

**TAPS**  
Institute for Hope and Healing

***The Helper's Journey: Empathy, Compassion, and the Challenge of Caring in Challenging Times***

**Dale G. Larson, PhD**  
Professor, Counseling Psychology, Santa Clara University

April 20, 2021  
Presented by Boeing




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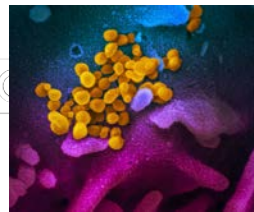
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**COVID-19 2020/2021**

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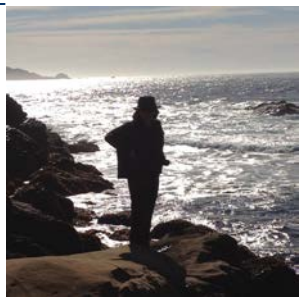
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## A Mental Health Pandemic?

**COVID Stress Syndrome**

- Fear of contamination
- Worry about finances
- Xenophobic fear that foreigners are spreading the virus
- Traumatic stress symptoms associated with direct or vicarious traumatic exposure
- Compulsive checking and reassurance seeking

Taylor, S. et al (2020). COVID stress syndrome: Concept, structure and correlates.

**COVID Stress Scale**

- Overall, how much preparation did you do for your self-isolation?
- Overall, how boring has it been for you to be in self-isolation?
- Overall, how anxious or worried have you been during self-isolation?
- Overall, how lonely have you been during self-isolation?

Taylor, S. et al. (2020). Development and initial validation of the COVID Stress Scales. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*

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## Person-Centered, Biopsychosocial-Spiritual Care

### What it asks of us

What it asks of us during the COVID-19 pandemic



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## Your Purpose in the Work

A powerful self-selection factor; a strong connection between who you are and what you do

Losses, perceptions of unmet need, desire to give back, seeking answers to life's questions, quest for personal growth, wanting to make a difference

**You're not normal!**



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### Resilience-Enhancing Strategies

- Understand the Transactional Model of Stress
- Recognize the troubling trifecta
- Practice balanced empathy
- Be mindful
- Be kind to yourself: Self-compassion
- Positively reappraise
- Set limits
- Strengthen social support
- Take care of yourself
- Integrate and transform loss and trauma
- Take action
- Find meaning and purpose—Eudaimonia

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### A Transactional Model of Stress



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### Stress and Your Telomeres



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The Troubling Trifecta:  
Burnout, Compassion Fatigue,  
and Moral Distress

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Burnout—The Cost of Caring

- Reduced personal accomplishment from efficacy to demoralization
- Diminished caring (depersonalization) from involvement to cynicism
- Emotional exhaustion from energy to fatigue



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Why Burnout?



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### Self-Concealment

*The active concealment from others of personal information that one perceives as negative or distressing*

Larson, D. G., Chastain, R. L., Hoyt, W. T., & Ayzenberg, R. (2015). Self-concealment: Integrative review and working model. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 34*(8), 705-725.



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### Dual-Motive Conflict



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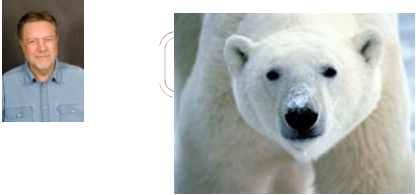
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### Suppression (cognitive preoccupation) and the White Bear Effect



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## Experimental Disclosure Research

*The act of not discussing or confiding the event with another may be more damaging than having experienced the event per se.*




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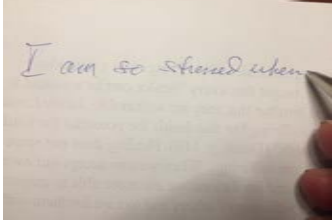
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## The Writing Cure



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## Concealment in Psychotherapy

SCS 45 r with number of topics lied about. % Reporting dishonesty

1. How bad I really feel – I minimized	54	15. My feelings about my body	18
2. The severity of my symptoms – I minimized	39	16. My sexual fantasies or desires	17
3. My thoughts about suicide	31	17. Not saying that I want to end therapy	16
4. My insecurities and doubts about myself	31	18. Self-harm I have done (cutting, etc.)	16
5. Pretending to like my therapist's comments or suggestions	29	19. What I really want for myself	15
6. My use of drugs or alcohol	29	Blanchard, M., & Farber, B. A. (2015). Lying in psychotherapy: Why and what clients don't tell their therapist about therapy and their relationship. <i>Counseling Psychology Quarterly</i> , 28(1), 90-112.	
7. Why I missed appointments or was late	28		
8. Pretending to find therapy more effective than I do	29		
9. Pretending to be more hopeful than I really am	27		
10. Things I have done that I regret	26		
11. Pretending I did homework or took other actions suggested by my therapist	26		
12. My sexual history	22		
13. My eating habits	21		
14. My real opinion of my therapist	18		

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## Compassion Fatigue

Compassion fatigue is a more user-friendly term for secondary traumatic stress disorder, which is nearly identical to PTSD, except that it applies to those emotionally affected by the trauma of another (usually a client or family member).

