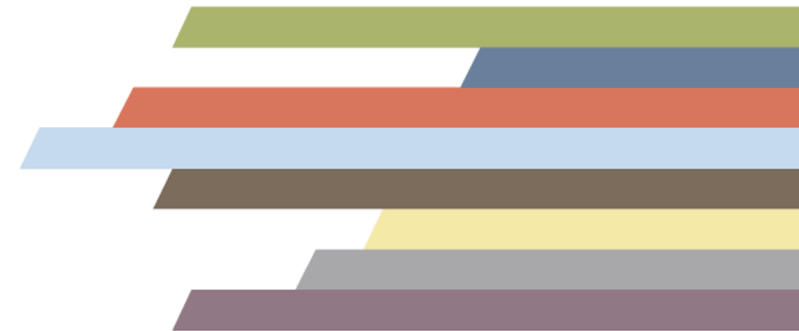
Factors Contributing to Compassion Fatigue

- **Emotional Contagion** - experiencing the feelings of the suffering through exposure to the sufferer.
- **Empathic Concern** - motivation to respond to people in need.
- **Empathic Ability** - aptitude for noticing the pain of others.
- **Empathic Response** - extent to which the helper makes an effort to reduce the suffering of the sufferer.
- **Disengagement** - extent to which the helper can distance himself or herself from the ongoing misery of the traumatized person.



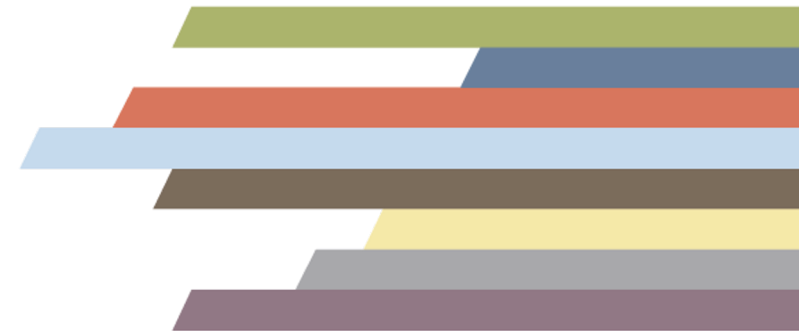
Factors Contributing to Compassion Fatigue

- **Sense of Achievement** - extent to which the helper is satisfied with his or her efforts to help the client/sufferer.
- **Compassion Stress** - demand for action to relieve the suffering of others
- **Prolonged Exposure** - on-going sense of responsibility for the care of the suffering, over a protracted period of time.
- **Traumatic Recollections** - memories that trigger the symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and associated reactions, such as depression and generalized anxiety.
- **Life Disruption** - unexpected changes in schedule, routine, and managing life responsibilities that demand attention (e.g., illness, changes in life style, social status, or professional or personal responsibilities).



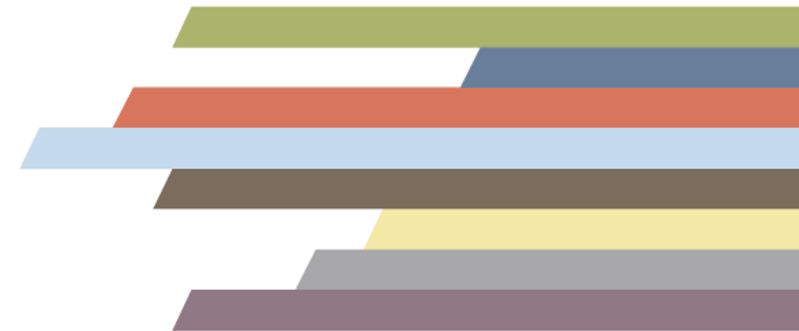
Factors Contributing to Compassion Fatigue Related to COVID-19

- **Physical distancing** – Providers experience the same stress as the people they serve (home schooling, family illness, and death, anxiety around use of technology, challenges of using telehealth and lack of confidentiality in their home) These all create triggers.
- **Fears of Competence** – Can you adequately support patient's needs with your limited tools?
- **Staff Shortages** - Responding to staff shortages related to workforce reductions and illness (COVID-19 or not) and lack of face-to-face supervision. We are all working more in isolation.
- **Lack of Technology** – Trying to serve your most vulnerable patients who have limited resources related to technology.

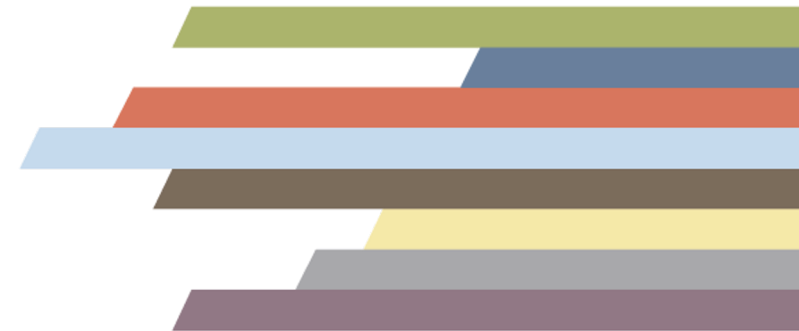


We have not been directly exposed to the trauma scene, but we hear the story told with such intensity, or we hear similar stories so often, or we have the gift and curse of extreme empathy and we suffer. We feel the feelings of our (clients). We experience their fears. We dream their dreams. Eventually,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

