

**CMHA Waterloo Wellington Dufferin**

# ***Compassion Fatigue***

# Introductions

# What is **Compassion Fatigue**?

The care giver's "reduced capacity for or interest in being empathic with others' suffering"

"The cost of caring" (Figley, 1982)

# Compassion Fatigue

- The erosion of physical and mental wellbeing we begin to experience when we give of ourselves without restoration.
  - Cumulative over time.
  - It affects all caregivers in some way, both in our personal and professional lives.
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# Vicarious Trauma

- In our work, we may experience traumatic events directly, or indirectly through secondhand story telling.
- Being around people/animals who are often in distress and crisis.
- We may experience intrusive thoughts, nightmares, avoidance, hyperarousal.



**You can't walk through water  
without getting wet.**

Vicarious trauma can change how you view the world.

# Burnout

- Being over worked and/or feeling overwhelmed.
- Depleted ability to cope with demands.
- Feeling powerless.
- Loss of job satisfaction.
- Diminished view of workplace.
- Leads to physical and emotional exhaustion.

- Each week, 500 000 employed Canadians miss work due to mental health concerns.
- 39% of Ontario workers indicated they would not tell their manager if they were experiencing a mental health problem.

([www.camh.ca](http://www.camh.ca))

# What's on Your Plate?



# Risk Factors

- Think about your role.
- What are some things that may increase your risk for compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma or burnout?

- Too much work, too few hours.
  - High exposure to crisis and trauma.
  - Little support from management and co-workers.
  - Lack of boundaries.
  - Lack of resources such as EAP.
  - Lack of variety/too much repetition.
  - Working in isolation.
  - More responsibilities outside work.
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Think about the way you engage  
your role.



**“I’ll save you!”**

# Challenging Unwritten Rules

- Don't talk about your personal issues/stress at work.
  - NEVER, EVER show emotions at work.
  - You have to do everything perfectly and show no weakness.
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Practice Empathy.

How will I know?

# Physical Signs/Symptoms

- Exhaustion
- Insomnia/hypersomnia
- Headaches
- Teeth grinding
- Muscle tension
- Increase/decrease in appetite
- Increased susceptibility to illness

# Behavioural Signs/Symptoms

- Increased use of drugs/alcohol
  - Absenteeism
  - Anger and irritability
  - Avoidance
  - Impact on job performance
  - Blaming others
  - Frequent complaining
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# Psychological Signs/Symptoms

- Reduced ability to feel empathy
- Depression
- Cynicism
- Resentment
- Anxiety
- Difficulty separating work/personal
- Negative self image
- Distorted thinking, e.g. black & white

# Have you ever thought?

- “If I have to do this one more time....”
- “What do you want ME to do about it?!?!?!”
- “It’s Monday, 5 more days to go”.
- “Maybe I’m not in the right profession”.

# Take Stock

- Know your stressors in both the workplace and home environment.
- Know your triggers.
- Know your early warning signs.



# Self Care

- Practice self care strategies in both the home and workplace.
  - Improve work/life balance.
  - Learn to make yourself a priority.
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# Examples of Self Care

- Mindfulness
- Breathing exercises
- Eating and sleeping well
- Exercise
- Leisure activities
- Nurturing relationships
- Giving yourself permission to do 'nothing'. E.g. a pajamas & Netflix day.

# Staff/Student Support

- Create a non-judgmental work environment.
- Provide the opportunity to debrief.
- Explore accommodations for those in need.
- Find out what the top job stressors are for people. (anonymous survey)
- Have fun together.

# Develop Resiliency

- The ability to return to a healthy state.
- Our ability to change our internal state in order to respond to stressors.
- Involves things such as attitude and coping strategies.

# Emotion Focused Coping:

- Strategies for calming your emotions.
- Can include things like deep breathing, taking a break, talking about feelings.

