

**Strengths and Protective Factors
for Minimizing Compassion Fatigue**

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Compassion fatigue is a stress condition with stress responses falling into two broad categories, burnout and secondary traumatic stress (STS). For a thorough review of compassion fatigue, see *Compassion Fatigue With Staff in Therapeutic Programs* at <https://kevinplummerphd.com/compassion-fatigue/>. Everyone who works with trauma-impacted children is vulnerable, but some people are at greater risk for compassion fatigue (see *Risk Factors for Compassion Fatigue*), while others are better equipped to minimize its impact. It is important to be aware of the personal strengths and protective factors that can minimize the adverse impact of compassion fatigue, because it is the professional responsibility of all staff working in therapeutic programs to be aware of the challenges and to do what is necessary to stay fit for the job.

Some of the strengths and protective factors are not necessarily under the control of the individual (e.g., compassion is a strong motivator for you, optimism—hopeful outlook, grit—strong sense of determination, internal locus of control) and other factors (e.g., work provides a sense of meaning and purpose, resonates with your personal values and principles), depend greatly on the match between the job and the individual (so a change in jobs for this individual could enable them to realize more strengths and protective factors). Most of the strengths and protective factors, however, can be developed if they are missing. Use the *Strengths and Protective Factors for Minimizing Compassion Fatigue* to determine if you are a good match for the job, to see if there is more you could do to provide yourself with the strengths and protective factors you need to minimize compassion fatigue, and to determine if you need to advocate for changes in work conditions.

Strengths and Protective Factors for Minimizing Compassion Fatigue

- 1) High level of compassion satisfaction—finding great meaning, purpose and reward in helping others, in making a difference in the lives of others, and deriving pride, inspiration and fulfillment from a job well done. Compassion is a strong motivator for you.
- 2) High level of engagement in work—feeling a deep connection with and absorption in the work along with strong feelings of dedication and high levels of pleasure and satisfaction. Able to derive a strong sense of accomplishment from work.
- 3) Work provides a sense of meaning and purpose, resonates with your personal values and principles, inspires a high level of dedication to the mission and purpose of the work, and creates feelings of significance and importance.
- 4) Optimism, hopeful outlook, and the ability to envision positive outcomes.
- 5) Grit, strong sense of determination, not easily discouraged, an ability to persevere and overcome obstacles without losing focus on the goal along the way.

Strengths and Protective Factors

- 6) Acute awareness of the indicators of progress, knowing what success looks like, ability to recognize very small measures of progress as progress is occurring, and awareness of what is realistic and the limitations to intervention effectiveness.
- 7) A growth mindset.
- 8) A job skills growth plan and an ability to self-assess and determine one's own needs for optimal job performance.
- 9) Internal locus of control, strong belief in your own ability to control the outcomes and circumstances in your life.
- 10) Thorough familiarity with what you are trying to do and how it is supposed to help the population you're working with, including a full understanding of what the job requires and active anticipation of what the experience will be.
- 11) Autonomy—work provides ample opportunity to be a decision maker, to improve the way things are done, to be creative, to put your unique stamp on what is done at work and how it is done.
- 12) High level of mastery of required skills, a strong feeling of competence in doing the job.
- 13) Being an integral part of a highly supportive and effective team, being socially connected with positive/supportive relationships at work.
- 14) Social engagement and supportive social network outside of work.
- 15) Well-developed self-regulation skills, especially in the management of the stress response and the ability to stay present and attuned despite situational provocation.
- 16) Mindfulness skills, meditation skills.
- 17) Restorative skills and restorative practices within the work environment and outside of work, for physiological, psychological and cognitive resetting and revitalizing.
- 18) You experience a high level of recognition for effort and accomplishment.