

UAB HIGHLANDS MANAGERS NEWSLETTER



Courtesy of the UAB Employee Assistance & Counseling Center

What is compassion fatigue?

Compassion fatigue is a colloquialism for secondary trauma and emotional exhaustion felt by caregivers, first diagnosed in nurses in the 1950s. Caring for others and empathy are positive attributes at the heart of many who go into a helping profession. If this care becomes overwhelming or unbalanced, compassion fatigue may result for the caregiver.

Below are signs of compassion fatigue to be aware of in your staff:

- Mood swings
- Feelings of cynicism and hopelessness about their job
- Anger at how things are and an inability to change them
- Preoccupation with a particular individual or case
- Difficulty remembering things or performing everyday tasks
- Emotional withdrawal from important relationships
- Physical ailments such as fatigue, headaches, and trouble sleeping
- Mental ailments such as depression, anxiety, and feelings of guilt
- Work performance issues such as a breakdown in work relationships, tardiness, and absenteeism

Tips to assist staff in recovery from compassion fatigue

- Limiting or diversifying patient case load
- Offer and remind staff about self-care resources available.
- Offer mentoring to staff who consistently experience compassion fatigue to help improve boundaries with patients.
- Foster a supportive social network among staff
- Contact EACC for confidential counseling services to address compassion fatigue.

The UAB Employee Assistance and Counseling Center is an employee benefit designed to provide UAB, UAB Medicine, VIVA and Homewood Board of Education employees and their immediate household members with resources for resolving work-related and personal problems. The EACC provides confidential counseling and employee assistance, community referral, supervisor consultation, crisis management and a variety of educational programs to support successful work/life integration and provide practical tools for balance in all areas of life. Services are provided as an employee benefit at no cost to our clients.

For more information on EACC services, visit uab.edu/eacc or call 205-934-2281.