



Compassion Fatigue & Paramedics

By Valérie Jacques
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What brought me to do this



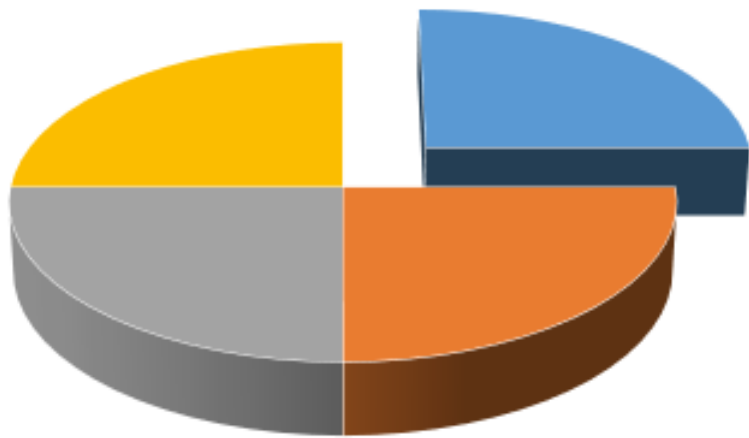
Valerie Jacques

Stress is like a hot potato



What is this presentation about...
YOU!!!





AWARENESS

ACCEPT IT

GOAL

ACTION!



How are you feeling today??

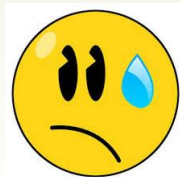
... can you answer without
using the word 'good'?



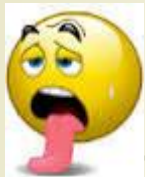
Acid reflux

Mood swings

TIRED



Overwhelmed



Trouble sleeping



Upset

Memory troubles



headache



Frustrated

SAD

On a scale of 1-10

1...2...3...4... 5...6...7... 8...9...10



/ 10

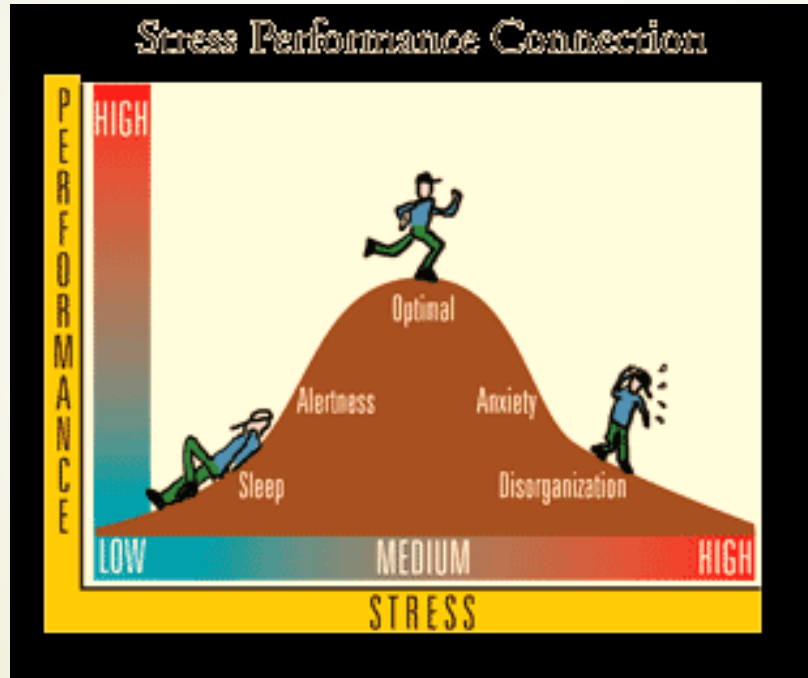


What is stress?

Stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that “**demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize**”.

Richard S. Lazarus

Is Stress a Good thing?



What is **compassion fatigue**?

“**Cost of caring**” for others

(Figley)

‘Profound **emotional** and **physical** erosion that takes place when helpers are **unable to refuel and regenerate**’

(Mathieu)



How can it affect you?

