



## SESSION 2 COMPASSION FATIGUE



1

## INTRODUCTIONS



**Erin Emery-Tiburcio, PhD, ABPP** is the Co-Director of the E4 Center and a nationally recognized leader in aging, behavioral health, and improving care across all communities. She serves as Professor of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences and Geriatric Medicine, Director of Geropsychology, and Co-Director of the RUSH Center for Excellence in Aging.



**Caryn Blanton, LCSW, ASW-G** is the Program Manager for the E4 Center, bringing extensive clinical social work experience with adults and older adults, as well as years of experience with program management at RUSH. She also incorporates mind-body practices into her work as a certified yoga teacher with training in yoga-informed psychotherapy.

2

## Program Overview

|                  | Date         | Title                                |
|------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| Session 1        | Feb 24       | Common Challenges in Caregiving      |
| <b>Session 2</b> | <b>Mar 4</b> | <b>Compassion Fatigue</b>            |
| Session 3        | Mar 11       | Grief and Loss                       |
| Session 4        | Mar 18       | Cultural and Language Considerations |
| Session 5        | Mar 25       | Managing Caregiver Needs in the Room |

 RUSH | Center for Excellence in Aging

3

---

## CAREGIVER STORY

Tracey Cargill-Smith

4

## To obtain credit you must:

Complete an electronic evaluation and generate your certificate.

### Accreditation Statement:

In support of improving patient care, RUSH University Medical Center is jointly accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE), and the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), to provide continuing education for the healthcare team.



### Credit Designation Statements

#### For Medicine:

Rush University Medical Center designates this live activity for a maximum of 1.00 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit(s)*<sup>™</sup>. Physicians should claim only credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

Successful completion of this CME activity, which includes participation in the evaluation component, enables the learner to earn credit toward the CME of the American Board of Surgery's Continuous Certification program. It is the CME activity provider's responsibility to submit learner completion information to ACCME for the purpose of granting ABS credit.

#### For Nursing:

Rush University Medical Center designates this live activity for a maximum of 1.00 nursing contact hour(s).

#### For Psychologists:

Rush University Medical Center designates this live activity for 1.00 CE credits in psychology. Continuing Education (CE) credits for psychologists are provided through the co-sponsorship of the American Psychological Association (APA) Office of Continuing Education in Psychology (CEP). The APA CEP Office maintains responsibility for the content of the programs.

#### For Social Work:

As a Jointly Accredited Organization, Rush University Medical Center is approved to offer social work continuing education by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Approved continuing education (ACE) program. Organizations, not individual courses, are approved under this program. Regulatory boards are the final authority on courses accepted for continuing education credit. Social workers completing this course receive 1.00 general continuing education credits.

**For Dietitians:** This live activity has been approved by the Commission on Dietetic Registration. Completion of this activity awards 1.00 CPEUs.

#### For physical therapy or occupational therapy:

RUSH University Medical Center is an approved provider for physical therapy (216.000378) and occupational therapy (224.000220) by the Illinois Department of Professional Regulation. Rush University Medical Center designates this live activity for 1.00 continuing education credits.

#### NBCC Credit:

RUSH University Medical Center is an approved provider by the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC ACEP No. 7599). This activity has been approved for 1.00 NBCC credit hours.



Rush University | 3/3/2026

5

5



Center for Excellence in Aging

## Compassion Fatigue

**Erin Emery-Tiburcio, PhD, ABPP**

Rush University Medical Center

**Cecilia Poon, PhD, ABPP**

Psychology Department, Nebraska Medicine

©Copyright 2026, Rush Center for Excellence in Aging

The course director(s), planner(s), faculty and reviewer(s) of this activity have no relevant financial relationship(s) with ineligible companies to disclose.



