



## *Raising Compassion Satisfaction in Academic Advising: Practical Strategies for Dealing with Complaints*

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### Overview

Sometimes, students come to the advising office with complaints; sometimes, advisors and/or administrators must deliver bad news. As representatives of their institutions primarily concerned with student success, advisors and administrators can take on the concerns of their students and experience stress, burnout, and other negative outcomes related to their work. In this [NACADA Advisor Training and Development Commission](#)-sponsored webinar, through the use of actual student complaint scenarios, we will explore situations which may cause advisors, and advising administrators, to take on those concerns. Our presenters, who received outstanding attendee responses to their 2015 NACADA Annual Conference presentations on this topic, come together to share practical strategies for avoiding burnout (compassion fatigue) by recognizing and dealing effectively with stress response, managing conflict, and promoting compassion satisfaction.

### Pre-Webinar Activity Suggestions

Please read this short article from the NACADA Clearinghouse about *"Coping with Advisor Burnout"*  
<http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Advisor-Burnout.aspx>

### Post-Webinar Activity Suggestions

You may complete the self-assessment on Professional Quality of Life (on the following pages).

### Additional Information

**Compassion Fatigue** - Feelings and emotions arising from doing helping work with persons undergoing trauma; both burnout and Secondary Traumatic Stress

**Compassion Satisfaction** - Positive emotions and feelings resulting from doing helping work well, seeing the results of your helping work

## References and Recommended Resources

"Chapter 6: Appreciative Advising." *Academic Advising Approaches. Strategies That Teach Students to Make the Most of College.* Ed. Jayne K. Drake, Peggy Jordan, and Marsha A. Miller. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2013. 83-103. Print.

Roundy, Jack. "Tips on Making Effective Referrals in Academic Advising." *Academic Advising News*, Vol. XIV No 2, April 1992, 2, 10.

Simpson, L. R., & Starkey, D. S. (2006). "Secondary traumatic stress, compassion fatigue, and counselor spirituality: Implications for counselors working with trauma". Retrieved September 7, 2016 from <https://www.counseling.org/resources/library/Selected%20Topics/Crisis/Simpson.htm>

[www.proqol.org](http://www.proqol.org) – website for a free assessment tool for burnout, secondary traumatic stress, and Compassion Satisfaction, includes handouts, resources, and research references

[www.compassionfatigue.org](http://www.compassionfatigue.org) – web resource for Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project

The following graphic is used with permission. *Elise Prouix, University of Berkeley, <http://greatergood.berkeley.edu>*



## PROFESSIONAL QUALITY OF LIFE SCALE (PROQOL)

### COMPASSION SATISFACTION AND COMPASSION FATIGUE (PROQOL) VERSION 5 (2009)

When you advise people you have direct contact with their lives. As you may have found, your compassion for those you advise can affect you in positive and negative ways. Below are some questions about your experiences, both positive and negative, as an advisor. Consider each of the following questions about you and your current work situation. Select the number that honestly reflects how frequently you experienced these things in the last 30 days.

**1=Never**

**2=Rarely**

**3=Sometimes**

**4=Often**

**5=Very Often**

- 1 I am happy.
- 2 I am preoccupied with more than one person I advise.
- 3 I get satisfaction from being able to advise people.
- 4 I feel connected to others.
- 5 I jump or am startled by unexpected sounds.
- 6 I feel invigorated after working with those I advise.
- 7 I find it difficult to separate my personal life from my life as an advisor.
- 8 I am not as productive at work because I am losing sleep over traumatic experiences of a person I advised.
- 9 I think that I might have been affected by the traumatic stress of those I advise.
- 10 I feel trapped by my job as an advisor.
- 11 Because of my advising, I have felt "on edge" about various things.
- 12 I like my work as an advisor.
- 13 I feel depressed because of the traumatic experiences of the people I advise.
- 14 I feel as though I am experiencing the trauma of someone I have advised.
- 15 I have beliefs that sustain me.
- 16 I am pleased with how I am able to keep up with advising techniques and protocols.
- 17 I am the person I always wanted to be.
- 18 My work makes me feel satisfied.
- 19 I feel worn out because of my work as an advisor.
- 20 I have happy thoughts and feelings about those I advise and how I could help them.
- 21 I feel overwhelmed because my advising case load seems endless.
- 22 I believe I can make a difference through my work.
- 23 I avoid certain activities or situations because they remind me of frightening experiences of the people I advise.
- 24 I am proud of what I can do to advise.
- 25 As a result of my advising, I have intrusive, frightening thoughts.
- 26 I feel "bogged down" by the system.
- 27 I have thoughts that I am a "success" as an advisor.
- 28 I can't recall important parts of my work with trauma victims.
- 29 I am a very caring person.
- 30 I am happy that I chose to do this work.