Figley (2002)

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## Compassion Fatigue Scale-Revised\*

Never/Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very Often

- I have felt trapped by my work
- I have thoughts that I am not succeeding in achieving my life goals
- **I have had flashbacks connected to my clients**
- I feel that I am a "failure" in my work.
- **I experience troubling dreams similar to those of a client of mine.**
- I have felt a sense of hopelessness associated with working with clients/patients.
- I have frequently felt weak, tired or rundown as a result of my work as a caregiver.

Gentry, Baranowsky & Dunning (2002)

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## Compassion Fatigue Scale-Revised\*

Never/Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very Often

- **I have experienced intrusive thoughts after working with especially difficult clients/patients.**
- I have felt depressed as a result of my work.
- **I have suddenly and involuntarily recalled a frightening experience while working with a client/patient.**
- I feel I am unsuccessful at separating work from my personal life.
- **I am losing sleep over a client's traumatic experience.**
- I have a sense of worthlessness, disillusionment, or resentment associated with my work.

Gentry, Baranowsky & Dunning (2002)

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### Moral Distress

When you believe you know the ethically correct thing to do, but something or someone restricts your ability to pursue the right course of action.

Examples:

- Life support against patient wishes
- Life support when not in best interest of patient
- Inappropriate use of health care resources
- Inadequate staffing
- Incompetent staff
- Inadequate pain relief
- False hope to patients and or families.



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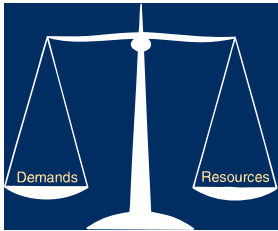
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### Balanced Empathy



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### CONTINUUM OF EMOTIONAL INVOLVEMENT

Burned Out Distant Uninvolved	Balance	On Fire Too Close Overly Involved
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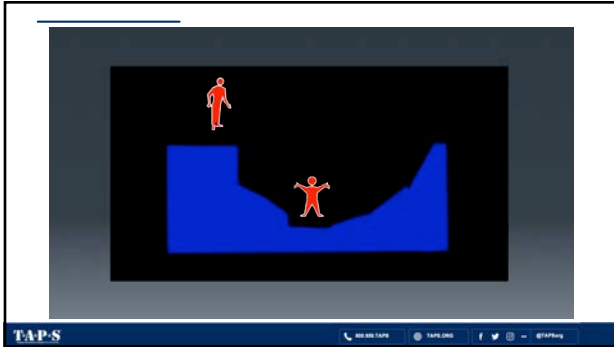
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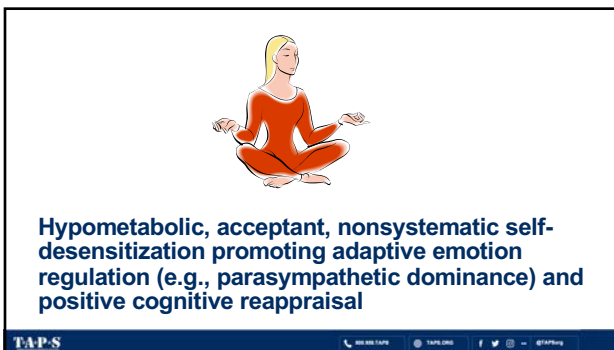
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**Self-Compassion**



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**Self-Compassion Scale (Neff, 2003)**

**Self-Kindness:** *I'm kind to myself when I'm experiencing suffering.*

**Self-Judgment:** *When I see aspects of myself that I don't like, I get down on myself.*

**Common Humanity:** *I try to see my failings as part of the human condition*

**Isolation:** *When I fail at something that's important to me I tend to feel alone in my failure.*

**Mindfulness:** *When I'm feeling down I try to approach my feelings with curiosity and openness.*

**Over-Identification:** *When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.*

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**"I Feel Inadequate"**

I feel very inadequate facilitating a spouse loss support group and I find myself not wanting to hear their stories or listen to their grief, or I just want them to get over it!



I try to be strong for my patients, but inside I am full of grief and still trying to cope with my husband's death. I wonder if I am fooling them or myself. Sometimes I think maybe I am trying to be too strong.

