

# Balanced Living

April 2022



## Combating Compassion Fatigue with Self-Care and Wellness

As a young psychologist and first responder, Dr. Charles Figley worked with wounded warriors after the Vietnam War. He then realized he was taking on the soldiers' traumatic experiences as though they were his own. In 1995, he coined the phrase compassion fatigue. Figley, a professor and founder of the Traumatology Institute at Tulane University, describes it as: "an extreme state of tension and preoccupation with the suffering of those being helped to the degree that it can create a secondary traumatic stress for the helper."

Compassion fatigue can occur to anyone who has a career or life focused on helping and healing others, particularly those in distress. It can be seen in those working as psychologists, social workers, nurses, physicians, first responders, volunteers, animal welfare workers, or any caregiving capacity when one focuses much of their energy outward. As a result, their own self-care may suffer.

### Signs and Symptoms

It is important to be aware of the signs and symptoms in order to recognize these in yourself or someone else. They can include:

- Feeling emotionally and physically exhausted
- Isolating from others
- Physical problems due to stress, overdoing it, or lack of self-care
- Outward focus rather than putting oneself first
- Substance abuse struggles
- Feelings of depression or apathy
- Flashbacks, recurring nightmares, or intrusive thoughts
- Difficulty concentrating and loss of productivity
- Loss of hope and feeling like one's contributions don't matter

### Causes of Compassion Fatigue

Patricia Smith, founder of the Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project, describes how some individuals are more prone to compassion fatigue than others due to patterns that start in early childhood. Some people might learn at a young age to be a caregiver and never learn the importance of taking care of themselves. This personality trait might attract the individual to a helping career. These types of people are constantly giving to others until they have nothing left, and their tank is on empty. Other factors that could contribute to a pattern of putting others first include lack of personal boundaries, unresolved trauma, and feeling responsible to constantly help others.

### Caregivers Need Self-Care Too

Caregivers need to be in a state of wellness to succeed at caregiving and avoid compassion fatigue. Psychologist Amy Williams, PhD, believes there are five crucial aspects of self-care, including getting enough sleep, eating healthy foods, exercising, having relaxation time, and having social support.

Caregivers can improve their quality of life and increase their levels of happiness by directing their attention inward and taking more time to care for themselves. Often, we might feel like there aren't enough hours in the day to fit in all we need to do. However, self-care is an essential ingredient to a healthy life. Until we properly take care of ourselves, we cannot be an effective caregiver for others.

Here are some tips for dealing with compassion fatigue:

- Slow down and make self-care a priority
- Try to strike more of a balance between caring for yourself and others
- Create a clear separation between your personal and professional life
- Don't be afraid to ask for help—don't try to hold the weight of the world on your shoulders
- Connect with colleagues who can relate to your experience
- Practice mindfulness by being completely present in whatever you are doing in each moment
- Be grateful for yourself and what you contribute to the world

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# Secrets For Finding Happiness At Work

The type of work you do, your title or your salary has very little to do with whether you are happy at work. Self-esteem and believing you deserve to be happy do.

"Self-esteem is the first key to finding happiness on the job," says Denis Waitley, Ph.D., speaker and coauthor of several books on personal and career success, including *The Joy of Working*. "Self-esteem is a deep-down feeling in your soul of your own self-worth. Individuals who enjoy their work develop strong beliefs of self-worth and self-confidence regarding everything they do."

Setting and achieving goals that are important to you are a necessary part of developing self-worth. "I advise people to chase their passions, not their pensions," Dr. Waitley says. "People who are working for their salaries alone become slaves to their work. People who are involved in what they're doing, who put their signature on everything they do, find satisfaction and happiness on the job."

## Wake up happy

"Optimism is a learned attitude," Dr. Waitley says. "If you start thinking positively early in the day, you're more likely to maintain a positive stance as your day progresses." To have a happier morning: Wake up to music instead of an alarm. Begin your day by saying something positive to your spouse, your children or the first person you see.

## Positive self-talk

"The role of positive self-dialogue in maintaining a positive attitude has been well-documented," Dr. Waitley says. "And it's been found to be most effective if you put it in the present tense."

Dr. Waitley begins his day with these affirmations: "This will be a good day." "I'm going to take steps today that will move me closer to my goals."