- ▶ Feel **drained**
- ▶ Unable to give anymore
- ▶ Unable to stop thinking about a patient

It happens... because you CARE! Or used to care!

It happens to 'good/strong staff'

It is normal! Most of us carry a certain level of Compassion Fatigue. We just need to be aware of it and keep it within reasonable limits.



What is **Vicarious Trauma**

‘the profound **shift in world view...**
helpers notice that their fundamental
beliefs about the world are altered
and possibly damaged **by being**
repeatedly exposed to traumatic
material’

Mathieu quoted Pearlman & Saakvitne

How can it affect you?

- Become **concern by death**, dying and end of life issues
- Changes your **world view** and **beliefs** about **life or illness**
- Intrusive image
- Hypervigilant



The Compassion Fatigue Trajectory

Noticing changes through progressive phases

**Zealous/
Keen**



Irritable



Withdrawn



Zombie



**Overwhelmed &
Leaving Work**

S&S of Compassion Fatigue:

Physical

- ▶ Exhaustion
- ▶ Insomnia
- ▶ Headaches
- ▶ Getting sick more often
- ▶ **Somatization** (emotional stress into physical symptoms)
- ▶ **Hypochondriasis** (hypervigilance)

Behavioural S&S

- ▶ Absenteeism
- ▶ **Anger and Irritability**
- ▶ Compromised care
- ▶ Impaired ability to make decisions
- ▶ Increased use of alcohol and drugs
- ▶ Avoidance of certain patient type
- ▶ Problems in personal relationships
- ▶ leaving the field

<https://compassionfatigue.ca/signs-and-symptoms-of-compassion-fatigue-and-vicarious-trauma/>

Mathieu, 2010

Psychological S&S

- ▶ Emotional exhaustion
- ▶ Distancing
- ▶ Reduced ability to feel sympathy and empathy
- ▶ Cynicism
- ▶ Resentment
- ▶ Feeling professional helplessness

<https://compassionfatigue.ca/signs-and-symptoms-of-compassion-fatigue-and-vicarious-trauma/>

Mathieu, 2010



Psychological signs and symptoms

- ▶ Depersonalization
- ▶ Disruption of world view/heightened anxiety
- ▶ Intrusive imagery
- ▶ Insensitivity to emotional material
- ▶ Loss of hope
- ▶ Difficulty separating personal and professional lives

<https://compassionfatigue.ca/signs-and-symptoms-of-compassion-fatigue-and-vicarious-trauma/>

Mathieu, 2010

Cumulative over time

They are an Occupation hazard of working in the helping field

(Saakvitne & Pearlman, 1996)





Healthy organization

- ▶ Biggest determinant of employee wellness:
'who you work for'

Important area for an organization

- ▶ **Supportive manager**
- ▶ **Education**
- ▶ **Strong social support**

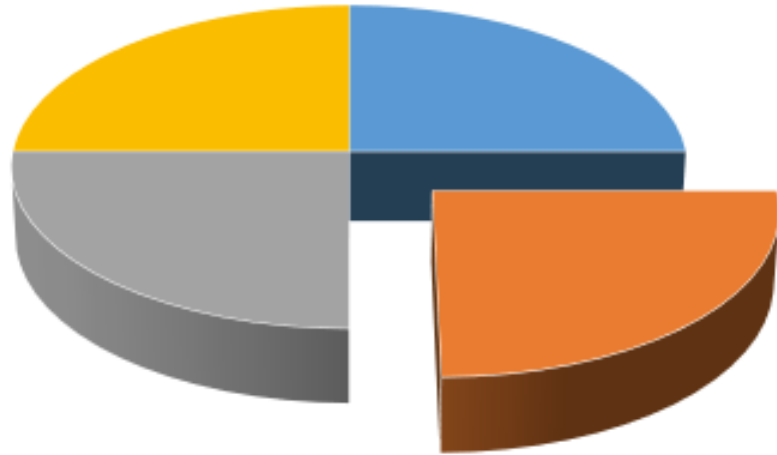
<https://compassionfatigue.ca/what-is-compassion-fatigue/>

Mathieu, 2010

Stigma

Why do we hesitate to ask for help?

