

patreon.com/chillpolyamory

Exclusive video: Is anything causing compassion fatigue?

Automated transcription by Otter.ai

Hello, and Happy Sunday, I hope that you're having a beautiful day and a beautiful weekend. Today I'm giving it a shot to shoot outside, hopefully the birds will not be too loud.

So a topic that has come up pretty often over my last few weeks of calls is compassion fatigue. So compassion fatigue is exactly what it sounds like you know, it is, "I don't want to hear about your problems, I do not feel bad for you, I have nothing to give." it's really common in service positions and caregiving roles. If you are in a job that has kind of normalized exploitation or even abuse... I worked in the film industry for a lot of years from a young age. And that was just hazing, long hours, no pay and very misogynist, and very, like a lot of harassment was part of the gig if you wanted to get ahead. At least that was my experience, I do have friends who work in it, who enjoy it. I'm a very warm and generous and compassionate person... now. but when I was in the film industry, I started being cold or icy to people, a lot more bitchy, frankly. And that was even rewarded. So it was wild, to sort of have the entire world around me reinforcing, "close yourself off, be a machine", because that serves the profit-making, that serves the end goal. But for me, that environment completely depleted me of any warmth or softness.

So yes, it's important that we take care of ourselves. And I'll get to that in a minute. But I think it can help put things in perspective. If our first question is, "what are big factors here, institutions, governments, laws and systems that might be creating this?"

Some people's solution is to try to shift out of that career path. that is not always an option. Or maybe you love the work, you just hate this particular form of it, or hate the way you're treated in the work. So then in that case, a lot of people will rally, set roots and rally for different conditions. And that can be small, that can be large. I mean, it's also fair to hunker down and just try to tolerate and get through the day, right? I'm not saying "if you feel burnt out, it is now your job to either get out or change it," I'm not trying to be like that. I'm just saying, fight the temptation to have pessimism or nihilism with it. There are multiple paths, aside from just finding a way to tolerate it. So it is kind of my practice now, with most chronic issues that I experience, I first pause and say, "what is the systemic factor here?" because there always is one, for the most part.

I have no idea if the camera angle is the same. My dog came over and like, I love him, but he wants to be all up in my shit all the time... In that same vein, I think a huge factor in burnout can be perfectionism, right? Being very militant and dogmatic that

patreon.com/chillpolyamory

Exclusive video: Is anything causing compassion fatigue?

“this isn't done yet because it's not perfect”, you know, and I think we can absolutely strive for excellence. But if we're like, “Nope, I need to do it again. Do it again. Do it again. Do it again.” – It really reminds me of the director of the most recent Les Miserables movie, said that Anne Hathaway on her fourth take, “they got it. good. We can call it a day” and she was like, “No, I can do it better. I can do it better”. And they wound up staying for like 8, 10, 12 hours, something like that. In the cold. It was this big, emotional, overwhelming scene, and she kept pushing herself. And the director said they wound up using the fourth take. and that's what won her an Oscar.

So wait, let me see if I'm remembering that right. [asks Siri] “Did Anne Hathaway win an Oscar for Les Miserables?” Okay, I don't have service out here. Perfectionism, be damned. So I think that story stuck with me because, one: I related to it. But also how we can absolutely be excellent, and not destroy ourselves in pursuit of that.

I do think there's value in challenging perfectionism in all areas of life, small and large. Because at the root of it, if we're being real, perfectionism and preoccupation with eliminating what we think is imperfect, is pretty rooted in militant supremacist fascist ideology. And I'm not calling anybody that name, you know, that's not what's happening. I'm just saying, really reframing it as that, it helped clarify for me that this is the work I wanted to do. That is the direction I want to go in, because of moral and ethical reasons. You know, there's so many ways that I can get overboard with criticizing myself, and so that will absolutely cause burnout.

I think there are also traumatic work environments, exposure to people that need care, that need compassion. Is there a way to sort of change the way that we're engaging with it? to not let it in so deep, to not take on so much? Even in this work, I'm talking to people all the time, hearing about their relationships and their stressors and their pain points and stuff. I cannot take it in too deep. I have like 220 pen pals, I meet with 10 to 12 people a week, everything that I relate to, if I really go into my deepest empathy and pull that out in that moment, I'm gonna drain it faster. So I've gotten to a place where I'm not cold, I'm not icy, but I do try to be a bit more detached, so that when I feel like it's non negotiable that I need to show up with empathy, they're coming to me very distraught, and then I have reserves still.

As I say, in a lot of spaces, I think a lot of relational work is anti codependent work. In terms of not getting exhausted emotionally, there are some internal boundaries that I get better at setting every fucking day, of “I'm not going to let this in too deep this time”. And it's one thing to sort of get into that mode constantly. And it's another to be able to turn it on and turn it off.