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**Positively Reappraise**



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

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**Change Your Explanatory Style**

Explanatory style is the way we perceive or explain the events in our lives. A depressogenic explanatory style has these three features:

Personal  Permanent  Pervasive 

Stop thinking  
*It's me,  
 It won't ever change, and  
 It is going to be like this in all of my life.*

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**Know Your Limits and Set Them**



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### Strengthen Social Support

Take advantage of the support that is already potentially there for you

Be proactive and develop a solid support system that will be there when you need it

Get as many of the different support functions fulfilled as possible—both technical and emotional support



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### Reach Out

Phone, text, email, Facebook, Zoom, Skype, Facetime, Instagram, sit on your porch getting to know your neighbors (from a safe distance), chatting (from a safe distance) while walking or hiking

Get some help if you need it: Online support groups and counseling



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### Self-Care/Restorative Activities



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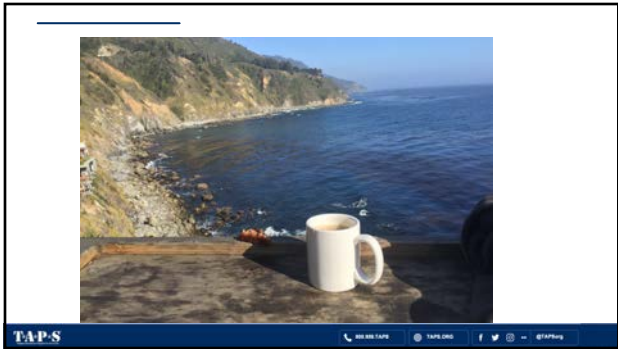
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### Posttraumatic Growth Inventory

- I changed my priorities about what is important in life.
- I have a greater appreciation for the value of my own life.
- I am able to do better things with my life.
- I have a better understanding of spiritual matters.
- I have a greater sense of closeness with others.
- I established a new path for my life.
- I know better that I can handle difficulties.
- I have a stronger religious faith.
- I discovered that I'm stronger than I thought I was.
- I learned a great deal about how wonderful people are.

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### Healing and Growth or Trauma?

A therapist's dream



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### Take Action



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**Cultivate and Discover Meaning, Commitment, and Eudaimonia**

Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile.

Life's most persistent and urgent question is "What are you doing for others?"

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*I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know: the only ones among you who will be truly happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve.*

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How have you contributed to the larger community, shared your wisdom, helped others g(r)o(w) through loss and suffering?

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**Best wishes to you on your helping journey!**



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**Upcoming TAPS Institute Programs**

**April 27** **Coping with Special Days: Finding Comfort in Remembering**  
*Live Webinar, Noon-1:00 p.m. ET*  
**Patti Anewalt**, PhD, LPC, FT, Director, Pathways Center for Grief & Loss

**May 20** **Grief Leadership: Examples from the Life and Service of Captain America**  
*Live Webinar, Noon-1:30 p.m. ET (1.5 CEs Available)*  
**David F. Carey**, MS, BS, LTC, U.S. Army (Ret.), Combat-Veteran (OIF/OEF)  
**Stephen J. Cozza**, MD, DFA&CAP, DFAPA, COL, U.S. Army (Ret.)  
**Jill Harrington-LaMorle**, DSW, LCSW, author/editor, *Superhero Grief*

**June 15** **Shifting Tides: From Caregiver to Survivor**  
*Live Webinar, Noon-1:00 p.m. ET*  
**Lisa Zucker**, MSW, LCSW, CT

Visit [taps.org/institute](http://taps.org/institute) to learn more and RSVP!

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**Upcoming TAPS Institute Programs**

**June 29** **EMDR Demystified**  
*Live Webinar, Noon-1:30 p.m. ET (1.5 CEs Available)*  
**Howard Lipke**, PhD, editorial board member, *EMDR Journal of Practice and Research*

**July 27** **Grieving While You Work, Working While You are Grieving**  
*Live Webinar, Noon-1:00 p.m. ET*  
**L. Mark Hensley**, MTS, DMiri, PT-Csp, Bereavement Services Manager, VITAS Healthcare

Visit [taps.org/institute](http://taps.org/institute) to learn more and RSVP!

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**About the TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing®**

Launched in March 2018 through an alliance with HFA, the TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing® serves as a resource and training center, providing programs for both professionals working in the field of grief and loss and the public.



**TAPS**  
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*Please note: The information provided on this program is intended for educational purposes only.*

*If you or a loved one needs professional support, please contact TAPS 24/7 at 800-959-TAPS (8277).*




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