

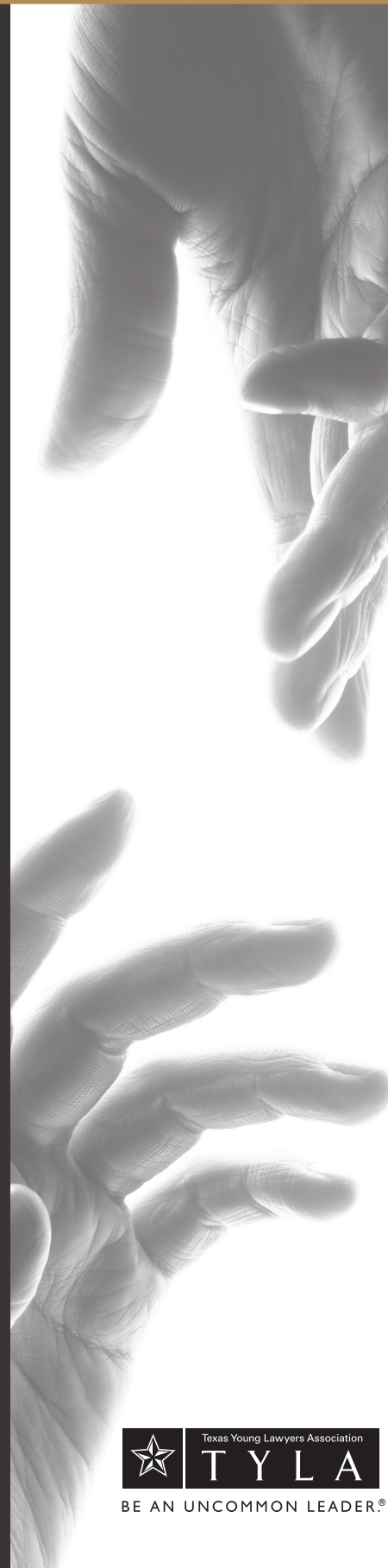
COMPASSION FATIGUE AT A GLANCE

What is compassion fatigue?

- Compassion fatigue (also known as vicarious trauma, secondary traumatic stress, secondhand shock, or secondary stress reaction) as defined by the American Bar Association, is the “cumulative physical, emotional and psychological effect of exposure to traumatic stories or events when working in a helping capacity, combined with the strain and stress of everyday life.”
- It is treatable and treatment may prevent the development of a more serious disorder.
- Attorneys are particularly susceptible to compassion fatigue, especially if the attorneys are regularly exposed to human-induced trauma, including in criminal, family, or juvenile practice areas.
- An attorney with compassion fatigue may feel spiritual, physical, and emotional exhaustion from long-term and cumulative work stress.
- In some cases, compassion fatigue may affect a lawyer’s fitness to practice and ability to provide competent representation.

What are the symptoms?

- Feeling overwhelmed and physically and emotionally exhausted
- Having client/work demands regularly encroach on personal time
- Having disturbing images from cases intrude into thoughts and dreams
- Becoming pessimistic, cynical, irritable, and prone to anger
- Viewing the world as inherently dangerous, and becoming increasingly vigilant about safety
- Becoming emotionally detached and numb in professional and personal life; experiencing increased problems in personal relationships
- Withdrawing socially and becoming emotionally disconnected from others
- Questioning one’s professional competence and effectiveness
- Secretive self-medication/addiction (alcohol, drugs, work, sex, food, gambling, etc.)
- Becoming less productive and effective
- Sleep disturbance, fatigue, or loss of appetite



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What is the treatment?

Professional Assistance

Seek assistance from a licensed provider who specializes in trauma.

Awareness and Education

Awareness is key to successful treatment. Learn more about compassion fatigue at TLAP's website www.tlaphelps.org/stress-anxiety.

Debriefing

Talk regularly with another lawyer who understands and is supportive. Talk about the traumatic material, how you think and feel about it, and how you are personally affected by it.

Self-care

Proactively develop a program of self-care, which should include healthy eating, exercise, and adequate rest. Avoid throwing yourself into work as a coping strategy.

Balance and Relationships

Take steps to simplify life. Try doing less and asking for help. Don't try to be all things to all people because you can't. Focus on work/life balance. Develop and maintain healthy relationships.

Be Intentional

Put a plan for change in place. Recognize that the attributes that contribute to your professional success may be contributing to an imbalance in your life. Monitor your thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Seek assistance to help you implement change.

TLAP Can Help.

If you or a colleague may be experiencing compassion fatigue, seek help or encourage him or her to seek help.

Texas Lawyers' Assistance Program

100% confidential

Call 24/7 1-800-343-8527 (TLAP)



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To read more about compassion fatigue, please visit TLAP's website at:

www.tlaphelps.org/stress-anxiety