- **Seen as weak**
- **Viewed as alpha personalities (alpha personalities should be strong!)**
 - **Lack of education**
 - **Timidity**
 - **We are proud**
- **We have been rejected or previous bad experience**
 - **Think we will be judge by others**



AWARENESS

ACCEPT IT

GOAL

ACTION!

Our job is demanding
and these studies are
starting to validate
that...



Sweden

Swedish ambulance service

Questionnaire to 1500 people staff

Questions about: Psychological demands of the job

25% of staff had at least two of the following

- **Stomach problems**
- **Sleeping problems**
- **Headache**



Netherlands

High proportion of staff
reported **FATIGUE**

10% had fatigue levels that were **'at risk'** of
sick leave or work disability

The risk of **burnout** was also high compared
with that of the normal population





YOUTUBE:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwCnJZyU70M>

micro sleep driving test

Sleepy Drivers Can Dose Unknowingly

All heroes eventually get tired!



- Fatigue workers are:
 - 1.9 times** more prone to get **injured**
 - 2.2. times** more prone to **medical error**
most common error:
protocol deviation
dropping patients
medication error
 - 3.6 times** more likely to be involve in a **safety-compromising behavior**
(ex: excessive speeding)

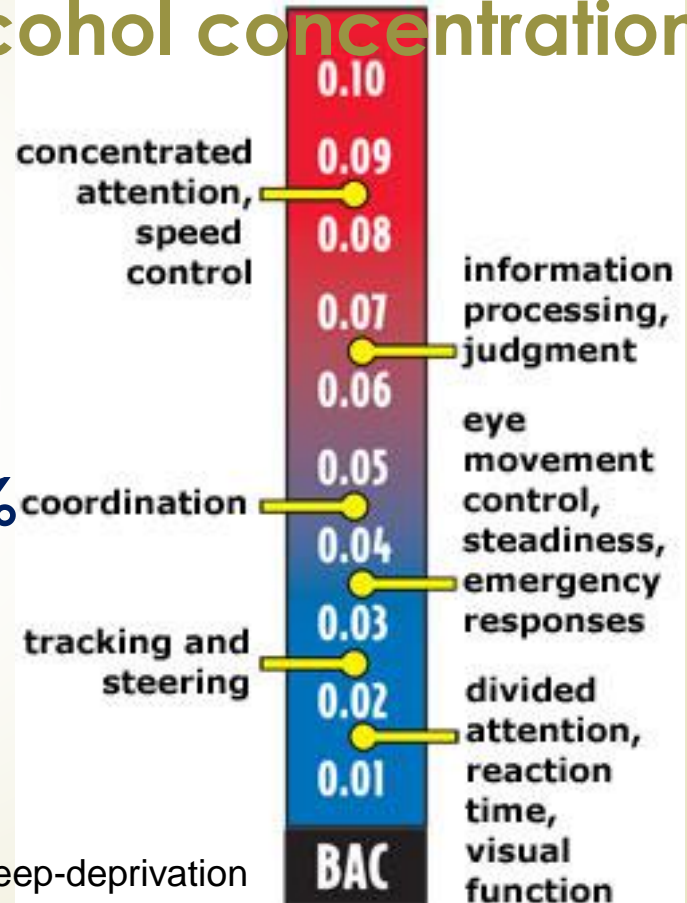
Fatigue & Shiftwork

- ▶ 'when we are over-tired, our **compassion and empathy** are often the first to go'
- ▶ '**We lose the ability to recognize that we are tired**'
- ▶ 'fatigue the number one problem in our field'
- ▶ 'Skills that are essential to EMS responders: critical thinking, multi-tasking, fine motor function and rapid response, are all affected by fatigue'

Cognitive impairment associated with sustained wakefulness and a blood alcohol concentration

Awake 24h = 0.096%

Awake 18h = 0.05%



Solutions for sleep (Study suggests)

- ▶ Hydrate
- ▶ **20 to 45 minutes “Power naps” at work**

improve alertness and reducing potential errors

- ▶ Education staff/family
- ▶ Peer support system

Employers can assist employees:

