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Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma - Signs and Symptoms

Physical Signs and Symptoms

Exhaustion

Insomnia

Headaches

Increased susceptibility to illness

Somatization and hypochondria

Behavioral Signs and Symptoms

Increased use of alcohol and drugs

Absenteeism

Anger and Irritability

Avoidance of clients

Impaired ability to make decisions

Problems in personal relationships

Attrition

Compromised care for clients

The Silencing Response

Depleted parenting

Psychological signs and symptoms

Emotional exhaustion

Distancing

Negative self image

Depression

Sadness, Loss of hope

Anxiety

Guilt

Reduced ability to feel sympathy and empathy

Cynicism

Resentment

Dread of working with certain clients

Feeling professional helplessness

Diminished sense of employment/career

Depersonalization/numbness

Disruption of world view/Heightened anxiety or irrational fears

Inability to tolerate strong feelings

Problems with Intimacy

Intrusive Imagery - preoccupation with trauma

Hypersensitivity to emotionally charged stimuli

Insensitivity to emotional material

Difficulty separating personal and professional lives

Failure to nurture and develop non work related aspects of life

Sources: Saakvitne (1995), Figley (1995), Gentry, Baranowsky & Dunning (1997), Yassen (1995)

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