## WHAT IS MY SCORE AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

In this section, you will score your test so you understand the interpretation for you. To find your score on **each section**, total the questions listed on the left and then find your score in the table on the right of the section.

### Compassion Satisfaction Scale

Copy your rating on each of these questions on to this table and add them up. When you have added them up you can find your score on the table to the right.

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
 6. \_\_\_\_\_  
 12. \_\_\_\_\_  
 16. \_\_\_\_\_  
 18. \_\_\_\_\_  
 20. \_\_\_\_\_  
 22. \_\_\_\_\_  
 24. \_\_\_\_\_  
 27. \_\_\_\_\_  
 30. \_\_\_\_\_

**Total:** \_\_\_\_\_

The sum of my Compassion Satisfaction questions is	So My Score Equals	And my Compassion Satisfaction level is
22 or less	43 or less	Low
Between 23 and 41	Around 50	Average
42 or more	57 or more	High

### Burnout Scale

On the burnout scale you will need to take an extra step. Starred items are "reverse scored." If you scored the item 1, write a 5 beside it. The reason we ask you to reverse the scores is because scientifically the measure works better when these questions are asked in a positive way though they can tell us more about their negative form. For example, question 1. "I am happy" tells us more about

- \*1. \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_  
 \*4. \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_  
 8. \_\_\_\_\_  
 10. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \*15. \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_  
 \*17. \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_  
 19. \_\_\_\_\_  
 21. \_\_\_\_\_  
 26. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \*29. \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

**Total:** \_\_\_\_\_

The sum of my Burnout Questions is	So my score equals	And my Burnout level is
22 or less	43 or less	Low
Between 23 and 41	Around 50	Average
42 or more	57 or more	High

You Wrote	Change to	
	5	the effects of helping when you are <i>not</i> happy so you reverse the score
2	4	
3	3	
4	2	
5	1	

### Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale

Just like you did on Compassion Satisfaction, copy your rating on each of these questions on to this table and add them up. When you have added them up you can find your score on the table to the right.

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
 5. \_\_\_\_\_  
 7. \_\_\_\_\_  
 9. \_\_\_\_\_  
 11. \_\_\_\_\_  
 13. \_\_\_\_\_  
 14. \_\_\_\_\_  
 23. \_\_\_\_\_  
 25. \_\_\_\_\_  
 28. \_\_\_\_\_

**Total:** \_\_\_\_\_

The sum of my Secondary Trauma questions is	So My Score Equals	And my Secondary Traumatic Stress level is
22 or less	43 or less	Low
Between 23 and 41	Around 50	Average
42 or more	57 or more	High

## YOUR SCORES ON THE PROQOL: PROFESSIONAL QUALITY OF LIFE SCREENING

Based on your responses, place your personal scores below. If you have any concerns, you should discuss them with a physical or mental health care professional.

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### Compassion Satisfaction \_\_\_\_\_

Compassion satisfaction is about the pleasure you derive from being able to do your work well. For example, you may feel like it is a pleasure to help others through your work. You may feel positively about your colleagues or your ability to contribute to the work setting or even the greater good of society. Higher scores on this scale represent a greater satisfaction related to your ability to be an effective caregiver in your job.

The average score is 50 (SD 10; alpha scale reliability .88). About 25% of people score higher than 57 and about 25% of people score below 43. If you are in the higher range, you probably derive a good deal of professional satisfaction from your position. If your scores are below 40, you may either find problems with your job, or there may be some other reason—for example, you might derive your satisfaction from activities other than your job.

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### Burnout \_\_\_\_\_

Most people have an intuitive idea of what burnout is. From the research perspective, burnout is one of the elements of Compassion Fatigue (CF). It is associated with feelings of hopelessness and difficulties in dealing with work or in doing your job effectively. These negative feelings usually have a gradual onset. They can reflect the feeling that your efforts make no difference, or they can be associated with a very high workload or a non-supportive work environment. Higher scores on this scale mean that you are at higher risk for burnout.

The average score on the burnout scale is 50 (SD 10; alpha scale reliability .75). About 25% of people score above 57 and about 25% of people score below 43. If your score is below 43, this probably reflects positive feelings about your ability to be effective in your work. If you score above 57 you may wish to think about what at work makes you feel like you are not effective in your position. Your score may reflect your mood; perhaps you were having a “bad day” or are in need of some time off. If the high score persists or if it is reflective of other worries, it may be a cause for concern.

