

Chapter 3

The ProQol: Professional Quality of Life Self-Test

Beth Stamm and Charles Figley have developed a self-test called the ProQol (Professional Quality of Life) that can be downloaded free of charge to assess one's own levels of secondary trauma, burnout, and compassion satisfaction.

In this chapter you are invited to:

- Learn more about compassion satisfaction
- assess your levels of CF/VT and Burnout with the Professional Quality of Life Self-Test
- Use the ProQol test results to map out your levels of CF, VT and burnout

What Is Compassion Satisfaction?

Beth Stamm describes compassion satisfaction as “the pleasure you derive from being able to do your work well.”¹ Stamm considers compassion fatigue (CF) to be the result of both burnout and secondary trauma (keeping in mind the terminological debate discussed in Chapter 2), so your test scores for both categories provide a picture of your CF, in her opinion. I'm not sure I completely agree, as I have seen individuals who work in highly supportive work environments with nontraumatized clients still develop compassion fatigue, but no matter. This test is a great tool and one that has been used throughout the world to collect reliable data on the cost of caring. It is being reproduced here with permission.

I would now like to invite you to take a few minutes to take the test (reproduced on the following pages in Figure 3.1). To download this test, go to http://www.proqol.org/ProQol_Test.html. Beth Stamm would also greatly appreciate it if you are willing to submit your test results to her, because she is compiling

PROFESSIONAL QUALITY OF LIFE SCALE (PROQOL)**COMPASSION SATISFACTION AND COMPASSION FATIGUE
(PROQOL) VERSION 5 (2009)**

When you [help] people you have direct contact with their lives. As you may have found, your compassion for those you [help] can affect you in positive and negative ways. Below are some questions about your experiences, both positive and negative, as a [helper]. Consider each of the following questions about you and your current work situation. Select the number that honestly reflects how frequently you experienced these things in the last 30 days.

1=Never**2=Rarely****3=Sometimes****4=Often****5=Very Often**

- _____ 1. I am happy.
- _____ 2. I am preoccupied with more than one person I [help].
- _____ 3. I get satisfaction from being able to [help] people.
- _____ 4. I feel connected to others.
- _____ 5. I jump or am startled by unexpected sounds.
- _____ 6. I feel invigorated after working with those I [help].
- _____ 7. I find it difficult to separate my personal life from my life as a [helper].
- _____ 8. I am not as productive at work because I am losing sleep over traumatic experiences of a person I [help].
- _____ 9. I think that I might have been affected by the traumatic stress of those I [help].
- _____ 10. I feel trapped by my job as a [helper].
- _____ 11. Because of my [helping], I have felt "on edge" about various things.
- _____ 12. I like my work as a [helper].
- _____ 13. I feel depressed because of the traumatic experiences of the people I [help].
- _____ 14. I feel as though I am experiencing the trauma of someone I have [helped].
- _____ 15. I have beliefs that sustain me.
- _____ 16. I am pleased with how I am able to keep up with [helping] techniques and protocols.
- _____ 17. I am the person I always wanted to be.
- _____ 18. My work makes me feel satisfied.
- _____ 19. I feel worn out because of my work as a [helper].
- _____ 20. I have happy thoughts and feelings about those I [help] and how I could help them.
- _____ 21. I feel overwhelmed because my case [work] load seems endless.
- _____ 22. I believe I can make a difference through my work.
- _____ 23. I avoid certain activities or situations because they remind me of frightening experiences of the people I [help].
- _____ 24. I am proud of what I can do to [help].
- _____ 25. As a result of my [helping], I have intrusive, frightening thoughts.
- _____ 26. I feel "bogged down" by the system.
- _____ 27. I have thoughts that I am a "success" as a [helper].
- _____ 28. I can't recall important parts of my work with trauma victims.
- _____ 29. I am a very caring person.
- _____ 30. I am happy that I chose to do this work.

Figure 3.1(a) Stamm, B.H. (2010). The ProQOL (*Professional Quality of Life Scale: Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue*). Pocatello, ID: ProQOL.org. Retrieved May 2011 from www.proqol.org (continued)

YOUR SCORES ON THE PROQOL: PROFESSIONAL QUALITY OF LIFE SCREENING

Based on your responses, place your personal scores below. If you have any concerns, you should discuss them with a physical or mental health care professional.

Compassion Satisfaction _____

Compassion satisfaction is about the pleasure you derive from being able to do your work well. For example, you may feel like it is a pleasure to help others through your work. You may feel positively about your colleagues or your ability to contribute to the work setting or even the greater good of society. Higher scores on this scale represent a greater satisfaction related to your ability to be an effective caregiver in your job.