6



## Learning Objectives

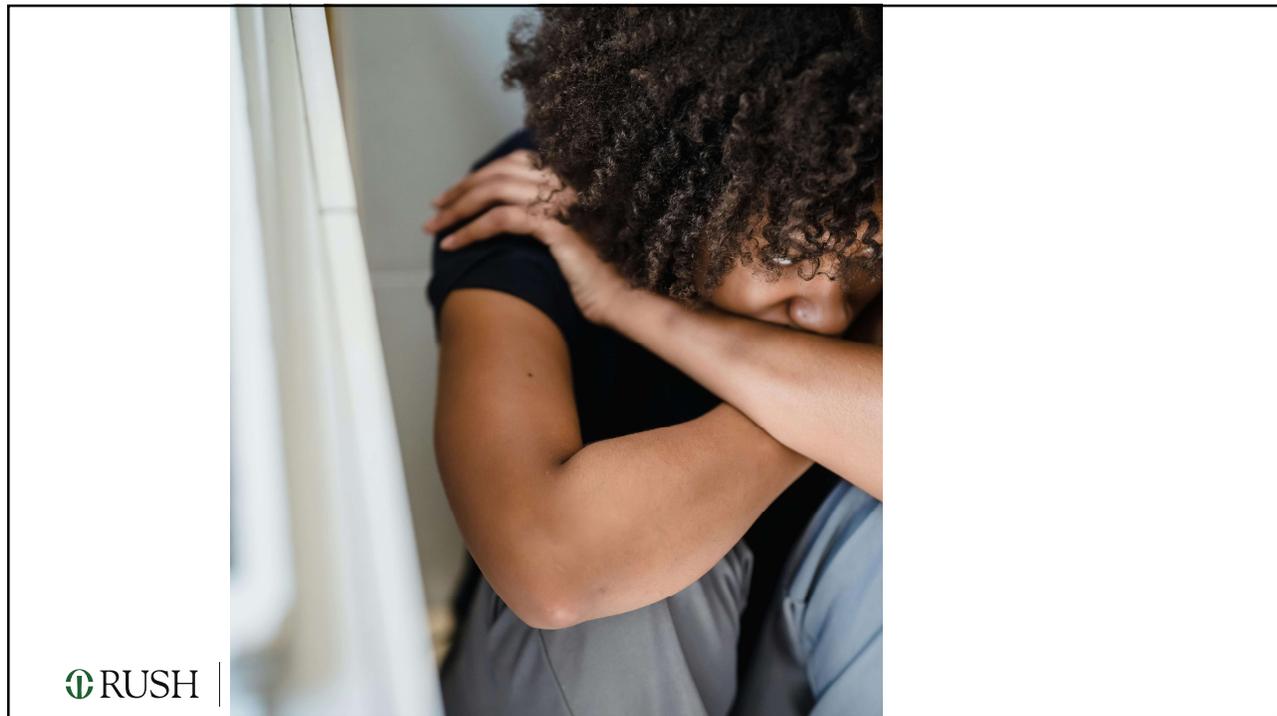
- Define compassion fatigue and burnout among caregivers of older adults
- Recognize and measure compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction among caregivers
- Develop individual and system level practices to manage compassion fatigue and maintain resilience

7



 RUSH |

8



 RUSH |

9

## Compassion Fatigue

- Burnout
- Secondary traumatic stress

A photograph of a person with curly hair sitting on the floor in a room, possibly a hospital or office. They are hunched over with their arms crossed and a sad expression on their face. The room has white walls and some equipment visible in the background.

