



## **Patricia Smith's New Book Compassion Satisfaction: 50 Steps to Healthy Caregiving**

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Caregiving is a role that, over time, can dominate the caregiver's life, to the detriment of both the caregiver and the person in need of care. Patricia Smith, in her book *Compassion Satisfaction: 50 Steps to Healthy Caregiving*, outlines how the caregiver, the person receiving care, and organizations that deal in caregiving can turn compassion fatigue into compassion satisfaction, to the benefit of everyone involved.

### **Why this book now?**

Patricia Smith, author: For too many years, caregiving has been a one-way street. Caregivers have been at the mercy of those in

their care. This not only applies to professional caregivers such as physicians, nurses, psychologists, social workers, and mental health clinicians but family caregivers as well. Since this "partnership" has been unbalanced, many helpers now suffer the symptoms of compassion fatigue, which is a secondary traumatic stress syndrome that can devastate the life of a caregiver. The tradition of one human taking full responsibility for another human is fading away. In its place are new concepts embracing a duality where both parties work together, in tandem, to effect hope and healing. This shared relationship allows the caregiver to elevate levels of compassion satisfaction.

### **What is meant by the phrase "compassion satisfaction"?**

PS: Compassion satisfaction is the pleasure we derive from being compassionate, quality caregivers. High levels of compassion satisfaction help to decrease the possibility of acquiring the set of symptoms known as compassion fatigue. Compassion satisfaction is fueled by our ability to provide healthy caregiving to those in our care and be effective helpers. Dr. Beth Hudnall Stamm, professor at the Institute for Rural Health at Idaho State University, has spent her professional life working on a Self-Test to measure levels of compassion satisfaction. My latest book, *Compassion Satisfaction: 50 Steps to Healthy Caregiving*, is divided into 3 sections: "For You, the Caregiver," "For Those in Your Care," and "For Your Organization." The purpose of the book is to provide ideas for raising levels of compassion satisfaction. It was written as a reference book wherein each of the 50 strategies includes what the idea hopes to accomplish and why, followed by 5 action items to get the reader started on a path to providing healthy caregiving.

**What can a caregiver do to measure or monitor their caregiving efforts to make sure they are not succumbing to compassion fatigue?**

PS: Dr. Beth Hudnall Stamm has created the **Professional Quality of Life Self-Test**. The ProQOL, as it is called, is a measurement tool that reveals levels of compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress. Caregivers can download the test on her website and use it regularly to monitor these levels. The test is available in 17 languages, and there is no charge to download the test. Along with the test, there are a number of other materials available to caregivers on the site.

**Fatigued caregivers can easily slip into unhealthy caregiving for the person in their care. Are there any particular warning signs of caregiver fatigue?**

PS: A caregiver with compassion fatigue will exhibit a certain set of symptoms. They are isolation, emotional outbursts, impulse to rescue anyone in need (this includes rescuing animals), continual feelings of sadness or apathy, lack of interest in self-care practices, recurring flashbacks or nightmares of traumatic events, and persistent physical ailments. The only way to manage compassion fatigue symptoms is to practice authentic, sustainable self-care practices daily. The difficulty in achieving this goal is that often caregivers at risk for compassion fatigue put the needs of others before their own needs. This leads to unhealthy caregiving, which means we provide care from a place of depletion instead of a place of abundance. We need to fill ourselves up with healthy practices in order to have something to give others.

## **How does compassion fatigue manifest itself in an organization with trained, professional caregivers?**

PS: I firmly believe that when a majority of caregivers in an organization experience the symptoms of compassion fatigue, the organization itself suffers from compassion fatigue. I have witnessed this in my own professional life and also have heard stories from caregivers in my workshops nationwide. Symptoms of organizational compassion fatigue include high levels of worker's comp claims, high turnover rates, inability of teams to work well together, lack of resiliency of staff and inability to adjust to change, lack of productivity and creativity, tension between staff and management, among other symptoms. Eventually, if the compassion fatigue is left unchecked, the bottom line of the organization will be affected.

## **Where can your book be found?**

PS: *Compassion Satisfaction: 50 Steps to Healthy Caregiving* can be ordered on Amazon.com. The book is also featured on the Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project website at [www.compassionfatigue.org](http://www.compassionfatigue.org).

*Patricia Smith is a certified Compassion Fatigue Specialist with 20 years of training experience. As founder of the Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project© ([www.compassionfatigue.org](http://www.compassionfatigue.org)), the outreach division of Healthy Caregiving, LLC, she writes, speaks and facilitates workshops nationwide in service of those who care for others. She has authored several books including *To Weep for a Stranger: Compassion Fatigue in Caregiving*, which is available at [www.healthycaregiving.com](http://www.healthycaregiving.com) or Amazon.com.*