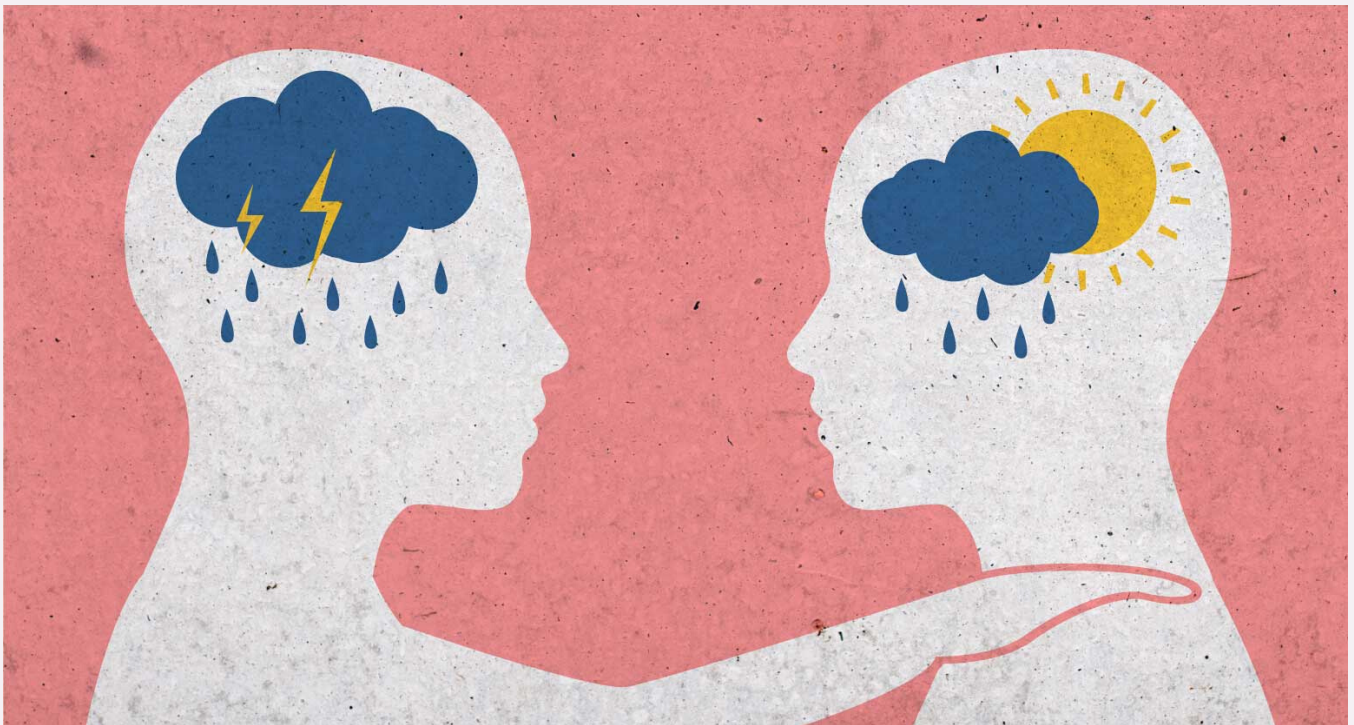


# AVOIDING COMPASSION FATIGUE

*A toolkit from 2-1-1 San Diego*



# How Can Compassion Fatigue Affect Me as a 2-1-1 Employee?

- **2-1-1 staff are at increased risk of compassion fatigue** because your job is about helping those who are most vulnerable
- **YOU** hear stories of pain, fear, and loss on a daily basis
- **YOU** can become overwhelmed when hearing these stories
- *With **COVID-19**, you also may feel worried, frustrated, or fearful—just like our callers—which can lead to experiencing negative symptoms of compassion fatigue more quickly*

## Compassion Fatigue

*What is it?*

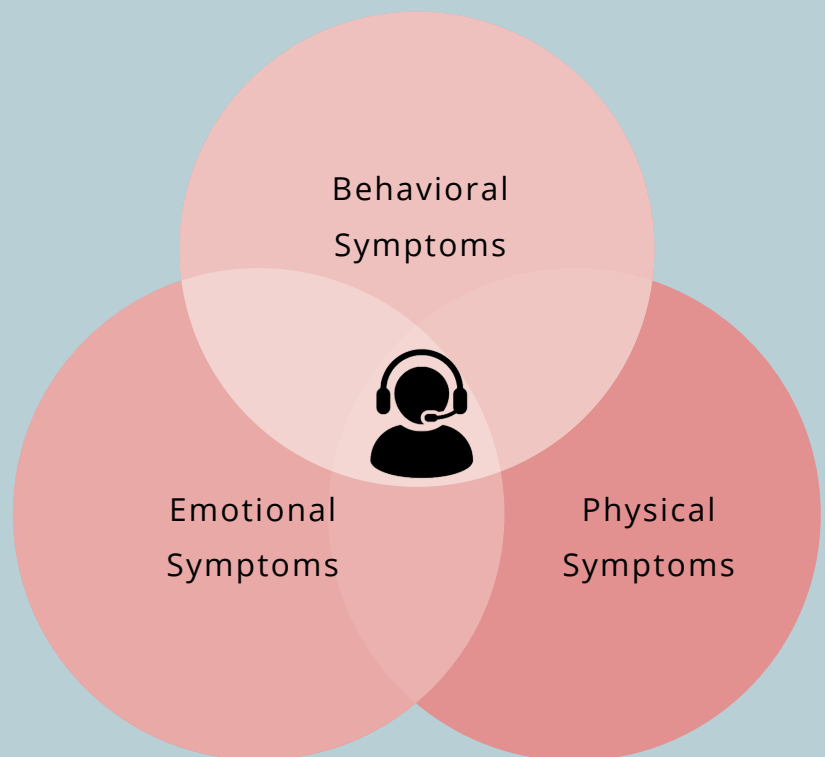
- Being overwhelmed by stories of suffering and need
- Feeling like you can't hear another story or help another client without getting angry or shutting down

