



# Dare 2 Care (D2C): Developing a Sustainable Compassion Fatigue Program That Meets Your Institutional Needs



## **J. Preston Van Hooser**

Review Scientist & Compliance Manager  
Chair, D2C Compassion Fatigue Committee  
IACUC Member  
Office of Animal Welfare

**Tuesday, November 7, 2017 | 11:30AM – 12:15PM**

# Session Objectives

- What is Compassion Fatigue?
- Examine compassion fatigue and its impact on our community
  - Lab Animal Caregivers
  - Researcher Faculty & Staff
  - IACUC & Administrative Support Staff
- Evaluate where in the process CF may show up
- Provide example coping strategies
- Illustrate D2C program development
- Develop and implement a sustainable compassion fatigue program





# What is Compassion Fatigue?

- A combination of physical, emotional and psychological depletion associated with working and caring for animals and their well-being and ultimately having to euthanize them.
  - It is the negative aspect of our work. It may be related to: providing care, the system, working with colleagues, beliefs about self, burnout and/or any work-related trauma.



# Signs and Symptoms - Individual

- Depression
- Hopelessness
- Physical and emotional exhaustion
- Diminished sense of career enjoyment
- Bottled-up emotions
- Irritability
- Substance abuse
- Increases in mistakes
- Anxiety
- Problems in personal relationships
- Isolation
- Poor relationships w/co-workers



# Signs and Symptoms - Organization

- Substandard level of care
- Absenteeism
- High turnover
- Lack of teamwork
- Team conflict
- Low morale
- Increased cynicism
- Blaming and complaining
- Reputation at risk
- Poor quality control
- Deterioration of the organization's mission

# The Cost of Caring

“The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet”

~ Remen, 1996



# We all Experience it

- Not only do the individuals that work directly with the animals, but IACUC members, administrative personnel, and facilities services personnel also experience compassion fatigue.



*We don't get CF because we are weak, can't handle the work, aren't "cut out" for it, etc. We get CF because we care, deeply. And we ignore our own needs.*

# It is important

To provide people with proper guidance and care because this will also have an effect on the animals.





# Self Care Strategies



# Institutional Level

- What does compassion fatigue look like at your Institution?





# The Human-Animal Bond

- The human–animal bond exists in many forms.
- Practices of gentle handling, compassion and patience serve to build the bond between humans and animals.
- The development of the human-animal bond can improve animal welfare by:
  - Minimizing stress
  - Enhancing a sense of safety and security
  - Fostering trust
- Close contact with animals can create feelings of satisfaction and affection.



# Confirming the Human-Animal Bond

- Feelings of satisfaction can arise from knowing that not only basic husbandry needs are met, but that animal welfare is enhanced by connecting through:
  - Compassion
  - Affection
  - Respect



# Animal Background



- Cattle Ranch
- B.S. Zoology – College of Idaho, Caldwell, ID
- R.S. Dow – Neurological Sciences Institute, Portland, OR
- University of Washington, Seattle, WA

# Causes: Compassion Fatigue

## Research Scientist

(1991-2002)

- Visual Cycle
- Mouse Model – LCA
- Incidental Tissues
- 1998
  - Rpe65 ko
- Animal Numbers
  - ~15,000 mice/yr

## Other Factors

- Euthanasia
  - Physical (CDMU)
- Developed mouse allergies
- Animal Rights Activists
- UW Kills
- Self Blame
- Isolation
- Long Hours
- Desensitization
  
- Can't talk about work



# Causes: Compassion Fatigue

## Review Scientist

(2002-Present)

- Protocol Review
  - Species specific studies
  - Category E protocols
- Grant Review
  - Projects/pilots without approval
- Animal Use Training Program
  - Euthanasia
    - Decapitation
- Post-Approval Monitoring
  - Protocol drift

## Other Factors

- IACUC
  - System failure
- Animal numbers
  - ~686,877 animals/yr
- 484 Protocols (337 PIs)
- >50 Different Species
- Unexpected Outcomes
- Negative Media / Animal Rights Activists
- UW Kills
- Desensitization
- **STILL** can't talk about work!





# Compassion Satisfaction

- Work environment
- Potlucks
- Continuing education
- Guest speakers (tie it all together)
- Take time to understand the benefits of the research AND the importance of our role as part of the research team
- Dare 2 Care!!!
- **FINALLY** feel like I can start talking about work!!