Here are other ideas from Dr. Waitley:

- Always greet your co-workers and your boss with a smile. "As simple as it sounds, a smile establishes your own self-worth and shares it with others," Dr. Waitley says.
- Turn dilemmas into opportunities. To do so, examine your most pressing problems on the job. Then, to gain a better perspective, come up with solutions as if you were advising one of your best friends.
- Stay away from pity parties or gripe sessions. Joining in may feel like worker solidarity, but it's actually climbing aboard a sinking ship. Instead, find happy and successful role models to pattern yourself after. Surround yourself with people who enjoy their work.
- View change as normal. Constantly monitor and evaluate your capacity to be flexible, open to new ideas and adaptable to change.
- Be persistent in visualizing your ultimate goals and dreams of achievement. Constantly practice positive self-talk and keep a positive attitude when times are tough and your perseverance needs bolstering.
- Don't let trifles bother you. "If the effort it takes to change something far exceeds its worth, forget it and learn to live with it," Dr. Waitley says. "Keep your mind free to concentrate on larger issues and problems."
- Don't make too much of your mistakes. They are part of being human. Concentrate on the lessons to be learned from even the most trying confrontations.
- Set your own standards rather than comparing yourself to others. Successful people run their own races.
- Appreciate each moment of your working day. If the work gets boring, use your powers of visualization to see yourself succeeding in your goals.
- Discover a sense of purpose. Knowing why you want what you want makes the difference between success and failure, happiness and unhappiness, joy and frustration.
- Expect the best from others; that includes your boss, co-workers and subordinates. "Be a leader in spreading encouragement and praise," Dr. Waitley says. "You'll be surprised how people will live up to what you expect when you share your positive expectations."

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# Alcohol Awareness: Warning Signs and the Path to Recovery

Many movies and television shows glorify alcohol use and binge drinking, especially in college, portraying it as part of the typical college experience. The reality is that alcohol is a serious drug. Anyone who has ever had a hangover knows that withdrawing from alcohol can be devastating—both physically and mentally. According to the 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health conducted by SAMHSA, 33% of college students reported binge drinking in the past month, which is generally defined as five or more drinks on one occasion. More than 8% reported drinking heavily, defined as binge drinking five or more days in the past month. Therefore, it is likely at some point in your college experience, you or someone you know will struggle with problematic alcohol behaviors. It's important to learn the warning signs, steps to take charge of unwanted behaviors, and how to engage in a supportive recovery environment.

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## Warning Signs of Alcohol Misuse

Moderate drinking is typically defined as one drink per day for females and two drinks per day for males. However, even moderate drinking could be considered problematic if it is negatively affecting one's life. Since drinking socially is normalized in our culture, it might be easy for someone with an alcohol problem to blend in. Here are some important warning signs that you or one of your peers may need help:

- Personality changes, such as a lack of inhibition or doing things you normally wouldn't do
- Social changes, such as self-isolating behavior or only wanting to engage in activities that involve drinking
- Decline in academic performance, difficulty concentrating, or missing classes
- Physical changes, such as having hangovers or withdrawing from alcohol
- Changes in appearance or decline in hygiene
- Decline in job performance
- Habit of drinking to the point of intoxication or blacking out
- Being unable to meet obligations or showing a decrease in productivity

## Steps to Change Problematic Behaviors

From time to time, it's good to step back and assess various behaviors in your life to see if they are benefiting or hindering you. As you consider your relationship with alcohol, here are some steps you can take to help you avoid or change problematic behaviors.

- If you feel you sometimes engage in unhealthy behaviors related to alcohol consumption, see if your campus has resources available to assist you and contact a professional counselor for help. By getting yourself help as soon as possible, you can minimize damaging effects and keep your life on track.
- Associate with friend groups and find role models who don't drink.
- Engage in activities or hobbies that don't involve drinking. For example, skip a party to go for a run or play basketball at the rec center instead. Regular exercise also has the benefit of clearing your mind, helping you to make better decisions.
- In life, it's good to practice self-discipline. Author and podcaster Tim Ferriss suggests to "treat life as a series of two-week experiments." Perhaps for a short period, you could take a break from drinking alcohol, even if you don't feel you have an unhealthy relationship with it. See how this affects your productivity and overall mental health. Many people who have become sober report positive results, such as improved sleep and energy and a clearer mind.
- Order non-alcoholic drinks. Even when others around you are drinking alcohol, don't feel pressure to do the same. No one will know if you're opting for a seltzer with cranberry or an iced tea instead.
- Remember to never drink and drive and do not get into a car with someone who has been drinking.

