

Compassion Fatigue

Compassion fatigue happens when someone continually puts other people's needs first while ignoring their own. It is common with adult children of narcissists.

Adult children of narcissists learned early to ignore their own needs & put their parents' needs first. Their parents demand it & it means the child has less of a chance of facing a narcissistic rage. Sadly, this sets in place a pattern of behavior that often lasts into adulthood. A lifetime of ignoring your own needs for the needs of others can take a toll, both physically & mentally.

There are a few tell tale signs of compassion fatigue..

You feel beyond tired. Sleep may help some but it won't fix the sort of mental, physical & even spiritual exhaustion you feel.

Being irritable is another. Little things that normally wouldn't bother you suddenly can seem like a huge crisis.

Anxiety is also common, especially if the person already has issues with anxiety. Lacking motivation can happen too. How can a person be motivated when they are exhausted & sick of doing for everyone else?

Trouble with sleep also happens. You may find yourself unable to sleep when normally you don't have that problem. You also may wake up frequently or have unusual dreams or nightmares that disrupt your sleep.

Depression is also a common problem with compassion fatigue. It's hard to be happy when you never think of or do for yourself.

A big red flag for compassion fatigue is feeling numb. You just don't care about another's suffering, even if the person is someone you love dearly. This numbness can happen easily when you have cared too much for too long.

Headaches can happen as well. If you never had migraines, they may start. At the very least, chances are your head may ache on a regular basis even if you never suffered with frequent headaches before.

If you can relate to any of these signs, then it's time for you to make some changes. You need a break & time to reevaluate your situation as well as to relax.

Make time to pray. Tell God how you feel, ask Him to show you what to do & then listen to what He tells you to do. He may be subtle, such as you suddenly getting the urge to resume a hobby you once enjoyed or spending time with your closest friend. Whatever you feel you should do, then do it! It WILL help you!

Also do things often that help you feel nurtured & comforted. Indulge in herbal teas, buy yourself that new CD you've been wanting or snuggle up in a soft blanket & watch Netflix all day. Little things like that can have a surprisingly positive affect on your emotional state.

Take frequent breaks. Everyone needs breaks & there is no shame in it. And, while you take that break, refuse to think at all about whatever is causing this compassion fatigue.

If you're a caregiver, arrange for help. Tell your family you need help a couple of days per week or whatever you need. If they refuse to help, look into professional in home care. Contact your local Department Of Aging or Social Services. They may be able to help you or at least point you in the right direction. Local churches also may be of some assistance, whether or not you're a member. Also, don't forget the library. Libraries are truly a wealth of information. My local library has a lot of very helpful pamphlets right inside the front door, & many of them pertain to caregiving.

Balance is the key to avoiding compassion fatigue. You have the right to say no & to set limits on what you do for others. After all, if you don't take care of yourself, how can you help others?