# Developing a Compassion Fatigue Program

## Management



Those who say  
it cannot be done  
shouldn't interrupt  
the people doing it

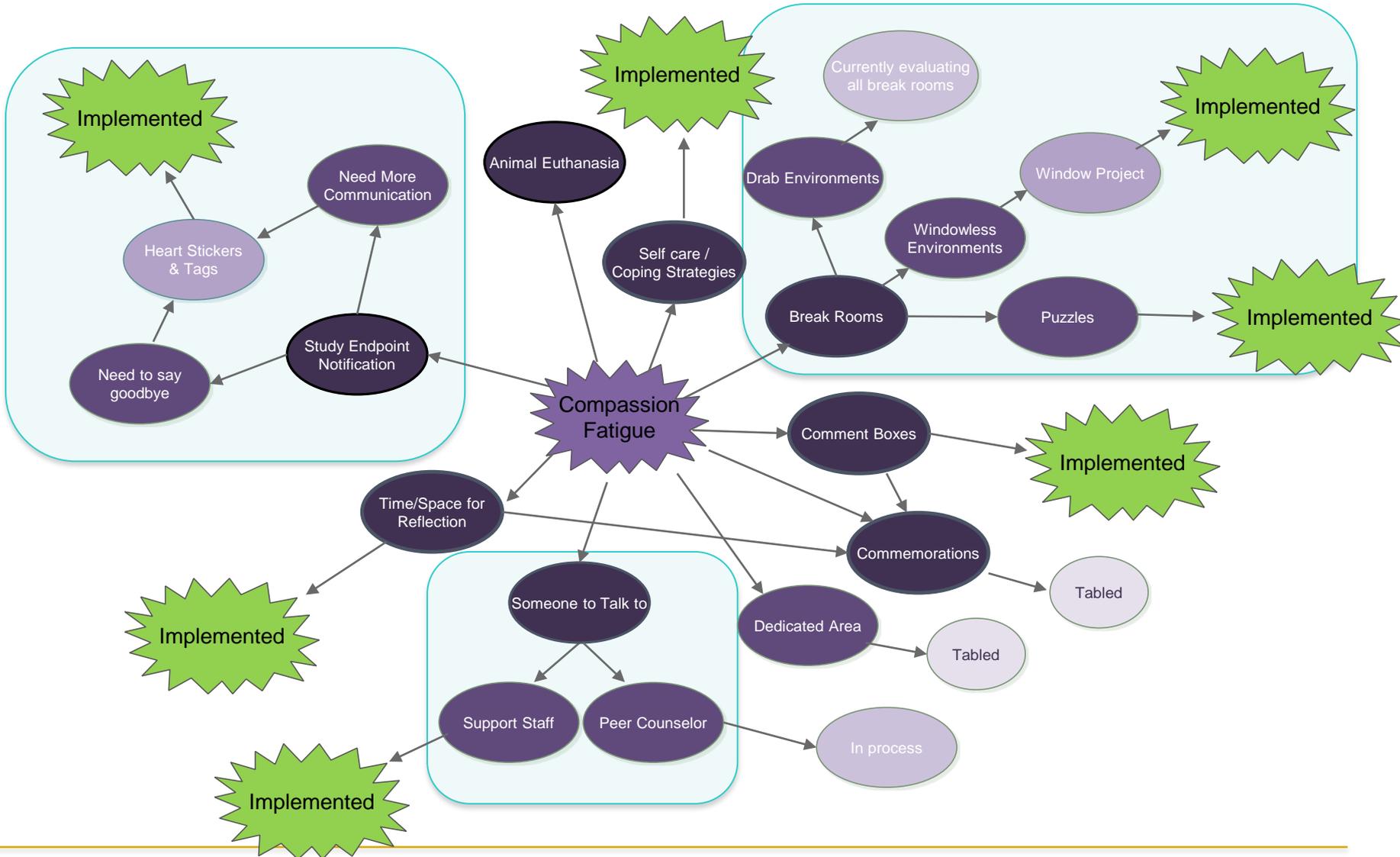
# Sharing UW's Experience: How did we get here?

- Anneke Keizer, Founder, COPE+
  - small company specializing in counseling services for people working with laboratory animals
- Needs Assessment (July 2016 & June 2017)
  - Interviews





# Compassion Fatigue at UW



# D2C Program Mission Statement

Assist all members of the research team to recognize compassion fatigue and raise awareness, provide tools, strategies and resources for managing human emotions in working with and caring for laboratory animals.



# Initial Program Target Objectives

- Study Endpoint Notification
- Support for Staff  
(someone to talk to)
- Annual Commemoration\*
- Dedication Area\*



# Study Endpoint Notification

- Heart Stickers
  - Temporarily being used with NHPs as well
- Cage Tags
  - In progress
- Email Notification (NHP)



# Someone To Talk To

- When individuals experience grief, anxiety, or bereavement associated with animal loss, it is important that we:
  - Acknowledge that these feelings exist
  - Provide support in the workplace
- Addressing bereavement in a safe and supportive environment allows individuals to:
  - Feel validated
  - Strengthen coping mechanisms
  - Reinforce ability to sustain or form new bonds



# Someone To Talk To ~ continued

- Create open atmosphere
  - encourages staff to acknowledge feelings
  - free from the shame or embarrassment of emotional reactions.
- Institute a safe open-door policy
- Provide a pleasant work environment
- Supply a comfortable break area for resting and reflecting



