

# **Compassion Fatigue, Burnout, and The Strengths-Based Workplace**

Robert O. Phillips, D.BH  
Indian Health Services Leadership  
Conference June 25-26, 2015  
Denver, Colo

# Why this workshop?



# Objectives for this Presentation...

**At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:**

- Define, recognize and distinguish the professional health-risks of compassion fatigue and burnout(CFBT).
- Understand the most common risk factors for the development of compassion fatigue and burnout (CFBT) among helping professionals; and assess one's own personal level of risk.
- Describe the elements of an effective approach to recovery from compassion fatigue and burnout (CFBT).
- Understand and cultivate a variety of research-supported protective factors against CFBT within ourselves, and within our work settings.

# Defining Burnout




# Defining Burnout

- 
- **Burnout** is a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion acquired through involvement in emotionally demanding situations.
  - A “**process**”, not a fixed condition which typically includes:
    - gradual exposure to job strain
    - erosion of idealism
    - a void of achievement
    - an accumulation of intensive contact with clients
  - **Symptom categories** →
- **Physical** (fatigue, depletion, sleep difficulty, somatic problems)
  - **Emotional** (irritability, anxiety, depression, guilt, sense of helplessness)
  - **Behavioral** (aggression, callousness, pessimism, defensiveness, cynicism, substance abuse)
  - **Work-related symptoms** (quitting the job, poor work performance, absenteeism, tardiness, misuse of work breaks, thefts)
  - **Interpersonal symptoms** (perfunctory communication, inability to concentrate or focus, withdrawal from colleagues/students/clients, dehumanizing students/clients)

# Defining Compassion Fatigue



# Defining Compassion Fatigue

- People can be traumatized either directly or indirectly
- The essential feature of traumatic stress is the development of symptoms following exposure to an event that involves threatened death, injury, or other threat to one's physical integrity; or witnessing such events occurring to others; or *learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associates.*
- **Secondary Traumatic Stress**  
**Symptoms:** 

## **Stressor**

Serious threat to traumatized person  
Sudden destruction of TP's environs

## **Reexperiencing the Traumatic Event**

Recollections of the event/TP  
Dreams of event/TP  
Sudden reexperiencing of event/TP  
Reminders of the TP/event distressing

## **Avoidance/Numbing of Reminders**

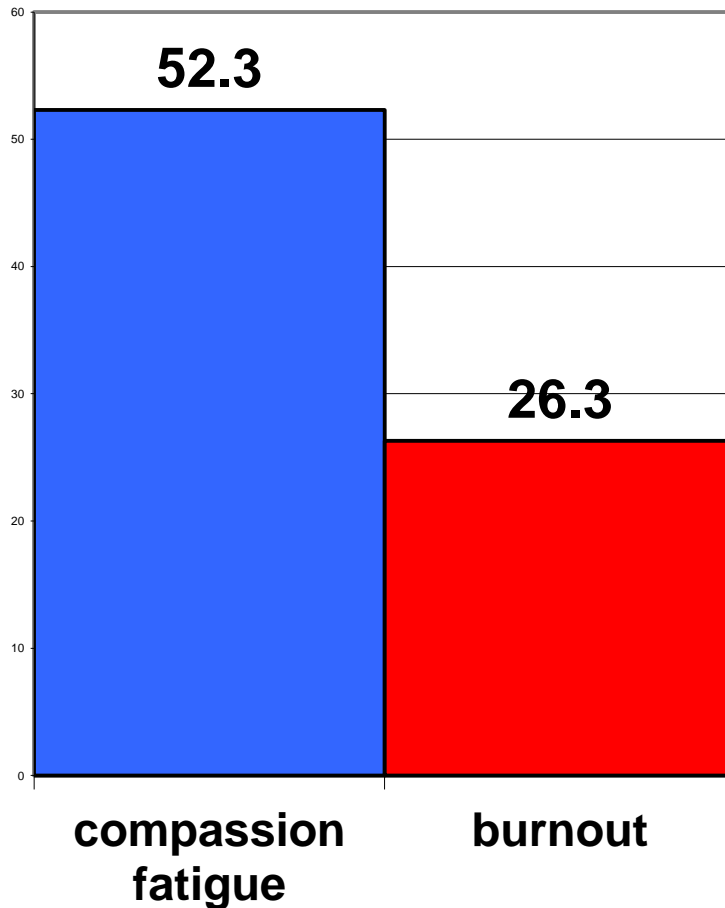
Efforts to avoid thoughts/feelings  
Efforts to avoid activities/situations  
Psychogenic amnesia  
Diminished interest in activities  
Detachment/estrangement from others  
Diminished affect  
Sense of foreshortened future