– C. Figley, 1995

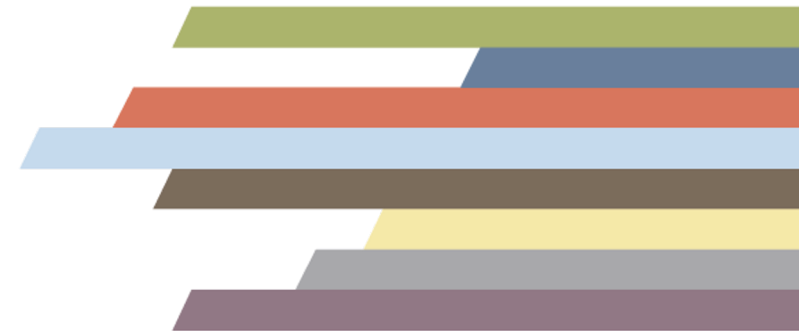


Trauma and the Brain

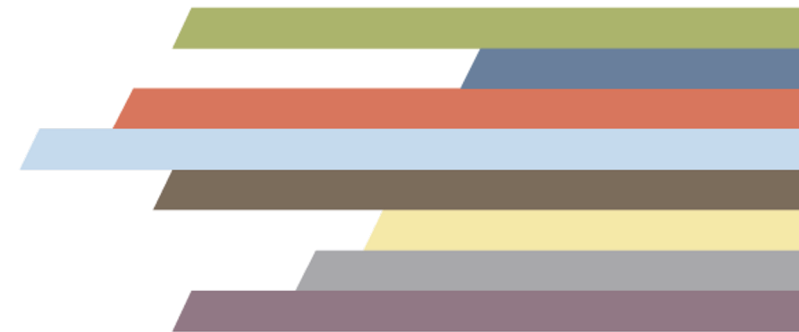
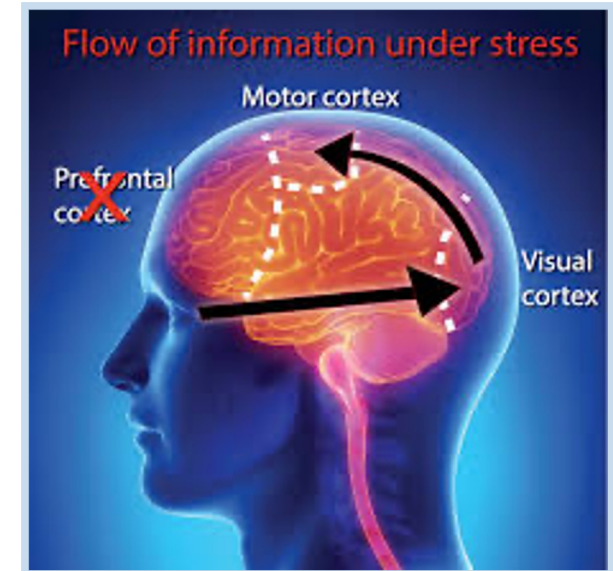
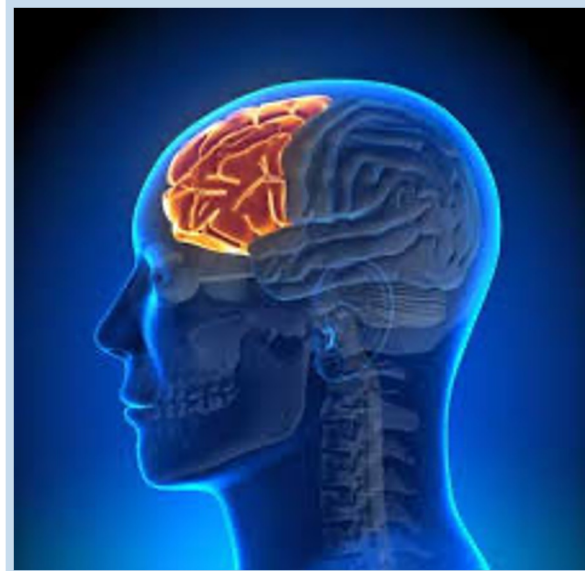
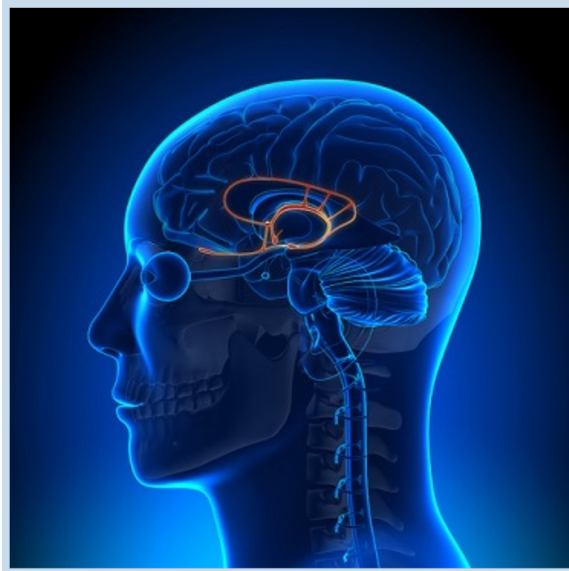


Sources of Trauma

- **Interpersonal violence in the home**
- **Life threatening medical conditions**
- **Involuntary hospitalization**
- **Poverty**
- **Addiction**
- **Community violence**
- **Others?**

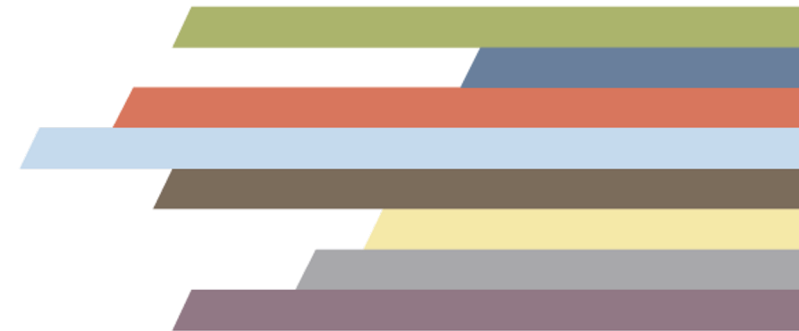


Trauma and the Brain



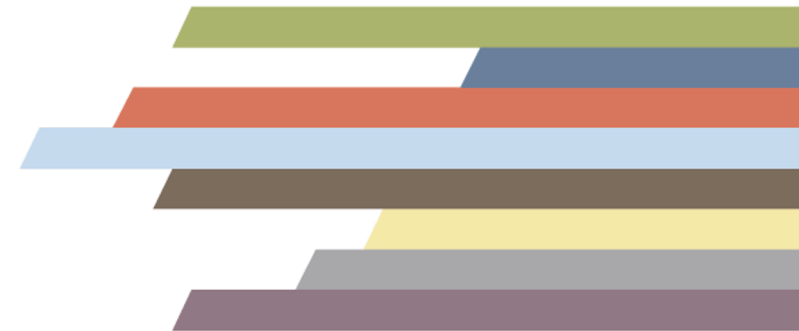
Survivors Learned Behaviors

- **Profoundly hurt**
- **Betrayed**
- **High sense of mistrust**
- **Highly frustrated**
- **Quick to react**
- **Tendency to blame**
- **May feel entitled**
- **May use deceptive maneuvers**
- **Use graphic details when telling stories**
- **Hesitant to tell the truth**

