

TEACHING ON AN EMPTY TANK: EDUCATOR COMPASSION FATIGUE

Julee Poole, Ph.D.

Austin Peay State University

Psychological Science and Counseling - Adjunct Faculty

poolej@apsu.edu

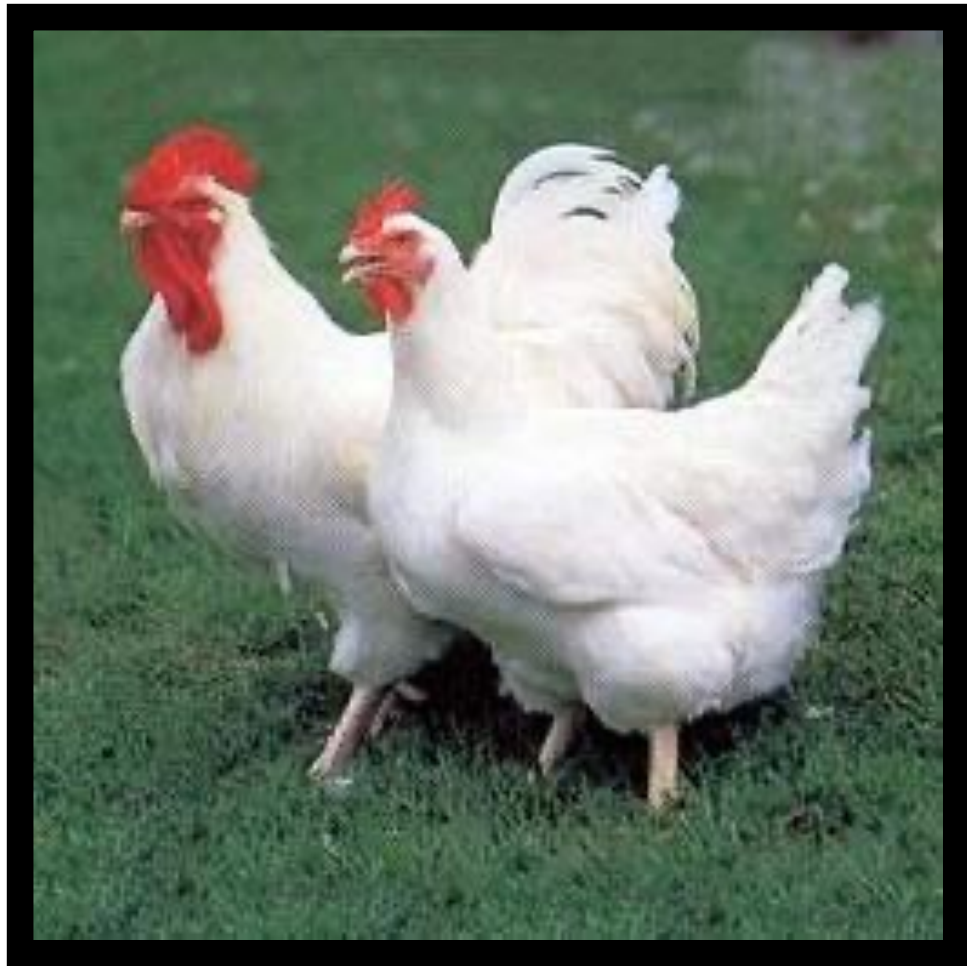
Dr. Julee Stamper Poole

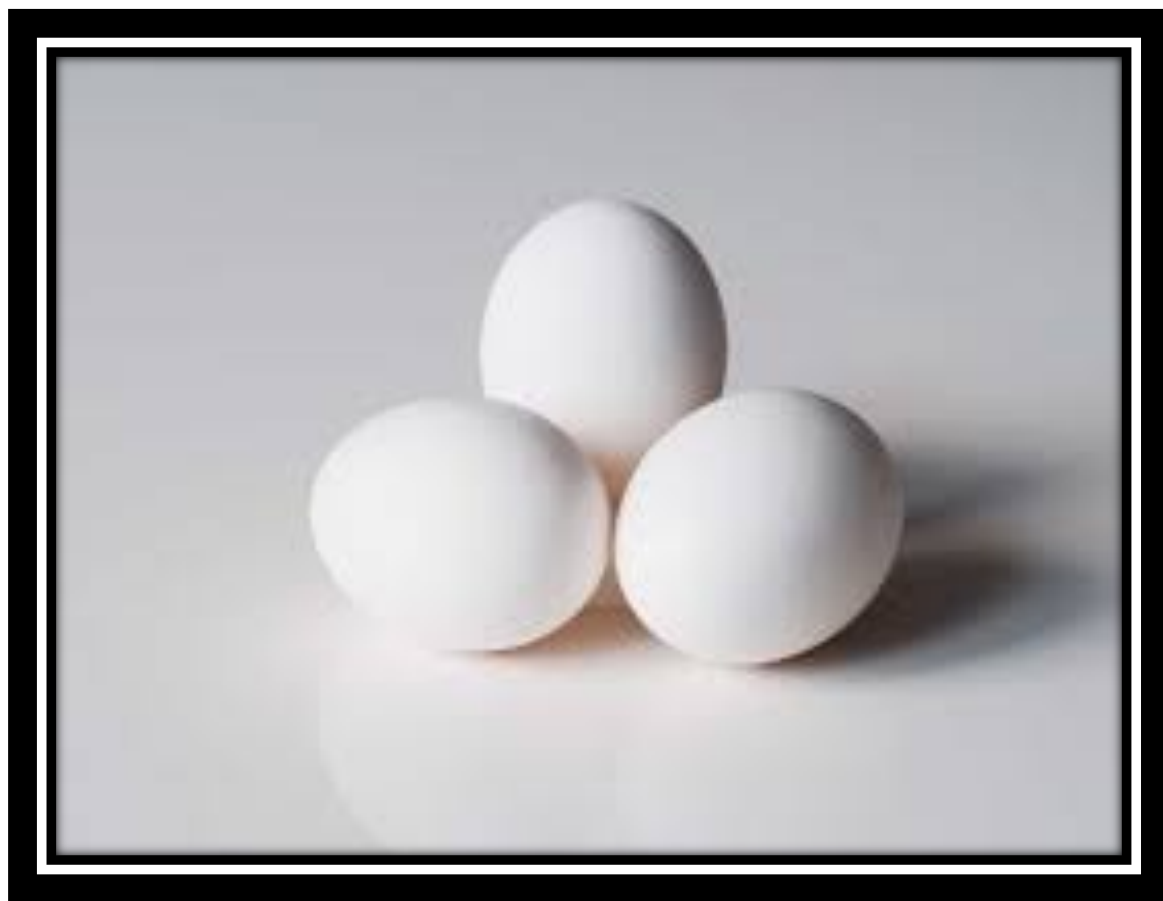
- B.S. in Psychology/ Sociology – Austin Peay State University
- B.S. in Criminal Justice with a concentration in Forensic Psychology - Purdue University Global
- M.S. in Mental Health Counseling - Austin Peay State University.
- Ph.D. in Psychology with a specialization in Family Psychology - Capella University.

- 30 years – mental health and addiction treatment provider
- APSU Psychological Science and Counseling -Adjunct faculty member since 2002
- Purdue University Global Graduate Psychology - Professor, Graduate Psychology– since 2007

Word Association

- What comes to mind when I say “Chicken”?





Chick-fil-A[®]