## **Persistent Arousal**

Difficulty falling or staying asleep  
Difficulty concentrating  
Hypervigilance for the TP  
Exaggerated startle response  
Physiologic reactivity to cues

# The Nature of Risks for Compassion Fatigue & Burnout

Average % of professional helpers at high risk

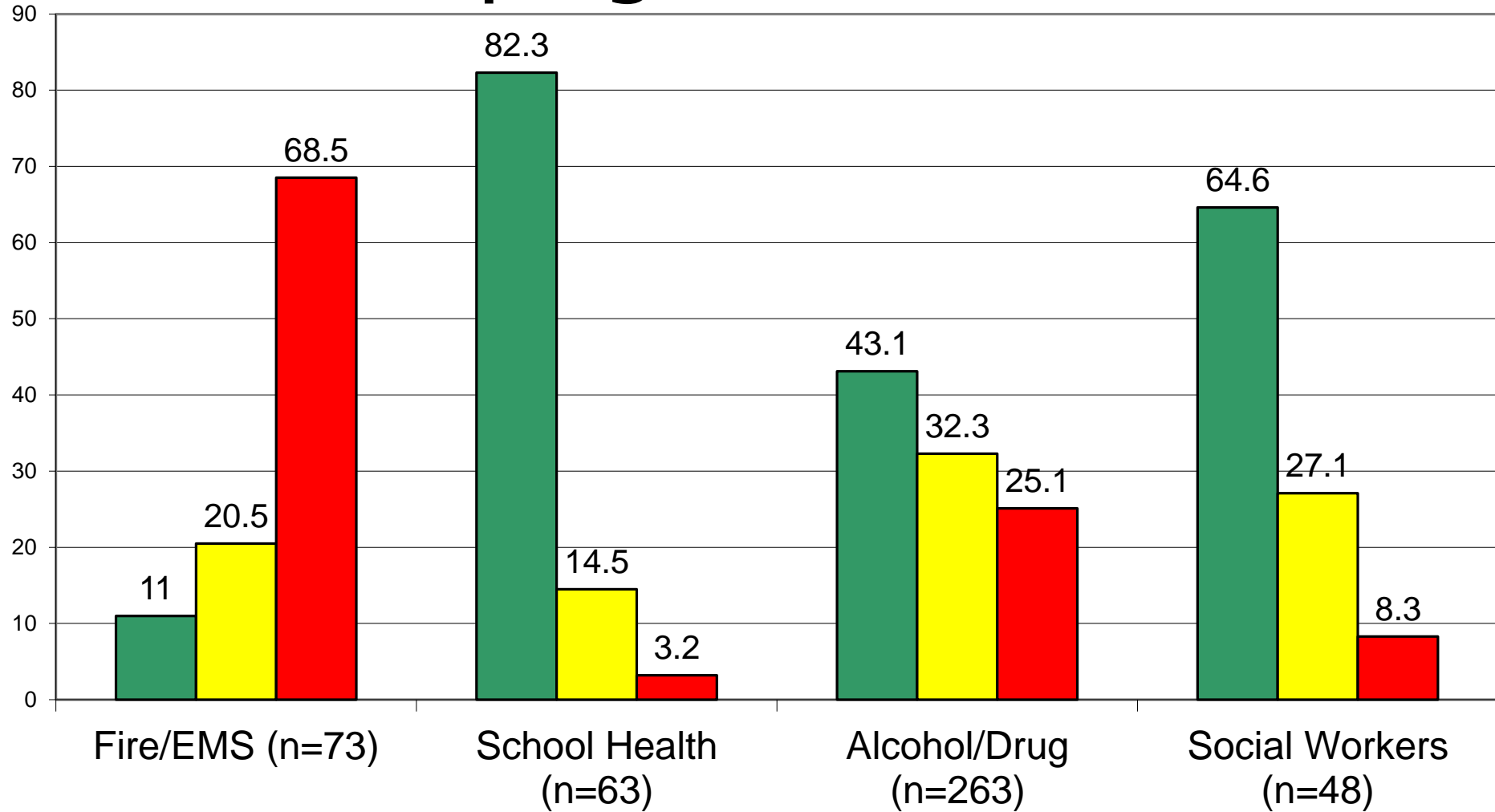


The same qualities that make effective counselors and helpers also place them at highest risk:

