

Washington State University

Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee

Animal Caregiver Training (ACT)

What is ACT?

It is essential you look through these materials in order to understand compassion fatigue (CF) and what can be done to address the issue. Please note that physical injuries occurring in the workplace are not covered under this program.

Know Compassion Fatigue

If you work with animals that experience pain and distress, or are responsible for the euthanasia of living beings under your care, you could experience the following:

- Increased stress at work
- Difficulty concentrating on the job
- Bodily pain in your work environment

A Common Condition

Even if you momentarily experience any of these, you may be experiencing compassion fatigue (CF). There is a high rate of CF in animal caregivers. If you are experiencing CF, there is assistance available. The first step towards helping yourself is gaining a better understanding of the issue.

Self-care

Witnessing the pain of others could take a cumulative toll. Caregivers begin in their roles with great enthusiasm and sense of purpose, but repeated exposure to painful experiences might eventually lead to exhaustion, irritability, and consideration of a career change. If you experience this pain and distress, you should take time for self-care.

Reducing CF at Work

Consider taking action in order to create a more comfortable environment. Try making the following changes in your workplace:

- Schedule time in advance to take a break.
- Remind yourself of your positive career goals.

Reducing impact of CF in your home life

One of the more difficult aspects of CF is that struggles from work are brought home. Try these strategies when you're not at work in order to ease the effects of CF:

- Create a "buffer time" between work and home to de-stress.
- Intentionally make time to have close conversations with others you care about.
- Take care of yourself through regular exercise, a healthy diet, and a full night's sleep.

If you need more help

Even if you have only momentarily experienced the distress of CF, you are encouraged to do something about it. Many caregivers cope with CF through a renewed emphasis on self-care and, when necessary, the help of a counselor.

Student Contact

If you are a student looking for a counselor, you should contact the Washington State University Counseling Center. The Center has walk in hours for consultation during the following times:

Mon: 1pm-3:30pm

Tues: 10am-11:30am, 1pm-3:30pm

Wed: 10am-11:30am, 1pm-3:30pm

Thurs: 10am-11:30am, 1pm-3:30pm

Fri: 10am-11:30am, 1pm-3:30pm

After hours, weekends and holidays call [509-335-2159](tel:509-335-2159)

Employee Contact

If you are an employee looking for a counselor, you should contact Scott Case at the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). To make an appointment, call [509-335-5759](tel:509-335-5759). You can also email to set up an appointment at eap@wsu.edu.

You may also walk in to set up a meeting. The EAP office is located in the Washington Building, room G60.

If you require assistance after working hours (Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm) or during the weekend, please call the mental health hotline at Palouse River Counseling: 509-334-1133.

You can access more detailed information about CF in the [presentation](#).