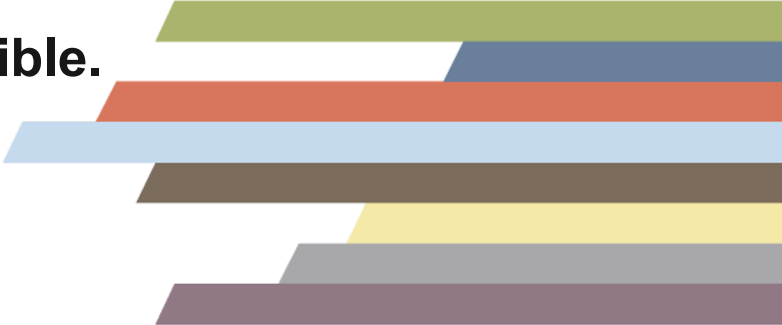


Secondary Traumatic Stress

- Can be incurred when an individual is exposed to people who have been traumatized themselves;
- Disturbing descriptions of traumatic events by a survivor, or others inflicting cruelty on one another;
- Symptoms of secondary trauma are similar to those of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) (e.g. intrusive re-experiencing of the traumatic material, avoidance of trauma triggers/emotions, negative changes in beliefs and feelings and hyperarousal);
- Secondary trauma has been researched in first responders, nurses and physicians, mental health care workers, and children of traumatized parents;
- Unaddressed Secondary Traumatic Stress often results in Compassion Fatigue.

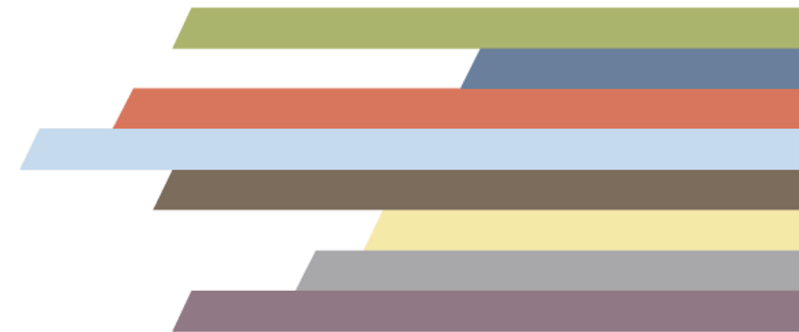


Burnout

- **Occupational problem linked to long-term, unresolved, work-related stress;**
 - **Characterized by**
 - Feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion,
 - Increased mental distance from one's job,
 - Reduced ability to meet the needs or expectations of the job.
 - **Leads to depersonalization of the individuals encountered in the work;**
 - **While not recognized as a health condition, it is characterized by the symptoms of depression.**
 - **Unaddressed STS may result in Compassion Fatigue and lead to Burnout.**
 - **A number of researchers indicate that Burnout may not be reversible.**
- 

Secondary Traumatic Stress

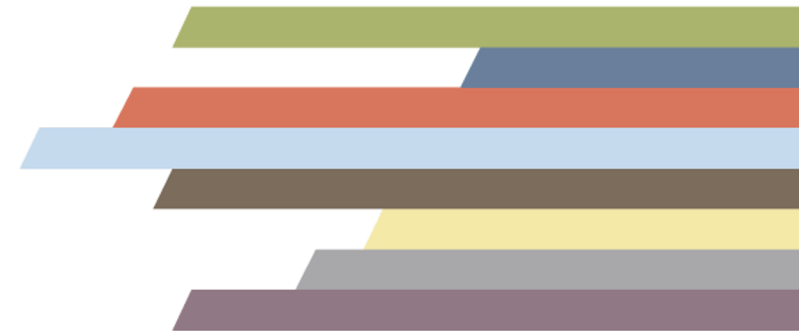
- Individuals working with others who have experienced trauma are susceptible to SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS.
- Unresolved Secondary Traumatic Stress can result in COMPASSION FATIGUE over time.
- Continued Secondary Traumatic Stress, which has resulted in Compassion Fatigue, over time can result in BURNOUT which may result in our not being able to do the work of support we are drawn to.



Organizational Considerations

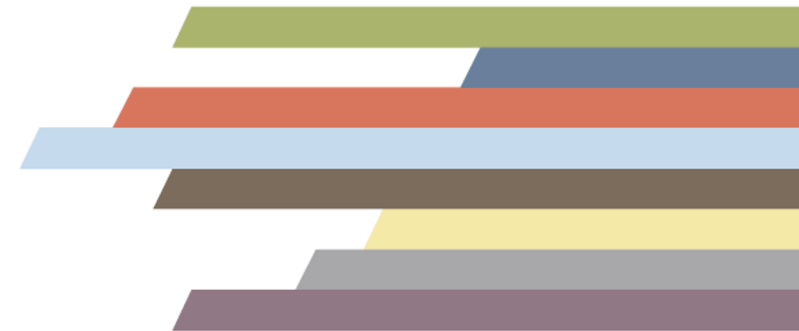
Support Work requires that the individuals doing it:

- Maintain the highest of ethics
- Hold integrity
- Maintain fiduciary responsibility
- Understand that they cannot heal anyone
- Be whole and healthy while doing this work

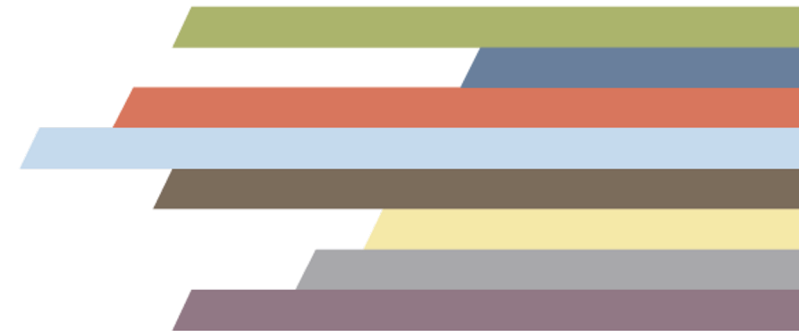


Special Vulnerabilities for Direct Service Workers

- **Empathy**
- **Personal Experience with Trauma**
- **Unresolved Trauma**
- **Children's Trauma**

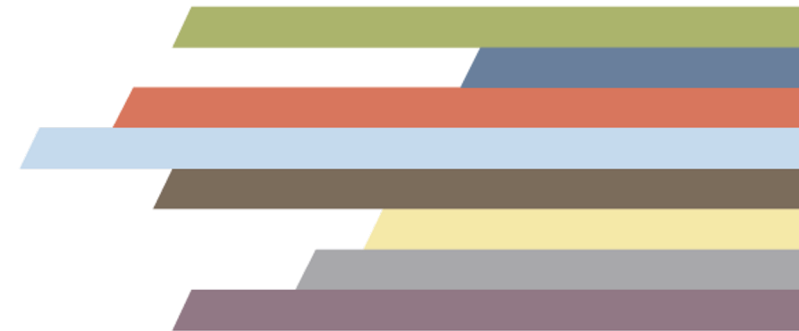


Who is at Higher Risk?