## How to Engage in a Supportive Recovery Environment

- Whether you are in recovery yourself, want to engage in healthier lifestyle behaviors, or want to support friends in recovery, there are ways you can contribute to a safe and supportive recovery environment.
- Lead by example. If you have decided to abstain from or limit your alcohol use, don't be afraid of judgment from others. Only you know what is best for you. If you feel comfortable doing so, be open and honest with those around you, as this could help others who might be too afraid to admit they have a problem. When you lead by example, you might inspire others to make improvements for a healthier life.
- Make new social connections. If your old friend group is not supportive of changes you are making, find like-minded individuals and form new connections with. Join a support group on campus or get involved in other campus activities that don't involve drinking. You could also follow inspirational accounts on social media that promote sobriety and healthful living.
- Reach out to friends. If you suspect a friend might be struggling with alcohol use, let them know you are there for them. Try to validate and support them rather than being accusatory.
- Change your relationship with stress. Stress plays a major role in influencing addictive behaviors and makes people more likely to use substances as a way to cope. With the help of your counselor or other supports, find healthy ways to manage your stress, such as exercising regularly, eating healthy foods, and getting plenty of rest.

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# The Wellness News

Tips and resources for living well

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## Autism Awareness Month

Autism or ASD is a complex, lifelong developmental disability that typically appears during early childhood and can impact social skills, communication, relationships, and self-regulation. Individuals with autism can show certain behaviors and are diagnosed on a “spectrum” that affects people differently and to varying degrees. Autism has risen in the United States from [1 in 125 children in 2010 to 1 in 54 in 2020](#).

ASD occurs in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups, but is about four times more common among boys than girls. According to the CDC, we do not know all the causes of ASD. Some risk factors include environmental, biological, and genetic risk factors.

- Children who have a sibling with ASD are at a higher risk of having ASD.
- Individuals with certain genetic or chromosomal conditions can have a greater chance of having ASD.
- When taken during pregnancy, the prescription drugs valproic acid and thalidomide have been linked with a higher risk of ASD.
- Children born to older parents are at greater risk for having ASD.

It can be difficult to diagnose ASD since there is no medical test, such as a blood test. Typically, a doctor will look at the child’s behavior and development to help make a diagnosis. ASD can sometimes be diagnosed at 18 months or younger. However, many children do not receive a final diagnosis until much older.

There is currently no known single cause of autism, but an early diagnosis can help a person receive the support and services they need. Proper support can help lead to a quality life filled with opportunities. Have an open dialog with your pediatrician if you have any concerns.

Sources:

<https://autismsociety.org/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/facts.html>



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## The Benefits of Biking

National Bike Month is observed in the spring each year. It is a health observance established in 1956 and promoted by the League of American Bicyclists and celebrated across the country. Cycling is a low-impact activity that is gentle on your joints and a great way to stay in touch with the world around you. Whether you ride outside or inside on a stationary bike, you can benefit greatly from this activity.

### Some of the benefits of cycling include

- Potential weight loss from calories burned.
- The movement and resistance help to strengthen leg muscles, especially those supporting your knee.
- Regular rhythmic movements are a great cardio workout and great for your heart and lungs.
- Cycling can help control blood pressure, blood sugar, and improve your cholesterol.
- Cycling can relieve stiffness, especially in your lower body.
- If you need to break a pattern of repetitive workouts, cycling gives you as much of a leg workout as a regular trip to the gym.

### Benefits of riding outside

- Exercising in the fresh air and sunlight improves mood.
- Biking outside also improved cognitive function in older adults.
- Riding a real bike provides more of a workout for stabilizing muscles that you use to keep upright.
- Riding a real bike also improved your balance and coordination.

If you want to be more active but aren't sure what to try, consider biking and reap the many health benefits. You should consult your doctor before you begin an exercise program.

If you have any injuries that cycling will affect, it's best to stay off the bike until you fully recover. Talk with your doctor if you have any conditions that cycling may affect. Stationary or adaptive bicycles are great alternatives for individuals with balance, vision, or hearing concerns.

### If the weather is in your favor, hop on your bike and go the distance. Just take the proper precautions and follow our safety tips.

- **CHECK YOUR EQUIPMENT.** Before you plan your ride, you should be aware of any mechanical problems with the bike. Make sure your seat is adjusted and locked in place. Check that your tires are inflated to the proper PSI.
- **PLAN TO BE SEEN.** The death toll in bicycle accidents has increased 37% in the last 10 years, according to [Injury Facts®](#). Make sure drivers can see you by wearing reflective clothing if riding at night.
- **WEAR A HELMET.** This applies to all children and adult riders of all ages. Check the helmet for comfort and tighten the chin straps to ensure proper safety.
- **FOLLOW THE RULES OF THE ROAD.** It is important to always maintain awareness while you are on the roads with motor vehicles around you. Make sure you are following the same rules that apply to motorists, such as stop signs, traffic lights, and proper signaling.

