

A healthcare professional, likely a nurse, is shown in profile, wearing light blue scrubs, a white surgical mask, and white gloves. She is looking down at the hands of a patient lying in a hospital bed. The background is a blurred hospital room with a window. Overlaid on the right side of the image is the text "Running on Empty" in a large, black, cursive font.

Running on Empty

Dealing with Empathic Strain and Secondary Trauma
for Healthcare Professionals

A bit about me...

Child and Youth Counsellor graduate from
St. Lawrence College



St. Lawrence
College

Certifications in many other courses such as
Suicide Prevention and Mental Health First Aid





Worked frontline in mental health for over
15 years and with children and youth
in various settings



Worked with low-income families in rural settings
as a youth and family counsellor



Worked with those living with substance use
disorders and homelessness in the shelter system



**Trained in 2022 by the TEND Academy
to present on Empathic Strain**



A bit of my story...

I want you to ask yourself....

Are any of these

true for me?



"My family says I'm grumpy"

"I hate my job"

"My partner says I am
drinking too much"

"I don't care anymore"

"I don't want to
go to work"

"I'm calling in sick"

"I am absolutely exhausted"

"I'm so frustrated"

"I can't stop thinking
about that incident"

"Look at those new staff.

"I'm not even making a
difference here"

They think they can change the world.
They'll soon learn this place sucks
and no one cares"

Empathic Strain: How do we tell?





Physical

- Headaches
- Insomnia
- Exhaustion
- Illness



Psychological



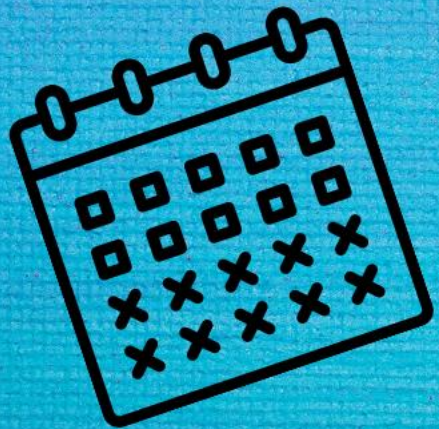
- Emotional exhaustion
- Negative thoughts
- Reduced Empathy
- Sadness
- Cynicism
- Preoccupation with trauma
- Dread of working with certain clients
- Feeling of professional helplessness



Behavioural



- Anger / Irritability
- Absenteeism
- Increased use of alcohol or substances
- Avoidance of clients
- Problems in personal relationships



Self-Care Battery: Recharge Yours!

Check Your Battery

How are you currently feeling?

Feeling great!

Keep meeting your needs and practicing self-care.

Feeling okay.

How can you make your day a tiny bit better?

Struggling.

Practice triage. What area of your life is suffering the most right now? Focus on that one area today.

BlessingManifesting



Feeling good!

How can you maintain the levels you're currently at?

Meh.

How can you love on your -self today? Be extra kind to yourself.

I'm empty.

Pinpoint what's draining you and try to create a boundary & then do one thing that fills you up.

So what are my choices?

(yes, you do have some)

What can I do?

Quit and Leave

vs.

Quit and Stay

Stay and
RE-IGNITE!



Strategies / Suggestions

1. Remember my "why"
2. Teach and Inspire others
3. Be a team champion
4. Focus on the positives
5. Seek appropriate supports

Remember your why

- Why did you choose to do this job in the first place?
- What were you like as a new grad/employee?
- What ideas or dreams did you have?

Teach and Inspire

- Stop being a Bitter Betty or Bitter Bob
- Be the change and lead by example
- Share your knowledge and POSITIVE experience
- Inspire new employees to chase their dreams and ideas
- Encourage others to watch for signs of empathic strain
- Be kind to yourself and others

Be a Team Champion

- Be a part of the solution - focus on what CAN I do
- Be creative in developing new ways of doing your work
- Challenge yourself and others to change the culture
- Try something new - a committee or a working group
- Help to "re-ignite" others
- Share your "why" with others

Focus on the positives

(Trust me, I know what you're thinking)

Negative Headspace

When our shift is over and we are taking the walk to the car, on the bus home, even in the 5 minutes we have alone to go to the bathroom when we get home, we reflect on the day.



Something seems to happen,
we focus on the things that went wrong.

The poop storm that was our day.

My work day - a poop storm

patient care

charts

reports

complex patient needs

time constraints

negative environment

working short staffed

stress

debriefs

complex family needs



I didn't help anyone today

I didn't have time to
see everyone

I didn't make a difference
to anyone today

I was too busy to give
anything to anyone

I'm a failure

Searching through the poop storm...

What DID I do today to make a difference or help?

What DID I do today that I can be proud of?

What is ONE THING I can say made
me smile today?

Focus on those things

and change the narrative of the day!

NO POOP
ZONE



NO POOP
ZONE



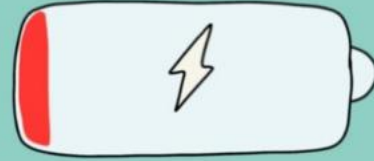
Seek appropriate supports

Don't suffer in silence, many of us have been where you are now

- Challenge your thoughts and know you are entitled to ask for help
- Contact your manager or a trusted leader and share your feelings
- Contact your EFAP program
- Contact your Family Physician
- Talk to a Spiritual Advisor
- Seek out a qualified counsellor

Strategy summary

1. Remember my "why"
2. Teach and Inspire others
3. Be a team champion
4. Focus on the positives
5. Seek appropriate supports



YOU WOULDN'T LET THIS
HAPPEN TO YOUR PHONE

DON'T LET IT HAPPEN TO
YOU EITHER.

SELF CARE IS A PRIORITY.
NOT A LUXURY.