Veterinary Professionals have 3 to 4 times higher rates of suicide, anxiety and depression than the general population. Twice as high as other health care professionals.
WHAT IS COMPASSION FATIGUE?
Compassion Fatigue is the natural consequence of stress resulting from caring for and helping traumatized or suffering people or animals. It’s an occupational hazard for animal care professionals, but there are proven strategies to help us address this unique stress.

(Dolce, 2014)
COMPASSION FATIGUE:

Emotional exhaustion experienced by caregivers frequently exposed to highly stressful situations.

Stress associated with caring for others during traumatic times.

Caused by: Repeated exposure to death and supporting peoples intense emotions.
Caring too much can hurt

- How many of you put others needs ahead of your own?
- When we focus on others without practicing self-care, destructive behaviors can surface.
- Isolation, apathy, bottled up emotions and substance abuse head a long list of symptoms
SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS:

- Feeling overwhelmed
- Isolation
- Increasing apathy
- Loss of energy/pleasure
- Blame others
- Complain/bitter
- Decrease hygiene
- Alcohol/substance abuse
- Loss of sleep
INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS:

- Perfectionism
- Neuroticism
- High achievers
- Very caring folk
- Compassionate
- Driven
- Critical of self
- Mask Feelings
- Tend to suppress
- Fixers
Contextual Factors Out of Our Control:

- Euthanasia/death – sometimes daily
- Grief rarely gets addressed
- Lack of training
  - negative side of the profession
- Stigma with getting help
- Professional and social isolation – no one talks about it
- Client expectations
CONTEXTUAL FACTORS WE CAN NOT CONTROL:

- Long hours/overnights
- Rise of standard of care
- Placating angry/abusive clients/fellow clinicians
- Lack of Empathy from owners/fellow employees
- Death – euthanizing (killing) the clients you cared for
  - Especially when you disagree or wish to do more
- See lots of ill clients
  - Clients cannot articulate problem/need – so many unknowns
- On call
OBSTACLES TO GETTING HELP

- Stigma of mental illness
- Self-reliant – “I can handle it”
- Fear of judgments
- Nothing can help
WHAT CAN WE DO TO AVOID IT?
“Want to be happy? Stop trying to be perfect.”

Brene Brown
Awareness

- Learning to recognize and manage symptoms is the first step toward healing.

Drop the stigma

Seek support

Be honest with yourself and others

Exercise, healthy eating, connecting with others, journaling, and restful sleep.
PATH TO WELLNESS

- Engagement
- Making Meaning...why
- Increase Self-esteem
- Focus on what is going well
- Resilience
- Sense of competency
- Positive relationships
- Optimism
TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

- 40% in our control
- 50% genetics
- 10% context
The better care we take of ourselves, the better care we will give clients.

“People are not disturbed by things, but the perception of them” (Epictetus)

SELF-CARE...
PATH TO WELLNESS...

- Be aware of inner critic
  + Give it less energy
  + Focus on what you did well...not the mistakes!

- Be aware of your limits and expectations
  o Focus on care – not outcomes

- Connect - create/be aware of your support system
  o Work as a team with your team
  o Be real – vulnerability is a strength
  o Quality vs quantity of relationships
• Exercise
• Reflect on what is going well
• Build resiliency
  o What helps you:
    o Ground out?
    o Smile/relax/feel content?
    o Be present – not distracted by thought?
  o Dispute thoughts – no one is perfect – we all make mistakes
  o Let the feelings pass
PATH TO WELLNESS...

- Boundaries – say NO
- Be aware of and seek support for your needs
- Monitor work load
  - Take breaks
  - EAT
  - Drink Water
  - Sleep/Rest
- Seek support...ask for help
- Have fun
  - At work and home
  - Get outside
  - Humor
What is your purpose?

Why are you here?

What are you passionate about?
WHAT MAKES COMPANIES A GREAT PLACE TO WORK?

WHY DO SOME COMPANIES KEEP ATTRACTING AND HOLDING ONTO THE WORLDS BEST TALENT?
The Secret...

- Its personal
  not perk-onal

- They know how to foster strong and rewarding relationships among employees

- Creating and building interpersonal relationships are what make companies great
Mindfulness...

HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM WATCH?v=W6T02G5HNT4
MAKE A COMMITMENT TO YOURSELF TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF!
CREATE A WELLNESS PLAN!!

What do you need?

How can you get your needs met?

Support each other...
BLUE PRINT FOR YOUR WELLNESS

Praise/Gratitude
Be kind to ourselves...Focus on went well...what are we grateful for

Communication

Nurture Connections
+ Vulnerability
  × Seek/accept support

Celebrate personal wins

Have more fun
+ what recharges your batteries/grounds you out
RESOURCES:

Dr. Ron Del Moro: rondel@ufl.edu  352.283.0028


Professional Resource Network (PRN)
1.800.888.8776        flprn.org
Substance abuse / addiction - Mental illness - Boundary violations
Disruptive behavior - Physical disorders  - Cognitive impairment

Veterinary Information Network - VIN – vin.com

http://jessicadolce.com/resources/
http://invma.org/veterinary-wellness/#
QUESTIONS??

Thank you...