

YOUR CAREER IS ABOUT HELPING FAMILIES- WHAT ABOUT YOU?

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The HeartLight Foundation
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All about Jill (not really- the highlights) – Why did your conference allow me to come speak to you today?

- Medical Social Worker with hospice for over a decade
 - Hospice Psychosocial Director, daily census 400
 - Owner in Private Practice for over a decade
 - Specializing in death and dying, chronic to terminal illness, and grief and loss
 - Author: adult workbook, children's grief books, 8 week and weekend grief program
 - Additional specialty in dementia
 - Contract provider for large funeral groups and other agencies as a speaker
- MSW University of South Florida
LCSW
Local, state, national, and international speaker on grief and loss for community groups and professionals
Twice widowed (with kiddos)
Active in the funeral industry
Officiant for memorials
UCR Extension and CSUF Ollie program provider
Educator for multiple agencies nationally and internationally

Our Goals for today

We are going to define compassion fatigue- and look for it

We will compare it to burnout- they are not the same thing!

We are going to look at what happens when time, & staffing levels, get in the way of being your best you

We'll look at the misconceptions you face in your work. (You can't be Superman and Wonder Woman all the time!)

We will look at what the messages are that impact how you feel about yourself, your role, and what work does to you.



And we will talk about why you do the work

- It creates your legacy

and

- What your work offers those you serve



"One day you'll look back and realise how hard it was, and just how well you did."

We want you to leave here today with a sense of how to create a support community, whether in virtually or at your worksite – because it is not easy being you right now.



Let's find out who is here today- if you are willing to share your name and profession.



Compassion Fatigue versus Burnout



Compassion fatigue is a type of stress caused by caring for others.



It leads to a lack of empathy and compassion where before that was the reason for the career/work/caregiving role



Burnout develops over time



Compassion fatigue comes on suddenly.

How does Compassion Fatigue happen?

- It is created by being someone who has compassion and empathy for others, and cares for others who are suffering trauma.
- In the pandemic and during disasters it increases with those who are compassionate *having trouble setting limits on how much they are giving*
- It's made worse by the high needs of those they care for- worried patients, stressed pet parents (especially new ones), anxious and depressed clients in mental health, families following a death needing help with services, caregivers being locked in at home with those they are caring for...
- And absorbing the anger and frustration of those you are serving because *that's what you do.*

In other words, both CF and burnout come from you being a helper. The better you are, the likelier the risk to you.



Trauma makes it probable, not possible, in helping professions. (That's you. And me, for that matter)

CF can also be seen as being caused by vicarious trauma.

The root cause is being a supporter of people suffering from the consequences of a traumatic event.

Has anyone here had any traumatic events around them recently?



What did the best-known helper say?

When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, “Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.”





BURNOUT AND COMPASSION FATIGUE MAY OVERLAP.

If you were already tired, you may be facing both.

What does the research say about who faces CF?



Research focused first on healthcare, specifically nurses, followed by:

- Military personnel
- Mental Health Professionals
- Emergency Medical Technicians/paramedics
- Firefighters
- Law Enforcement
- Clergy
- Hospice Workers
- Emergency care staff
- Lawyers
- People who care for animals like veterinarians and animal rescue programs
- Chronic caregivers
- And, finally, mortuary and funeral staff

THAT MEANS- ALL
OF US HERE. ALL OF
OUR COLLEAGUES.

Did you raise your hand?



What does CF look like? How do you know if you are sharing your head?

- *Less ability to function*
- *More turnover at work*
- *More stress than usual*
- *Caregiver feels traumatized*
- *Working harder, getting less done*
- *Irritability*
- *Feeling bored*
- *More sickness, aches, and pains*
- *Less hygiene*
- *Higher rates of alcohol and substance abuse*
- *Less attention at work*
- *Difficulty with challenging clients/families/patients due to lack of emotional energy*
- *Increased rates of depression and anxiety*
- *A sense that employers (and family) do not care about the mental health issues surfacing*

That's a lot to absorb. It's also vitally important for all of us.
Because helpers do not ask for or accept help well, do we?



