



Workforce Wellness, Compassion Fatigue, Vicarious Trauma, and Reoccurring Use Management

Jay Hughes | October 18, 2023



PWI and EPOC AE Team

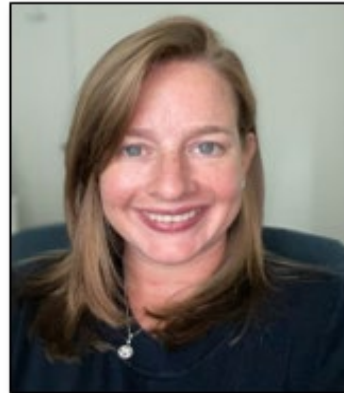
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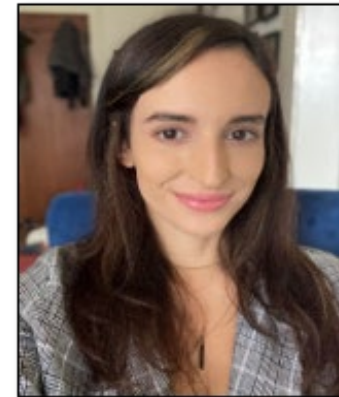
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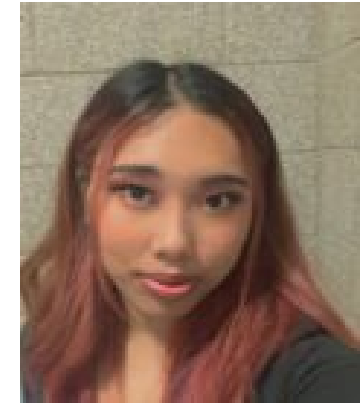
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Jay Hughes

- Speaker, educator, and facilitator
- Accomplished and goal-oriented professional with more than 18 years' experience in both federal and state systems providing services and resources to individuals and families
- Specialized expert in operational techniques, staff development, recovery, and serving the needs of the reentry community

Agenda



Recognize the symptoms and effects of compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma on the peer workforce.



Explore effective strategies for preventing and managing compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma.



Understand the concept of workforce wellness and its significance in maintaining a healthy and productive work environment.



Gain knowledge about reoccurring use management and its importance in supporting individuals and teams to handle challenging situations.



Safety Agreements

- Open-mindedness
- Respect
- No hogs, no logs
- Stretch
- Avoid stigmatizing language
- Encouragement
- Confidentiality
- Ouch/Oops
- Many people, one mic



Introductions



Name

Organization

Role

Setting the Stage



Recognize the symptoms and impact of compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma on the peer workforce.



Compassion Fatigue



What is it?

How does it happen?

Compassion

“A strong feeling of sympathy and sadness for the suffering or bad luck of others and a wish to help them.”

(Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.)



Fatigue

“Fatigue describes a state of tiredness (which is not sleepiness) or exhaustion. In general usage, fatigue often follows prolonged physical or mental activity.”

(Wikipedia, n.d.)



Compassion Fatigue

“Compassion fatigue ... refers to the emotional and physical exhaustion that can affect helping professionals and caregivers over time.” (Figley, 2012, pg. 4).

Brief Conversation (5 minutes)

Tell a story about a compassionate encounter you have had and describe the following elements:

- The other's suffering
- Your empathic concern and ability
- The encounter
- How you were able to detach and experience satisfaction