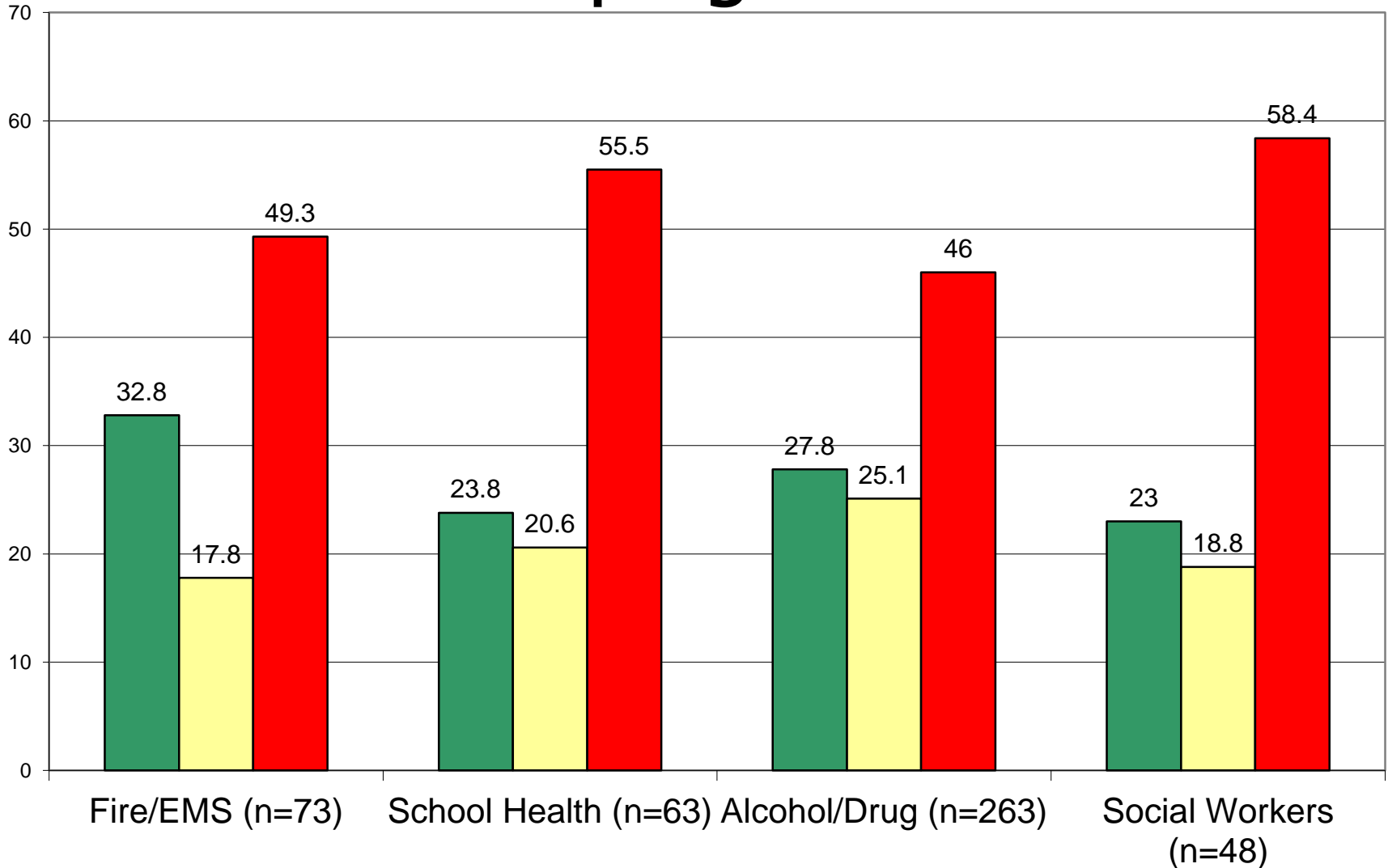
1. The constant presence of trauma-inducing factors.
2. Empathy is a major resource for helping but also a key factor in the induction of traumatic material.
3. Most people have experienced some trauma in their own lives, and there is risk of overgeneralizing one's experience to the student/client, and overpromoting one's own coping/recovery methods.
4. Unresolved issues of the helper will be activated by reports of similar issues in clients.
5. Childhood trauma is especially provocative for helpers; from reports of childhood trauma by adults, or exposure to traumatized children.