# Problem Solving:

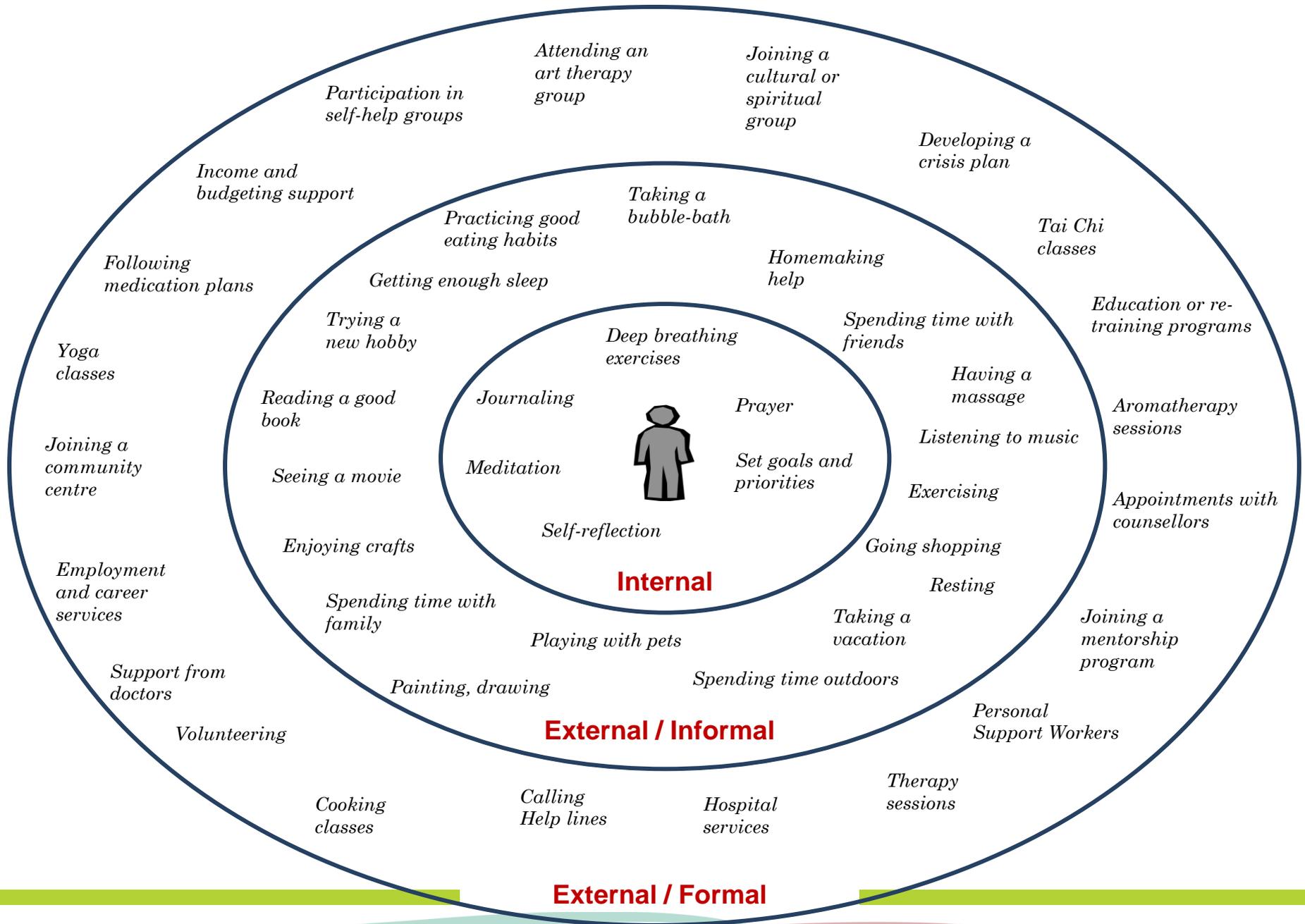
- Strategies for addressing practical matters.
- Can include things like reassigning duties, changing work schedules.

How do you 'decompress'  
during work?

How do you 'decompress'  
after work?

**Ask for help.**





# Questions?

