EMPATHETIC STRESS

Compassion Fatigue • Personal Self-Check

When caring for others begins to weigh on you, your mind and body may be signaling a need for support, recovery, or change. Notice patterns, not labels.

COMPASSION FATIGUE

The cumulative physical and emotional strain of caring for people in pain or distress. You may feel depleted, less patient, or less able to connect.

VICARIOUS TRAUMA

Repeated exposure to others' traumatic experiences may gradually change your beliefs about safety, trust, control, yourself, or the world.

These experiences may overlap, but they are not interchangeable.

WHERE EXPOSURE MAY BE GREATER

SUSTAINED CARING DEMANDS

Family caregiving; nursing and healthcare; education; clergy and chaplaincy; social service and community support.

REPEATED TRAUMA EXPOSURE

Crisis response; behavioral health; child protection; victim advocacy; emergency care; corrections and first responders.

Risk can rise with heavy caseloads, distressing stories, little recovery time, limited support, or pressure to always be available.

MY SELF-CHECK

Think about the past few weeks. Check what fits.

- ☐ I feel exhausted after being present for others.
- ☐ I dread another request for help.
- ☐ My patience or empathy feels thinner than usual.
- ☐ I find it harder to be present with loved ones.
- ☐ I am more irritable, numb, or emotionally distant.
- ☐ I feel guilty when I rest or set a boundary.
- ☐ My sleep, focus, or physical tension has changed.
- ☐ I have trouble switching off from others' pain.
- ☐ My sense of purpose feels harder to access.
- ☐ I feel less safe or trusting after hearing others' trauma.

Pause and consider: These are reflection signals, not a score or diagnosis. Ask: *What am I carrying, and what support or boundary would help?*

ONE RESTORATIVE NEXT STEP

One need or limit I can name: _____

One person or resource I can reach out to: _____

Educational self-reflection only; not a validated screening or clinical diagnosis. If distress persists or impairs daily life, consult a qualified professional.