SO, WHAT, THEN IS BURNOUT?

(I know. Trust a therapist to split hairs over why
someone is not feeling their best.)



Burnout can be seen as having stages- they follow all the energy of enthusiasm in your career

- 1) Disillusionment
- 2) Stagnation
- 3) Frustration
- 4) Apathy



What happened to enthusiasm????



Enthusiasm loses energy over these issues

- **Lack of control.** An inability to influence decisions that affect your job — such as your schedule, assignments or workload — could lead to job burnout. So could a lack of the resources you need to do your work.
- **Unclear job expectations.** If you're unclear about the degree of authority you have or what your supervisor or others expect from you, you're not likely to feel comfortable at work.
- **Dysfunctional workplace dynamics.** Perhaps you work with an office bully, or you feel undermined by colleagues or your boss micromanages your work. This can contribute to job stress.
- **Extremes of activity.** When a job is monotonous or chaotic, you need constant energy to remain focused — which can lead to fatigue and job burnout.
- **Lack of social support.** If you feel isolated at work and in your personal life, you might feel more stressed.
- **Work-life imbalance.** If your work takes up so much of your time and effort that you don't have the energy to spend time with your family and friends, you might burn out quickly.



Some questions to ask yourself- and colleagues

- Have you become cynical or critical at work?
- Do you drag yourself to work and have trouble getting started?
- Have you become irritable or impatient with co-workers, families, patients or clients?
- Do you lack the energy to be consistently productive?
- Do you find it hard to concentrate?
- Do you lack satisfaction from your achievements?
- Do you feel disillusioned about your job?
- Are you using food, drugs or alcohol to feel better or to simply not feel?
- Have your sleep habits changed?
- Are you troubled by unexplained headaches, stomach or bowel problems, or other physical complaints?



What can you change at each stage?... And where do you fit?



- The best time for intervention is in the enthusiasm stage: when expectations can be explained in terms of realistic goals. *Are your expectations realistic?*
- Stagnation stage: further education, possible career movement *What kinds of things can you learn to add or change your role?*
- Frustration stage: energy of discontent can be channeled toward the possibility of change. *Can you find some things you need to change to create a better space for yourself?*
- Apathy stage: involvement is the best intervention technique. *When nothing seems to matter you need to make it matter – then use that experience to decide what you need to change*
- Acknowledgment of existing conditions is important rather than an idealizing what you think the helping relationship should be. *You can't make changes if you can't see what the reality is around you.*



WHAT DOES YOUR TIME LOOK LIKE IN A DAY?