Perspective

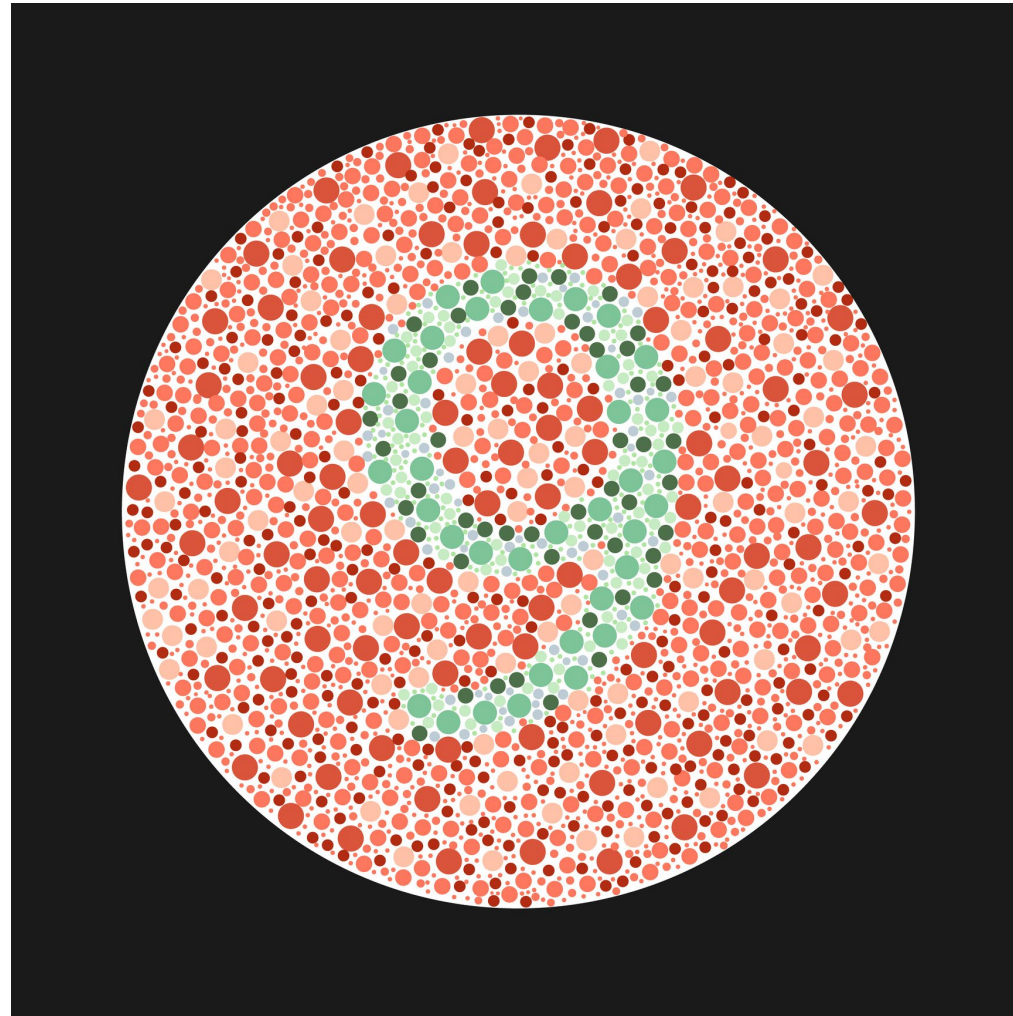


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Signs and Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

1. Emotional exhaustion
2. Decreased empathy
3. Physical symptoms (e.g. aches and pains, low energy levels, and changes in appetite)
4. Decreased satisfaction
5. Increased irritability
6. Isolation and withdrawal
7. Sleep disturbances
8. Cognitive difficulties
9. Loss of enjoyment
10. Increased self-doubt

(Scott, 2022)

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 themselves from the ongoing misery of the traumatized person.
- **Sense of achievement:** extent to which the helper is satisfied with his/her efforts to help the client/sufferer."

(Figley, 2012, pg. 44)