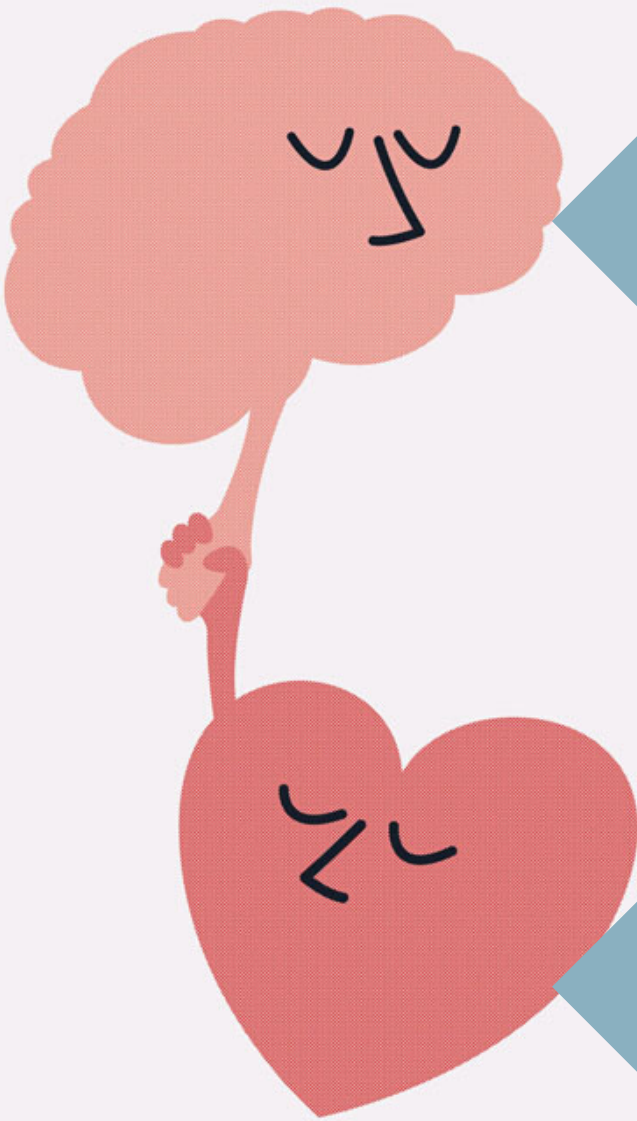
*How does it affect those experiencing it?*

- Compassion fatigue affects people who are exposed to others' trauma
- Can put physical and mental health at risk

Compassion fatigue and your closeness to your clients can affect you in a variety of ways.

These symptoms can be inter-related and feed into each other. Explore these symptoms further on the next page.





### Behavioral Symptoms:

#### In your personal life:

- Using drugs or alcohol to escape
- Sleep disturbances
- Overeating or bingeing on unhealthy foods
- Isolating yourself; not connecting with loved ones
- Poor hygiene

#### In your work:

- Becoming irritable with callers
- Loss of empathy
- Complaining about work and callers
- Cutting corners in your work—not completing documentation, etc.

### Emotional Symptoms:

- Heightened anxiety—being jumpy, fidgety, panicky
- Irritable and angry—snapping at callers, friends and family
- Sad/down—loss of energy and motivation; feeling like nothing matters
- Helpless and hopeless—feeling like you can't do anything to help
- Apathetic—not caring about or enjoying things you used to
- Blaming others—feeling like callers put themselves in bad situations and that they are to blame
- Burdened—feeling like the suffering of others is on your shoulders
- Bottling up your emotions

### Physical Symptoms:



BODY ACHES



EXHAUSTION



HEADACHES



MUSCLE TENSION



BRAIN FOG



DIGESTION ISSUES



## The ABCs of Compassion Fatigue Prevention

**A**

### AWARENESS

**Awareness** about issues and contributing factors

- Being aware of what events can cause fatigue

**Self-awareness**—knowing to check in with yourself and when you're experiencing compassion fatigue

**B**

### BALANCE

**Balancing:**

- Work and personal life
- The needs of clients and your own emotional needs
- All aspects of health—mental health, physical health, emotion health

**C**

### CONNECTIONS

- **Connect** with someone else to process your thoughts and reactions (ex: friend, family, etc.)
- Build a **positive support system** that supports you and doesn't fuel stress
- Interact with **animals or pets**—they're invulnerable to compassion fatigue!



## Resources

### TED Talks

▶ [The Edge of Compassion by Françoise Mathieu](#)

▶ [Compassion Fatigue: What is it and do you have it? by Juliette Watt](#)

### ProQOL Self-Assessment

The ProQOL is the most commonly used measure of the negative and positive effects of helping others who experience suffering and trauma.

[Click here to download the ProQOL and assess yourself now.](#)