

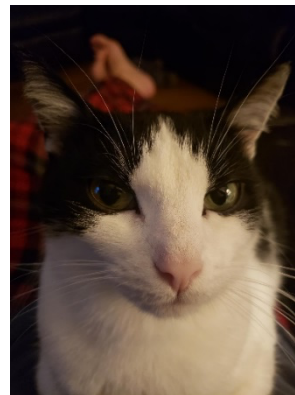
Compassion Fatigue in Veterinary Medicine: Recognition, Treatment, and Prevention

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MedVet

About Me

- I am not a mental health professional (and I don't play one on TV)
- 25 years experience in the veterinary industry
- 10 years with MedVet
- Certified Compassion Fatigue Professional
- I now have and have always had too many pets



Evolution and History of Compassion Fatigue

How did we get here?

When was the first diagnosis of Compassion Fatigue? **1992!**

- **1970: Burnout**
- 1980: PTSD: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Primary Trauma)
- 1987: Secondary Trauma
- 1992: Compassion Fatigue
- 1995: Compassion Fatigue= Secondary Trauma + Burnout



Compassion Fatigue: What is it?

“The physical and mental exhaustion and emotional withdrawal experienced by those who care for sick or traumatized patients over an extended period of time

Unlike burnout, which is caused by everyday work stresses compassion fatigue results from taking on the emotional burden of a patient's agony.



Veterinary Professionals And Compassion Fatigue



The Impact on the Veterinary Field

The Cost of Caring

- Personality
- Professional Isolation
- Work-related stressors
- Exposure to death
- Other mental illness/Outside Stressors
- Compassion Fatigue

We are naturally compassionate and empathetic



Recognizing Compassion Fatigue

Physical

- Sleep disturbances
- Prolonged exhaustion
- Headaches
- Poor appetite
- Lack or limited self care
- Reduced immune function
- Elevated blood pressure
- Self-medicating

Mental

- Irritability/agitation
- Sadness/Depression
- Losing sense of humor
- Becoming over involved with clients
- Self-criticism
- Feeling helpless
- Brain Fog
- Becoming distant in relationships

Work Related

- Absenteeism
- “Presenteeism”
- Lack of follow through
- Negative comments about clients/patients
- Receiving increased complaints
- Poor relationships with co-workers

Assess Your Situation

The Professional Quality of Life Assessment:

ProQOL: Most commonly used measure Compassion Fatigue and Burnout

- Measure of compassion satisfaction and fatigue
- Free tool
- 30 item self-report

Available at www.proqol.org/proqol_test.html



Treatment and Prevention

Self-Care:

Assess your current mental state:

- How am I feeling?
- What do I need?

Identify ways to improve your mental and physical wellbeing

Self-Care is a
priority and necessity
- not a luxury -
in the work that we do.

Get professional help: If you feel your Compassion Fatigue is related to depression or another mental illness, seek professional help

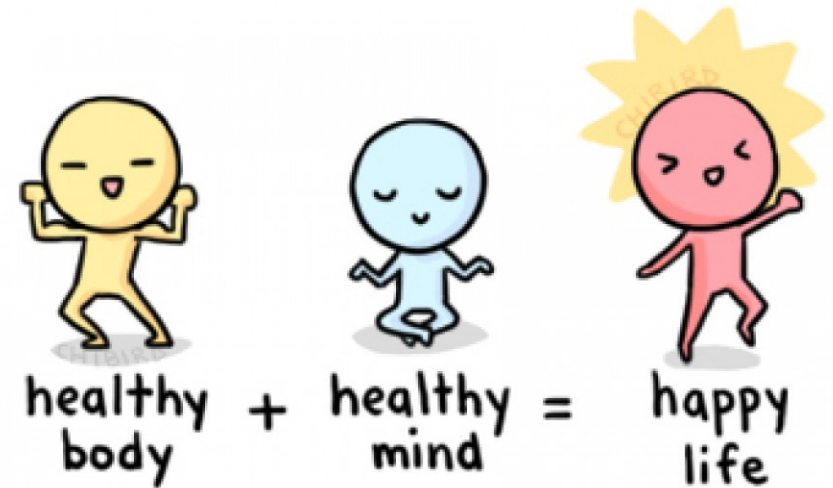
Treatment and Prevention: Your Physical Wellbeing

Your physical wellbeing and mental wellbeing are partners.

How you treat your body impacts your mental wellbeing.

- Put yourself FIRST
- Eat right
- Exercise
- Practice relaxation techniques
- Use soothing senses

Small changes go a long way!!



Treatment and Prevention: Your Mental Wellbeing

- Practice mindfulness: *a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings and thoughts*
- Breathing techniques
- Meditation
- Creative expression/Hobby
- Apps; Headspace!
- Spend time with family/friends
- Step away
- Leave it at work: Say goodbye.
- Talk about it



Headspace

- FREE to all team members!
- Mindfulness app; focus' on the use of meditation
- Backed by science!
- Daily use can lower your stress by 30% in as little as one month
- Not just for work;
 - Sleep/Wake
 - Healthy/Mindful eating
 - Exercise/Motivation



Prevention

- On-going awareness
- Make a formal, tangible commitment to self-care
- Create goals and deadlines- start small!
- Create strategies and follow them

Strategies should include

- Rest and relaxation
- Proper nutrition
- Stress management
- Having a resiliency plan



Resiliency: Part of your self-care plan

Have a resiliency plan:

- What are your stressors?
- What do you need to recuperate from additional stress?
- How can you plan ahead for what you can?



We're In This Together: Recognizing Signs of Suicide

- Be kind
- Ask if your coworkers are ok
- Know the signs that someone may be considering suicide
 - Acting depressed
 - Indirect verbal clues
 - “I can’t go on”, “I just want out”
 - Saying goodbye or giving away possessions
 - Alcohol or drug abuse
- Learn QPR



Veterinary workers are 5 ½ times more likely to commit suicide

Ask a Question, Save a Life!

QPR=

- 1 Question 2 Persuade 3 Refer**

**3 simple steps that anyone can learn to
help save a life from suicide!**



How To Help:

If you think someone may be suicidal:

Question: (Indirect) Are you happy? (Direct) Are you thinking of killing yourself?

LISTEN to what they say. Don't jump to respond.

Persuade: Again, LISTEN to what they say. Give them your full attention and don't rush to judgement.

OFFER THEM HOPE. The feeling of hopelessness, not depression is the main driver in suicidal thoughts.

“We will get through this. Will you let me get you some help?”

Refer: Taking them directly to a treatment facility is the best option but you can also call and schedule an appointment or provide a suicide prevention hotline #.

Give them the info and get a commitment from them to get help.

Pause to PAWS

Practice mindfulness

Assess self-care

Work together

Say something



Self-Care Commitment Plan

- Create your Commitment plan
- Find a peer/support person to keep you accountable
- Evaluate weekly, monthly, annually
- Notice and appreciate the changes!

It's ok to modify the plan- as long as it doesn't impede on your self-care.



Strategies for Tomorrow

- Reference your Commitment Plan.
- Incorporate at least one new habit every month
- Practice **Pause to PAWS**
- Use Headspace!



Support Your Wellbeing

Additional MedVet Resources

- EAP
- Headspace
- Rally
- Real Appeal
- Health Advocate



Contact your medical provider if you have signs or symptoms of a serious medical condition including depression, anxiety or other mental health issues.

If you have an emergency, call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room. The MedVet EAP cannot be used for immediate medical attention.