

## Sound Animal Representation: Navigating Legal Ethics and Compassion Fatigue as an Advocate for Animals....

### Key Definitions:

#### **Compassion Fatigue:**

- “the cumulative physical, emotional, and psychological effects of being continually exposed to traumatic stories or events when working in a helping capacity” ..... the effect of this fatigue... “is a disruption of an ordinary level of the psychological and emotional functioning of a helping professional.”
- Can result in physical and emotional exhaustion and a notable decrease in the ability to empathize
- Is a form of secondary traumatic stress, as the stress occurs as a result of helping or wanting to help those who are in need
- Symptoms can include (but are not limited to): sleep disturbances, anxiety, intrusive thoughts, and a sense of futility or pessimism, a feeling of learned helplessness, chronic exhaustion, reduced feelings of empathy and sympathy, dreading to go to work, weight loss etc. etc.
- It differs from “burnout,” but the 2 can co-exist

#### **Burnout:**

- (in case you are wondering)... is defined as “a cumulative process marked by emotional exhaustion and withdrawal associated with increased workload and institutional stress, that is ***not trauma related.***”

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### **Some questions to ask yourself after today:**

*These get at identifying compassion fatigue...*

- I know when I’m feeling dissatisfied with my job or work roles because I tend to \_\_\_\_\_ when I feel this way.
- Here is what my friends and family members observe of me when I feel overwhelmed and powerless at work: \_\_\_\_\_
- My beliefs about the world and about people has shifted since being in my line of work. I used to believe: \_\_\_\_\_
- I now believe: \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_% of the time, I feel good about the work I do for my animals.
- I feel that colleagues value the work I do for animals.

*These get at coping strategies....*

- When exhausted and emotionally burned out, I turn to \_\_\_\_\_ for support and to help me relax.
- It is easy for me to set limits with my work. Here are my typical strategies:  
\_\_\_\_\_
- In the distant past, when I needed to feel emotionally rejuvenated and restored, I \_\_\_\_\_
- Nowadays, when I need to feel emotionally rejuvenated and restored, I \_\_\_\_\_
- I have ideas of how my work site can support me more to take better care of myself. For instance, here is what my organization can do: \_\_\_\_\_
- After encountering difficult material, I can debrief with the following colleagues or legal peers: \_\_\_\_\_

***(Here are the questions asked in today's presentation):***

1. What are the top 3 signs or signals that I'm emotionally exhausted due to what is demanded of me professionally? (In other words, what would others notice of me? What would I notice of myself?)
2. About \_\_\_\_\_% of the time, I feel that the work I do for my animals makes a difference (in the world).
3. I have trouble feeling a good work/life balance \_\_\_\_\_% of the time (looking over the past year).

### **Some Strategies to cope and prevent “Compassion Fatigue”**

1. Self-Care—seek balance between work and life; seek optimal exercise, food, sleep, relaxation
2. Team/Peer Support—talk with colleagues when you have difficult cases; seek support from others
3. Set boundaries with work and electronic media related to work
4. Gain more self-awareness—what is your sign to turn for help?
5. Get hobbies!! Do things outside of work, have friends outside of work
6. Keep a journal to process your emotions and to cultivate self-awareness
7. Influence your work culture—take breaks, relaxation areas?
8. Seek professional help: Attorney Assistance Programs, get a therapist...

[https://www.americanbar.org/groups/lawyer\\_assistance/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/lawyer_assistance/)

<https://oaap.org/> (the Oregon Attorney Assistance Program for those of you in Oregon)

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#### **Key references for this presentation:**

1. *Compassion fatigue and lawyers - the cumulative cost of caring*

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2. *Keeping Legal Minds Intact: Mitigating Compassion Fatigue among Government Lawyers*

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*The Wisconsin Defender*, Winter/Spring 2009, Vol. 17(1)

3. *Burnout and compassion fatigue: what lawyers need to know*

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