



## **Stress in the Storm: Jesus the Calming One**

Anxiety and depression are the most prevalent challenges we face. It is not a new phenomenon – they have been around a long time. Actually, in many ways they were created by God to be an important part of the human condition and at times can be quite helpful.

Without anxiety we would be eaten by bears, run over by cars, or suffer other dangers in the world. Anxiety is a survival feature of our life. It helps you get going on that exam coming up or finish the project with its deadlines. When the car is low on gas, that anxiety we feel, helps us to stop and get gas. Anxiety can be a warning siren for many harmful times in our lives.

Depression, too has useful features. Without depression, we would not know how to grieve our losses, how to feel sorrow, or how to create down times in our lives for rest and recuperation. Without depression, we would not have much of the finest art, music, and writing we all enjoy.

Depression is an opportunity to dive into the human character of textured feelings, and colors many of our most enjoyable experiences.

Depression takes us to the very questions of life. Without some depression, we would be robotic creatures, unable to feel and understand ourselves, or have the ability to empathize with others.

How do you know if you're suffering from compassion fatigue?

- Mistakes go up and job performance goes down.
- You can't stop thinking about your job or the problems of your patients.
- You have trouble sleeping.
- You have a general feeling of weariness – emotional exhaustion
- You don't feel like doing anything—you feel blah.
- You feel less satisfied, less energetic and less efficient.
  - Lose meaning for your role as a counselor
  - Isolation from others
  - Sin returns

If you're unsure whether you suffer from compassion fatigue, it's time to become more self-aware. Watch how you are reacting to your patients and colleagues...and how they are reacting to you.

New York = Hong Kong – Francis Chan's video re treadmill

Read Psalm 46:10 – among the chaos of the world around us; does not say “how” to be still; not the same as lazy

Ps. 37:7 – in the context of what other people do and are

Ex. 20:8 Longest command. Why? He knew we would struggle with this one; What does our disobedience of this communicate to God?

Meditate: ruminates in Romans 12:2 – the renewing of your mind by the Word and God's creation

Consider the works of God; His love, your ways, spend time this week and take a good long look at your ways...even the lilies (Jesus)

Are you more sensitive than usual? Are your colleagues getting frustrated with you? Are your patients becoming too clingy? Too familiar? When you recognize how others perceive you and the affect you have on others, you can identify the above symptoms of burnout early.

There is a battle between our anxiety brain and our logical brain  
Anxiety brain's job is to protect us with biological (body) dangers  
The GOAL is to have the logical brain win out

In order: **calming and coping**  
need to get the body calm.

Some people do only this and never seem to get to the source of their anxiety and deal with it. But calming is a vital need to know how to access our smart brain and then make rational choices.

**Jesus wrote on the ground.**

**Body –**

- breathing-in through the nose and out the mouth (like blowing on soup),
- Stretching-tightening up muscles for a minute and then relaxing

**Mind –**

- Mindfulness – learning to control your mind and be in the present; count to ten
- Grounding – reading, count lines in your palm, time and day of the week,

- Exercise of Five: 5 facts, 4 things you see, 3 things you touch, 2 things you hear, 1 thing that makes you happy
- Humor – helps us with perspective

**Senses** – music, lotions, scent

**Release** – putting your feelings into something constructive

- journaling – what I don't journal, I take out on my family,
- venting –
- creative work – write or produce music

**When you practice, you are ready for the crisis**

**So, calming before coping**

### **Coping Strategies**

- **Argue** – acknowledge/talk back; between your anxious brain and your smart brain:

Anxious brain: Tim don't get on that airplane, it might crash

Smart Brain: What are the odds?

Anxious brain: Yea, but maybe you'll beat the odds

Smart brain: let's list some reasons that reveal risk/reward

- **Consequences**

– risk/reward; What rewards outweigh the risks? Why am I flying? Is there purpose that overrides my anxiety?

If I raise my hand in class, will that be more beneficial than not knowing the material?

Google stats or review past events. Are you thinking in the extremes?

- **Negotiate Exposure** – little bit and then increase. Exposure therapy by trained therapist. Snake? Fake snake, then little snake, then bigger...

Sitting on an aisle; sometimes it does not work out so I have to talk my way down and remember it is a short time.

**Courage** – appeal to your morals, goals, and motivations. The WHY before the WHAT and HOW  
Work backwards: kid who is unmotivated in math and wants to be an EMT...who do I want in an accident?

Use goals and motivations to determine current behavior

Use these strategies to cope with job stress and to combat compassion fatigue:

- **Session Awareness:** Learn to read yourself during session. Pause to reflect on your own emotional and physical state. Consider your cognitive health. Positive? Struggling with the possibility of change for others?

- Be still and know that I am God – calming effect so that you can think more clearly; journaling may help here. Try to notice what agitates you in counseling and have a plan to consider what belongs to you and what belongs to God. Meditation may prove useful here.
- Maintain a personal life, even if you don't feel like it. When you're stressed, you may tend to eliminate the very things that will revitalize you—like family dinners, eating lunch out, prayer, meditation, or time with friends. Spend time with supportive people.
- Exercise. You may feel like you just don't have time to exercise. The physical and mental benefits of exercise will make you more productive and are worth every minute. [Editor's note: Scrubs Magazine has a great series of articles for quick workouts you can do while on the job].
- Have a sense of humor. People in stressful jobs, such as psychiatric nurses, may often have a wicked sense of humor—but it's still a sense of humor. When people who work with them recognize they're joking around less often, it's a sign that it's time for a break.
- Set limits between work and home activities. Easier said than done, I know. Don't play
- Opportunity to connect intimately with God and others nurse or therapist in personal relationships.
- Broaden your network. Get involved in professional or social organizations where like-minded people meet and discuss events and mutual problems. Step up meaningful fellowship; Are you having your needs met? This can be difficult in our roles as others look to us constantly for advice, support, and help. That may feed our need to be needed and the cycle begins.
- Re-evaluate your core values and motivations – does your work align with God's values and motivations? Is this a calling? Why do you do what you do?

Editor's note: Some of the symptoms that included in this article could be indicators for depression. Please see a mental health professional if you believe you are clinically depressed. Also, it's okay to show emotion and share it with families and patients, but try your hardest to not get attached to patients too frequently. Sure, there will always be that special patient that touches your heart, but if you're suffering from compassion fatigue, it is time to reevaluate your role as a professional in these particular peoples' lives for your own sanity.