The average score is 50 (SD 10; alpha scale reliability .88). About 25% of people score higher than 57 and about 25% of people score below 43. If you are in the higher range, you probably derive a good deal of professional satisfaction from your position. If your scores are below 40, you may either find problems with your job, or there may be some other reason—for example, you might derive your satisfaction from activities other than your job.

Burnout _____

Most people have an intuitive idea of what burnout is. From the research perspective, burnout is one of the elements of Compassion Fatigue (CF). It is associated with feelings of hopelessness and difficulties in dealing with work or in doing your job effectively. These negative feelings usually have a gradual onset. They can reflect the feeling that your efforts make no difference, or they can be associated with a very high workload or a non-supportive work environment. Higher scores on this scale mean that you are at higher risk for burnout.

The average score on the burnout scale is 50 (SD 10; alpha scale reliability .75). About 25% of people score above 57 and about 25% of people score below 43. If your score is below 18, this probably reflects positive feelings about your ability to be effective in your work. If you score above 57 you may wish to think about what at work makes you feel like you are not effective in your position. Your score may reflect your mood; perhaps you were having a "bad day" or are in need of some time off. If the high score persists or if it is reflective of other worries, it may be a cause for concern.

Secondary Traumatic Stress _____

The second component of Compassion Fatigue (CF) is secondary traumatic stress (STS). It is about your work related, secondary exposure to extremely or traumatically stressful events. Developing problems due to exposure to other's trauma is somewhat rare but does happen to many people who care for those who have experienced extremely or traumatically stressful events. For example, you may repeatedly hear stories about the traumatic things that happen to other people, commonly called Vicarious Traumatization. If your work puts you directly in the path of danger, for example, field work in a war or area of civil violence, this is not secondary exposure; your exposure is primary. However, if you are exposed to others' traumatic events as a result of your work, for example, as a therapist or an emergency worker, this is secondary exposure. The symptoms of STS are usually rapid in onset and associated with a particular event. They may include being afraid, having difficulty sleeping, having images of the upsetting event pop into your mind, or avoiding things that remind you of the event.

The average score on this scale is 50 (SD 10; alpha scale reliability .81). About 25% of people score below 43 and about 25% of people score above 57. If your score is above 57, you may want to take some time to think about what at work may be frightening to you or if there is some other reason for the elevated score. While higher scores do not mean that you do have a problem, they are an indication that you may want to examine how you feel about your work and your work environment. You may wish to discuss this with your supervisor, a colleague, or a health care professional.

Figure 3.1(b) Stamm, B.H. (2010). *The ProQOL (Professional Quality of Life Scale: Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue)*. Pocatello, ID: ProQOL.org. Retrieved May 2011 from www.proqol.org (continued)

WHAT IS MY SCORE AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

In this section, you will score your test and then you can compare your score to the interpretation below.

To find your score on **each section**, total the questions listed on the left in each section and then find your score in the table on the right of the section.

Compassion Satisfaction Scale:

- 3. _____
- 6. _____
- 12. _____
- 16. _____
- 18. _____
- 20. _____
- 22. _____
- 24. _____
- 27. _____
- 30. _____

Total: _____

The sum of my Compassion Satisfaction questions	So My Score Equals	My Level of Compassion
22 or less	43 or less	Low
Between 23 and 41	Around 50	Average
42 or more	57 or more	High

Burnout Scale:

- *1. _____ = _____
- *4. _____ = _____
- 8. _____
- 10. _____
- *15. _____ = _____
- *17. _____ = _____
- 19. _____
- 21. _____
- 26. _____
- *29. _____ = _____

Reverse the scores for those that are starred.

0=0, 1=5, 2=4, 3=3, 4=2, 5=1

Total: _____

The sum of my Burnout Questions	So My Score Equals	My Level of Burnout
22 or less	43 or less	Low
Between 23 and 41	Around 50	Average
42 or more	57 or more	High

Secondary Trauma Scale:

- 2. _____
- 5. _____
- 7. _____
- 9. _____
- 11. _____
- 13. _____
- 14. _____
- 23. _____
- 25. _____
- 28. _____

Total: _____

The sum of my Secondary Traumatic Stress questions	So My Score Equals	My Level of Secondary Traumatic Stress
22 or less	43 or less	Low
Between 23 and 41	Around 50	Average
42 or more	57 or more	High

Figure 3.1(c) (continued) Stamm, B.H. (2010). The ProQOL (*Professional Quality of Life Scale: Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue*). Pocatello, ID: ProQOL.org. Retrieved May 2011 from www.proqol.org

data on the effectiveness of the test. Please visit her Web site for more information: www.proqol.org.