- ▶ ‘Limiting number of consecutive shifts an employee can work’
- ▶ ‘Offer sleep disorder screening’
- ▶ ‘Educate workers about the dangers of drowsy driving’

<http://www.jems.com/article/news/study-measures-effect-sleep-deprivation>

Montreal



- ▶ **58%** High level of psychological stress
- ▶ **26%** Consider suicide once in their life (compare with **8%** for the population)

Since 2001:

8 employees committed suicide

20 employees committed suicide attempt (7%) of staff

Facts

How does that make you feel?

afraid, annoyed, angry, horrified, confused, lost,
disconnected, numb, alarmed, surprised, ashamed,
depleted, regretful, hurt, sad, hopeless, discouraged,
tense, nervous, restless, vulnerable, helpless, nostalgic

compassionate, sympathetic, empowered, absorbed,
alert, energetic, thankful, encouraged, calm, quiet,
renewed



You can do it!

Don't be depress there are solutions!





Primary Trauma

It happened to me, I experienced it

Secondary Trauma

from someone else



Low impact debriefing...
... a new way to tell your stories!

Secondary trauma



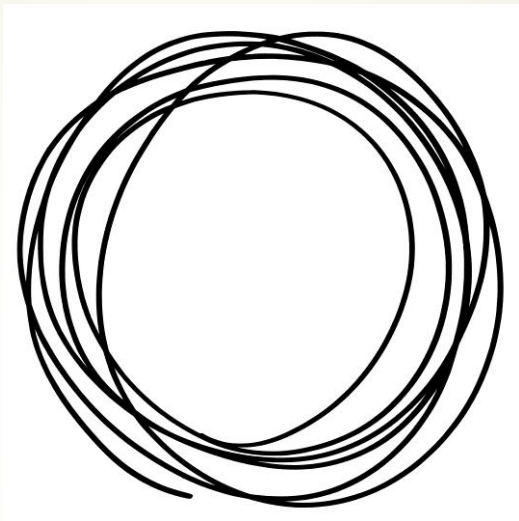
Are you traumatizing others with your story? ...

SLIMING!

The Power of words & Images

‘Sharing gory details is a “normal” part of our work and that we think we are desensitized to it, but the data on vicarious trauma show otherwise.’

Francoise Mathieu
Compassion Fatigue Expert



Low impact debriefing

Step 1: Self awareness

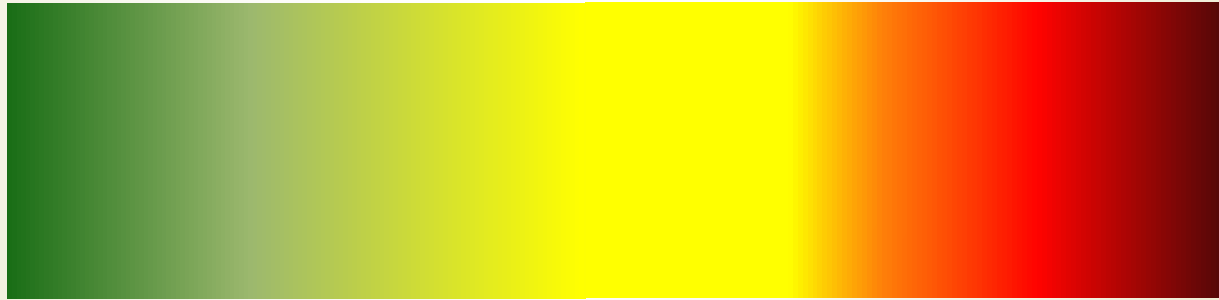
Step 2: Fair warning

Step 3: Consent

Step 4: Low impact disclosure

Step 1: self awareness

1...2...3...4... 5...6...7...8...9...10



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Step 2: fair warning...