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### Secondary Traumatic Stress \_\_\_\_\_

The second component of Compassion Fatigue (CF) is secondary traumatic stress (STS). It is about your work related, secondary exposure to extremely or traumatically stressful events. Developing problems due to exposure to other's trauma is somewhat rare but does happen to many people who care for those who have experienced extremely or traumatically stressful events. For example, you may repeatedly hear stories about the traumatic things that happen to other people, commonly called Vicarious Traumatization. If your work puts you directly in the path of danger, for example, field work in a war or area of civil violence, this is not secondary exposure; your exposure is primary. However, if you are exposed to others' traumatic events as a result of your work, for example, as a therapist or an emergency worker, this is secondary exposure. The symptoms of STS are usually rapid in onset and associated with a particular event. They may include being afraid, having difficulty sleeping, having images of the upsetting event pop into your mind, or avoiding things that remind you of the event.

The average score on this scale is 50 (SD 10; alpha scale reliability .81). About 25% of people score below 43 and about 25% of people score above 57. If your score is above 57, you may want to take some time to think about what at work may be frightening to you or if there is some other reason for the elevated score. While higher scores do not mean that you do have a problem, they are an indication that you may want to examine how you feel about your work and your work environment. You may wish to discuss this with your supervisor, a colleague, or a health care professional.

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 NACADA WebEvents 

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**Goals for today**

- Identify Best Practices to individual interactions in complaint scenarios
- Discuss approaches for delivering bad news/managing conflict

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**Goals for today**

- Recognize causes and develop solutions to job stress and burnout
- Identify self-care strategies

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### Setting the Stage

**Why Advocate?**

“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, Nothing is going to get better. It's not.”  
- Dr. Seuss, The Lorax



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### Appreciative Advising Techniques

- Disarm
- Discover
- Dream
- Design
- Deliver
- Don't settle



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### Mediation Techniques

Effective mediators strive to

- Recognize and honor diversity
- Be open minded
- Be caring

Sound familiar?

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### Compassion Fatigue

Defining our terms



- Compassion Fatigue
- Job Burnout
- Secondary Traumatic Stress

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### Compassion Fatigue

- Common symptoms of Compassion Fatigue
- Factors that lead to Compassion Fatigue



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### Compassion Satisfaction

Defining our terms

- Compassion Satisfaction



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### Case Study 1: Will you be my Advisor?



You've been here a while... will you be my new Advisor?

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### Case Study 1: Things to Consider

- Do you take the student?
- Do you tell the supervisor?
- How might the supervisor support both advisors?

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### Case Study 1: Compassion Fatigue

#### Issues to consider

- Role Ambiguity – What obligations do I have as a professional, and how to navigate them?
- Role Conflict – What if these obligations are in conflict? How do I negotiate these roles?

Outcome: Undue stress, risk of burnout

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### Case Study 2: HELP ME!!

#### An email complaint from parent

- Student is a junior who just completed summer school and is starting fall classes in a new major
- He overcame a lot of adversity last year
  - Returned from academic probation
  - Lost his father to cancer

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### Case Study 2: Things to consider

- What would your first step be?
- Would you follow up with the Student?  
Why or why not?
- Would you follow up with the Advisor?  
Why or why not?
- What are some other things to consider?

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### Case Study 2: Compassion Fatigue

#### Issues to consider

- Secondary Traumatic Stress – Taking on the concerns of students in a helping relationship
- Expectations – Self-expectations of performance, being “Super-Advisor,” taking on too much

Outcome: Compassion Fatigue

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### Case Study #3: I feel unsafe....



<http://tsithecrew.com/politics/i-dont-belong-here-i-dont-vote/>

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### Case Study 3: Things to consider...

- How to support staff *and* students
- Will there need to be a Performance Improvement Plan?
- Administrators may get a lot of complaints, from many sources, with many levels of intensity

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### Case Study 3: Compassion Fatigue

Issues to consider

- Coaching/Mentoring for Supervisors
- Role Conflict
- Documentation



Outcome: Positive, Productive Work Environment!

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## Are You a SuperPerson?



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## Things to consider when dealing with complaints

- How you hear about it
- Student centered service
- FERPA
- Significance and patterns

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## What To Do Now



Greater Good Science Center; [greatergood.berkeley.edu](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu)

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