

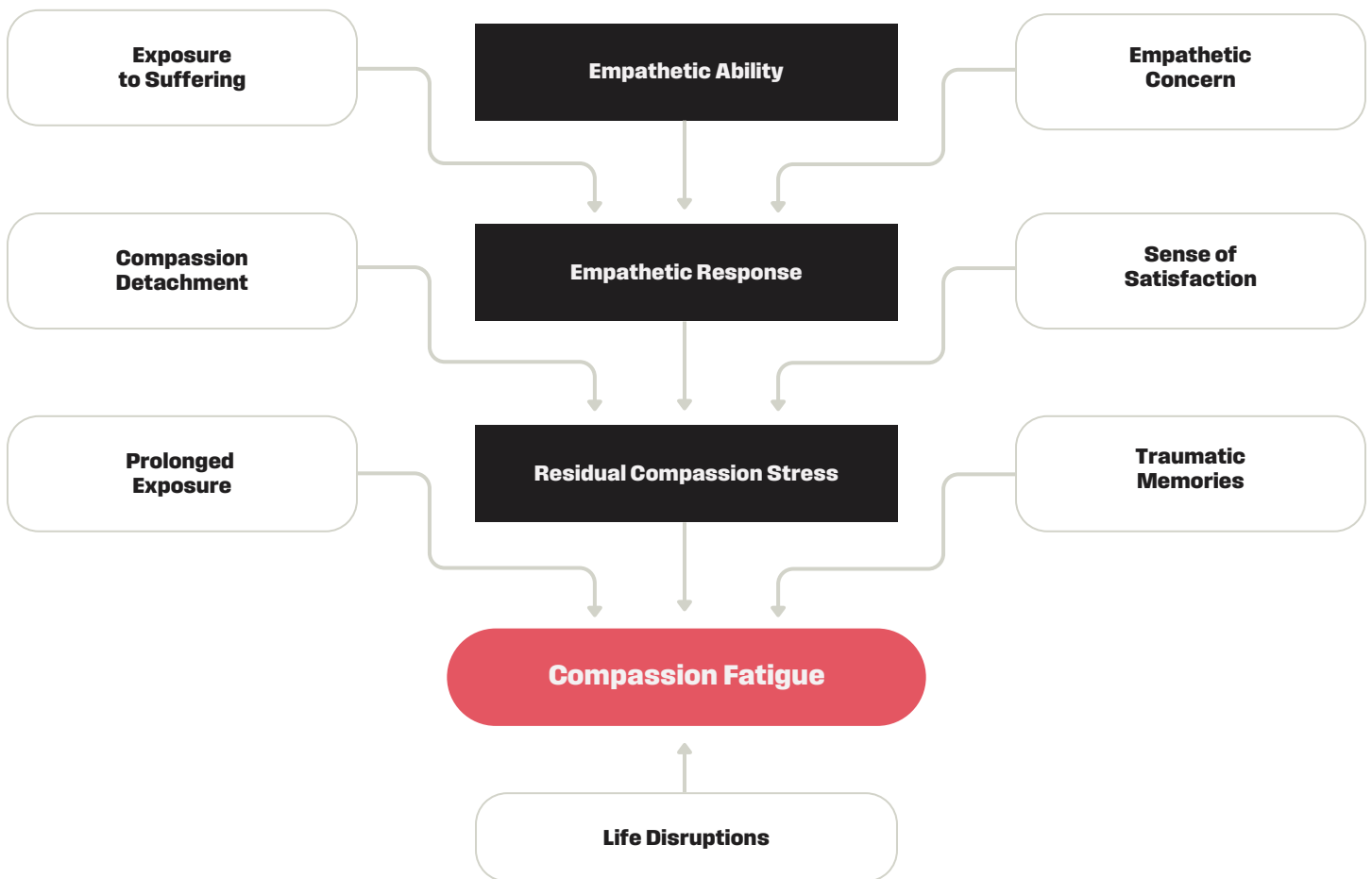
# HELPING HELPERS IN SPORT



**This sheet is for:**

For those who are in helping professions and positions, supporting people as they process their trauma often means that those helpers are exposed to hours of people sharing their worst traumatic experiences. It's important to understand how this can lead to vicarious/secondary trauma, compassion fatigue, and burnout.

## THE COMPASSION FATIGUE PROCESS (ADAPTED FROM FIGLEY, 2002)



Adapted From: Figley, C. R. (1995). Compassion fatigue: Toward a new understanding of the costs of caring. In B. H. Stamm (Ed.), *Secondary traumatic stress: Self-care issues for clinicians, researchers, and educators* (pp. 3-28). Baltimore: The Sidran Press; Figley, C. R. (2002). Compassion fatigue: psychotherapists' chronic lack of self care. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 58, 1433-1441. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.10090>.

**Vicarious/Secondary Trauma**

is the emotional and psychological distress experienced by someone who has been exposed to another person's trauma, often in a professional capacity, such as a social worker, therapist, or lawyer

**Compassion Fatigue**

is the physical, emotional, and psychological exhaustion that results from a deep and prolonged exposure to the stress and trauma of helping others.

**Burnout**

is a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged or excessive stress.

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**INTERRUPTING THE IMPACTS OF TRAUMA ON HELPERS**

There are several strategies to support helping professions and people exposed to secondary trauma. These include three main practices:

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**Training -**

provide training and education about vicarious/secondary trauma, compassion fatigue, and burnout that include definitions, warning signs, and resources to address, heal, and reset.

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**Review and practice training concepts -**

make sure there are continuing education and continuing discussions about these issues, access to resources, and self-care practices that make recognizing and healing from secondary trauma a possibility. Training and educating on compassion fatigue and burnout are useless without a workplace culture that allows it to be practiced.

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**Support and supervision -**

provide a space for debriefing incidents that may be causing trauma and stress. This can include regular supervisor check-ins, support groups with others in the field, or even staff meeting sessions that allow people to opt-in to sharing and processing incidents with others. Be sure that client/patient confidentiality continues to be protected when needed. Best practice in this area includes supporting staff in choosing where they want to find help and healing. Finding support outside of the workplace allows for more comfort and anonymity for some. Ensure that staff are not required to share and be vulnerable in their workplace if they do not feel comfortable doing so.