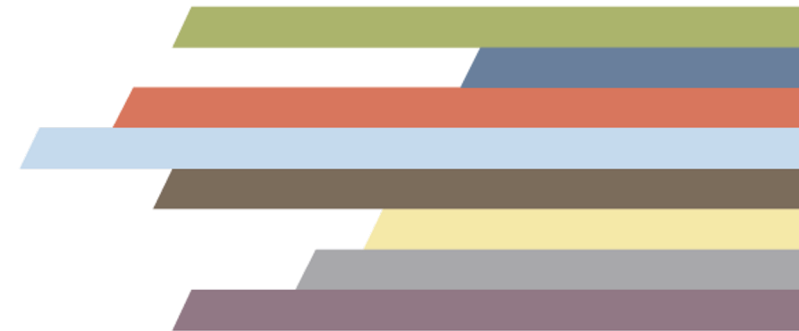
Hesitant to Set Boundaries

- **Fear of loss of love from someone**
- **Fear of abandonment**
- **Fear of losing employment** – May be a particular concern during COVID-19
- **Fear of being viewed as mean**
- **Fear of someone's anger or reaction to boundary**
- **Lack of clarity on what boundaries can be set**



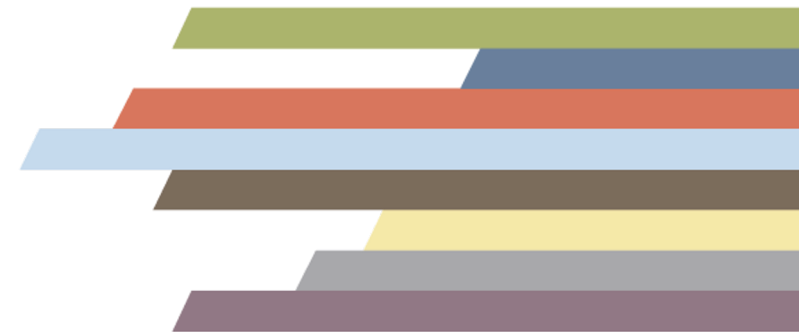
Over Achievers

- **High expectations and standards**
- **Busy all of the time**
- **Take on more responsibility when feeling stressed**
- **Feel others are not taking enough responsibility**
- **Consider being busy as a sign of success**



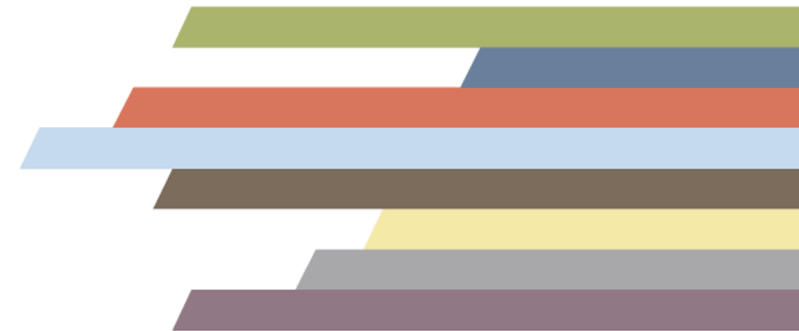
Stressful Home Life or Life Situation

- **Children**
- **Taking care of self or a family member who has a chronic disease**
- **Taking care of an aging parent**
- **Financial difficulties**
- **Divorce**
- **Death**
- **Single Parenting**



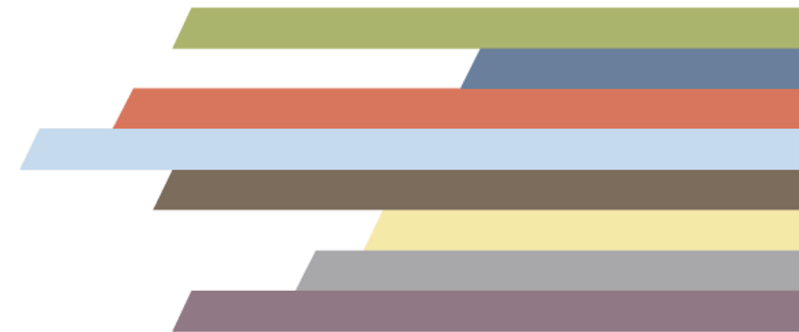
Minimal Self Care

- **Takes no time for self**
- **Puts others first**
- **Unhealthy eating**
- **Minimal social circle**
- **Numbing activities**
- **Isolation**
- **Lack of personal and professional boundaries**

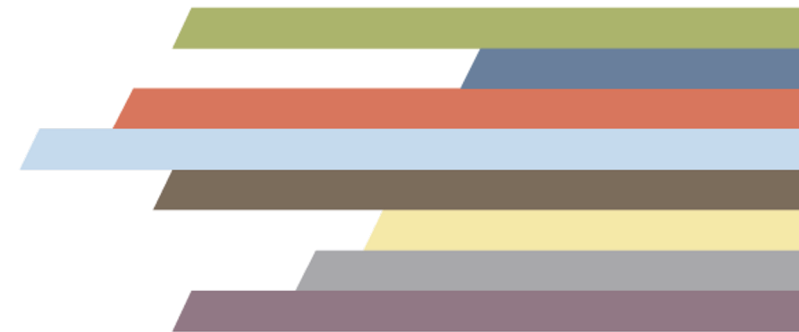


Workplace Changes and Challenges

- **Death of a staff member, patient, or client**
- **Reduction in work force**
- **Layoffs**
- **Mergers – New working environments/expectations due to COVID-19**
- **Minimal supervision**
- **Lack of appropriate venue to express feelings**

