



MLCPC 212:

Compassion Fatigue:

Managing the High Cost of Care

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Abstract

This session will teach coaches how to maintain their own physical, mental, and spiritual health while working with crisis pregnancy situations. Dr. Scalise will discuss the causes and symptoms of compassion fatigue and stress. Participants will learn how to develop a plan to manage the stress of their lives and ministry.

Learning Objectives

1. Participants will be able to recognize the difference between burnout and stress.
2. Participants will study how the brain works when under stress.
3. Participants will be able to develop a plan for stress prevention.

"If you're always last you won't always last."

I. Burnout vs. Stress

- A.** **Burnout** is a defense mechanism characterized by **disengagement**. **Stress** is characterized by **over-engagement**.
- B.** In Burnout, the emotions become **blunted**. In Stress, the emotions become **over-active**.
- C.** In Burnout, the **emotional** damage is primary. In Stress the **physical** damage is primary.
- D.** The exhaustion of Burnout affects **motivation and drive**. The exhaustion of Stress affects **physical energy**.
- E.** Burnout produces **demoralization**. Stress produces **disintegration**.
- F.** Burnout can best be understood as a loss of **ideals and hope**. Stress can best be understood as a loss of **fuel and energy**.
- G.** Burnout produces a sense of **helplessness** and **hopelessness**. Stress produces a sense of **urgency** and **hyperactivity**.
- H.** Burnout produces **paranoia, depersonalization, and detachment**. Stress produces **panic, phobia, and anxiety**.
- I.** Burnout may **never kill you**, but your long life may not seem worth living. Stress may **kill you prematurely** and you won't have enough time to finish what you started.

Source: Dr. Archibald Hart, **Coping with Depression in the Ministry and Other Helping Professions*

J. **We Were Created with limits.**

K. **The Building Blocks of Stress**

1. **Role Ambiguity:** What am I supposed to be doing?
2. **Role Conflict:** Am I doing the right thing?
3. **Role Overload:** Am I doing too much?
4. **Role Significance:** Does what I do really matter?
5. **Role Isolation:** Am I alone too much?
6. **Role Rigidity:** Am I still in control?

II. **Neurobiology of Stress**

- A. The brain has three primary parts: the hindbrain, the midbrain, and the forebrain.
- B. Forebrain includes the **cortex/neo-cortex** (cognition) and interacts with the **limbic system** (emotion).
- C. The feeling of pleasure is produced and regulated by a circuit of specialized nerve cells within the limbic system and is called the **nucleus accumbens**.
- D. The brain has 100 billion **neurons** (cells) – a strongly stimulated neuron can fire 1,000 times per second.
- E. The **amygdala** plays a primary role in the processing and memory of emotional reactions.
- F. **Neurotransmitters:** chemical messengers released by the electrical impulses of a neuron which record sensory experiences called **imprints**. These imprints are encoded, passed along appropriate pathways (across a **synapse**), and stored (usually at the

unconscious level). Dopamine is one of the major agents related to the “**pleasure pathway**” to/through the limbic system. It plays a key role in love, sex and is instrumental in the development of addiction and stress responses.

G. There are two primary stress hormones: **adrenaline** and **cortisol**.

H. The “**fight**” or “**flight**” response is instinctive but often compromises.

1. Adrenaline signals the body to move blood out of the brain and to the muscles where it may be needed more.
2. This can produce **anhedonia**: **an** (without or loss of) + **hedone** (pleasure or delight) = the inability to derive pleasure out of the ordinary things in life.
 - It produces **emotional numbness**, **apathy**, **boredom**, and **sadness** (different than depression).
 - It is the very real consequence of **over-stimulation** and a major cause of moral failure in the ministry.
 - The result is what is referred to as **dopamine flooding** and **hedonic dysregulation** because the pleasure center is hijacked, alternative responses are not processed by the neo-cortex, and an addictive process is then created.

III. Stress

A. Dr. Hans Selye, a Canadian endocrinologist and the father of stress research, began to define stress in terms of the “**General Adaptation Syndrome**” during the 1950’s. He went on to define stress as the nonspecific response of the body to any demand.

1. Stress releases **adrenaline** and **cortisol** into the bloodstream with the potential for harmful effects over time:

- a narrowing of the capillaries and other blood vessels leading in and out of the heart
 - a decrease in the flexibility and dilation properties of blood vessels and their endothelium linings
 - a decrease in the body's ability to flush excessive LDL cholesterol out of its system
 - a decrease of up to 50% in certain cognitive processes
 - an increase in the production of blood cholesterol (especially LDL)
 - an increase the blood's tendency to clot
 - an increase in the depositing of plaque on the walls of the arteries
 - an increase in heart, breathing, and glycogen conversion rates
 - an increase for risk of cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, stroke, and a compromise of the body's immune system
2. According to the American Institute on Stress, **80-90%** of all doctor's visits are stress-related.¹
3. According to the American Heart Association, more than **50 million** Americans suffer from high blood pressure and nearly **60 million** suffer from some form of cardiovascular disease, resulting in over 1 million deaths each year (2 out of every five that die or 1 every 32 seconds).²
4. Heart disease has been the **leading cause of death** in the United States every year since 1900 (except 1918) and crosses all racial, gender, socioeconomic, and age barriers.³

B. Compassion comes from the Latin word, **compat**, which means “to suffer with.” It has been defined as: “feelings of deep sympathy or sorrow for another who is stricken by sufferings or misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate pain or remove its cause”

1. Compassion Fatigue refers to emotional, physical, and spiritual exhaustion that gradually impacts a person’s capacity to experience joy, or to feel and care for others.