TM

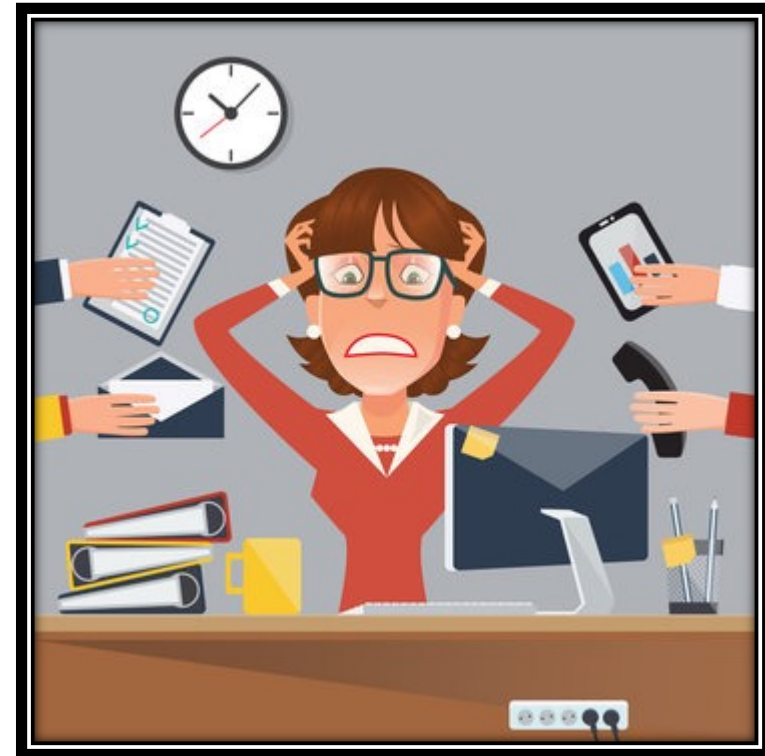
Word Association

- What comes to mind when I say “Work”?





**SHOW ME
THE MONEY!**



Word Association

- What comes to mind when I say “Post-traumatic Stress Disorder”?







Compassion Fatigue

- Compassion fatigue is the post-traumatic stress disorder related symptoms that you receive vicariously as a secondary target to trauma.
- Compassion fatigue is experienced by those in a helping profession.

Overview

- Educators who work directly with students experiencing significant emotional pain, physical distress, and traumatic experiences can be affected by students' trauma.
- This can result in secondary traumatic stress, known as compassion fatigue.
- Compassion Fatigue is the profound emotional, behavioral, physical, and spiritual exhaustion resulting from secondary traumatic stress.
- Educators need to understand the impact of compassion fatigue and how to combat it.
- In doing so, as an educator, you can continue teaching and serving student.

Learning Outcomes

The objectives for this presentation are for participants to:

1. Understand what compassion fatigue is and how it differs from burnout, how it develops, and the symptoms;
2. Examine the physical, emotional, spiritual, and work-related symptoms of compassion fatigue;
3. Explore ways to combat compassion fatigue successfully.

Defining Compassion and Fatigue

- **Compassion** - Sympathy for the suffering of others, often including the desire to help and make a difference.
- **Fatigue** - Mental or physical exhaustion: extreme tiredness or weariness resulting from physical or mental activity.

Defining Burnout

- **Burnout** is physical, emotional and mental exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment.
- A process, rather than a fixed condition, and becomes progressively worse over time.
- A chronic condition of perceived demands outweighing perceived resources and perceived awards. Includes gradual exposure to job strain, erosion of idealism, and a void of enjoyment in achievements
- Caused by long-term involvement in emotionally demanding situations
- **Exhaustion**
- **Depersonalization (cynicism)**
- **Reduced personal accomplishment.**

Defining Compassion Fatigue

- Compassion fatigue is not burnout
- **Compassion Fatigue** –
 - Profound emotional, behavioral, physical and spiritual exhaustion that helping professionals can develop when with caring for others who are in significant emotional pain and physical distress.
 - **Absorbing the trauma through the eyes and ears of your students.**
 - Loss of sympathy: a loss of sympathy for the suffering of others experienced by caregivers as a result of the demands made of them.
 - Loss of connection to self and others
 - Can be due to exposure to a single trauma or due to a cumulative level of trauma.