10

## Burnout

A result of external factors in the environment

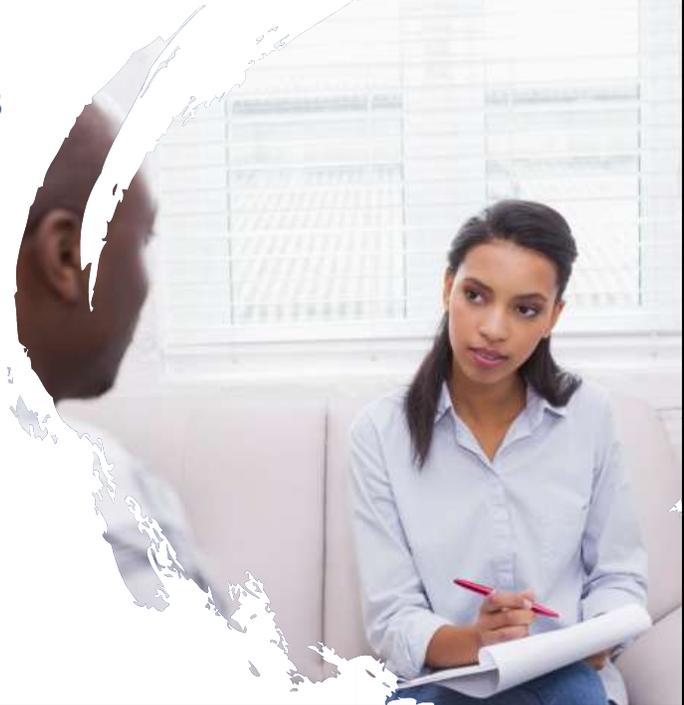


 RUSH | Center for Excellence in Aging

11

## Secondary Traumatic Stress

- Hearing about traumatic events
- Response to exposure
- Preoccupation with the traumatic story



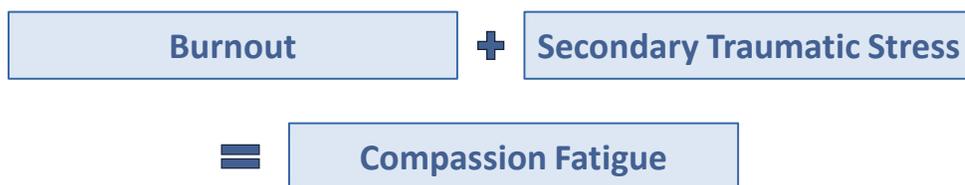
12



13

## Compassion Fatigue

- Burnout does not typically involve trauma exposure
- Burnout is gradual; compassion fatigue may have a sudden onset



14



## General Risk Factors for Compassion Fatigue

For those working with cancer patients:

- Frustration regarding limited financial, social and medical services
- Exposure to challenge related to cancer and treatment
- Over-identification with challenges
- Limited support at the system level

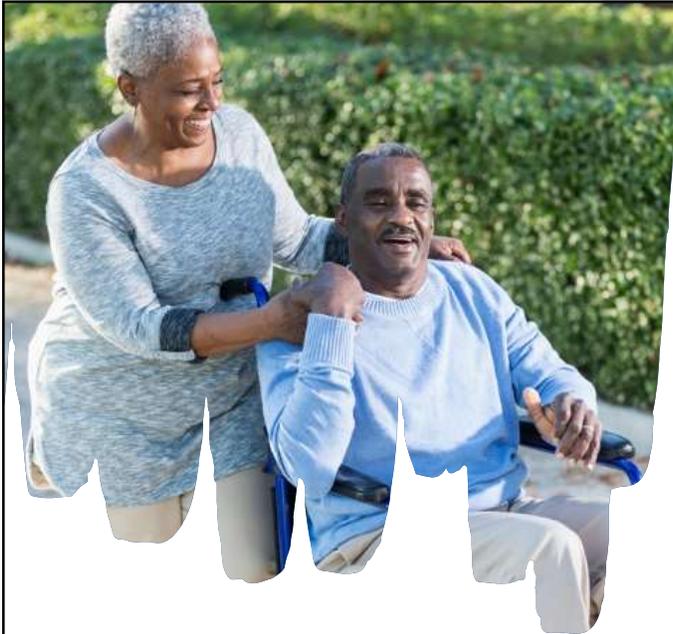
15



## Individual Risk Factors for Compassion Fatigue

- Being female
- Frequent anxiety and/or negative thinking
- Idealistic expectations of ability to help others
- Sustained empathic engagement
- Limited or maladaptive coping
- Personal trauma history
- Having several other stressors
- Low levels or lack of social support

