



Counseling Connections



Too Tired to Care: Compassion Fatigue

Hope deferred makes the heart sick—Proverbs 13:12

Attachment is the cause of all suffering—The Buddha

This is the true joy in life - being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap — George Bernard Shaw

I was raised to think that we should give everything we have to the people we love, and that we should love the whole world. This belief is a large part of why I returned to school to study counseling. Most of us are in this program because we see the pain of the world and want to give ease. We feel compassion toward those who are suffering. The counseling profession (and other helping professions) draws people who want to give to others. And these same professions experience a high rate of burnout or compassion fatigue.

The Random House Dictionary defines compassion fatigue as “fatigue, emotional distress, or apathy resulting from the constant demands of caring for others.” It occurs when those we tend to do not get better. We attach to the idea they will improve through our guidance and care. When they do not, we lose hope and our sense of efficacy.

Symptoms of compassion fatigue include irritability, disturbed sleep, outbursts of anger, intrusive thoughts, and a desire to avoid anything having to do with the client's struggle. The empathy backfires, flooding the counselor with the other person's pain, and leaving the counselor exhausted, angry, even unable to care anymore. We tend to avoid discussing these feelings; they seem selfish, shameful and weak. They take a toll, however -- on both counselor and client.

Unlike burnout, which is caused by everyday work stresses, compassion fatigue results from taking on the emotional burden of a patient's suffering. “Those who have enormous capacity for feeling and expressing empathy tend to be more at risk of compassion stress”. (Figley, 1995)

Empathy in this context can be seen as a drain. This is the type of empathy that processes the emotions of others through feeling those emotions. Egan (1994) frames empathy as an action rather than an emotion. He defines it as understanding the client's viewpoint and communicating a sense of caring. He does not suggest that the therapist gain this understanding by feeling the client's emotions. If we spend 8 hours a day feeling another person's heartbreak, we will then have to process that heartbreak within ourselves at the end of the day. Or we can let it go through good and bad behaviors. But I wonder how long we can do that. And I wonder how helpful it is to a client.

Berzoff, J. & Kita, E. (2010). Compassion fatigue and countertransference. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 38, 341-349.
Egan, G. (1994). *The skilled helper* (5th ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
Figley, C. F. (1995). *Compassion fatigue: Coping with secondary traumatic stress disorder*. New York: Brunner/Mazel.
www.compassionfatigue.org



Compassion (continued)

Several sources indicate that compassion fatigue results from taking on the emotions of the client. In our profession we call this countertransference. Although some theories believe that it is a functional and necessary tool in counseling (Berzoff & Kita, 2010), it can lead to problematic consequences. To allow yourself to integrate your psyche with that of the client, is less empathy and more a boundary issue.

This kind of intensive focus may be part of what leads to compassion fatigue. It certainly indicates a particular mindset regarding the client. It could reflect an underlying viewpoint that the therapist is stronger than the client – “please give your pain to me, I can handle it and you can’t”, a position which does not empower the client. An alternate viewpoint is one of faith in the client and a belief that although clients may be struggling, they are also creative, resourceful and whole. In this scenario the counselor does not need to assume the client’s emotions but only facilitate their processing.

Throughout our program we have been reminded to engage in self-care. For the first year many of us responded to this with the thought that we didn’t have time. Now that we are beginning to work in the field, however, self-care and fatigue have become real elements of our work and we must incorporate compassion and care for ourselves into our everyday practice. To do this, we need to remember why we have come to the field of counseling and what we hope to do.

It is challenging for the compassionate counselor to detach while still caring for the client, and difficult to find a balance between caring and caring to the point of fatigue. It requires balance of the internal life and the external. It is important for the counselor to spend quality time not thinking about clients, their troubles, or the troubles of the world. Spend time in nature, keep physically healthy, enjoy time with friends, family and pets. Absorb the beauty around you. Feed your soul with art, poetry, humor, love, music and silliness. And remember, we are just vessels for the loving-kindness of the Universe. If we are willing, the compassion of the Universe will flow through us.

R. Henry

Four-Seven-Eight Breath

Best done sitting but can be done standing or lying down.

1. Sit with your back straight and your hands resting comfortably in your lap or on your thighs.

Look ahead...try not to fix your gaze on anything in particular. Slightly closing your eyes helps.

Try to focus internally on your breathing.

