



# Preventing Compassion from Becoming Fatigue: Self-Care Tips for Nursing Home Staff

November 7, 2024 | 2-3 p.m. EST



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**EXCELLENCE**  
FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH  
IN NURSING FACILITIES

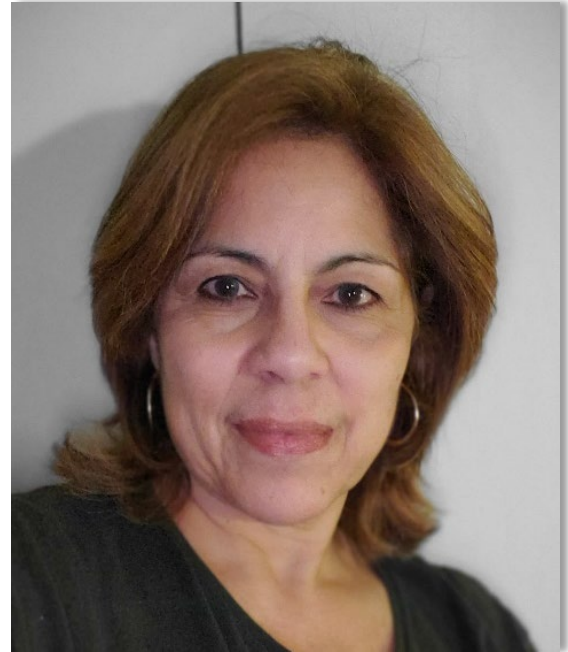
# Presenter

## **Diana Padilla, MCPC, CTSS, CARC**

### **RESEARCH PROJECT MANAGER**

Diana has worked in the behavioral health field for over 24 years. She is the technical assistance and implementation specialist on screening, brief intervention and referral to treatment, for the Northeast & Caribbean Addiction Technology Transfer Center, (NeC-ATTC).

Using a cultural and recovery-oriented perspective, Diana teaches how to incorporate evidence-based practices and enhance strategies and interventions to address health and behavioral health needs of communities at risk.



# Training Objectives

- Review work dynamics that affect a nursing home staff's ability to take care of themselves.
- List potential effects that staff's secondary trauma can have on their residents.
- List warning signs of the dedicated but stressed-out nursing home staff.
- List practical strategies for building resiliency.

# Some Current Challenges with Nursing Homes

- A June 2023 survey, 55% of nursing home providers say that they have turned away residents because of labor shortage.
- 48% of nursing homes have a waiting list for prospective residents of at least a few days.
- More than half of nursing homes (those included in the study) are operating at a loss.

# Documented by Nursing Home Staff

- Physical and emotional expressions of compassion fatigue.
- Compassion fatigue is associated with decreased quality of care.
- Nursing staff have a desire to make a difference in the lives of residents and may go beyond their 'expected' parameters.

# Consider this Scenario

It's late evening, and your watch alarm went off an hour ago. You promised yourself you'd stop then, yet here you are, reviewing resident care plans.

You're dedicated and passionate about helping residents in care, but the blurred lines between personal and professional life turn your passion into exhaustion.

*...sound familiar?*

# Question – Chat Box

What is the most important factor for resident care?

**You!**

# The Helping Profession

- Ability to effectively and compassionately communicate with residents (and their families).
- Demonstrate compassion, integrity and respect.
- Demonstrate respect for resident's privacy and autonomy.
- Apply the principles of ethics to decision making.





# Self-Reflect

Why do nursing facility staff continue to work beyond weariness?



# Empathy

“Empathy is a complex cognitive and affective process that allows humans to experience concern for others, comprehend their emotions, and eventually help them.”

- Helps create a safe space
- Essential to the therapeutic alliance as a predictor of successful client/patient outcomes

# Exposure and Absorption

- Listening to stories
- Collecting data as part of their efforts to intervene to identify issues
- Provide the care services with kindness and empathy
- Facilitating crisis interventions
- Conflicted by work related care issues, empathetic relationship to residents, and having to do 'more with less.'

# Compassion Fatigue or Empathetic Strain (ES)

- **Compassion Fatigue** is the emotional residue or strain of exposure to working with those suffering from the consequences of traumatic events.
- Refers to the profound emotional and physical exhaustion that helping professionals and caretakers can develop over the course of their career as helpers.