Step 3: consent





Step 4: low impact disclosure

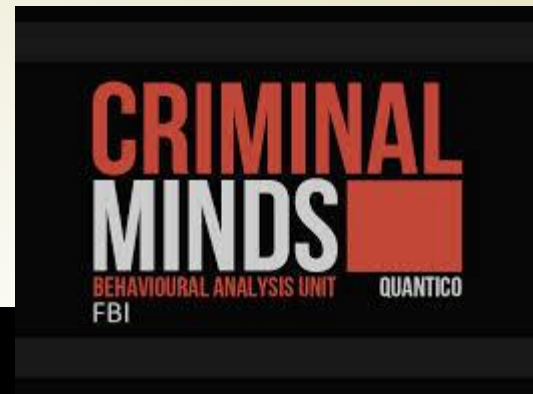
- ▶ You can say a little ...
Re-ask for consent and continue your story
- ▶ It matters how it is given



What can you do if someone is telling you their entire nasty call ...

- ▶ Break the 'bond'
- ▶ How are you sitting
- ▶ Leaning forward?
- ▶ Be in your shoes!!! Be grounded!
- ▶ Take a sip of water
- ▶ Look around
- ▶ Cut them with a question
- ▶ Change the subject
- ▶ Go in the space for a few seconds

Secondary / Cumulative trauma



Stories you are sharing


What is it exactly that you want to share

What are you looking for? (another point of view on your actions, venting, recognition, sharing a proud moment?)

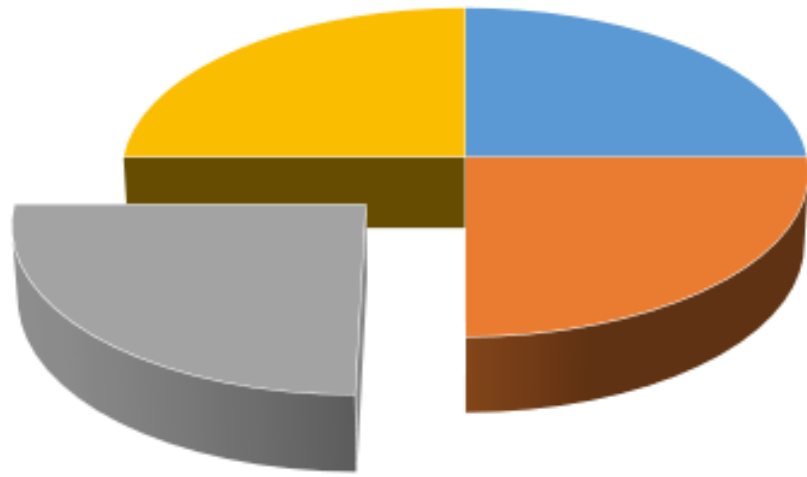
► **How you are describing your day at home?**

Can you describe your day without the graphic details





Do you need to stretch?



AWARENESS

ACCEPT IT

GOAL

ACTION!

Support System

Do you have one?

Can you tell them about your goal



- ▶ Family / Spouse / Parents / Sisters/Brothers / Kids
- ▶ Coworkers
- ▶ Friends
- ▶ Professional Support





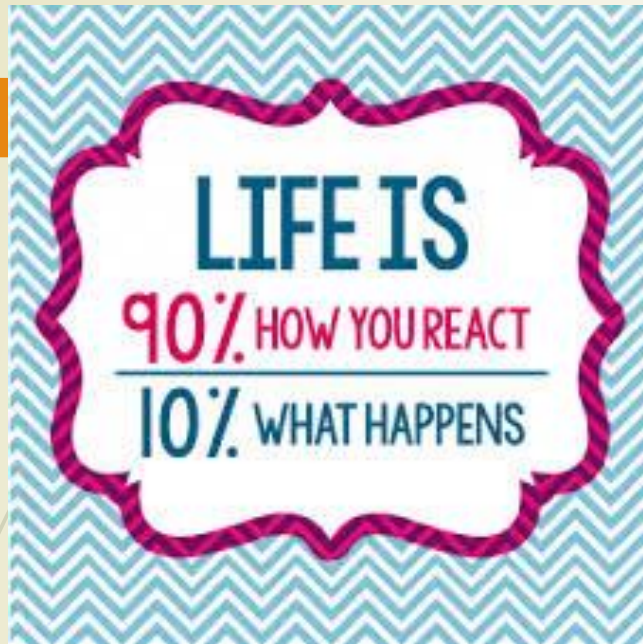
AWARENESS

ACCEPT IT

GOAL

ACTION!