16



## Compassion Satisfaction

- Positive and pleasurable aspect of caregiving
- Compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue may co-occur

17



## Recognizing and Measuring Compassion Fatigue and Compassion Satisfaction

 RUSH | Center for Excellence in Aging

18

## Signs of Secondary Traumatic Stress

- Intrusion
- Avoidance
- Hyperarousal



19

## Signs of Compassion Fatigue

| Physical                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Psychological                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Cognitive                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Behavioral                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muscle tension, headaches, upset stomach</li> <li>• Elevated blood pressure, racing heart</li> <li>• Tired more often or easily</li> <li>• Sleep problems</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More prone to anger, anxiety, irritability, depression</li> <li>• Emotionally disconnected or overwhelmed</li> <li>• Feeling ineffective, guilty</li> <li>• Questioning the meaning of life and existing beliefs</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confusion, disorientation, inability to focus</li> <li>• Misplacing things, forgetting to keep appointments, more prone to mistakes</li> <li>• Difficulty with decision making</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decreased interest in health behaviors</li> <li>• Diminished tolerance, patience, or trust, and projection of anger at the care recipient</li> <li>• Worsening communication</li> <li>• Social isolation</li> </ul> |

20

## Assessment of Compassion Fatigue: ProQOL 5

### Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL)

*Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue  
(ProQOL) Version 5 (2009)*

When you [help] people you have direct contact with their lives. As you may have found, your compassion for those you [help] can affect you in positive and negative ways. Below are some questions about your experiences, both positive and negative, as a [helper]. Consider each of the following questions about you and your current work situation. Select the number that honestly reflects how frequently you experienced these things in the last 30 days.

**1=Never**

**2=Rarely**

**3=Sometimes**

**4=Often**

**5=Very Often**

**SAMPLE ITEMS:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I am happy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I am preoccupied with more than one person I [help].
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I get satisfaction from being able to [help] people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I feel connected to others.

 **RUSH** | Center for Excellence in Aging

21



## Managing Caregiver Compassion Fatigue and Building Resilience

 **RUSH** | Center for Excellence in Aging

22



## Interventions supported by research

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Mindfulness-Based Interventions
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)

23

## Addressing Compassion Fatigue

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Compassion
- Self-Care

### Self-Awareness

- Mindful, present moment focus
- Understand compassion fatigue; review the definition from time to time
- Notice signs and symptoms

24

## Addressing Compassion Fatigue

- Self-Awareness
- **Self-Compassion**
- Self-Care

### Self-Compassion

- Acceptance: non-judgmental relationship with our thoughts, feelings, memories, and sensations
- Kindness to ourselves
- Set more realistic and flexible expectations as a helping professional

25

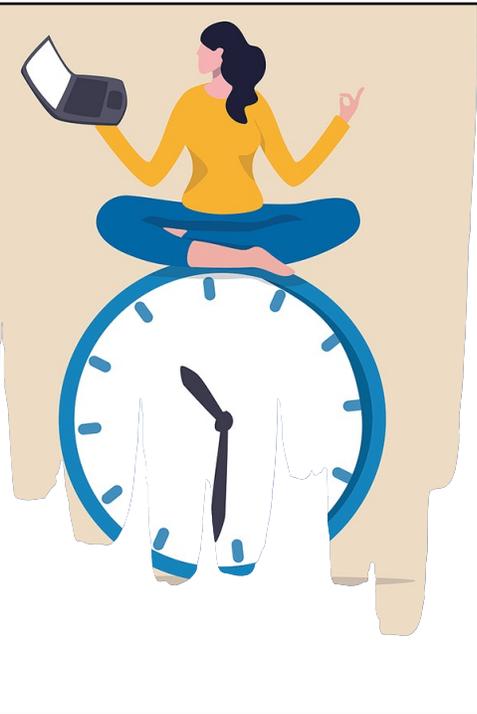
## Addressing Compassion Fatigue

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Compassion
- **Self-Care**

### Self-Care

- Part of ethical practice
- Maintain healthy habits, e.g., adequate sleep, balanced diet, regular physical exercise
- Engage in meaningful leisure activities and hobbies
- Use relaxation strategies

