

June 2, 2023

CAC FIRST FRIDAYS



Monthly Strategy Updates from our President and CEO

"It is our mission to end poverty by empowering and improving people's lives while building strong communities."



Keith Pitts, President & CEO
Community Action Committee of Pike County

IN THIS ISSUE

*Compassion Fatigue
is a Real Thing*

Last month I spoke about you – the champions among us that are driven from within to help others. Overwhelmingly, those we are called to help are at their lowest point when we encounter them. Many are broken. Dazed. Traumatized. Lost. We fight the good fight to be advocates for the resources that these neighbors and friends of ours so desperately need. And, we do it tirelessly. Wait! Really? Tirelessly? I don't know about you, but I would venture to guess that we are a lot alike in that respect. We get tired and sometimes burn out. And, sometimes, it is much more than that.

Compassion is a basic job requirement for every single person doing the work of the Community Action Committee of Pike County. Simply put, we cannot do our work successfully unless we are able to recognize the suffering of others and then take action to help. That's what we are all about.

But, the constant flow of need and pain experienced by those in caregiving jobs can take a toll on our physical, emotional, spiritual, and professional lives due to the vast amounts of emotional energy required to work in helping professions. USAID international development specialist Kovia Gratzon-Erskine wrote, "The same traits that make [foreign service] professionals good at their work – empathy, compassion for others and tenacity – can, when self-care is neglected, turn into compassion fatigue."

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Kovia Gratzon-Erskine

Compassion fatigue occurs when one's resilience weakens. The result is that there is often very little energy or compassion left for ourselves, including the important relationships outside of work. The American Psychological Association notes the potential signs of compassion fatigue as loss of productivity, depression, intrusive thoughts, jumpiness, tiredness, feelings of being on edge or trapped, or the inability to separate personal and professional life.

Experts on the subject suggest that among others things, the practice of self-care is important to the prevention of compassion fatigue. When we fly, we are told that in the event of an emergency, oxygen masks will fall from the ceiling. We are further instructed to put our own oxygen mask on before helping others. Self-care to prevent compassion fatigue is a similar concept. You have to take care of yourself well before attempting to care for others. A daily routine that includes adequate sleep, healthy nutrition, physical activity, relaxation, and socializing, is recommended to fuel necessary resilience.

This is not the last you will hear on the topic of compassion fatigue. Our 2023-2025 Strategic Plan contains a commitment to address compassion fatigue and employee burnout (CAC Strategic Plan 2023-2025, 1.2.3). It is our goal to develop a plan that will help our team members with early identification of the signs of compassion fatigue, as well as meaningful strategies to prevent it and help working through it when it does happen.

Until next time...

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