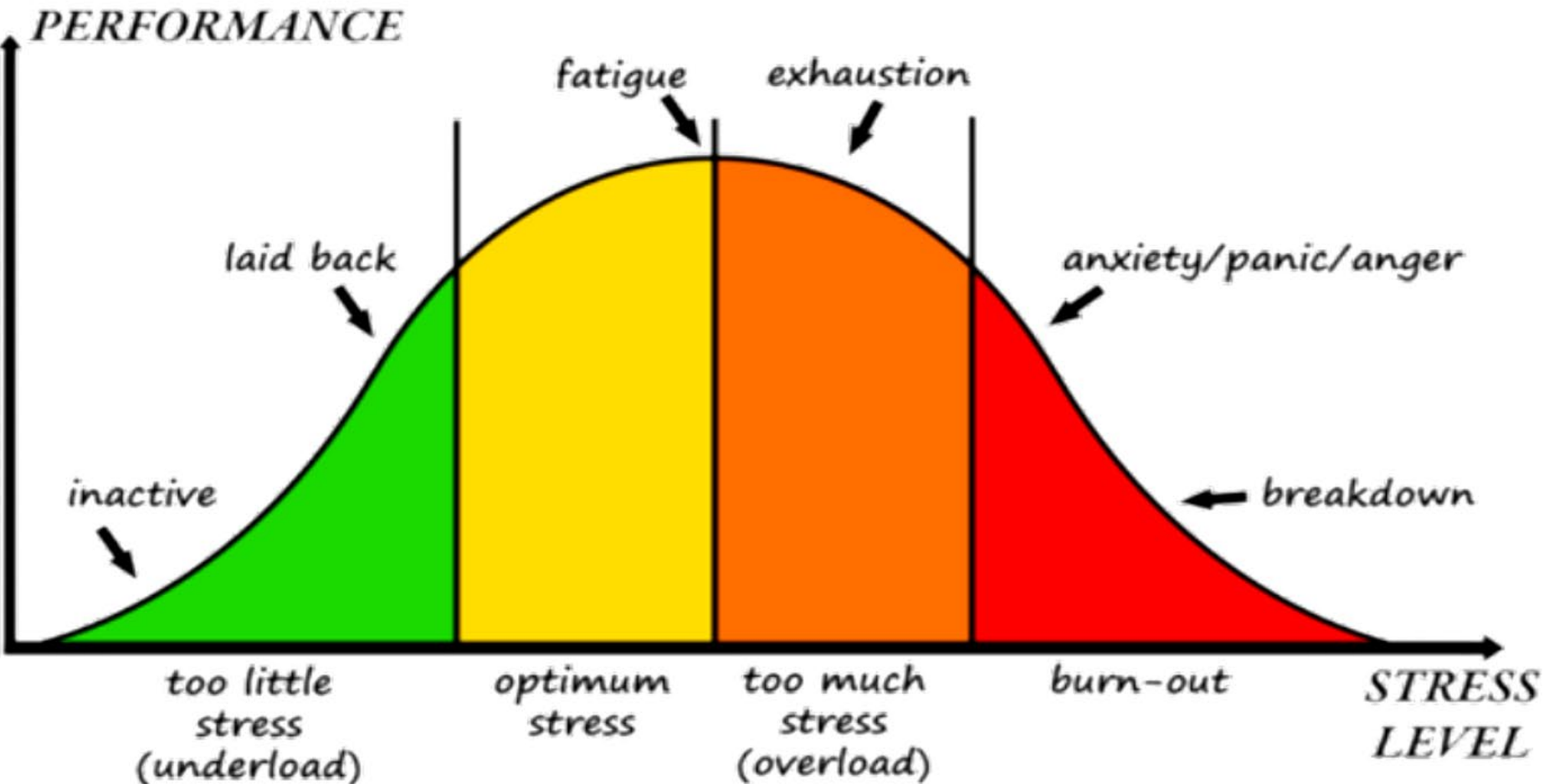
# Compassion Fatigue Factors

- Stress-related symptoms experienced by caregivers in reaction to working with traumatized people over an extended period of time.
- Has a more rapid onset while burnout emerges over time.
- Faster recovery (less severe, if recognized and managed early) but can co-exist.