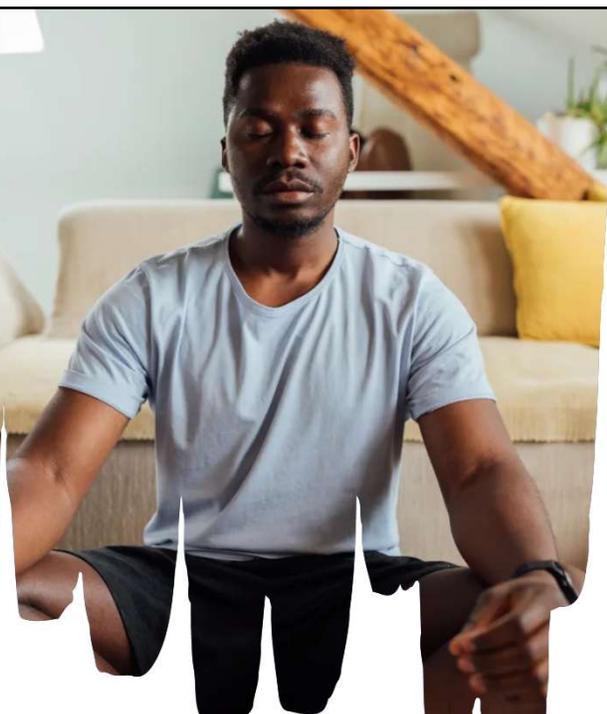
26

An illustration of a woman with dark hair, wearing a yellow long-sleeved shirt and blue pants, sitting in a meditative lotus position on top of a large, stylized blue clock face. She is holding a laptop in her right hand and has her left hand in a mudra. The background is a plain tan color.

## Addressing Barriers to Self-Care

- Assertiveness and communication skills
- Time management and problem-solving skills
- Flexible coping styles:
  - Problem-Focused Coping
  - Emotion-Focused Coping

27

A photograph of a man with short dark hair and a beard, wearing a light blue t-shirt and dark shorts, sitting on a light-colored couch. He has his eyes closed and a calm expression, appearing to be in a meditative state. The background shows a living room with a wooden beam and a yellow cushion.

## Relaxation Exercises

- Breathing exercise
- Body scan
- Grounding

28

## Social Connection

- Include social activities in the self-care plan
- Develop or refine our communication skills
- Learn to ask for and accept help
- Find meaningful activities in the community