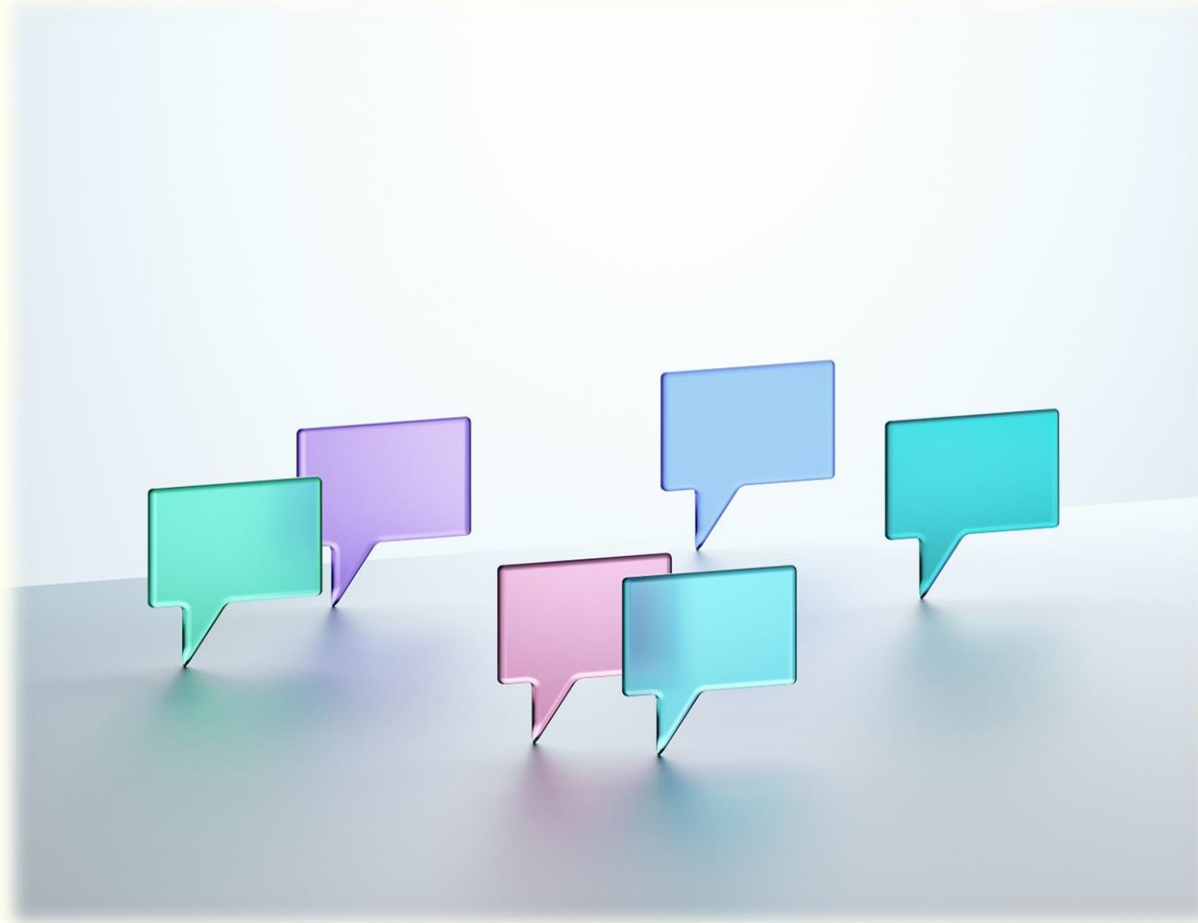
How much do you have a say in it?
How much does it change?



What does staffing, or scheduling or your caseload do to your sense of well being?



What are the messages that impact how you feel about:
yourself, your role, and what work does to you.



Have you been asked or told...:

- Do you need any training to do your job?
- Or been told you should do it for free or less money because you are supposed to help people?
- Or that there is no way the speaker could do that job (with a shudder for effect?)
- Or had someone step back when they heard what your chosen career is?
- Or criticized for the hours you work- without understanding that your hours are part of your career and your ability to care for your clients/families/patients?
- Or asked why you chose this career- as if there is something off or wrong with it?



What misconceptions have you faced in and about your work?

(You can't be Superman and Wonder Woman all the time!)



Sometimes we need “our” people in a caregiver profession

Do you have places and people with whom you can share those moments – and laugh?

Do you know where to find the safe people to share your work-related humor?



Where does humor come into your work life?

Research says grievors- and those who work with them- need humor.

They need you to demonstrate it and engage in it

It creates a bond between you and it reduces stress- for all of you.



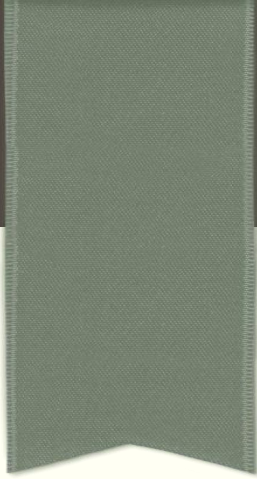
From Rabbi Steve Leder (The Beauty of What Remains)

On The Stephen Colbert Show Steve was asked about the connection between his faith and comedy.

He answered with this beautiful message that “death is not defeat,” which I have been so lucky to witness, over and over again.

When I sit with a family after a loved one has passed, the moment I know when they will be ok, the moment I know they have chosen to keep living, to not be defeated by death, is when they laugh. *Humor is a powerful tool. It can take us places, it can bring us together, it can calm us down, and it can make life bearable, even when it gets hard. When we choose not to be defeated, we have chosen to laugh, to keep living, to look for all the beauty that remains!*





WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT YOUR WORK?