Compassion Fatigue vs. Burnout

Compassion Fatigue	Burnout
Inability to maintain a balance of empathy and objectivity	Anxiety
Difficulty focusing and concentrating	Irritability
Negativism and outbursts	Mood swings
Apathy	Insomnia
A diminished sense of purpose	Depression
Hopelessness	Sense of failure

Emotional Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

- No longer enjoying activities that have been fun in the past
- Depression
- Anger and resentment, explosive behaviors, aggression, irritability
- Loss of objectivity
- Memory issues
- Poor concentration, focus and judgement, easily distracted
- Loss of sense of meaning, hopelessness, emotional numbness
- Relationship issues with others
- Feeling vulnerable
- Excessive worrying
- Detachment
- Mental exhaustion
- Personal relationship issues – withdrawal, mistrust, overprotective, loneliness, lack of intimacy.
- Mood swings – difficulty managing emotions, emotional roller coaster
- Feeling emotionally numb or shut down
- Oversensitivity
- Anxiety
- Destructive coping mechanisms
- Reduced ability to feel sympathy and empathy
- Irrational fears
- Intrusive imagery or dissociation
- Hypersensitive or insensitivity to emotional situations
- Feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness
- Feelings of guilt, survivor guilt

Behavioral & Physical Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

- Restlessness
- Excessive use of substances – nicotine, alcohol, drugs
- Accident prone
- Jumpy, on edge
- Losing things
- Being rigid or inflexible, wanting to do everything the same way
- Using ineffective or harmful self-care practices
- Poor sleep
- Physical exhaustion
- Easily startled

Spiritual Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

- Existential questions or crises
- Questioning the meaning of life
- Loss of purpose
- Lack of self-satisfaction
- Strengthening, weakening, questioning of religious/spiritual faith
- Spiritual crisis
- Changes in beliefs, expectations, assumptions
- Loss of hope
- Anger at God, Higher Being
- Skepticism toward religion

Work-Related Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

- Preoccupation with student concerns
- Avoidance, increased absenteeism
- Feeling of dread
- Relationship issues with colleagues
- Avoiding interactions with students
- Diminished work enjoyment and productivity
- Feeling trapped by work,
- Having little compassion towards colleagues
- Working for a paycheck rather than for fulfillment
- A sense of worthlessness, disillusionment, and/or resentment associated one's work
- Reduced feelings of making a difference
- Impaired ability to make decisions, loss of objectivity
- Difficulty separating work life from personal life
- Work-life balance issues

Compassion Fatigue

What the Research Tells Us

- **Helping Professions**

- Law Enforcement, Courts, Corrections, Dispatchers
- Medical Professions – Doctors, Nurses, other medical professionals
- Persons working in Ministry positions
- Social Workers, Psychologists, Psychiatrists, Case Managers, Therapists, Counselors
- Caregivers
- K-12 Teachers

Compassion Fatigue Research

What We Need to Know

- The literature on compassion fatigue related to professionals working in higher education is limited to academic advisors, student affairs professionals and campus police
- The research does not tell us if higher education faculty are at risk of developing compassion fatigue through their direct work with students.

Compassion Fatigue Research

What We Need to Know

- Kicking off a new pilot study in the fall of 2023 through Purdue University Global to answer the questions:
 - Should higher education faculty identified as “helping professionals”?
 - Are higher education faculty susceptible to experiencing compassion fatigue?
 - Are Higher Education Faculty at risk of developing compassion fatigue through their work with students?
- On ground and online faculty and adjunct faculty across disciplines.
- Quantitative survey research utilizing the Professional Quality of Life Scale and the Compassion Satisfaction and Fatigue Test.
- Descriptive and correlational analyses

Combatting Compassion Fatigue

- Prevention is the best way to combat compassion fatigue
- Prevention begins with the individual and extends to professional networking and organizational systems.
- **Overall Goal – Build Compassion Satisfaction**