# Different From...

- Burn out - cumulative process marked by emotional exhaustion and withdrawal associated with increased workload and institutional stress, NOT trauma-related.
- Vicarious trauma - emotional residue of exposure that peer professionals have from working with people as they are hearing their trauma stories and become witnesses to the pain, fear, and terror that trauma survivors have endured.

# Stress Curve



# Potential Course of Impact

- **Phase 1** “Zealot” – full of enthusiasm, go the extra mile, handholding, extra care, willingness to do anything
- **Phase 2** “Irritability” – begin to take shortcuts, avoid people and conversation about work, make mistakes
- **Phase 3** “Withdrawal” – residents become irritants, enthusiasm disappears, avoid discussing your job, avoid people & work
- **Phase 4** “Zombie” – go through the motions, no humor, no fun, disconnected from emotions, lost compassion, lost hope



# Association with Compassion Fatigue

The main factors included the professionals' own

**Trauma history**

**Empathy**

**Caseload**

# 5 Signs to Be Aware Of

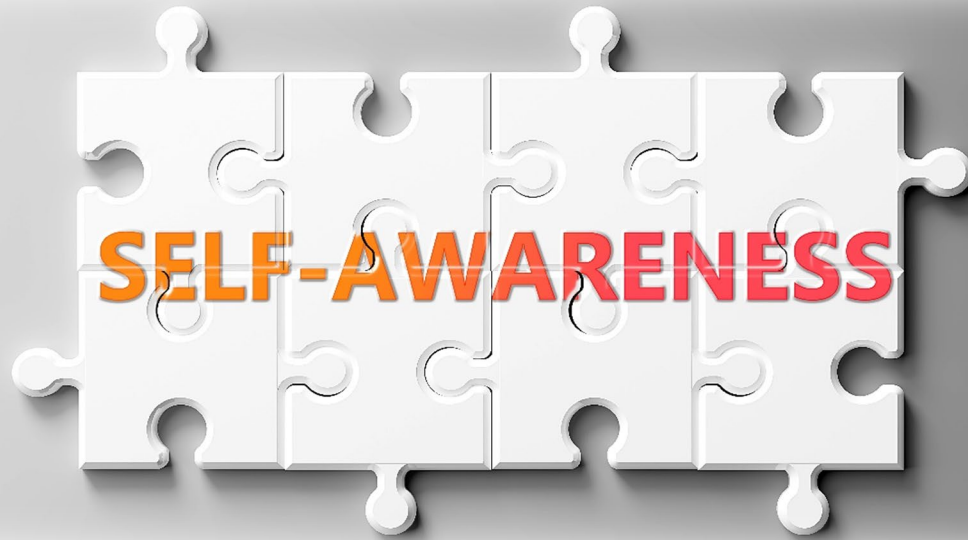
- **Apathy:** You literally just can't anymore
- **Anger:** You're angry at the person experiencing abuse
- **Isolation:** You're avoiding people
- **Negativity:** You've become a pessimist
- **Fatigue:** You're tired, all, the, time!

If you believe a coworker might be experiencing negative reactions to compassion fatigue, consider —

- reaching out and talking to them individually about the impact of the work;
- helping them establish a consistent work-to-home transition that creates an important boundary and safe place outside the workplace;
- encouraging them to attend to the basics—sleep, healthy eating, hygiene, and exercise;
- supporting connections with family, friends, and coworkers;
- referring them to organizational supports such as a peer support team, employee assistance program, or chaplain; and
- encouraging them to discuss their experience with their supervisor

# Self-check

Professional Quality of Life: Compassion Satisfaction and Fatigue Version 5 (ProQOL). [www.proqol.org](http://www.proqol.org)



# Changing Work-Life to *Life-Work* Balance

- Making a bigger impact at work and in the world (but without sacrificing your personal healthy or happiness for it).
- Having a positive impact on your family's lives.
- Being present in the moment (with actual space to think).
- Prioritizing what's important to you (including self-care) without guilt shame or apology.
- Having strong boundaries that you feel good about enforcing.
- Let go of trying to do it all.