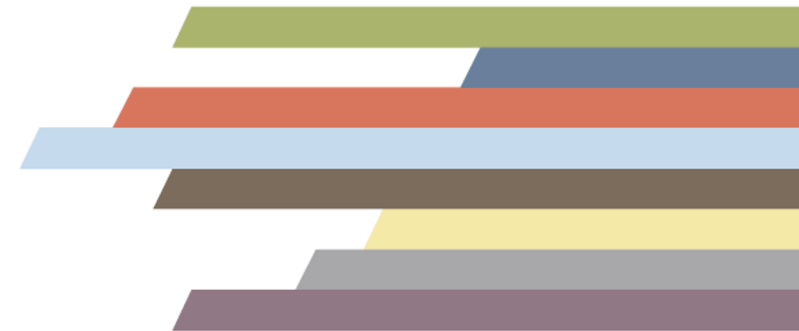


Warning Signs



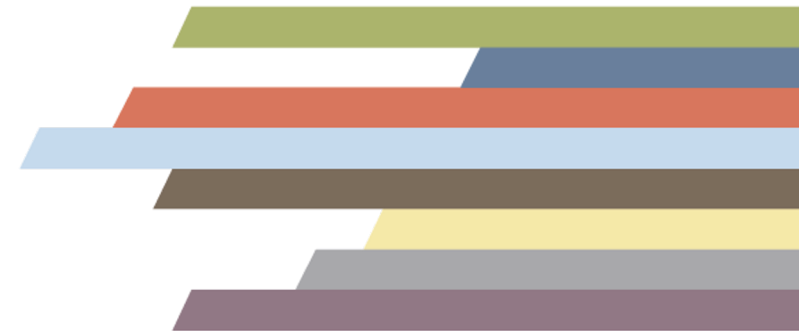
Potential Warning Signs

- **Diminished creativity**
- **Inability to embrace complexity**
- **Minimizing**



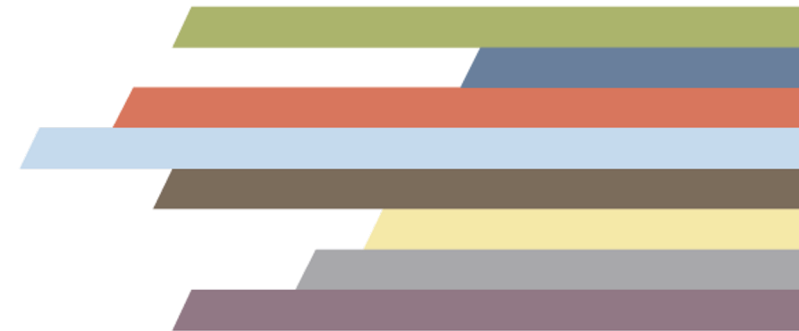
Potential Warning Signs

- **Chronic exhaustion**
- **Physical ailments**
- **Avoidance**
- **Inability to listen**



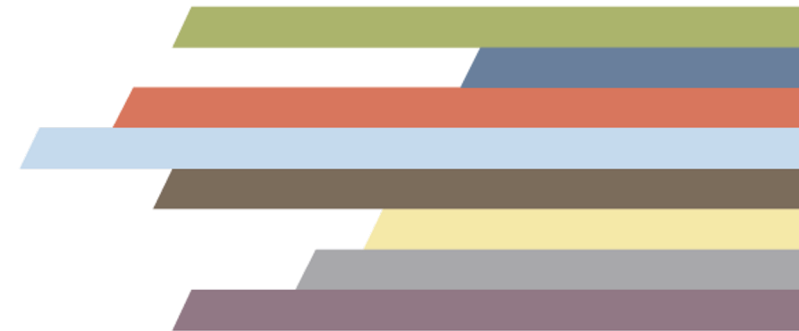
Potential Warning Signs

- **Feeling helpless and hopeless-can't do enough**
- **Feel the need to rescue, heal, or fix**
- **Hypervigilance**



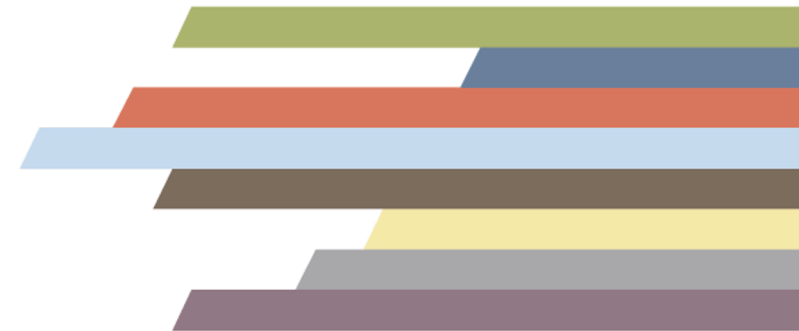
Potential Warning Signs

- **Dissociative moments**
- **Sense of persecution**
- **Guilt & Fear**



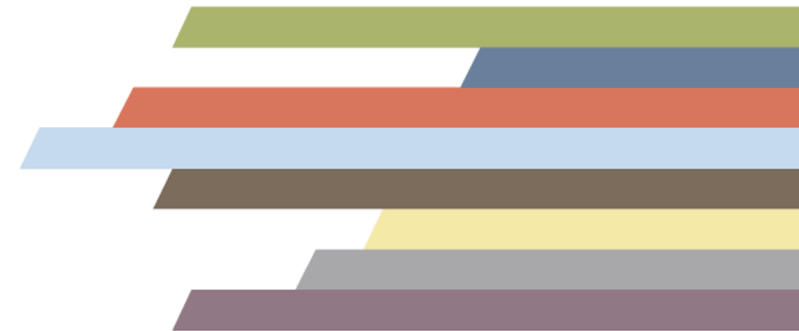
Potential Warning Signals

- **Anger and Cynicism**
- **Inability to Empathize**
- **Addictions**
- **Grandiosity**



Potential Warning Signs

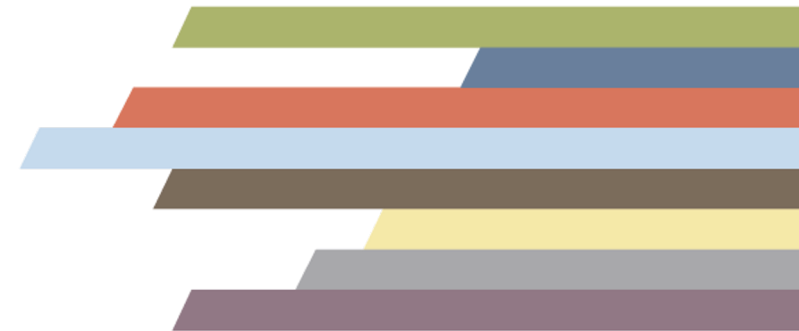
- **Taking on a victim mentality**
- **Blaming others for all that doesn't go well**
- **Justifying all behavior**
- **Frequent venting and complaining**



