

Reddit Discussions of Compassion Fatigue

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Compassion fatigue is a serious concern for those expressing compassion chronically (Vu & Bodenmann, 2017). It occurs when the stress of expressing compassion leaves a person unable to continue to care for others (Ledoux, 2015). This issue results in emotional and physical symptoms of distress (Vu and Bodenmann, 2017). An approach for coping with compassion fatigue is to find and maintain a healthy support system. Reddit provides users with an opportunity to build a system of support through participation in subreddits, which are communities of Reddit users (Sowles, et al., 2017). In this study, the goal was to develop a greater understanding of compassion fatigue through an examination of how this concept is discussed across subreddit communities, and how these communities support their members who are experiencing symptoms of compassion fatigue. Content analysis was used to examine posts made in five subreddit communities, and patterns were identified across the groups. This analysis resulted in four themes: social contexts (discussion of relationships), psychological (the expression of negative emotions), work (any mention of work stress or environments), and supportive communication (words of encouragement, empathy, or advice). The conversations observed on Reddit showed that subreddit members discussed their experiences with compassion fatigue in the contexts of their personal lives, requested advice for coping from others, and provided each other with support. This research also indicated that subreddit communities are a valuable environment for receiving support for compassion fatigue.