

FIRST RESPONDER COMPASSION FATIGUE



First responders witness highly stressful or traumatic events every day. Constant exposure to these events can lead to compassion fatigue (CF). This is characterized by a burnout feeling that positive change is unachievable and that nothing can be done to make the situation better. An example of compassion fatigue is reviving the same person with naloxone and feeling it is not making a difference because the person continues to use drugs.

Signs of CF

- Lack of energy and motivation for work
- Feeling lack of purpose

- Emotional exhaustion (lethargy, apathy, depression)
- Feeling drained or "used up" after work
- Hopelessness, as if nothing you can do will help
- Pervasive negative attitude
- Low feeling of accomplishment
- Decreased job satisfaction
- Lower productivity
- Intention to leave job/turnover
- Reduced commitment to the job
- Cold/dismissive attitude
- Cynical

Tips to Combat CF

- Focus on the four components of resilience: relaxation, adequate sleep, nutrition, physical activity
- Speak openly about how you feel with coworkers who understand
- Educate yourself about the people you are serving and the disease of addiction
- Notice, acknowledge, and appreciate the work that you do
- Familiarize yourself with the recovery process and know that you are making a difference because people do seek treatment

Resources

If you are experiencing compassion fatigue or suffer from burnout, review the sources below for more tips and treatment options.