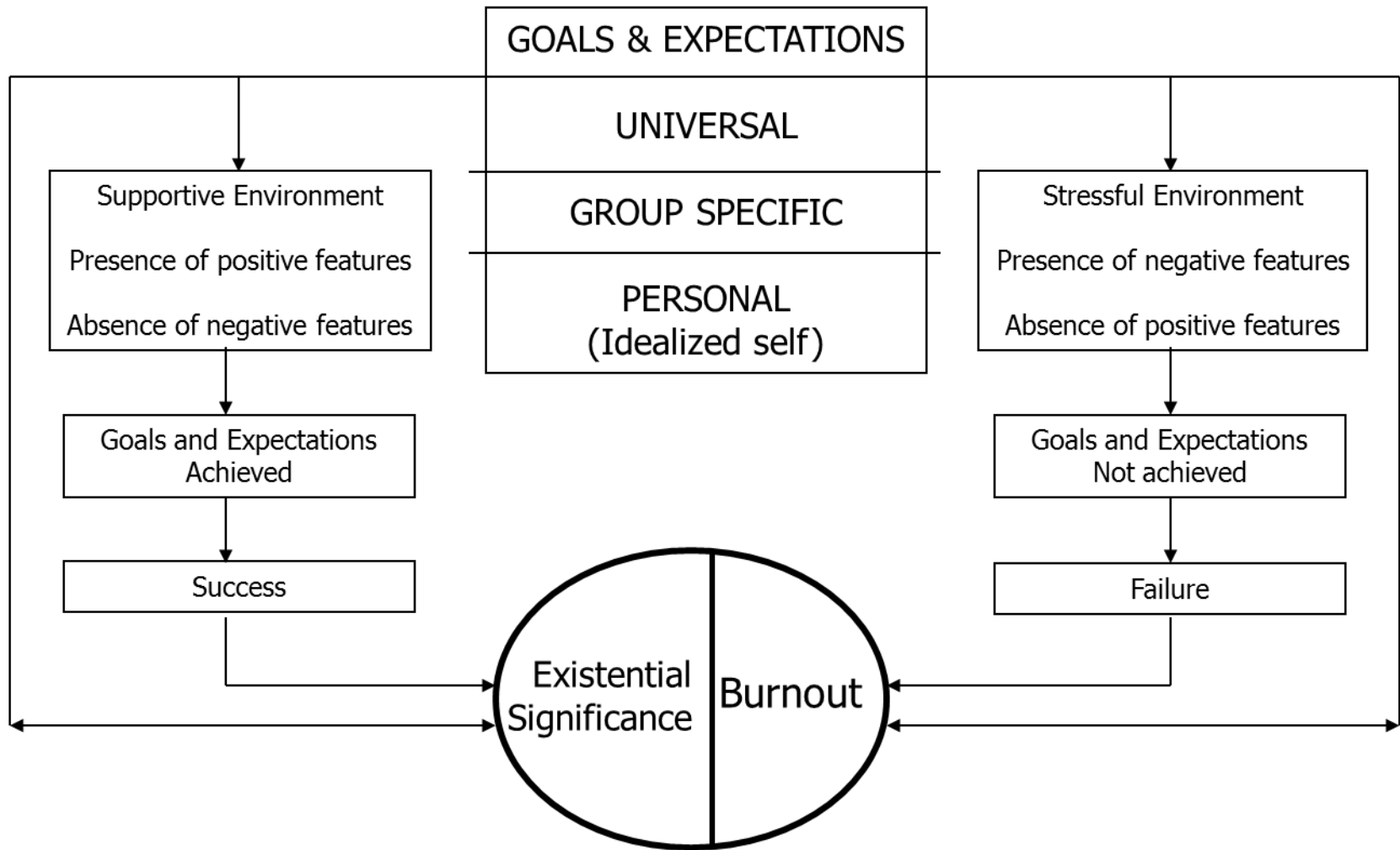
# Rates of Burnout Risk across Helping Professions