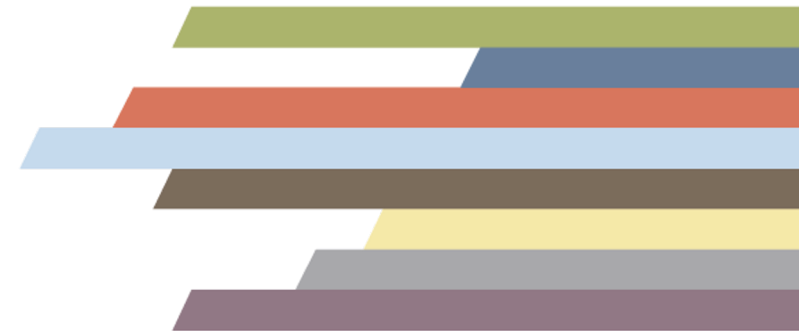
Make an Honest Life Assessment

- Helpers need to carefully and honestly assess their life situation:
- Is there a balance between nourishing and depleting activities in your life?
- Do you have non-work interests and activities in your life?
- Do you have non-work-related friends and relationships?
- Are you a care-giver to everyone in your life? Who cares for you?
- Are you relying on alcohol, food, gambling, or shopping to de-stress?
- How is this list different during, or because of, COVID-19?

Adapted from Running on Empty: Compassion Fatigue in Health Professionals By Francoise Mathieu, M.Ed., CCC

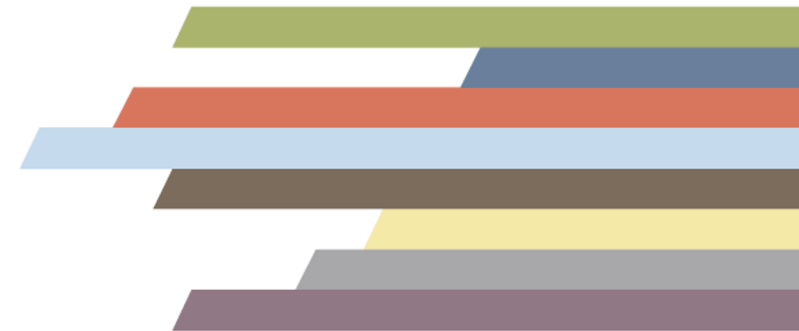


Compassion Satisfaction



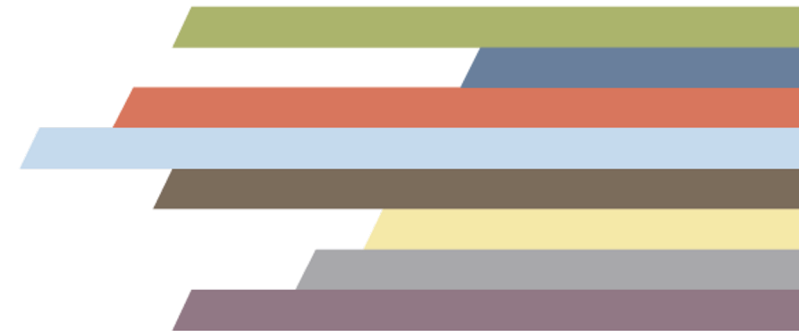
Shift in Priorities

“Taking good care of you, means the people in your life will receive the best of you instead of what is left of you” - Carl Byran



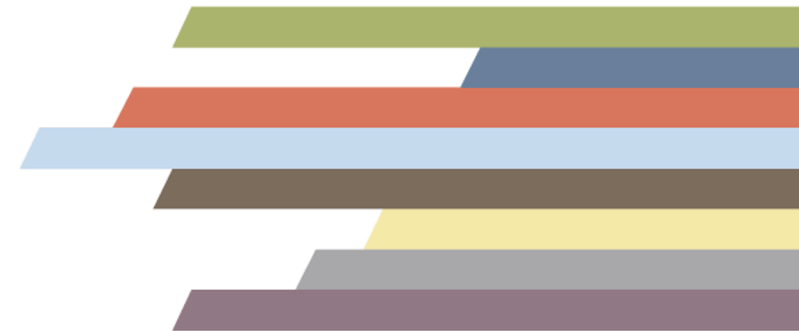
Compassion Satisfaction: A Secret Ingredient

- Compassion Satisfaction is about the pleasure we derive from being able to do the work we do. The compassion we experience in doing our work provides a sense of satisfaction.
- Compassion Fatigue and Compassion Satisfaction can be seen as the positive and negative consequences of working with individuals who have experienced or are currently experiencing trauma or suffering.
- A substantial amount of evidence suggests Compassion Satisfaction is an important part of the whole, thus increasing the significance of building resiliency and the transformation from negative to positive aspects.

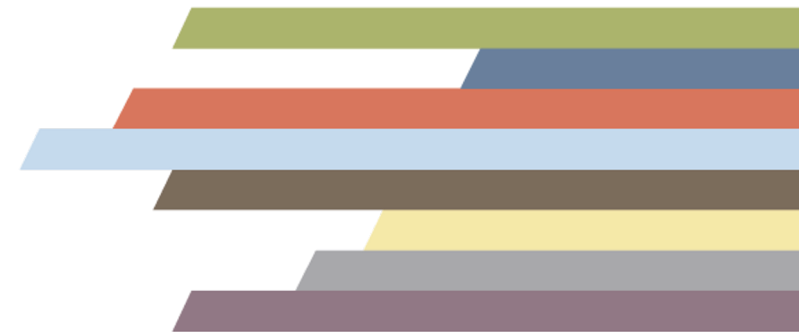


Building Compassion Satisfaction

- **Compassion Satisfaction can be a source of hope, strength, and ultimately resilience.**
- **Allows us to face another day, another disaster, another tragedy. It is the quiet knowledge that what we do makes a difference, and that we possess the same strengths we see and support in the survivors with whom we work.**
- **Appreciating each encounter with a (disaster) survivor can add to our Compassion Satisfaction and help protect us from CF.**
- **In these ways, Compassion Satisfaction can serve as a natural, protective tool against the negative aspects of our work.**