**Seek help from a mental health professional when compassion fatigue becomes too overwhelming**



29



 **RUSH** | Center for Excellence in Aging

30



## Family Caregiver Compassion Fatigue

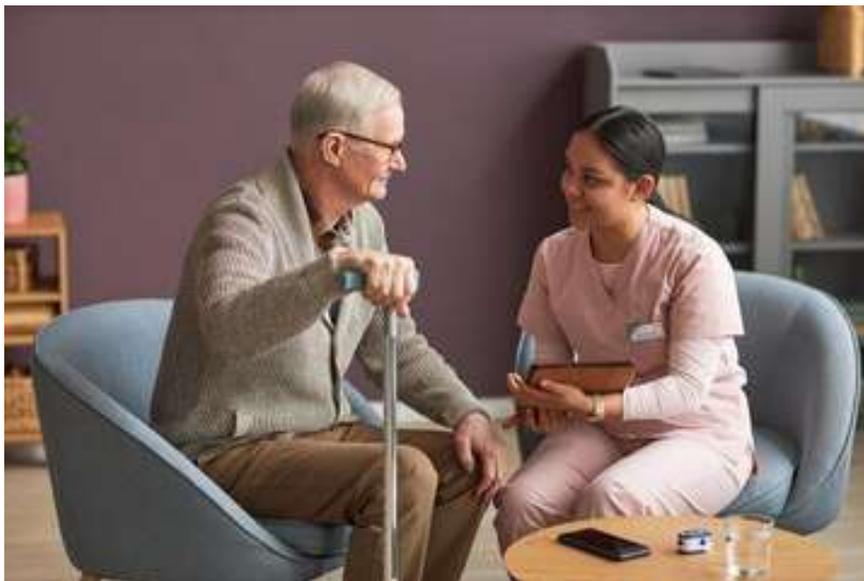
- Family caregiver study
  - 71% high levels of caregiver burden
  - Almost 60% burnout
  - 50% secondary traumatic stress
- Family caregivers are more likely to experience compassion fatigue because they are less likely to have a robust and formal support system
- There are important cultural and diversity considerations

31



 **RUSH** | Center for Excellence in Aging

32



 RUSH | Center for Excellence in Aging

33



- Self-compassion meditation tape
- Identified values
- Virtual Parkinson’s Disease support group
- Caregiver-only group
- Stress management class

 RUSH | Center for Excellence in Aging



34

## RUSH Caring for Caregivers

**Caring for Caregivers** aims to support family or friends that are providing care for adults 60 and older. Focusing on What Matters to the caregiver, we assist in developing a plan for the caregivers' health and well-being that incorporates the care needs of the older adult.

1. **Skill Building Meetings** can include occupational therapists, nurses, pharmacists, or nutritionists in teaching skills to caregivers, such as transferring patients without injuring themselves or performing basic medical care.
2. **Planning for What Matters Sessions** with our social worker to discuss what matters most to both caregiver and care recipient and develop health and life plans that reflect your preferences.
3. **Care Team Planning Meetings** involve learning to create and work with care teams most effectively, focusing on communicating effectively and ensuring that older adults and their caregivers are included in planning for care.

**Initial session is provided at no cost.** Additional services are covered by most insurances. Support for Rush Caring for Caregivers is made available through a generous grant from the RRF Foundation for Aging.

For more information,  
call 312.563.0350 or  
email us at  
[caregivers@rush.edu](mailto:caregivers@rush.edu)

**Tower Resource Center**  
1620 W. Harrison St.  
4th Floor, Suite 04527

**Services can be provided  
by phone, virtual or in-  
person.**

Parking is available at the  
Rush garage on the  
southeast corner of Paulina  
and Harrison Streets.

From the 4th floor, follow  
the signs to the Tower.

Valet parking is also  
available in front 1620 W.  
Harrison Street. Parking at  
both locations will be  
validated in full.



Excellence is just the beginning.

35



## Summary

- It is important to recognize and measure compassion fatigue
- We may address compassion fatigue by increasing:
  - Self-Awareness
  - Self-Compassion
  - Self-Care
    - Self-Reflection
    - Stress Management
    - Social Connection

36

## Contact Us

To join our mailing list or learn more about upcoming opportunities, please email

[e4center@rush.edu](mailto:e4center@rush.edu)

Erin Emery-Tiburcio, PhD, ABPP

[erin\\_emorytiburcio@rush.edu](mailto:erin_emorytiburcio@rush.edu)

Caryn Blanton, LCSW, ASW-G

[caryn\\_L\\_blanton@rush.edu](mailto:caryn_L_blanton@rush.edu)



**E4**CENTER  
Center of Excellence for  
Behavioral Health Disparities in Aging  
AT RUSH UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER



37



SESSION  
COMPASSION FATIGUE  
MOQC RESOURCES



38