# Rates of Compassion Fatigue Risk across Helping Professions

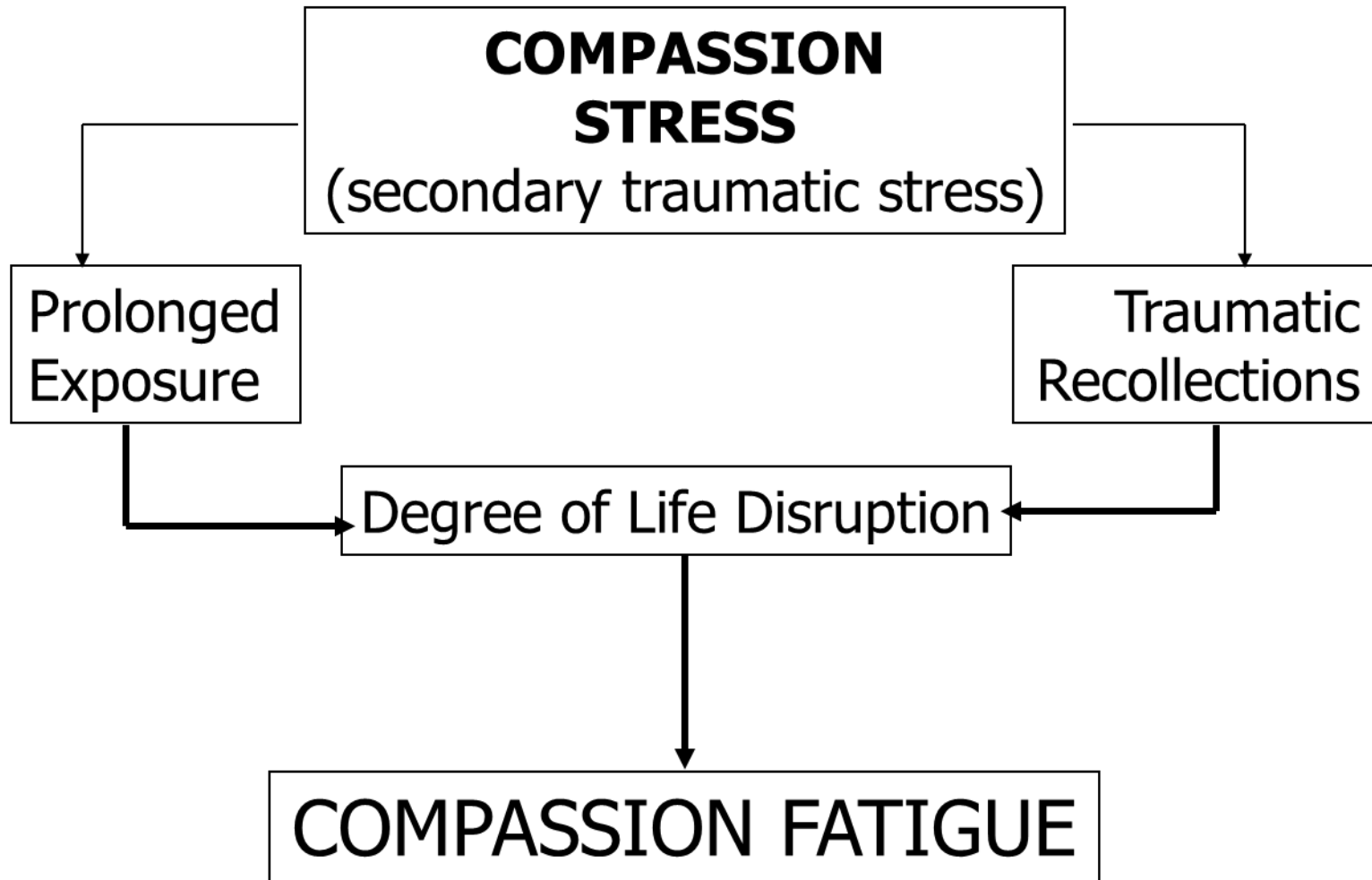


# THE BURNOUT MODEL



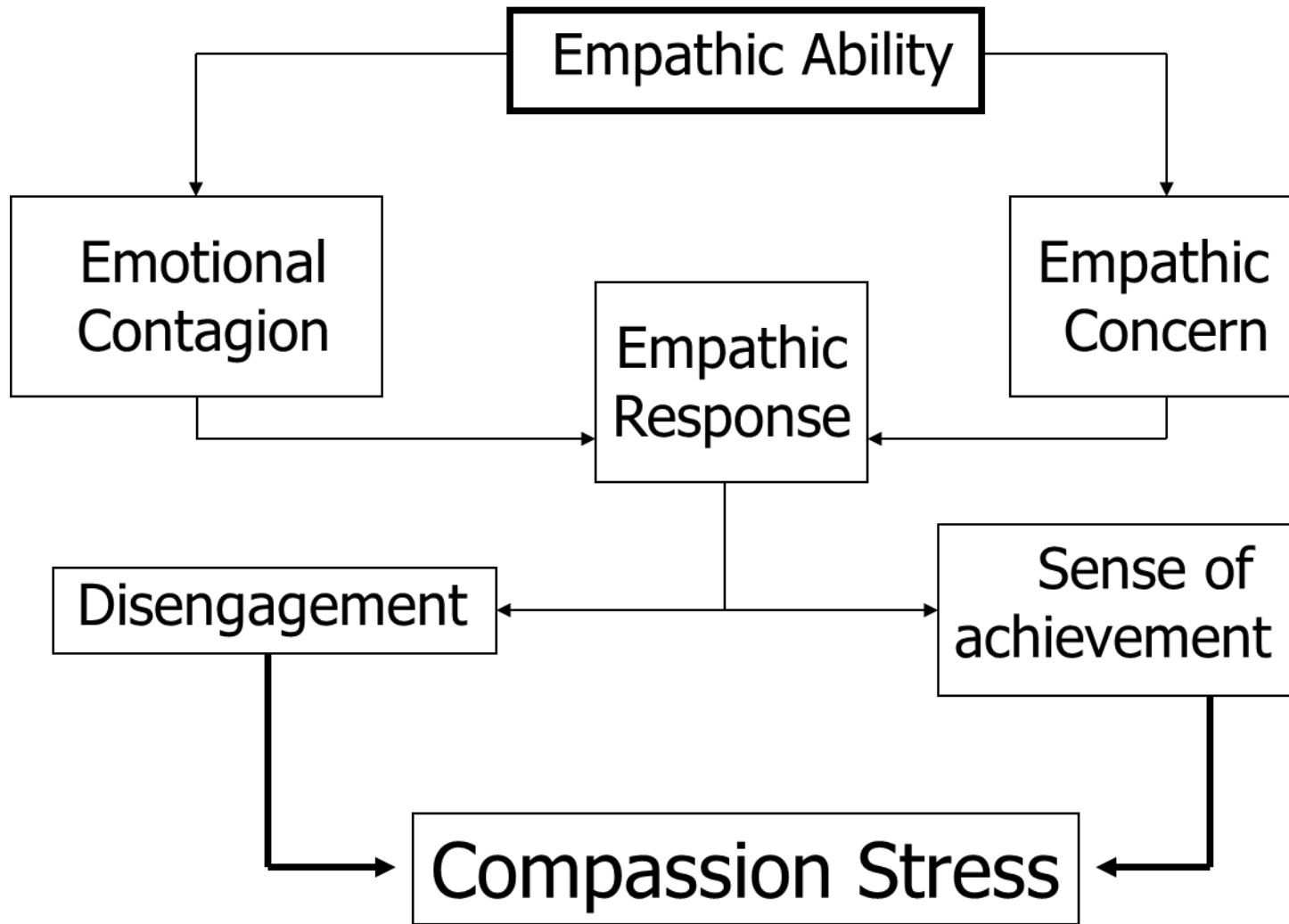
# A MODEL OF COMPASSION FATIGUE

---



# A MODEL OF COMPASSION STRESS

---



# An Accelerated Recovery Program for Compassion Fatigue

Gentry, Baranowsky & Dunning

## **A brief intervention protocol, emphasizing...**

- The therapeutic alliance
- Symptom identification
- Recognition of compassion fatigue triggers
- Identification and utilization of resources
- Contracting for life enhancements
- Review of personal & professional history to the present day
- Master arousal reduction methods
- Learning grounding and containment skills
- Resolving impediments to efficacy
- Initiating conflict resolution
- Designing and implementing a supportive aftercare plan of self-care

# Is there a “bright side” to the experience of Crisis?

危機

- Rates of “benefit from adversity: range from 45% to 90% of persons studied
- Health adversities
- Natural disaster
- Criminal victimization
- Grief
- Combat