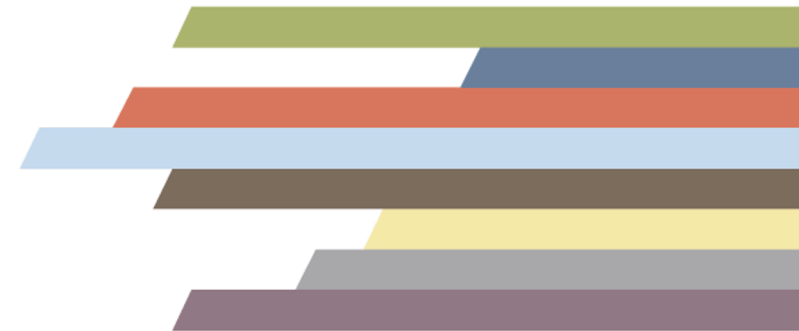


Boundaries



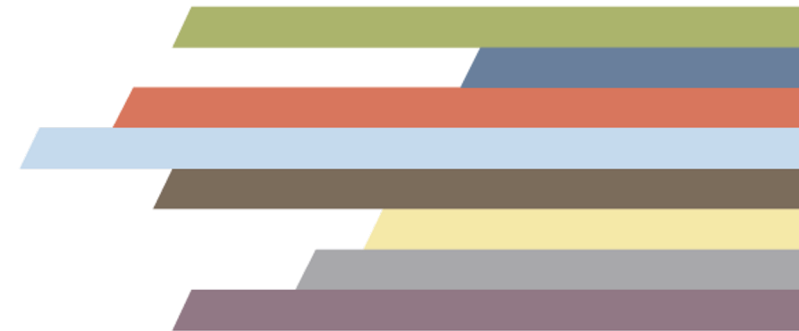
Boundary Myths

- **Boundaries are selfish**
- **Boundaries are mean**
- **Boundaries are permanent**
- **Boundaries will hurt me**
- **I will hurt others by setting a boundary**

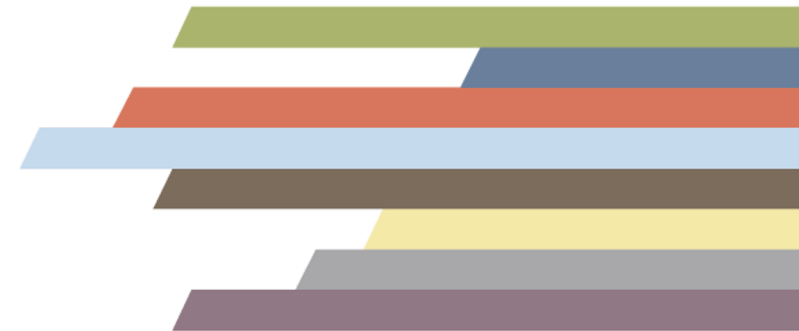


Internal Resistance to Boundaries

- **Fear of abandonment**
- **Loss of love from someone**
- **Fear of another's anger**
- **Fear of loneliness**
- **Guilt**
- **Need for approval**
- **Over identification with someone's loss**



Navigating Compassion Fatigue Through Self-Care



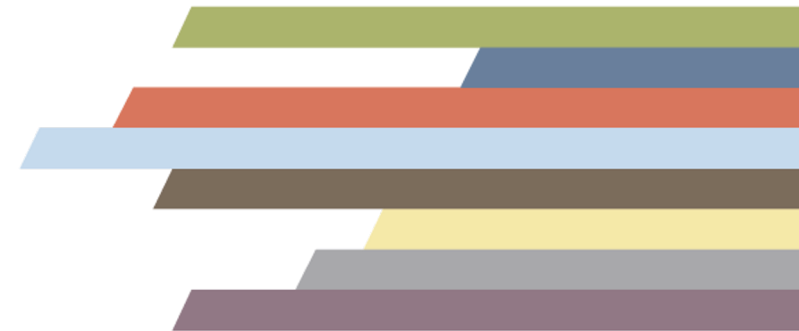
Tips for Managing Compassion Fatigue

DO

- Find someone to talk to.
- Understand that the pain you feel is normal.
- Exercise and eat properly.
- Get enough sleep.
- Take some time off.
- Develop outside interests.
- Identify what's important to you

DON'T

- Blame others.
- Look for a new job, get a divorce or have an affair.
- Make a habit of complaining to your colleagues.
- Work harder and longer.
- Self-medicate.
- Neglect your own needs and interests.

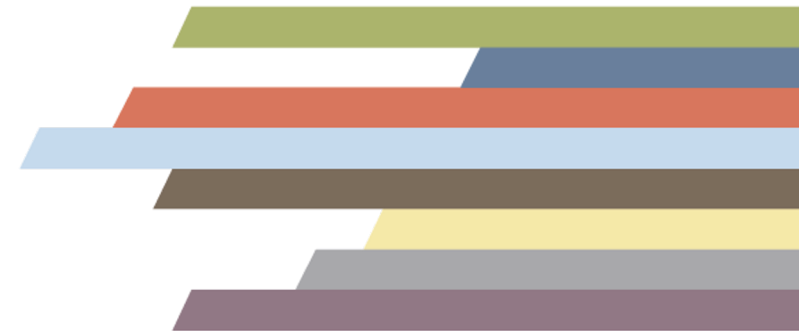


Ask for help – A critical step

- **“When helping professionals make the crucial first step of reaching out to ask for help, they are already well on their way to recovery.**
- **Many helping professionals who have successfully resolved their symptoms of Compassion Fatigue credit this reaching out as one of the most important personal and professional moves of their career.**
- **Not only do these professionals report a marked reduction in Compassion Fatigue symptoms, they also state that they feel more empowered, more energetic, and enlivened with a strong sense of self-worth.”**
- **Remember to look at your past resiliency and how you have had success in asking for help in the past.**