Compassion Satisfaction

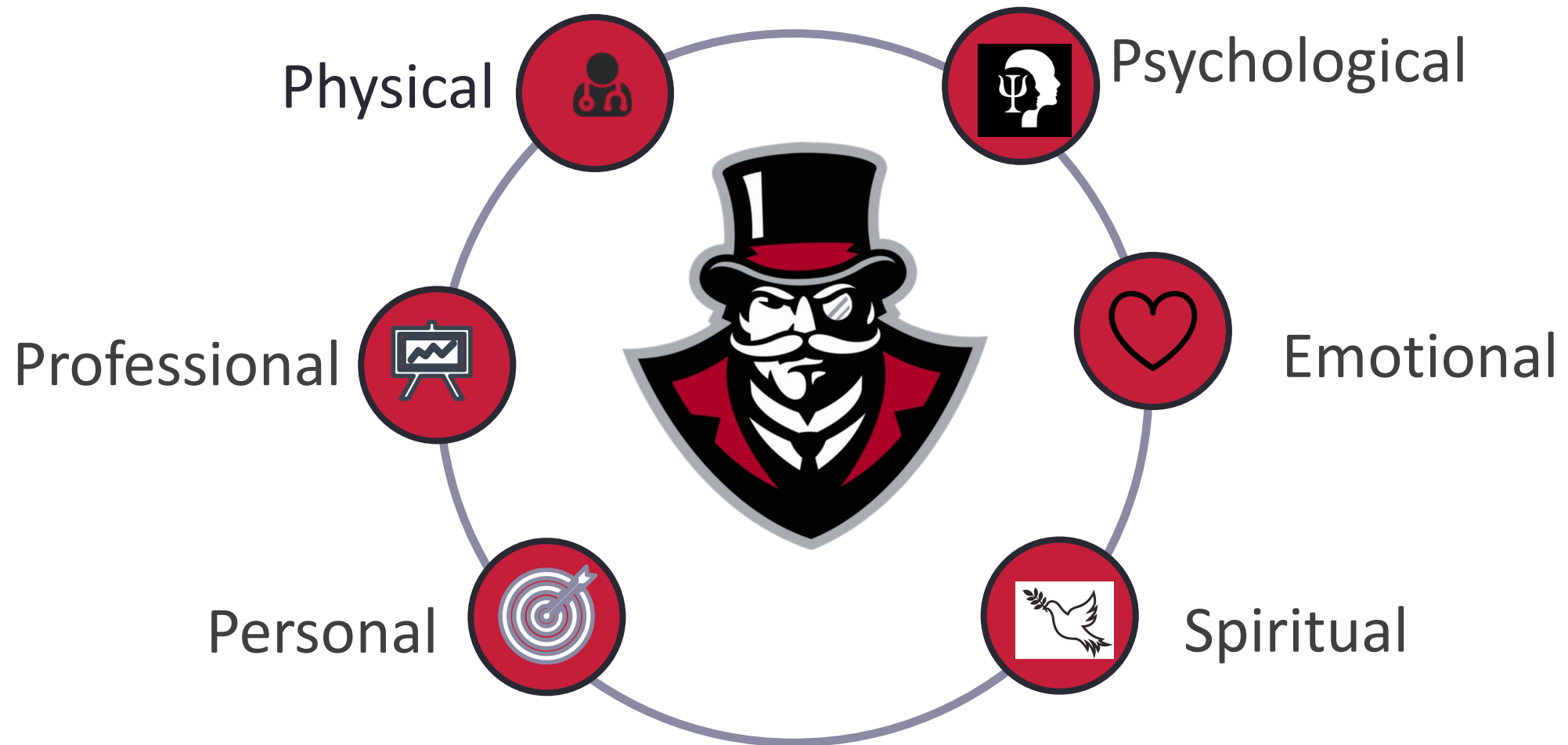
- Defined as the pleasure, meaning, and satisfaction derived from working with persons who need assistance, help.
- Related to positive feelings through
 - Providing care/services
 - Making a difference in the lives of others and in the bigger system.
 - Working for an organization with a meaningful mission and like-minded colleagues
 - Altruism
 - Confidence in self

Combatting Compassion Fatigue

- Three categories of primary prevention.
 - **A** = Awareness
 - **B** = Balance
 - **C** = Connections

Combating Compassion Fatigue

Developing a Self-Care Plan



Thoughts, Comments, Questions?

- Thank You for the Opportunity to Share!
- If you would like a copy of this PowerPoint presentation and a listing of the references, please send an email to poolej@apsu.edu

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