# Steps to Building Resiliency

- **Connecting:** Reach out to family and friends.
- **Mobilizing:** Get involved in the community.
- **Energizing:** Get enough sleep. Exercise, eat healthy foods, and stay hydrated.
- **Training:** Participate in trainings to help strengthen resilience. Learn how to recognize the signs of mental health distress
- Create your own **Wellness Plan.**

# Creating Your Wellness Action Plan



- Physical health
- Emotional and mental health
- Self-care and me-time
- Building new habits
- Having fun

# Quote

***“Hope is important because it can make the present moment less difficult to bear. If we believe that tomorrow will be better, we can bear a hardship today.”***

Thich Nhat Hanh



# Questions?



# COE-NF Resource – Mindful Moment



**Dealing with uncertainty and being pulled into different directions can create stressful moments.**

Mindfulness is a technique or strategy that helps us re-center our thoughts.

**Here are some steps to practice Mindfulness!**

- Find a quiet place to meditate.
- Get comfortable and close your eyes.
- Now, breathe and focus on your breath.
- Breathe in.
- Breathe out.
- When your mind wanders, simply bring it back to your breathing.
- When you are ready to stop, think of something you're grateful for.
- Feel refreshed and renewed.

**Take time daily to relax, be in the moment and focus on your breathing. Consistency is key!**

This material was prepared by Alliant Health Solutions as a strategic partner to Morehouse School of Medicine's National COVID-19 Resiliency Network (NCRN) and modified by the Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health in Nursing Facilities. This work is made possible by grant number 1H795M087155 from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.



Scan the QR code or visit the link below to view this resource.



<https://bit.ly/COENFMindfulnessmoment>

# COE-NF Resource: Stop the Merry-Go-Round: Ways to Help Calm the Mind and Body

 **Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health in Nursing Facilities**

## Stop the Merry-Go-Round:

Ways to help calm the mind and body



During periods of stress, you may find your thoughts spinning. When you feel like your thoughts are going round and round, like your brain is on a merry-go-round, try 'grounding' techniques to refocus your thoughts.

Grounding is a way to calm worried thoughts by using your five senses. When your thoughts are calm, your body is more relaxed.

**To feel calmer, finish one or more of the following sentences:**

I see \_\_\_\_\_ example: I see the color red.  
I feel \_\_\_\_\_ example: I feel the chair I am sitting on.  
I hear \_\_\_\_\_ example: I hear water running.  
I smell \_\_\_\_\_ example: I smell the coffee.  
I taste \_\_\_\_\_ example: I taste something sweet/sour.



**The more you practice, the better you get at staying calm and grounded!**

**Grounding can help anyone. Use this for yourself or help a resident stay grounded.**



This material was adapted in part from Mental Health America "Keep Your Mind Grounded", prepared by Alliant Health Solutions, and modified by the Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health in Nursing Facilities. This work is made possible by grant number 1H102401150 from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