# The Search for Protective Factors

---

Compassion Exhilaration

Networks

Hope

**The Keystone of high achievement and happiness is exercising your strengths, not overcoming your weaknesses**

Personal Empowerment

Resilience

M.E.P. Seligman

Optimism

Strengths-Based Workplaces

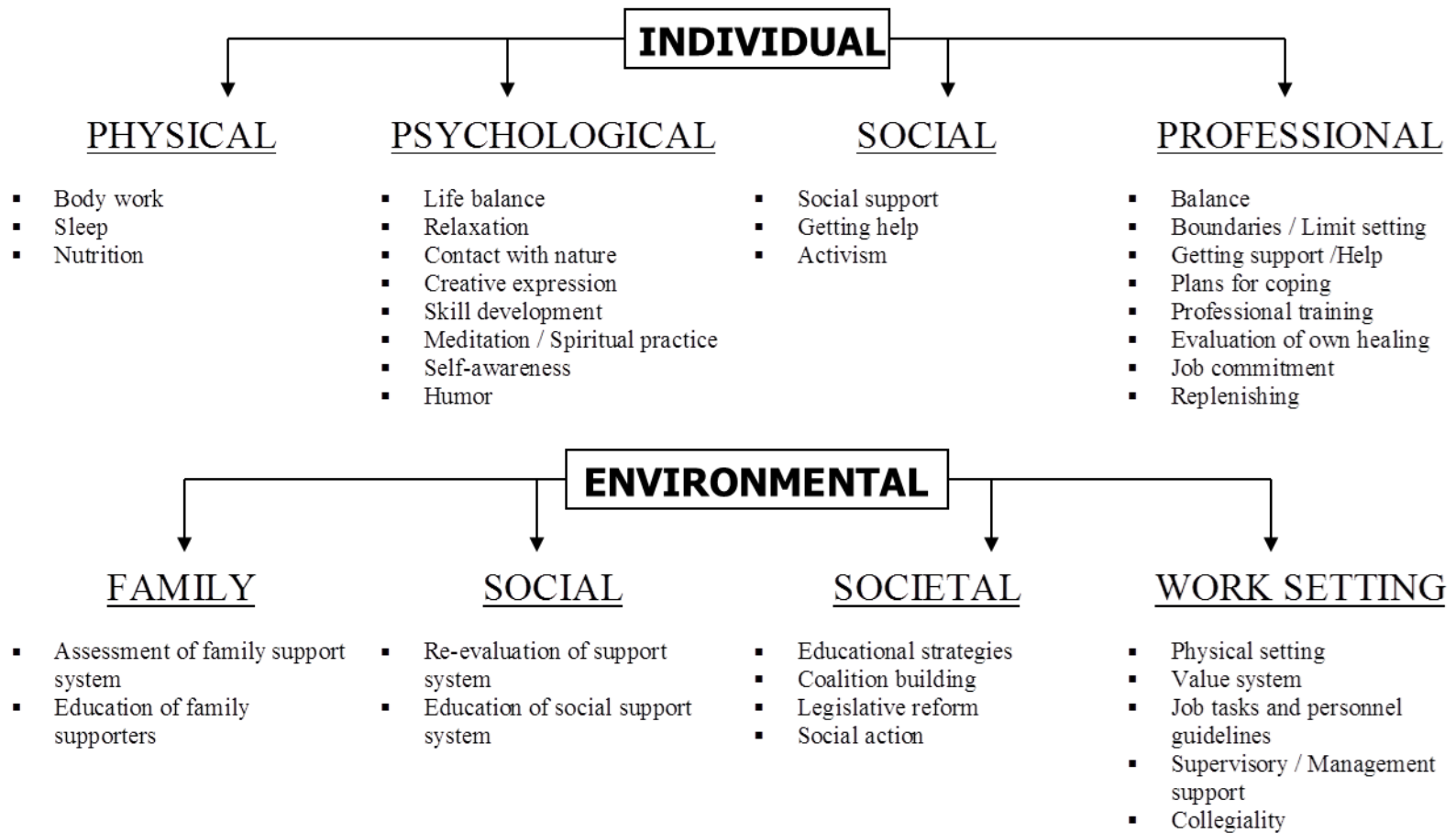
Sense of Coherence



## The Power to Protect...

<b>Protective Factor</b>	<b>CF</b>	<b>BT</b>
<b>Sense of Coherence</b>	<b>-.725***</b>	<b>-.602***</b>
<b>Compassion Satisfaction</b>	<b>-.412**</b>	<b>-.385**</b>
<b>Optimism</b>	<b>-.400**</b>	<b>-.410**</b>
<b>Hope</b>	<b>-.331*</b>	<b>-.323*</b>
<b>Co-worker support</b>	<b>-.452**</b>	<b>-.430**</b>
<b>Fun</b>	<b>-.432**</b>	<b>-.443**</b>
<b>Family/Social support</b>	<b>-.386**</b>	<b>-.350**</b>
<b>Supervision</b>	<b>-.276*</b>	<b>-.261<sup>a</sup></b>