Source:

<https://www.nsc.org/home-safety/tools-resources/seasonal-safety/summer/bicycles>



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## Invest in our Planet this Earth Day

Earth Day was founded in 1970 with the goal to spread education about environmental issues. We now celebrate this day globally on April 22nd, although many places have extended to Earth Week. On the first Earth Day, rallies were held across the US while speeches were given. It successfully raised awareness about environmental issues and was the catalyst for many important legislative changes.

### How Can I Participate?

There are many ways to participate in Earth Day or Earth Week. First, take time to educate yourself about current environmental and climate issues. Begin by reading through different events and programs on [Earthday.org](https://www.earthday.org). Find a cause that interests you personally. There may even be local events going on in your community.

Here are a few ways you can invest in our planet and participate this Earth Day.

- Change your diet to fight climate change by incorporating Meatless Mondays into your weekly meal routine.
- Find your personal carbon footprint and then make changes to reduce it.
- Choose options without single-use plastics when out shopping.
- Buy and shop locally whenever possible. The shorter distance your food must travel, the less pollution it creates.
- Research greener energy options that may be available in your neighborhood for your home.

Although you're only one person, you can still have an impact. Get your family, friends, and community involved this Earth Day and spread the word about different changes they can make. And if you really want to get involved, try writing to your local political offices to voice any concerns you may have. They can vote in changes that impact a larger scale.

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We know it is not always easy to juggle everything & realize simple tips can help provide a different approach. Your EAP is here to help with family, work, health, well-being & legal issues.

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## RECIPE : Strawberry Rhubarb Crisp with Chia Seeds

*(Vegan & Gluten-Free)*

8 Servings

### Ingredients

- 16 ounces strawberries
- 4 cups rhubarb, chopped into ½ inch thick slices (about 4–5 stalks)
- ½ cup maple syrup
- 4 tablespoons chia seeds
- 2 teaspoons corn starch
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- pinch salt
- 1 cup GF rolled oats
- 1 cup almond flour (or sub other flour)
- 3 tablespoons maple syrup
- ⅓ cup melted coconut oil – or olive oil or butter or ghee!
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground cardamom– optional
- ¼ teaspoon nigela seeds- optional

### Directions

1. Preheat oven 375F
2. Wash and quarter the strawberries. If very large, quarter again, so each piece is roughly ½ inch thick. Slice the rhubarb into ½ inch slices. Place both in a bowl and add the maple, chia, cornstarch, lemon juice and vanilla and pinch salt. Stir well. Place in a, greased, 8x8 baking dish or 2-quart baking dish. (The pan in the photo is 5 x12)
3. To make the crumble, place all ingredients in a medium bowl and mix really well.
4. Lightly drop crumble evenly over the top and do not press down.
5. Place in the oven, uncovered for 40 minutes. If the top is golden and the edges are bubbly, it's time to take it out.
6. Otherwise, continue baking for 5-7 more minutes. Let sit 15 mins before serving.

### Nutrition

**Per serving:** Each serving: 259 calories, 12g total fat, 8g saturated fat, 0mg cholesterol, 443mg sodium, 35g carbohydrates, 6g dietary fiber, 20g sugar.

**Source:** <https://www.feastingathome.com/maple-sweetened-strawberry-rhubarb-crisp-chia-seeds-vegan-gluten-free/>

## **New Calorie Restriction Diet Rage**

Beyond losing weight, calorie-restricting diets done safely may improve longevity and memory, lessen inflammation, and even fight GI infections. Like most weight loss programs and diets, there are cautions worth knowing about. One study reported that some participants mismanaged their eating routine and had health problems like anemia and bone loss. Some dieters have gone too far, too fast with calorie restriction (crash dieting) and experienced kidney damage, abnormal heart rate, dehydration, and electrolyte imbalances. Be guided properly, and consult your medical doctor so he or she understands your goals and can monitor your health needs. You are more likely to gain the benefits, reduce risk, have better accountability, and maybe keep the lost weight off for good.

Learn more:

[www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5315691/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5315691/).

## **Free Cool Apps: OurGroceries.com**

OurGroceries is a smartphone app that allows everyone in the household to have the same grocery list on their phone. If modified, everyone with the app gets an instant update. It solves the problem of omitting grocery store items and overbuying items not needed. If you purchase an item and cross it off the list, everyone's list is updated. The app learns what you buy, so when typing an item, you never need to enter more than a letter or two before the item choice appears. Source: OurGroceries.com.productivity.