Auto-pilot = Walking in a room and forgetting why we needed to go there!



Self Care



YOU

**MAKE IT A PRIORITY
CUZ NOBODY WILL**





NO

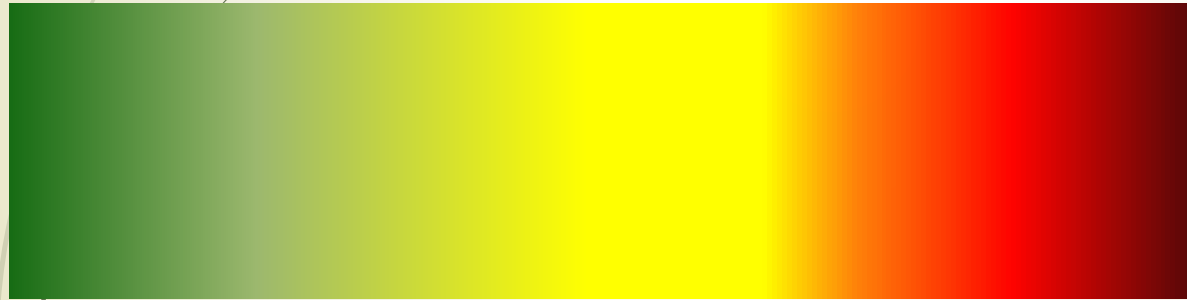


Tell people ahead of time that you may say 'no'



On a scale of 1-10?

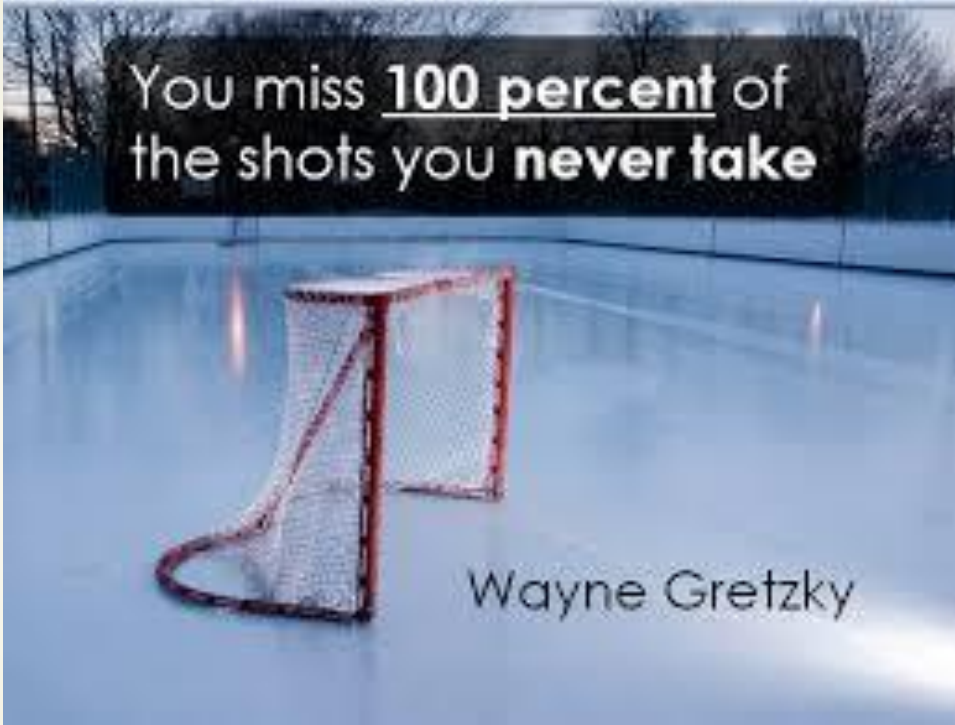

1...2...3...4... 5...6...7... 8...9...10



/ 10

Nothing is permanent





You miss 100 percent of
the shots you **never take**

Wayne Gretzky

So 1 thing you may do after this presentation...

The end...



Questions... Comments...???

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