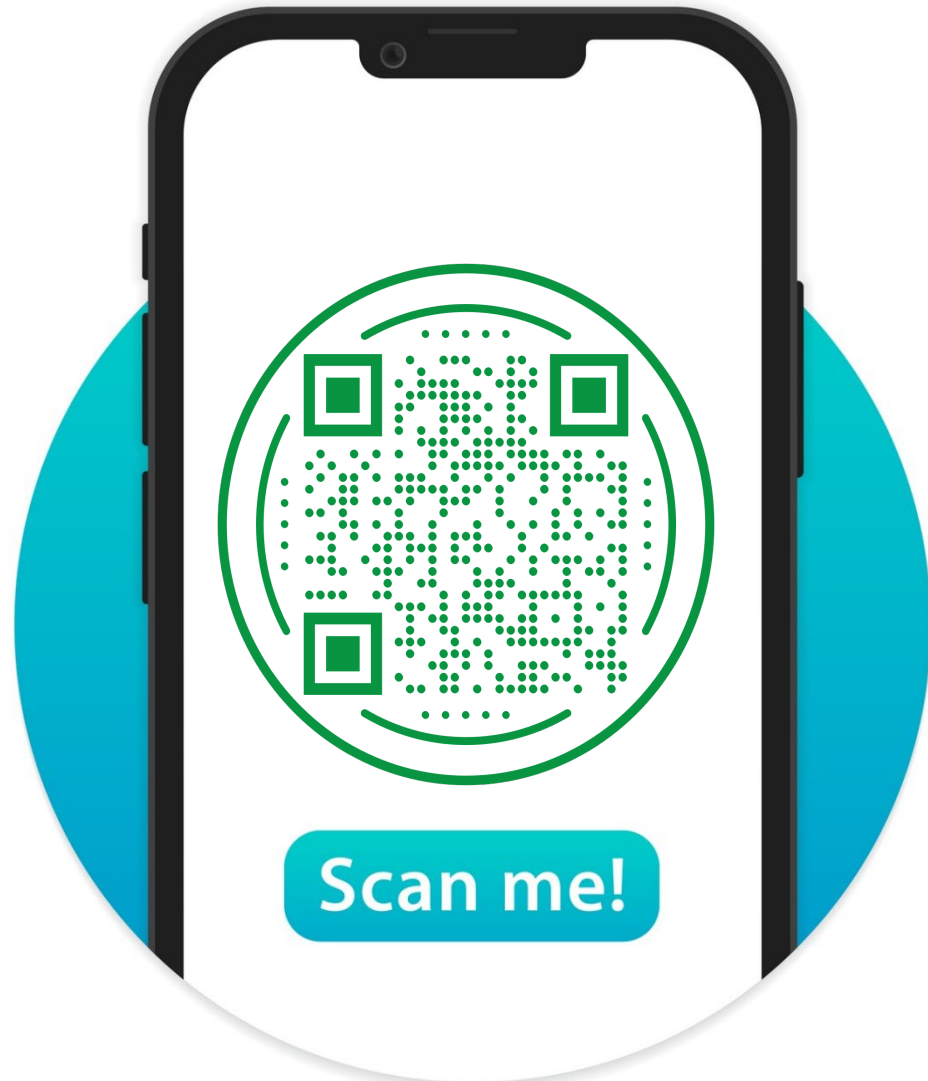
nursinghomebehavioralhealth.org

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<https://bit.ly/COENFGrounded>

# Request Assistance



**To submit a request for assistance, scan the QR code.**

**We look forward to assisting you!**

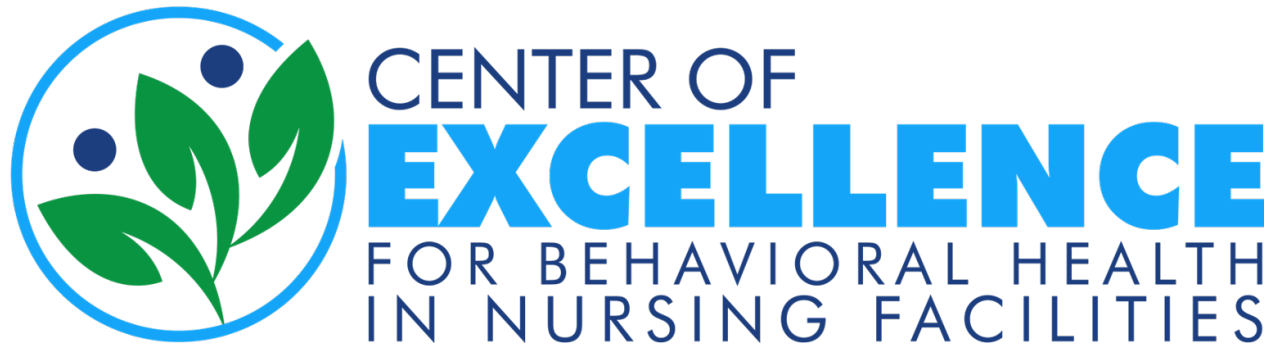
**Contact us:**

For more information or to request assistance, we can be reached by phone at **1-844-314-1433** or by email at [coeinfo@allianthealth.org](mailto:coeinfo@allianthealth.org).

**Visit the website:**

[nursinghomebehavioralhealth.org](http://nursinghomebehavioralhealth.org)

# Thank You!



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