What makes you want to be you?
What makes your career count to you?
(I know the answer- but humor me- what is it for *you*?)

Your career

What makes you feel good about your career?

When you do a great job or have a great day- what does that mean and feel like?

What do you want to look back and see at the end of your career?

What can make your work mean and connect more to your clients/families- even in tough times and moments?



When you are working with grieving clients, referrals to traditional open support groups are frequently part of the process

- The research about Hospice families:
 - Survivors, particularly the primary survivor, aren't open to hospice grief support if their attempts to voice emotional needs were met with medical solutions during the dying process.
 - Those who felt they were not well prepared for a death are even less open to hospice-based grief services.
 - Non-hospice families report feeling dismissed when referred to groups that do not feel like a “fit.” And that impacts their sense of security with providers.



How communication processing creates connection with grievors before and after loss

Providers

- Listen for the concerns
- Go directly for the issues
- Focus on problem solving
- Do not go into any emotional issues if there is a choice and medical or other concerns are present

Patient and /or family:

- Feel heard in terms of medical or specific needs
- If emotional issues are overtaken by medical /other task specific concerns, they won't bring them back up, and will also be less likely to recover well
- They need you to respond to them on an emotional level and to provide a sense of safety- and your humor can come in here.

Grievers gave me these examples of what they want you to understand

- I wish people understood that grief physically hurts. The tears, the painful thoughts around the loss, it's exhausting. Most days I feel like I am trying to hold a beach ball under water. Some days, I just can't.
- My experience is NORMAL and grief is not simple,
- That you become changed in one way or another. And that it is an extremely lonely experience.
- And that it is not moving onplease obliterate that phrase from your vocabulary, it is "moving forward but with our loved ones.
- Don't ask me if they gave up or why I chose the care I did- it sounds like you are judging me.
- Don't tell me my faith should help
- Don't pathologize and assume I am clinically depressed and need meds because I am extremely sad and not following your assumed progression of grieving.
- Just listen.. let us lead the discussion. Sometimes we just need a safe place to cry
- That it's not your job to "fix" me
- You can't just follow a cookie cutter example of the "stages of grief"
- Everyone grieves differently and putting expectations and timetables on anything is not helpful.
- Don't tell me everything happens for a reason.
- Don't tell me not to make changes. I need to and want to.

They need their experience normalized- by all of you



And they need your humor more then ever...

- In your planning with them
- In your work
- In your interactions
- The Greif Rules do not allow humor. You get to model it.
- Be organic- not forced. Follow them.
- Grievors look for smiles because nobody gives them anything but that look...



FOR THERAPISTS BEFORE AND AFTER A DEATH
UNDERSTANDING THE CLIENT'S EXPERIENCE IS
EVERYTHING- AND THAT MEANS KNOWING THE
DYING PROCESS.

FYI THAT'S IMPORTANT FOR OTHERS IN
AFTERCARE AS WELL.



What can you do to make your career and worksite be the best it can?

- How can you create a safe space?
- Find one for yourself and maybe colleagues?
- Support each other even when there are different roles and approaches?
- If virtual is best- how might you create that? (Hint- secret groups are best, not public)
- Do you need to reinvent the wheel?
- You all deserve to feel good about the career you worked hard to create!



What can you do to take back some of yourself?

- **Evaluate your options.** Discuss specific concerns with your supervisor. Maybe you can work together to change expectations or reach compromises or solutions. Try to set goals for what must get done and what can wait.
- **Seek support.** Whether you reach out to co-workers, friends or loved ones, support and collaboration might help you cope. If you have access to an employee assistance program, take advantage of relevant services.
- **Try a relaxing activity.** Explore programs that can help with stress such as yoga, meditation or tai chi.
- **Get some exercise.** Regular physical activity can help you to better deal with stress. *It can also take your mind off work.*
- **Get some sleep.** Sleep restores well-being and helps protect your health.
- **Mindfulness.** Mindfulness is the act of focusing on your breath flow and being intensely aware of what you're sensing and feeling at every moment, without interpretation or judgment. *In a job setting, this practice involves facing situations with openness and patience, and without judgment.*



How else do we combat this kind of stress?

