



Mental Health Works

Person centred. Evidence based. Solutions focused.

Secondary Traumatic Stress and Compassion Fatigue

Essentials



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
Mental health for all



Some Definitions

Primary Traumatization	Direct contact with a traumatic event
Secondary Traumatization	Indirect exposure, may develop from hearing about a traumatic event or caring for someone who has experienced such an event
Burnout	Defensive response to prolonged occupational exposure to demanding interpersonal situations that produce psychological strain and provide inadequate support
Compassion Fatigue	Consequence of working with a significant number of traumatized individuals in combination with a strong empathic orientation or a caregiver's reduced capacity and interest in being empathetic for a suffering individual
Secondary Traumatic Stress	The distress and emotional disruption connected to an encounter with an individual who has experienced a primary traumatization
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	Psychological disorder associated with a stress response from directly experiencing a traumatic event



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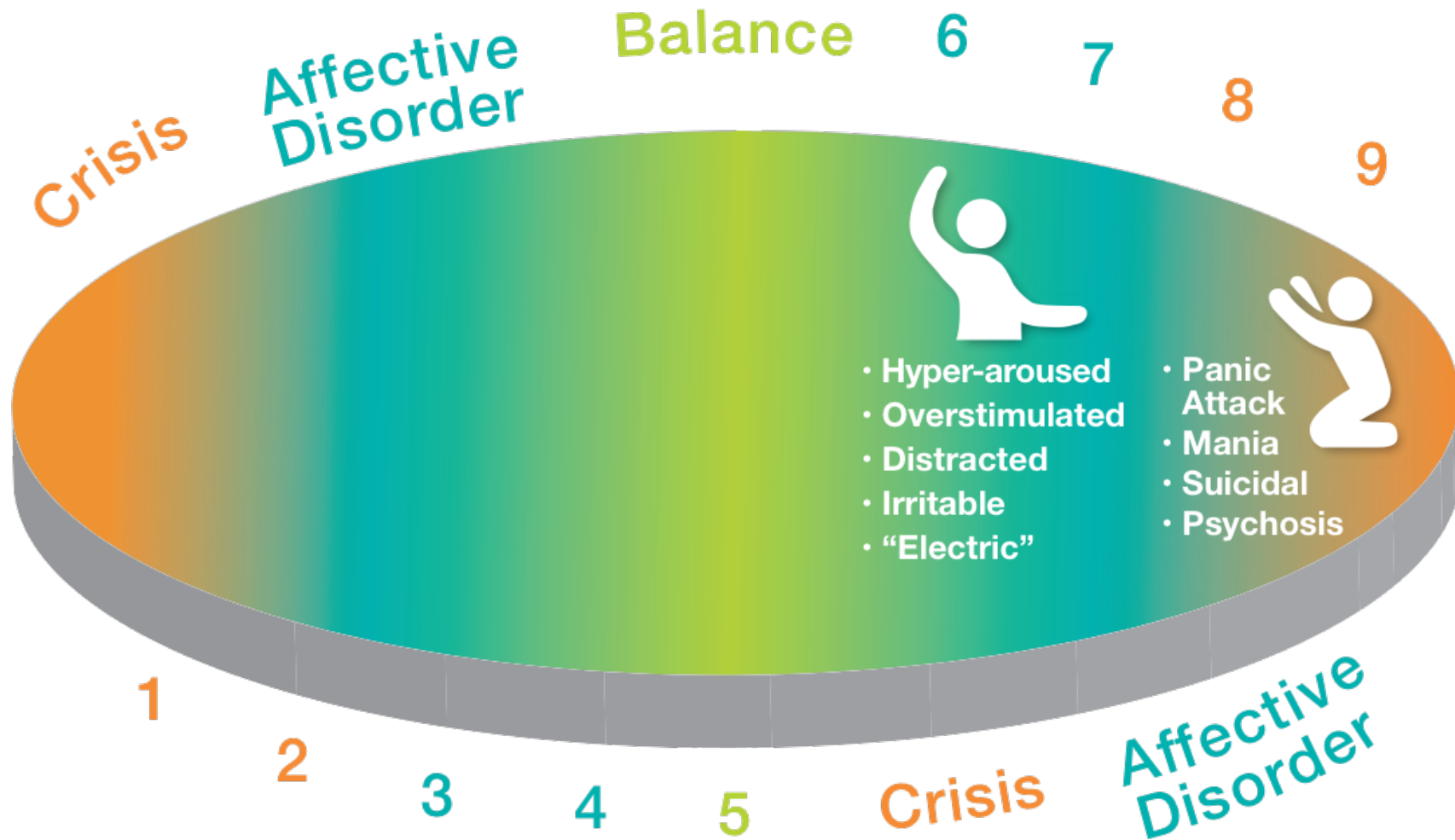
Secondary Traumatic Stress

- Secondary traumatic stress is a disruption of an individual's schema, typically their understanding of safety and control
- It occurs when a practitioner or listener engages with a person who has lived through a traumatic experience
- These disruptions can be pervasive (effect all aspects of life), cumulative (the more you listen, the greater the disruption), and permanent.