At the individual and small scale level, a lot of this kind of burnout can come from emotional intensity, just sustained high octane, “we are talking about our emotions

patreon.com/chillpolyamory

Exclusive video: Is anything causing compassion fatigue?

and our relationship constantly”, you know? That has a time and a place, but I really think it's important to be mindful of the calendar. has there been a heavy talk several days this week? should we also prioritize play, and at least downtime? rest and relaxation with each other, not just alone, but with each other? You know, if that is the source of the emotional intensity.

Sometimes the source of the emotional intensity comes from our own trauma. if we finally have the luxury of being able to dig into our history, and really root out what happened, and “can I not carry it like a load on my back for the rest of my life?” you know, that is, in a lot of ways a luxury despite it being excruciating. it can just be exhausting. I have, the entire last few months, been working on so much familial intergenerational trauma, concurrent with my family presently being a stressor. And a lot of my life is full of very rich, intense emotions, even if I call them “good” positive emotions. I feel a lot of love in my life. I feel a lot of adventure, a lot of gratitude. That is also intense emotion, right? it can sneak up on me when I think “oh, well, all these good things are happening. So why am I so exhausted?” but it's an intense emotion, and we can still get burnt out, even when we're feeling good.

So we've talked about environmental factors, we've touched on emotional overload, what about overextension? – all of the rest of the video can also apply to systemic shit, but I'm going to be focusing on individual relationships and individual conflicts. – Now, overload can be very optional in those cases, right? giving and giving and giving and giving, whether or not the person has asked you to, that can really lead to burnout, that can lead to resentment, that can lead to the end of a relationship. so I don't see it as a virtue when somebody is always giving, I actually find it concerning when somebody always is suggesting that they take on a responsibility, or that they take on the load, or they try to not have needs. that really sets off my alarm bells if they never want to complain, and say “no, everything's good. Nope, everything's fine”. That is a huge struggle for me. I really need people around me who will say no when the answer is no, who will suggest an alternative when my suggestion does not suit them.

Self neglect can be a huge source of overextension and exhaustion. Neglecting what we need, not just in eating food, hygiene, all of that, obviously – though, if that is a struggle to maintain those baseline needs, then maybe there is depression, or maybe there could be some greater issue happening. – But self neglect can also look like “I have filmed a TikTok, and a video for the Patreon resource, and I did four hours of emails and I have a couple of calls. And now I'm gonna go out.” Just knowing my own social battery, my own energy level, that if I want to go out later, maybe I chill out and reschedule a couple of things if I can. or maybe I tell whoever I want to go out with later, “I could be tired or I might need to cancel”. I want that option just in case. Self neglect can look like not factoring in what we need to our plans, to the

patreon.com/chillpolyamory

Exclusive video: Is anything causing compassion fatigue?

calendar, at the negotiating table. Not advocating for, "I might not feel good if that happened, what you're suggesting. Let me suggest something different, Because what you're suggesting could maybe hurt me or might, I might resent you later." Self neglect, self abandonment can be a massive reason that we just have nothing left to give.

So what do we do? I think developing very intentional one to one relationships is very important. To have people that I can vent to, that I can be real with, that I can say all of it. I think one way that I try to get out ahead of burnout is by noticing the physical signs before the emotional or the mental ones, because often my body picks up on it before anything else. So if I'm walking around very mechanically, and sharp and quickly, even in my own home. if I am speaking in very short and punchy sentences, and I don't use exclamation points in my email, I don't have warmth in my emails. if I can notice, "I'm doing that thing", it can be a tip off, I might need to pause. I might need to rejuvenate and recharge even in some small way.

I also think delegation is very important. If we can step back and say, "Could somebody else do this?" That can be a valuable question to ask. I think it's also really important to draw clear lines and bounds around what we engage with, and when. We don't want our restorative time or rejuvenating time to be infiltrated too often by demands on us. Now, that's not always controllable. You're trying to meditate and your kid barges in, you know, like that is a thing. But can we try to really focus on rest when it is time to rest, and really focus on giving when and where it is time to give?

I kind of needed a lot of brainstorming with the people in my life, with my support network to see, "what do you think I should do?" That willingness to ask for help can, in and of itself, take some of the pressure off that "Oh, I don't have to have it all figured out. I don't have to be the only one in charge here."

Well, the sun is telling me I should probably wrap up. I also hear the birds are out and kids are off of school and at the playground. So that might be just nature's alarm clock. But I think in general, I've covered what I want to. You know, we want to engage in this kind of self reflection, we want to engage in self compassion. We want to see, "is there any way I can streamline my stress management? Is there actually anything within my power that I can do to sort of tweak the dials here and there to try to make this a little bit more peaceful?"

I would love to know how you navigate this, how you feel about it. What do you think about everything that's been in my brain today? I love you so much. Thank you for being here. And I will talk to you next week. Bye.

xxx