Factors Contributing to Compassion Fatigue

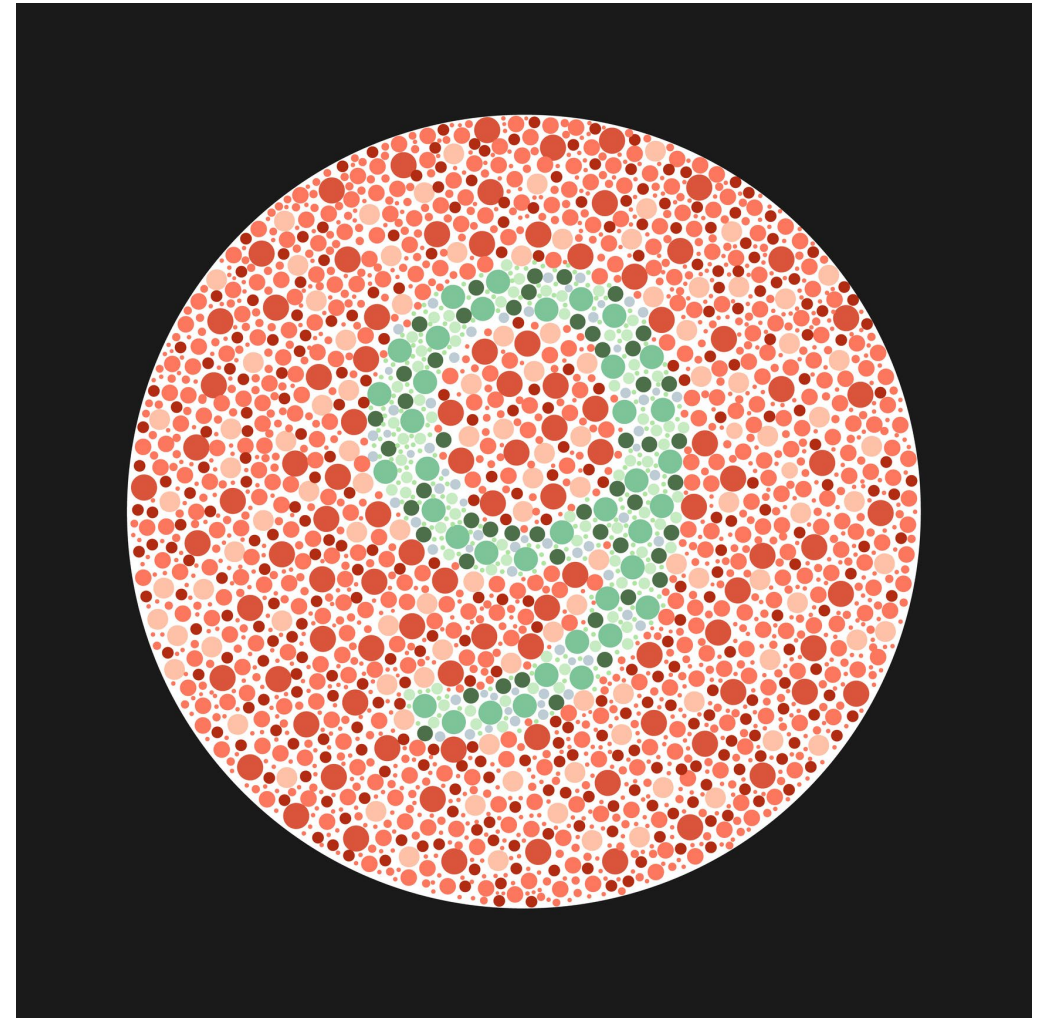
- **Compassion stress:** demand for action to relieve the suffering of others
- **Prolonged exposure:** on-going sense of responsibility for the care of the suffering, over a protracted period.
- **Traumatic recollections:** memories that trigger the symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) 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 lifestyle, social status, or professional or personal responsibilities).

(Figley, 2012)

Breakout #1

Question:

Can you share a story about a time when you thought someone was experiencing anxiety or depression, at risk for returning to use, or demonstrating other concerning symptoms that may have been signs of compassion fatigue?



Other Demands

- Family stress
- COVID-19
- Remote work
- Financial insecurity
- Racial inequity
- What else?



“

Who is at higher risk?

”

Peer Support Workers

- Empathy
- Personal experience with trauma
- Unresolved trauma
- Children's trauma



Burnout



“Burn-out is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed.” (WHO, 2019)

Signs and Symptoms of Burnout

1. Physical and emotional exhaustion
2. Increased cynicism and detachment
3. Decreased productivity
4. Lack of motivation
5. Increased irritability and negativity
6. Cognitive difficulties
7. Physical symptoms
8. Withdrawal from activities
9. Decreased self-care
10. Decreased sense of accomplishment

(Scott, 2022)

Question

Have you ever witnessed someone in your career who was truly burned out?

Describe that individual (without names).

What Is Vicarious Trauma?



“The emotional residue of exposure to traumatic stories and experiences of others.”

(Policy Research Associates, Inc., n.d.)

Signs and Symptoms of Vicarious Trauma

1. Emotional and psychological distress
2. Intrusive thoughts or nightmares
3. Hypervigilance
4. Emotional numbing
5. Sleep disturbances
6. Cognitive difficulties
7. Increased irritability or anger
8. Avoidance behaviors
9. Changes in worldview
10. Physical symptoms (e.g., headaches, insomnia, exhaustion)

(Mathieu, 2021)



“

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

(The Compass Center, 2020)

Empathy



[Brené Brown on Empathy - RSA \(thersa.org\)](https://www.thersa.org/)

Breakout Time

Empathy

Explore effective strategies for preventing and managing compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma.



Warning Signs

- Chronic exhaustion
- Avoidance
- Physical ailments
- Inability to listen
- Dissociative moments
- Hypervigilance
- Sense of persecution
- Feeling the need to rescue, heal, fix
- Feeling helpless/hopeless, like you can't do enough
- Guilt/fear

(Mathieu, 2021)

Warning Signs

- Anger/cynicism
- Inability to empathize
- Addictions
- Victim mentality
- Grandiosity
- Frequent venting/complaining
- Minimizing
- Justifying all behavior
- Inability to embrace complexity
- Diminished creativity
- Blaming others for all that doesn't go well

(Mathieu, 2021)

Question

How do we have compassionate and empathic conversations when we identify a potential warning sign in the workplace?