# An Ecological Model for the Prevention of Compassion Fatigue



# The Strengths-Based Workplace



# Organizational Practices that Sustain Values

- Its ironic that just as many businesses in the corporate world are learning to embrace respect and empowerment values toward employees that much of contemporary Human Services systems are characterized by worker exploitation, and a fierce “factory” mentality.
- Employment security and mutual commitment
- Selective recruiting for cultural fit as well as skill
- Investment in training and developing the skills and capabilities of employees
- Decentralization of decision making and the delegation of substantial authority
- Pay and other rewards that are contingent on group and organizational, as well as individual performance
- Broad sharing of information within the organization

# The Strengths-Based Workplace

Buckingham & Coffman (1999). *First, break all the rules*

- I am extremely satisfied with workplace
- I know what is expected of me at work
- At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best everyday
- In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work
- I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right
- My supervisor, or someone at work seems to care about me as a person
- There is someone at work who encourages my development
- At work, my opinions seem to count
- The mission/purpose of my organization makes me feel my job is important
- My associates are committed to doing quality work
- I have a best friend at work
- In the last six months, someone at work talked with me about my progress
- This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow

# Work Environment Features leading to Burnout

PSYCHOLOGICAL	PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	ORGANIZATION
COGNITIVE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Autonomy</li> <li>- Variety</li> <li>- Overload</li> </ul>	FIXED <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Structure</li> <li>- Space</li> <li>- Noise</li> </ul>	SERVICE RECIPIENTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Numbers</li> <li>- Problems</li> <li>- Relations</li> </ul>	BUREAUCRATIC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Red tape</li> <li>- Paperwork</li> <li>- Communication problems</li> </ul>
EMOTIONAL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Significance</li> <li>- Actualization</li> <li>- Growth</li> </ul>	FLEXIBILITY TO CHANGE  FIXED FEATURES	CO-WORKERS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work relations</li> <li>- Sharing</li> <li>- Time out</li> <li>- Support</li> <li>- Challenge</li> </ul>	ADMINISTRATIVE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rules and regulations</li> <li>- Policy influence</li> <li>- Participation</li> </ul>
		SUPERVISORS & ADMINISTRATORS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Feedback</li> <li>- Rewards</li> <li>- Support</li> <li>- Challenge</li> </ul>	ROLE IN THE ORGANIZATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Role conflict</li> <li>- Role strain</li> <li>- Role ambiguity</li> <li>- Status disorder</li> </ul>

Source: A. Pines, *Changing Organizations: Is a Work Environment Without Burnout a Possible Goal?* In W.S. Paine Ed.), *Job Stress and Burnout* (p.192). Beverly Hill, CA: Sage.

# When is the last time you asked yourself what you wanted to be?

The fundamental unit of the new economy is not the corporation but the individual. Tasks aren't assigned through a stable chain of management, but rather are carried out by *autonomously* independent contractors...join(ed) together in fluid and temporary networks to produce and sell goods and services...when the job is done, the network dissolves and its members become independent agents again, circulating through the economy, seeking the next assignment.

*Malone & Laubacher in Harvard Business Review*



# It's a Brand You World

(For a personal tour of Brand You World see [www.tompeters.com](http://www.tompeters.com))

- I am known for (2-4 things). By this time next year I plan also to be known for (1-2 more things).
- My current project is challenging me in the following (1-3) ways.
- New stuff I've learned in the last 90 days includes (1-3 things)
- Important new additions to my Rolodex in the last 90 days include (2-4 names)
- My public (local, regional, national) visibility program consists of (1-2 things)
- My principal "resume enhancement activity" for the next 90 days is (1 item)
- My resume/CV is discernibly different from last year's on this date in the following (1-2) ways.
- Today's date: \_\_\_\_\_