Awareness

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Secondary Traumatic Stress

- What changes

- ↑ Worry
- ↑ Exhaustion
- ↑ Avoidance
- ↑ Intrusive Thoughts
- ↓ Concentration
- ↓ Sleep
- ↓ Energy

- Risk factors

- Stress
- Trauma
- Sustained Contact

- Treatments

- Psychotherapy
- Mindfulness
- Medication



Compassion Fatigue

- Compassion fatigue has been described as the “cost of caring” for others in emotional pain (Figley, 1982)
- The profound emotional and physical erosion that takes place when helpers are unable to refuel and regenerate



**What does Compassion
Fatigue look like?**



MHW Approach



1

“I’ve noticed...”



2

“Tell me more...”



3

“What can we do together?”



P

“I’m here to help”

Intentional Noticing



- Paying attention to an individual's exposure on purpose
 - Starts a day-to-day baseline
 - Significant change in behaviour, performance, etc.
 - Considers context
- Starting the conversation about **Secondary Traumatic Stress and Compassion Fatigue**
 - I've noticed...
 - I'm wondering...
 - I want to hear more



Responding

Active Listening



- Active listening
 - Building validation, safety, clarity
 - “Thank you for being so open...”
 - “Tell me more...”
- Active hearing
 - Seek understanding



Responding

Working Together



- How can I help?
- Recovery is likely and expected



Responding



Protective Factors

- Awareness of environmental stress
- Having a sense of control at work
- Balanced client load
 - Reducing hours spent working directly with traumatized individuals is the single most effective way of reducing STS
- Social support:
 - Quality supervision
 - Constructive and supportive team

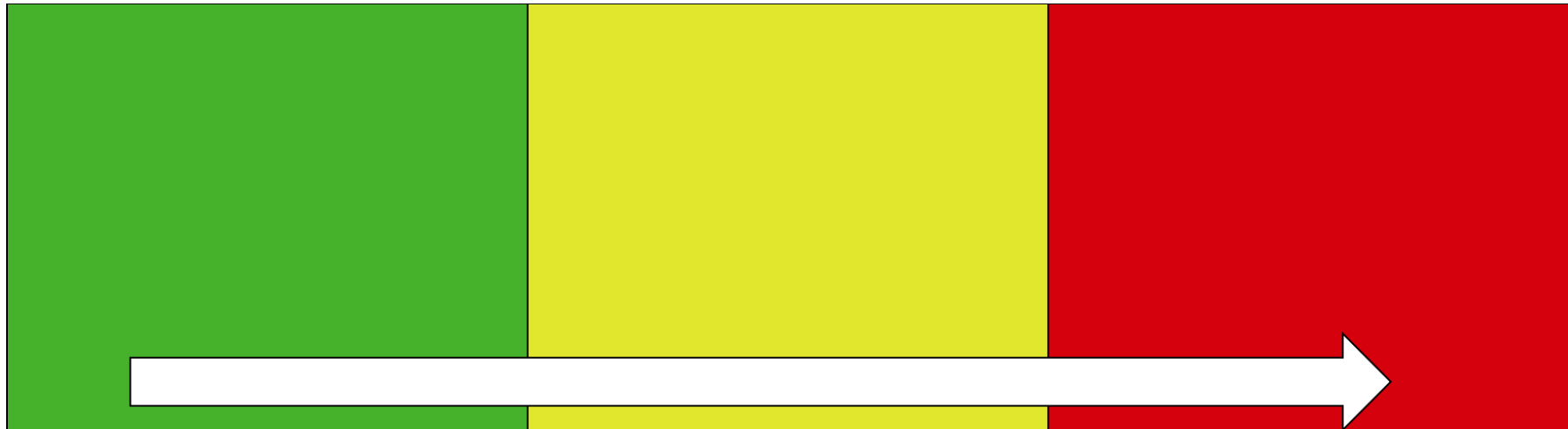


**What else can I do
to address my own
compassion fatigue?**



Protective Factors/Self-care

- Self awareness
- The Warning Signs Continuum (Françoise Mathieu)
Physical, Behavioral, Emotional





Protective Factors/Self-care

- Make time
- Work on personal boundaries
- Redirect attention to ourselves
- Address past pain & trauma
- Nurture supportive social network
- Ask for help
- Be mindful/Cultivate equanimity
- Physical exercise
- Learned coping and grounding skills



The Benefits

- Addressing mental health at work benefits individuals and the organization
 - Higher job satisfaction and greater organizational commitment
 - Improves performance, attendance and productivity, more effective accommodation, return to work
- Preventative awareness and informed responding improves knowledge of triggers, strengths, and solutions.

Resources





Final things

Evaluation form

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Thank you!

from Mental Health Works



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