## **Stay Focused on Your New Path if Downsized**

Like a grief reaction, denial is usually the first response to news of being downsized. Likewise, anger often follows, especially if loyalty to your employer has been a strong personal work ethic, and you envisioned retiring from your job someday. Often the first reaction is to engage in commiserating with coworkers. This path often emphasizes negativity and hopelessness and can undermine your ability to rise above the crisis. Keep your work ethic, but focus on opportunities. Experience shows that doing so will better energize discovery of the next step in your career journey.

## **Cyberbullying in the Workplace**

Cyberbullying is the use of electronic media to harass or intimidate. It can harm health, increase absenteeism, and decrease job satisfaction. Cyberbullying is different from other bullying. Online forums where anonymity exists can make it difficult to pin down a perpetrator. It can also be 24/7, and the digital medium of choice can be email, text, or social networking sites. Intervention step #1 is to tell the cyberbully to stop it, but coworkers are especially influential. Research shows that intolerance of peers will have more influence than a corporate policy. So don't be a bystander. Be a change agent, and make cyberbullying not okay. You'll see less of it. Learn more: [www.igi-global.com](http://www.igi-global.com).

[Search: cyberbullying merdan]



## **Stress Awareness Month Psychological Effects of War**

Many people have been affected by the stress of the Ukraine war. There are at least five current wars and over 50 armed conflicts active in the world. The Syrian war includes 600,000 deaths. It's difficult to imagine the trauma that victims experience. Helplessness, anxiety, and fear can affect anyone with a personal history of war trauma or any life-threatening event. Be mindful of overexposure to war news. Videos, feeds, news, and social media are as close as your smartphone. Be cautious about accepting any story as immediately true. Disinformation, or "psyops," is used in war routinely to manipulate emotions, and you can be affected unnecessarily. Take care of yourself with positive health practices and stress management exercises. If you have a family member such as a child emotionally affected by war news, don't discourage them from "thinking about it." Encourage they share their feelings and help them (process) their reaction. Then discuss ways to cope with the stress. (Empathy is a healing force that helps put strong emotions in their place.) If you are from a war-torn country, came from one nearby, or have friends and family who are there right now, your reaction can be especially distressful. But every person has a different coping style for severe stress or trauma. Don't judge yourself or others for having different emotional reactions to traumatic events. If your employer has an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), reach out for support. It's the best first step to winning over stress. Source: [www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/how-to-talk-to-loved-ones-about-ukraine-stressful-news](http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/how-to-talk-to-loved-ones-about-ukraine-stressful-news).

## **You're a Sales Representative (No Matter What You Do)**

"Every employee is a salesperson." It's a motto in many companies. Phrases like "Answer the phone with a smile" may sound tiresome, but delve more deeply. These are attitude adjusters. They help manage stress. Any position could, someday, somehow, come directly in contact with a customer. Most employees know this and respond accordingly, but living with a positive attitude is an acquired life skill. One distasteful or less-than-stellar customer experience is sometimes all it takes to set in motion stressful communication and a bad day, so it makes sense to put your best attitude forward. Try it for a day. You may discover that a purposeful and positive engaging style is a key to enjoying your job more.

## **Getting Your Work-Life Groove Back**

Commuting to work comes with boundaries between work and home that can make work-life balance a little easier. If you're a remote worker, you have to set your own boundaries. It may not be so easy. A natural urgency to complete work or return to work may be ever-present. This dynamic can cause you to postpone "until tomorrow" things you would otherwise enjoy doing. This pattern then repeats. If the "always on" lifestyle is undermining work-life balance, your first awareness will be boredom and frustration at your lack of leisure or engaging recreational pursuits. Identify and use this awareness to plan and engage social, recreational, family, and leisure activities. Change the scenery and shake things up. You'll discover more energy and excitement for your job and a more complete sense of self.

## **Doing a Great Reset as a Couple**

When you met, you saw each other as special, amazing, and wonderful, but has your relationship lost pizzazz? Overcoming monotony can be a challenge but is doable. Yes, it feels awkward at first, and vulnerability will be required, but what works is working with a couples therapist who "feels right." Communication habits; trust; fear of getting hurt, or even embarrassed or rejected; sexual issues; resentments built from arguing; and health issues may need troubleshooting. Couples therapy can work, but your desire to try is key. Start by researching couples therapists in your area. You can get a referral from your EAP or a free pre-therapy meeting to help you zero in on the issues. This can help your first couples therapy appointment go more easily, be more productive, and possibly even be exciting.

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