- Assess your self-care. When were you last seen by your doctor?
- Stay physically active, even in 15 minute walks.
- Try deep breathing and progressive relaxation.
- Double check your support system, and fill in the holes. Put a list of emergency phone numbers on your cell phone or by your landline phone.
- Join a support group for your particular field. They are available online- but sit in a few to determine if they are healthy.
- Include some fun and laughter in each day. *Take a break.* You may find that sitting quietly is now fun.
- Care for your spiritual self in whatever way you define that. Look for fellowship- and hugs- if it is safe.
- Decorate for the holidays or special days but do not overdo them.
- Garden. Get your hands dirty!
- Sit quietly by the fire or the water
- Music – it works!
- Look for where you found joy. You work in a hard field. You are allowed some fun, laughter, and joy.
- Find a therapist (yes, even therapists have therapists)
- Ask for help!

Some other ideas to do a reset- and prepare to change your day and thought process

- Short videos that make you laugh or smile (Talking Huskies anyone?)
- Scents that stimulate or change your outlook: citrus (sniff an orange), flowers (I know- FD do not do flowers...) Pine. Others?
- Cold water.
- Make someone else laugh- and join
- Social media that is fun or takes you away.
 - My favorites? View From My Window on FB and real estate from beaches and mountains



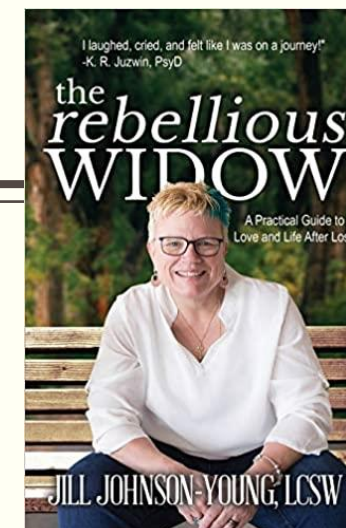
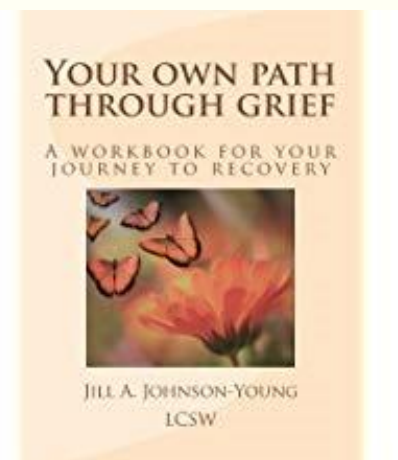
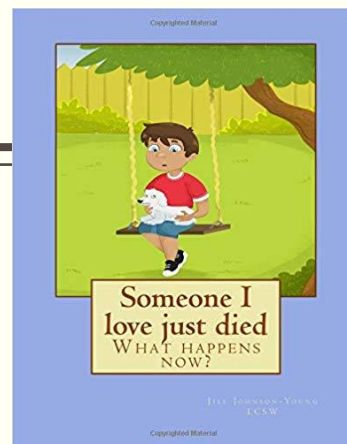
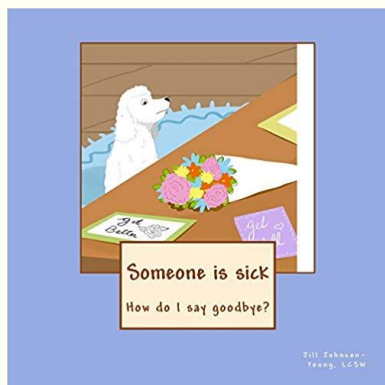
We can take all the stress management, and all the ideas-

- And remind ourselves that this is your career- and you love it.
- And you can find your people in your office, or company, or online- and make a support network of your own.
- And you can make p the career you choose- and keep your sense of pride and satisfaction- even on the tough days.



Thank you for being here. Questions?





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