# More ways YOU can help.....



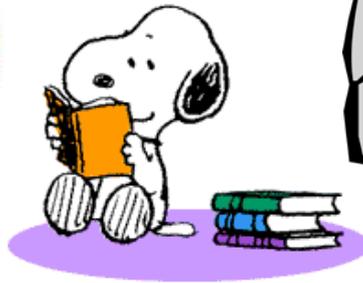
- Rotate staff to distribute job responsibilities to share difficult tasks
- Ensure proper training in euthanasia procedures
- Do not require the animal caregiver caring for long-term animals to participate in the euthanasia
- Honor a request to be excused from euthanizing an animal
- Consider institutional adoption program for animals suited to transition to a home or sanctuary environment (per institutional policies)

# Other D2C Program Related Objectives

- Self Care Strategies
- Reflections
- The “Box” Project
- Work Environments
- Get Involved
- Sympathy Cards



# Self Care Strategies



# Non-negotiables of Self Care

- Eat well
- Rest
- Move (30)
- Fresh air (20)
- Connection with others



# Time and Place for Reflection

- Purpose - provide an opportunity for individuals to come together in one place to pay tribute to our research animals and each other.



**Martin K. (Casey) Childers,  
DO, PhD**

Professor  
Rehabilitation Medicine  
University of Washington



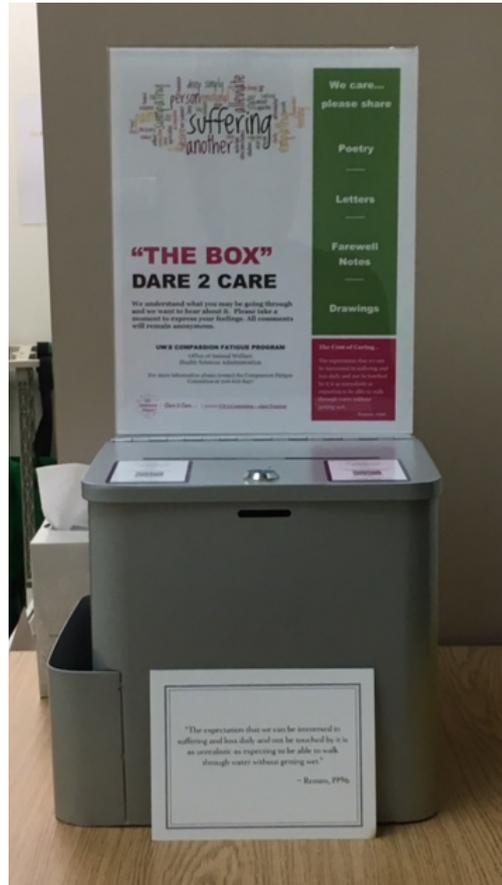
**Paul Frase**

NFL Veteran  
Co-Founder, Joshua Frase  
Foundation

- Paul and Casey shared their stories and provided an explanation about how the use of their research animals help bring new treatment to patients with Myotubular Myopathy (MTM), a form of muscular dystrophy.
- Open to all animal caregivers, research faculty and staff

# "The Box"

- Poetry
- Letters
- Farewell Notes
- Drawings
  - Drawings courtesy/copyright of **Emily Spaulding**, Research Scientist/Engineer 1 University of Washington, Department of Comparative Medicine - Veterinary Services



# Work Environment / Break Areas



# Get Involved

- Recruit investigators to conduct informational seminars:
  - Discuss why the research is important and potential benefits of the results.
  - Explain why specific endpoints were chosen for the study.
- Encourage all forms of support:
  - Investigate partnerships with counseling providers if your institution permits.
  - Encourage individuals to build an outside support network of family and friends.
- Take an opportunity to understand the benefits of the research at your institution:
  - Remember the benefits of research advancement for both humans and animals.
  - Reflect on any personal impacts of research advancements.





- Own It (management/exec leadership supports but stays out of way)
  - Expect challenges
  - In-Person Interviews
    - Needs Assessment
    - Identify trends and immediate objectives
    - Challenges
  - Form Compassion Fatigue Committee (CFC)
    - Identify immediate goals/objectives
    - Identify other goals/objectives that are important (i.e. low hanging fruit)
  - Mission Statement
  - Establish Baseline
    - All user survey - Research Faculty/Staff, ATs, IACUC, Admin
  - Human Subjects Protocol?
  - Funding Opportunities/Sponsorships
- 
- Own it (management/exec leadership supports but stays out of way)
  - Monthly D2C:CFC Meetings
  - Time for Reflection - Quarterly Basis/As Needed
  - Challenges
- 
- Own it (management/exec leadership supports but stays out of way)
  - Survey - Annually
  - Establish “Baseline” (metrics)
  - Identify what is and what isn't working and make necessary changes

Develop

Implement

Sustain



# Acknowledgments

- University of Washington Leadership
- D2C Compassion Fatigue Committee
- VA Puget Sound Health Care System
- Anneke Keizer, Co-Owner & Founder, [COPE+](#)
- Ken Gordon, Executive Director, [NWABR](#)



## Remember.....

- Empathetic, caring personnel ensure that animals are treated humanely and with respect.
- Emotionally supported individuals who are caring and respectful toward animals are best suited to promote and provide an enriching experience for animals.





**Thank you for what you do.....  
you truly make a difference!**