All inhalations are done through your NOSE; all exhalations through your MOUTH.

Throughout the exercises keep the tip of your tongue in contact with the top of your mouth, just behind your top teeth.

2. Commence inhaling slowly, smoothly and deeply to a mental count of 4 seconds. Fill your lower lungs first (by pushing out your abdomen), then your middle and upper lungs.

Hold your breath for a mental count of 7 seconds.

Slowly and smoothly exhale for a mental count of 8 seconds.

As you exhale, try to let go of all your anxiety, tension & stress.

That’s one round. Pause briefly without inhaling then start another round. This natural pause is very therapeutic and relaxing.

Do 10-12 rounds to begin. Build up to 25-30 rounds several times a day AND whenever you feel anxious or nervous, etc.

Summary: Inhale for 4 seconds - Hold for 7 seconds - Exhale for 8 seconds - Pause briefly - Repeat.

Benefits

- Calms your mind
- Tones your nervous system
- Regulates your breathing
- Balances your emotions

Tips

- Can be done anywhere - on a bus, in a line, at work, before a test
- If you lose your breath, stop, breathe freely then try again
- With practice your pauses between rounds will naturally get longer
- Soothing music or ear plugs can help reduce external distractions



Professional Associations

NCSCA 3rd Annual Summer Academies

*Eastern Summer Academy—July 13 at Shell Island Resort
in Wrightsville Beach*

*Western Summer Academy —July 19 at Appalachian
State University in Boone*



19th Annual School and Community Counselors Conference

Dr. James V. DeLeo will be speaking on "The Challenge of Adjustment: Anxiety, Fears and Phobias in Children and Adolescents". Dr. DeLeo is an emeritus professor of clinical psychology and humanities, co-founder of the Institute for Existential Dialogical Psychotherapy, and has a private practice in Asheville.

Friday April 20, 2012 — 7:30 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.
Covenant Community Church in Asheville

Please pre-register. Contact Phyllis Robertson
with questions.

In the Counseling World

Resources

Licensed Professional Counselors
Association of North Carolina
www.lpcanc.org

American Counseling Association
www.counseling.org

American School Counselor
Association
www.schoolcounselor.org

North Carolina Counseling Association
www.nccounseling.org

North Carolina School Counselor Assoc.
www.ncschoolcounselor.org

National Institute of Mental Health
www.nimh.nih.gov

National Board for Certified
Counselors
www.nbcc.org/Newsletter

Buncombe County
www.buncombecounty.org

This newsletter is a resource of the WCU counseling program and is edited by me, Rachel Henry, a graduate student in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. If you have any questions, suggestions, wishes or needs, please contact me (Rachel) at rahenry2@catamount.wcu.edu. I am happy to answer any and all questions and help in any way I can.

The American School Counselor Association is holding their annual conference June 23–26 in beautiful Minneapolis, Minnesota. Speakers will include Dan Savage of "It Gets Better" fame, Andre Norman and Robin Gurwitsch. Seminars cover a broad spectrum of topics including disaster counseling, creative counseling and working with difficult parents. You can register at www.schoolcounselor.org—just look for the Annual Conference page.



"All current practicum and internship students please send thank you notes to your site supervisors at the end of the semester.

Brief and professional hand-written notes on nice stationary probably make the best impression and could impact future employment." - Russ Curtis

Spring 2012: NCE on April 21.

The rumor is true! Western Carolina University Programs in Asheville will be moving from the UNCA campus to Biltmore Park Town Square. This will mean more parking! And comfortable chairs. And access to great restaurants and shopping. It will mean extra rooms outfitted with up-to-date equipment. Negotiations are underway to provide all the services we are used to and more. We will have 25,000 sq. ft. on the third floor of Building 2B at 28 Schenck Parkway, Exit 37.

If you have questions or ideas, please email Patsy Miller, miller@wcu.edu.



If ever there were a spring day so perfect,
so uplifted by a warm intermittent breeze

that it made you want to throw
open all the windows in the house

and unlatch the door to the canary's cage
indeed, rip the little door from its jamb,

a day when the cool brick paths
and the garden bursting with peonies

seemed so etched in sunlight
that you felt like taking

a hammer to the glass paperweight
on the living room end table

releasing the inhabitants
from their snow-covered cottage

so they could walk out,
holding hands and squinting

into this larger dome of blue and white,
well, today is just that kind of day.

