

Compassion Satisfaction



Definition

Although there are risks to those working in the helping field, there are also rewards and benefits that come from this work. Compassion satisfaction is the positive consequence of helping behavior. Compassion satisfaction is the pleasure you derive from helping, positive feelings we have for colleagues and a good feeling resulting from the ability to assist others and make a contribution³. Compassion satisfaction occurs when you find meaning and fulfillment in your work. Compassion satisfaction is the direct opposite of compassion fatigue and can protect you from burnout and secondary traumatic stress².

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Signs

The indicator of compassion satisfaction is the sense of pleasure and fulfillment that healthcare providers derive from their work. Compassion satisfaction associated feelings include fulfillment, reward, achievement, happiness, enrichment, inspiration, energy, gratitude and hope.



Case Example





Fatimah is a 50-year old nurse who works within an oncology department. Approximately 15 years ago, Fatimah went through a period of feeling fatigued, lacking in motivation and having difficulty finding meaning in her work. At the time, she was working long hours, with a heavy caseload of patients and did not feel supported by her colleagues and supervisor. She experienced low mood, was more irritable with her children and spouse and found it difficult to experience pleasure in the leisure activities she used to enjoy. With the help of a mental health counselor and engaging in counseling, Fatimah realized that she was experiencing burnout and symptoms of compassion fatigue. As a result of this realization, Fatimah began to implement gradual changes in her life. She started by ensuring that she got enough and good quality sleep, improved her diet to eat healthy foods and engaged in moderate exercise. She became intentional in planning activities with her children that both she and her children would enjoy and she and her spouse ensured that they scheduled time together. Fatimah also engaged in a job search and obtained a nursing job in a health facility that was well staffed, had reasonable working hours with scheduled rest periods, and a positive and collaborative relationship amongst team members. She felt supported by her new supervisor who was invested in mentoring Fatimah and providing her with opportunities for her continued professional growth. Over time, Fatimah's physical and emotional symptoms improved. She found herself enjoying her job once again and feeling especially gratified and fulfilled by her work with patients.



Factors that increase Compassion Satisfaction

Research indicates that the following elements influence a person’s level of compassion satisfaction: use of professional counseling, co-worker dynamics, time spent in direct client care, longer duration in current position, work hours per shift, older age, hobbies, quality of social supports, and exercise¹.

The likelihood of experiencing compassion satisfaction is also increased by developing healthy personal and workplace practices. These include:

 Behavioral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leisure activities • Address and minimize work and personal factors that contribute to stress, burnout, compassion fatigue and secondary traumatic stress.
 Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective decision making
 Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate and restorative rest • Physical exercise • Healthy eating habits
 Working Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective communication, teamwork and collaboration • Appropriate staffing • A culture of meaningful recognition • Effective leaders that promote a culture of caring • Recognition • Professional development • Debriefing • Eliminating mistrust and intimidating behavior

Refer to handouts on burnout, compassion fatigue and secondary traumatic stress for additional guidance on self-care practices.

 **References**

1. Jarrad, R.A. & Hammad, S. (2020). Oncology nurses’ compassion fatigue, burnout and compassion satisfaction. *Annals of General Psychiatry, 19(22)*, 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12991-020-00272-9>
2. Stamm, B.H. (2010). *The concise ProQOL manual*, 2nd Ed. Pocatello, ID: ProQOL.org.
3. Yilmaz, G. & Ustun, B. (2018). Professional quality of life in nurses: Compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue. *Journal of Psychiatric Nursing, 9(3)*, 205-211.