

WEBINAR SERIES

MENTAL HEALTH *and* CARE

COPING WITH STRESS DURING THIS SEASON AND BEYOND

presented by  AMPLIFY MEDIA

Episode 3 – Compassion Fatigue: Helping the Helpers

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Host

Rev. Justin Coleman, Senior Pastor, University United Methodist Church, Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Panelists

- Dr. Brian Bantum, Neal F. and Ila A. Fisher Professor of Theology, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Seattle, Washington
- Bishop Kenneth L. Carder, Retired UMC Bishop, Columbia, South Carolina
- Rev. Dr. Leanna Fuller, Associate Professor of Pastoral Care, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

If you are suffering from mental health concerns, contact your doctor or other health professional.

These hotlines are also available:

The National Alliance on Mental Health Helpline ⇨ (800) 950-6264

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline ⇨ (800) 273-8255

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration National Helpline ⇨ (800) 662-4357

National Domestic Violence Hotline ⇨ (800) 799-7233

Episode Recap

This year has been uniquely hard on caregivers, paid and unpaid, as many of their support networks have changed in the face of a pandemic. "Compassion fatigue" has traditionally been associated with those in the medical field, but even more people are experiencing it this year – those caring for children, those caring for sick spouses and parents, social-justice workers, and pastors – as they take care of others during the stress of 2020's pandemic.

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Episode Recap

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Some of the symptoms of compassion fatigue include:

- Elevated displays of stress
- Feeling isolated
- Self-medicating
- Feeling sad or apathetic
- Lack of self-care
- Sleeplessness
- Irritability

Many times you cannot see these symptoms yourself, so listen to your friends and family when they tell you that you don't seem like yourself. Staying connected is important to combatting compassion fatigue and other stressors. In this year of physical distancing, you must be creative about socializing and staying in touch with other people.

Practicing self-care can sometimes feel like an additional item on your to-do list, an additional stress. To fight that, choose self-care practices that bring you energy and joy, which might not look like what self-care looks like for other people. The panelists reminded us to "kiss the joy as it flies by." Self-care might just be noticing a moment of joy in your day.

Remember that self-care is a path to renewed vitality, and making it a routine makes it easier to avoid "crashing and burning" at the end of a period of stress. One piece of advice is to think of something you can do each day, something you can do each week, and something you can do each month. Making a routine of self-care will make you better at self-care.

Caregiving can also be part of the process of grieving, so take time to lament. Bottling up emotions is both a cause and symptom of compassion fatigue.

This year's pandemic has further revealed the inequalities in America. Racial trauma is generational, so look to your elders for what it means to find joy and balance in the midst of injustice. Find your own ways to resist because otherwise the input of bad news will be overwhelming. Churches can be better allies by both providing practical help when needed and by being honest about what role the church has historically played in these inequalities. Churches can show support by not only providing help to those who need it but also by advocating for better systems and policies.

This year has been difficult and pastors should be mindful of their own self-care. It also has created opportunities for pastors to re-imagine ministry.