-Billy Collins
Poet Laureate

"Simplicity, patience, compassion. These three are your greatest treasures. Simple in actions and thoughts, you return to the source of being. Patient with both friends and enemies, you accord with the way things are. Compassionate toward yourself, you reconcile all beings in the world." [Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching](#)



First Annual Counseling Program Creative Arts Show!!

When and where? Coming Full Circle, May 3rd 2012

Who can display? Any past or current counseling program students and faculty are most welcome.

What counts as art? Pottery, sculpture, collage, quilting, photography, drawing, painting, fiber art, basket work, and onward...

Please contact Trevor Hermann at twhermann1@catamount.wcu.edu with any questions and the following information:

Approximate size of the artwork

Display needs, e.g., easel, wall hanging, free standing, flat on a table. If an easel or other item for display will be needed from Western, please specify.

Dr. Valerie Schwiebert has kindly offered the use of her office to store the art in the week prior to the event.

April 12, 2012 — 3rd Annual TRANSaction Day



Presented by the Department of Intercultural Affairs, TRANSaction Day is the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network's (GLSEN) annual national day to encourage dialogue about gender identities, and to advocate for inclusive, safe schools for all students. At Western Carolina University, TRANSaction Day will include a panel, educational sessions, and an expo of local businesses and organizations, information, and art. Come to the Grand Room on April 12 and see what it's all about.

2012 LPCANC Nancy Howell Scholarship Award - Call for Applications

The Licensed Professional Counselors Association of North Carolina (LPCANC) is pleased to accept applications for the Nancy Howell Scholarship Award. This \$500 scholarship is designed to acknowledge two graduate students who demonstrate leadership as counseling students and potential as practicing LPCs. Recipients also receive a conference registration fee waiver for the upcoming LPCANC Annual Conference. In addition to the honoraria, recipients are provided the opportunity to work with the LPCANC Board of Directors on advocacy projects in the state of North Carolina. Completed applications are due in electronic format no later than 11:59 pm May 1st 2012.

http://lpcanc.org/files/2012_Howell_Scholarship_Guidelines_and_Application.pdf

The Mountain Area Health Education Center presents

ADDICTION: FOCUS ON WOMEN CONFERENCE MAY 15—18, 2012

Keynote Speakers: Norma Finkelstein, Ph.D., LICSW and Glenis Redmond

Located at Kanuga Conference Center near Hendersonville. The conference offers information for ANY behavioral health provider (male or female) about women and addiction, the societal and familial impact of substance abuse, and training on evidenced based models.

More information is available at www.mahec.net/afow or call MAHEC 828-257-4768





Summer School

In between hiking, traveling, sleeping in, summer jobs, floating down the French Broad, fighting the rapids down the Class 5, drinking at the Bywater, barbecues with friends and family, laying out by the pool, catching up on the soaps, painting the kitchen, gigging frogs, shopping the farmers' markets, driving the BRP, watching the Tourists, sculpting, playing music, catching fireflies, hide and go seek, running, biking, church picnics, hot-tubbing, yoga, sightseeing and walking the dog—We have summer school! Here's the reading list.

Counseling 617: Critical Incidents in Addictions Counseling by Virginia Kelly

Counseling 650: Essential Elements of Career Counseling: Processes and Techniques (2nd Edition) by Norman E. Amundson
(or the E-BOOK)

Counseling 637: Counseling as an Art: The Creative Arts in Counseling by Samuel T. Gladding

EDPY 693-60: Integrated Care: Applying Theory to Practice by Curtis and Christian, Routledge
(online discount code HYJ82 for 20% off)
and Flourish by Martin Seligman, Free Press (paperback)

Check with your professors for additional requirements or for textbooks not yet posted.

Summer 2012 courses. Any/all combinations of courses listed can be "mixed and matched":

COUN 617: Addictions Counseling with Dr. Valerie Schwiebert, May minimester (May 7-May 22) in Cullowhee

COUN 650: Career Development with Dr. Lisen Roberts, June term (May 31-July 2) in Asheville

COUN 637: Creative & Expressive Arts in Counseling with Dr. Phyllis Robertson, 2-week session (July 9-20) in Asheville

COUN 677: Spirituality in Counseling with (adjunct) Dr. Mary Deck, 1-week session (June 18-22) in Asheville

EDPY 693-60: Positive Psychotherapy in Integrated Care with Dr. Russ Curtis, July term (July 5-Aug 3) online, with 2 face-to-face sessions in Asheville

EDPY 693-20: Supervision in Clinical Mental Health Counseling with Dr. Valerie Schwiebert, June term (May 31-July 2) in Cullowhee (and some online) – note that this course will be available on a limited basis; COUN 686: Practicum is a pre-req; COUN 687: Internship completion strongly encouraged.