2. Compassion fatigue is sometimes referred to as **secondary** or **vicarious stress**.

3. Two Categories of Stress in the Ministry:

- The first is the stress of the ministry
- The second is the stress we bring into the ministry
- Ministry leaders who have dealt with the second category of stress can better handle the first category of stress.
- Is your ministry **causing** the stress in your life? Or, is your ministry **revealing** the stress in your life?

4. Websites:

www.compassionfatigue.org/index.html

www.proqol.org/ProQol_Test.html

www.figleyinstitute.com/indexMain.html

www.scholar.google.com/scholar?q=compassion+fatigue+figley&hl=en&as_sdt=0&as_vis=1&oi=scholart

IV. Develop a Personal Stress Prevention Plan

A. Don't forget your first love because you are not your ministry.

1. Your identity cannot and should not be primarily as a crisis pregnancy coach.

*"And He appointed twelve, so that they would **be with Him** and that He could send them out to preach and to have authority to cast out demons."—Mark 3:14-15*

*"...and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have left your **first love**."—Revelation 2:3-4*

B. Learn what it means to have joy and understand that it is not the same thing as happiness or pleasure.

C. Learn to depersonalize the process and limit your time around negative people or those who are always in pain.

D. Learn to rest because God has a lot to say about rest and slow down the rate of change.

*"If the axe is dull and he does not **sharpen** its edge, then he must exert more strength."—Ecclesiastes 10:10*

E. Maintain a healthy foundation of sleep in your daily routine.

*"In peace I will both lie down and **sleep**, for You alone, O Lord, make me to dwell in safety."—Psalm 4:8*

*"When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your **sleep** will be sweet."*—**Proverbs 3:24**

F. Pay attention to diet and exercise regimens.

*"All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything. Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them, yet **the body is not for immorality**, but for the Lord, and **the Lord is for the body**. Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power. Do you know that **your bodies are members of Christ?**"*—**1 Corinthians 6:12-15**

*"Do you not know that **your body is a temple** of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore **glorify God in your body.**"*—**1 Corinthians 6:19-20**

G. Learn to be silent and learn to be still.

*"But Jesus Himself would **often slip away** to the wilderness and pray."*—**Luke 5:16**

*"**Be still** and know that I am God."*—**Psalms 46:10**

*"But know that the Lord has set apart the godly man for Himself; the Lord hears when I call Him. Tremble, and do not sin; meditate in your heart upon your bed, and **be still.**"*—**Psalms 43:3-4**

*"The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him. It is good that he **waits silently** for the salvation of the Lord."*—**Lamentations 3:25-26**

H. Create outlets to avoid stagnation.

"Give, and it shall be given to you. They will pour it into your lap a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."—**Luke 6:38**

*"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of **living water**.'"—**John 7:37-38***

I. Seek to give your burdens to God each day.

*"Cast your **burden** upon the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken."*—**Psalms 55:22**

*"Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our **burden**, the God who is our salvation."*—**Psalms 68:10**

*"Come to Me, all you who are **weary and heavy laden**, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For **My yoke is easy** and My burden is light."*—**Matthew 11:28-30**

J. Learn to triage your daily life events.

*"Teach me good **discernment** and knowledge, for I believe in Your commandments."*—**Psalms 119:66**

*"The **steps** of a man are established by the Lord and He delights in his way."*—**Psalms 37:23**

K. Learn to have realistic expectations of yourself and others.

*“Discretion will guard you, **understanding** will watch over you.”—Proverbs 2:11*

*“For He Himself knows **our frame**; He is mindful that we are but dust.”—Psalm 103:14*

L. Seek to resolve those things that can be attended to easily and quickly.

*“Catch the foxes for us, the **little foxes** that are ruining the vineyards while our vineyards are in blossom.”—Song of Solomon 2:15*

*“A **little leaven** leavens the whole lump of dough.”—Galatians 5:9*

M. Learn to manage your time by saying, “No,” or your time will control you.

*“There is an **appointed time** for everything. And there is a **time** for every event under heaven...He has made everything appropriate in its **time**.”—Ecclesiastes 3:1-11*

*“But as for me, I trust in You, O Lord, I say, ‘You are my God.’ **My times** are in Your hands.”—Psalm 31:14-15*

N. Learn to delegate to others whenever, wherever, and however it’s appropriate.

***Jethro counsels Moses:** “The thing that you are doing is not good. **You will surely wear out**, both yourself and these people who are with you, for the task is too heavy for you; **you cannot do it alone.**”—Exodus 18:13-26*

***The Apostles respond to the need:** “Therefore, brethren, select among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, **whom we may put in charge of this task.**”—Acts 6:1-5*

*“The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, **entrust these** to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”—2 Timothy 2:2*

O. Find one or two key people in your life to be accountable to.

“Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, **seeking someone to devour.**”—1 Peter 5:8

Isolation is the enemy’s plan: “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to **sift you like wheat**; but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.”—Luke 22:31-32

Who is standing with you? **1 Kings 4:1-6**

V. My Personal Commitment

Based on what God has been speaking to my spirit and challenging me with, I will commit to change by beginning with the following three things:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Endnotes

¹American Institute of Stress, accessed September 5, 2012, www.stress.org.

²American Heart Association, accessed September 5, 2012, [www.american heart.org](http://www.americanheart.org).

³Ibid.