Closer Look

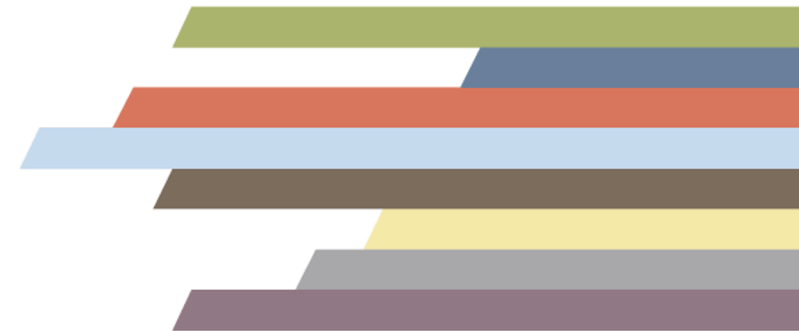
- **Care = to pay close attention to, to keep from harm**
- **Self Care = pay close attention to your body, mind and spirit to make sure you are avoiding harm to yourself**



15 Steps to Better Self-Care

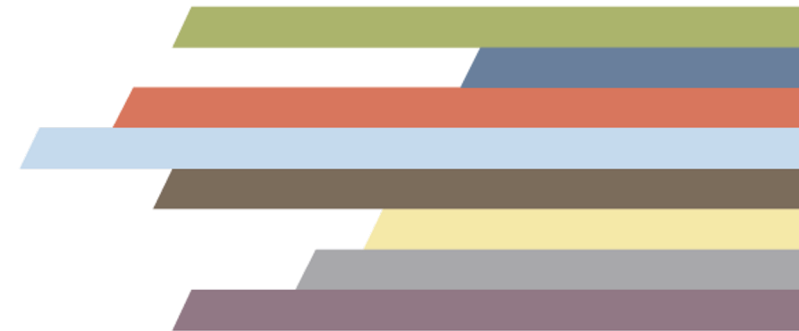
There are many things we can do to better care for ourselves. We're going to look at 15 possibilities and we'll explore them in five broad areas:

- You might want take a step to do something to better manage your workload.
- You might want to take a step something to Enhance and nourish your inner life - feed your spirit.
- You might want to take a step to achieve better balance between work and the rest of life.
- You might want to take a step to better “re-create” energy and interest in your life.



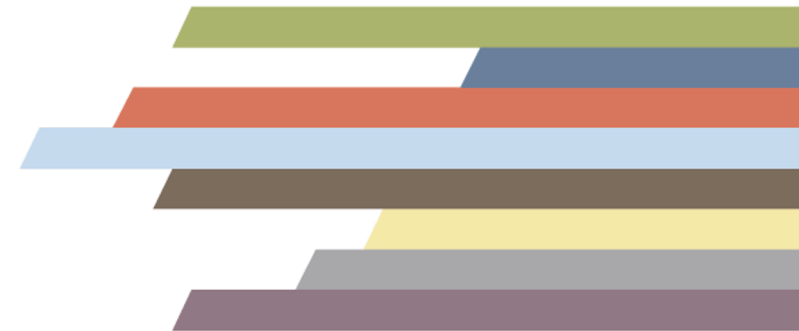
Manage my workload

- **Take something off your plate and don't replace it with anything.**
- **Delegate at work and at home.**
- **Learn to say no (or yes).**
- **Balance your schedule: intersperse easy with hard.**
- **Seek more and regular supervision. Ask for what you need.**



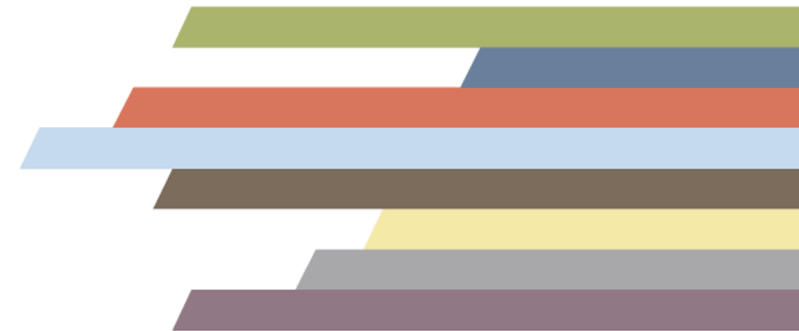
Enhance my Inner Life

- **Increase your spiritual or mindfulness practice.**
- **Increase your self-observations and self-awareness.**
- **Find a quiet and undisturbed time for yourself everyday.**
- **Assess your trauma inputs.**
- **Avoid falling into a victim mentality.**



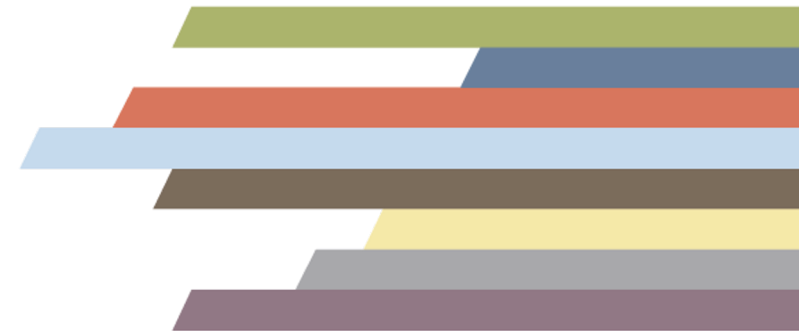
Enhance balance

- **Create transition rituals.**
- **Cherish your family and friendships.**
- **Attend education and training outside of your work.**

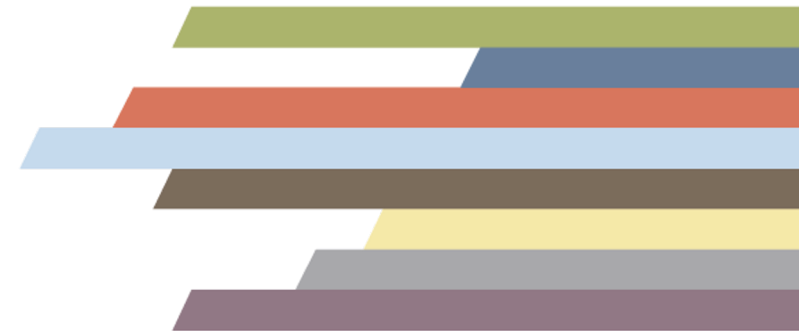


Increase my Recreational Activities

- **Add more movement and nourishment to your life.**
- **Engage in short term goal-oriented hobbies or sports.**



Thank you for your participation



Contact Information

- **Marvis Doster, CARN**
- **Regional Coordinator (Region 8)**
- **Opioid Response Network**
- **University of North Dakota**
- **Email: marvis.doster@und.edu**