Learning is like rowing upstream, not to advance is to drop back.



Coming Full Circle:
Western Carolina University Counseling Programs'
5th Annual
Counseling Conference and Commencement Celebration

Thursday, May 3, 2012 - Cullowhee, North Carolina

Conference at the WCU University Center (UC)

8:00 – 8:30 a.m.: Arrival, registration, outside Multipurpose rooms, UC (**Coffee** is found at Einstein's downstairs)

8:30 – 8:45 a.m.: Welcome and commencement slide show, Multipurpose room B

8:50 – 9:50 a.m.: Session 1

- ψ **Counseling Implications for Working with Children in Poverty: Does SES Make a Difference?**, Amber Cody and Chelsie Picon (Multipurpose room A)
- ψ **Journeywoods: Community Based Wilderness Therapy and Mentoring for Adolescent Males**, Logan A. Walters, Matthew B. Peterson, Michael T. Hurd, and Thomas J. Jameson (Multipurpose room B)
- ψ **Practical Strategies for Working with Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder**, Jen Laite (Catamount room)
- ψ **Artful Longevity**, Alwin E. Wagener, Trevor Hermann, Todd Lester, and Jenny Stulck (Cardinal room)

10:00 – 11:00 a.m.: Session 2

- ψ **Sex Workers In Buncombe County: Demographic On The Fringe**, Kristin Manning, Elizabeth Olds, Megan Denis, and Chris Farmer (Multipurpose room A)
- ψ **Playful Heart: A Therapeutic Play Center for Autism and Caregivers**, Megan Simpson, Shannon Coney, and Daniel A. Keith (Multipurpose room B)
- ψ **Farm of Opportunities: Women Reintegrating from Prison Life**, Catherine Shane (Catamount room)
- ψ **College and Career Planning (K-12): "When I Grow Up, I Want to be..."**, Suzanne O'Donnell, Autumn Rumpfelt, and Mandi Willingham (Cardinal room)

11:10 a.m. – 12:10 p.m.: Session 3

- ψ **It Takes a Village: Responding to Teen Pregnancy as a School Counselor**, Megan Coaplen, Libby Henderson, and Molly Johnson (Multipurpose room A)
- ψ **Caring for Ourselves: Women Struggling with Emotional Overeating, Postpartum Transition, and Caregiving Responsibilities**, L. Beagle, Rachel A. Henry, Laurie A. Kozar, and Mehgan C. McNeil (Catamount room)
- ψ **Get Your Game On: Team Building Activities for School Counselors**, Matt Kirby, Ashley Mitcham, and Mike Pruet (Cardinal room)

12:15 -12:30 p.m.: Closing, CEU certificates, and door prizes, Multipurpose room B

Commencement picnic at the WCU Picnic Grounds

2012 Coming Full Circle

Registration

For space and resource planning, ALL participants (including presenters and their guests) must register in advance.

Registration deadline: Monday, April 30, 2012

Circle all applicable areas:

Your role	Event	Fee
COUN 624/665 student	Conference	free
	Commencement picnic	free
Other COUN student	Conference	free
	Commencement picnic	free
2011-2012 site supervisor	Conference with CEU (3 hrs)	free
	Commencement picnic	free
Other professional	Conference with CEU (3 hrs)	\$15
	Conference without CEU	free
	Commencement picnic	\$5
Guest(s) of 624/665 student	Conference	Free
	Commencement picnic	\$5 individual
		\$10 family of 2-3
		\$15 family of 4+

Name(s): _____

Email: _____

Make checks payable to: WCU Counseling Programs

Deliver, postal mail, or email registration to:

Dr. Lisen Roberts, Director, Graduate Counseling Programs
Department of Human Services
91 Killian Building Lane, room 208
Western Carolina University
Cullowhee, NC 28723
Email: lroberts@email.wcu.edu