ProQol Self-Test Results

What are your thoughts/reactions to your results?

Compassion Satisfaction
Burnout
Secondary Trauma

After you have read the definitions in the previous chapter, and with your ProQol results in hand, take a look at the following graphs, which offer a visual guide to CF, secondary trauma, burnout, and primary trauma.

Many of us will have overlap and will simultaneously experience burnout, CF, and secondary and primary trauma. However, depending on the type of work you do, you may not have a great deal of exposure to trauma.

If I love my job and have a very supportive work environment, but have a lot of trauma exposure *and* have experienced primary trauma in my life and job, I might highlight the circles as in Figure 3.2.

If I have a lot of burnout (due to poor working conditions, an unsupportive manager, etc.) and compassion fatigue, but no exposure to trauma in my work life or in my past, I might highlight those as in Figure 3.3.

Many of us will end up right in the middle, with quite a bit of all four (Figure 3.4).

In the graph in Figure 3.5, color in where you see yourself at the moment. Is there a lot of overlap, or are you concentrated in one or two areas only?

The better you understand the source of the stressors, the sooner you will be able to develop an intervention plan for yourself. We will discuss this in more detail in the chapters to come.

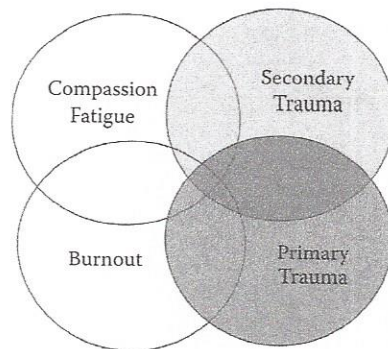


Figure 3.2

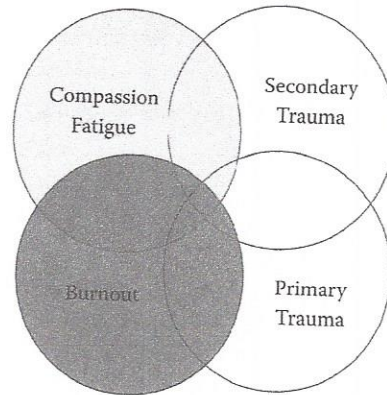


Figure 3.3

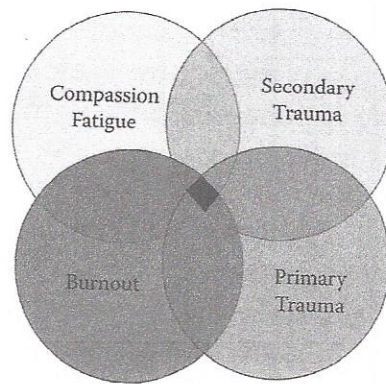


Figure 3.4

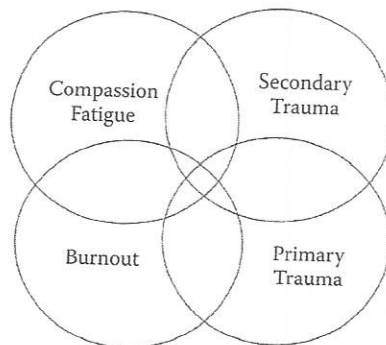


Figure 3.5

RECOMMENDED READING: TRAUMA STEWARDSHIP—A MUST FOR ANYONE DOING TRAUMA WORK

Laura van Dernoot Lipsky's wonderful book *Trauma Stewardship*² fills a real void in the field of vicarious trauma resources. Laurie Anne Pearlman and her colleagues gave us the cornerstone books *Transforming the Pain* and *Trauma and the Therapist*, but we were in dire need for a book that provides concrete steps to help us navigate the challenging field of trauma work. Lipsky guides us through new ways to navigate trauma exposure and implement lasting changes in our daily lives.

Endnotes

1. Stamm, B.H. (2005). *The ProQOL manual: The professional quality of life scale: Compassion satisfaction, burnout & compassion fatigue/secondary traumatic scale*. Baltimore: Sidran Press, p. 12.
2. van Dernoot Lipsky, L., & Burk, C. (2009). *Trauma stewardship: An everyday guide to caring for self while caring for others*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.