Strategies for Preventing and Managing Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma

1. Self-care
2. Boundaries
3. Peer support and supervision
4. Awareness and self-reflection
5. Professional development
6. Support network
7. 7. Regular breaks and time off
8. Healthy coping strategies
9. Awareness of personal triggers
10. Regular self-assessment

(Shakespeare & Lafrenière, 2012)

Navigating Grief



Boundaries



Boundaries Discussion

1. Understanding Boundaries in Peer Support: How would you define boundaries in the context of peer support? What are some elements of establishing and maintaining healthy boundaries as a peer support specialist?
2. The Importance of Boundaries: Why are boundaries essential in the peer support relationship? What potential benefits can both the peer support specialist and the recipient of support experience when clear boundaries are set?
3. Boundary Challenges: What are some common challenges peer support specialists may encounter when establishing and maintaining boundaries? How can these challenges be effectively addressed to ensure the well-being of the specialist and the person receiving support?

Boundaries Discussion (continued)

4. Ethical Considerations: What ethical considerations should peer support specialists be mindful of when it comes to boundaries? How can adherence to ethical guidelines enhance the professionalism and effectiveness of peer support relationships?
5. Self-Care for Peer Support Specialists: How can peer support specialists prioritize their own self-care while providing support to others? What self-care practices or strategies have you found helpful in maintaining personal well-being as a peer support specialist?
6. Professional Development and Supervision: How can ongoing professional development and regular supervision contribute to the establishment and maintenance of healthy boundaries for peer support specialists? Share any examples of effective professional development programs or supervision practices that you are familiar with.

Understand the concept of workforce wellness and its significance in maintaining a healthy and productive work environment.



What Is Workforce Wellness?

Workplace wellness refers to the initiatives and programs implemented by organizations to promote the health and well-being of their employees, creating a supportive environment that encourages healthy behaviors and addresses the diverse needs of individuals. These programs aim to improve employee health, enhance productivity, and contribute to a positive work culture. (CDC, n.d.)

Key Aspects and Significance of Workforce Wellness

1. Physical health
2. Mental and emotional health
3. Increased productivity
4. Enhanced employee engagement and retention
5. Cost savings
6. Positive organizational culture

(Gentry & Baranowsky, 2013)

Workforce Well-Being on a Budget

1. Promote work-life balance
2. Provide mental health care
3. Create a supportive work environment
4. Organize wellness activities
5. Encourage breaks and relaxation
6. Offer health education and resources
7. Seek partnerships and collaborations
8. Prioritize employee development and growth
9. Foster social connections
10. Regularly assess and evaluate

Conversations Around Workforce Wellness

1. **The Link Between Workforce Wellness and Productivity:** How do you believe employee well-being directly affects productivity in the workplace? Can you share any personal experiences or observations that support this connection?
2. **Creation of a Healthy Work Environment:** What are some key elements necessary for fostering a healthy work environment? How can organizations actively support and promote employee well-being? Share any examples of successful workplace wellness initiatives you are familiar with.
3. **Balance Between Work and Personal Life:** How does achieving a healthy work-life balance contribute to overall workforce wellness? Can you share any strategies or practices that have helped you or others find this balance effectively?
4. **Mental Health Support:** In what ways can organizations prioritize and support the mental health of their employees? What initiatives or resources do you think are most effective in addressing mental health challenges in the workplace?

Conversations Around Workforce Wellness (continued)

5. **The Role of Leadership:** How can leaders and managers positively influence workforce wellness? Share examples of leadership practices that have demonstrated a commitment to employee well-being and have had a significant impact on the overall work culture.
6. **Employee Engagement and Retention:** How does workforce wellness influence employee engagement and retention rates? How can organizations create an environment that attracts and retains top talent through prioritizing employee well-being?
7. **The Benefits of Workforce Wellness Programs:** What are the potential benefits of implementing comprehensive workforce wellness programs? Discuss the short-term and long-term effects on employee satisfaction, productivity, and overall organizational success.

Gain knowledge about reoccurring use management and its importance in supporting individuals and teams in handling challenging situations.



Helpful Tips: Reoccurring Use Management

1. Understanding triggers and warning signs
2. Developing coping skills
3. Building a support network
4. Creating setback prevention plans
5. Learning from setbacks
6. Offering ongoing support and education
7. Addressing underlying issues

(Melemis, 2015)

Emotional Resilience



What Is Emotional Resilience?

“Psychologists define resilience as the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress—such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stressors. As much as resilience involves ‘bouncing back’ from these difficult experiences, it can also involve profound personal growth.”

(American Psychological Association, 2012)

Questions?





Please fill out the attendance form and feedback survey in the chat to meet your requirements for today's event!



Thank You

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