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Emotional labour: support for animal technologists

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Registered charity in England and Wales. Charity no. 219099.

Values, compassion and animal research

- You **care** for research animals
- Which means being **attentive**, **responsible for their welfare** and treating them with **compassion**
- But this can be **tough**! Sometimes people get worn down, question themselves and detach to get through the day



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Work-related stress



- Compassion Fatigue
- Burnout
- Perpetrator-Induced Traumatic Stress
- Cognitive Dissonance
- Traumatic Compassion Dissonance

Negative effects

- Reduced quality of life
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Intrusive thoughts
- Self-medication
- Loneliness
- Poor sleep

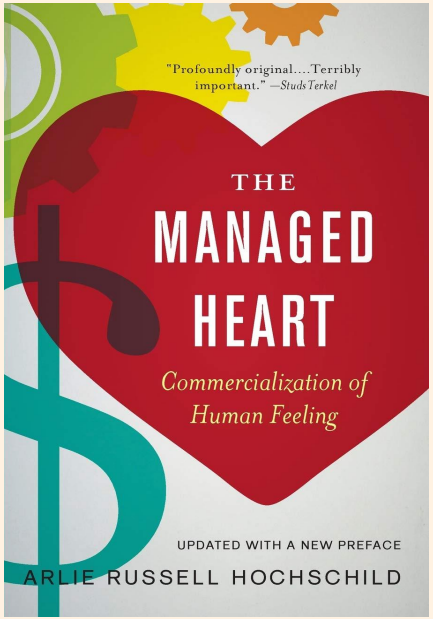
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Where does the dissonance come from?

- **Frustration** if you feel that **no-one understands** what you're going through
- Working in an **insular environment**, and depending only on co-workers for support, can lead to **loneliness, isolation or alienation** in the workplace and your social circles
- How do people overcome the barriers – simply put on a **façade** and 'act' differently?

What is emotional labour?

- Defined as the management of feeling to create a publicly observable, facial bodily **display** (e.g. a smile and a nod)
- You become **'someone else'** in the workplace and make it believable to others, by changing yourself
- But there are potential **adverse consequences** to mental health



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When might emotional labour occur?

- Emotional problems could start early at **induction/probation** – how well are new starters prepared for what's ahead?
- Emotional problems could start **later in careers**, due to species and/or task changes, role responsibilities, personal situations outside work – or cumulative severity

Compassion fatigue

NORTH AMERICAN 3RS COLLABORATIVE

- Less social support
- Higher severity procedures
- Desire for more enrichment
- Physical euthanasia methods
- Long working hours, understaffing
- Poor relationships with managers



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na3rsc.org/compassion-fatigue/

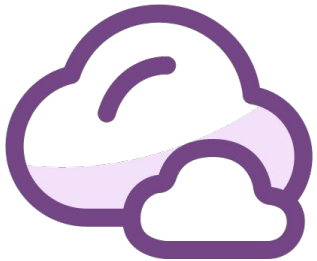
It isn't just animal technologists …

- Others are also affected – those conducting procedures, AWERB members, facility support staff in administration and/or manual and ancillary roles, building maintenance/engineers, security officers and so on…
  - Veterinary surgeons
  - Veterinary nurses
  - Farmers
  - Zookeepers
  - Abattoir workers
  - Animal shelter workers (much work done in the US)



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Using three words, describe some of the feelings you struggle with ...

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Impostor syndrome
Numbness
people
Work life balance
Numb
depression
Tiredness
Exhaustion
Turn of work
management
Overwhelmed
Fatigue
Time
Anxiety
Responsibility
Stressed
Frustration
Welfare
Guilt
Stress
Busy
Conflicted
pressure
Guilty
Balance
Upset
Tired
Overworked
Judged
Pity
Overwhelm stress responsibility

Culture of care



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Culture of care is …

- An establishment-wide commitment to improving animal welfare, scientific quality, care of the staff and transparency for all stakeholders, including the public
- More than caring for animals
  - How staff treat each other and communicate
  - How effectively 3Rs are implemented
  - Proper consideration of ethical issues
  - Expectations for good quality science
  - Going beyond legal requirements



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The human factor

The Culture of Care includes fostering mutual respect between people with different roles and recognising emotional labour



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Photo: IAT

What's in place for you?

- A supportive environment in which you feel you can openly discuss any issues you are having, with opportunities to do this?
- Acknowledgement of 'compassion fatigue' and pathways to institutional support if you need it?
- Access to information produced by external bodies
  - e.g. NA3RSc, IAT?
- Changes to practice if needed
  - e.g. around humane killing, enabling refinement, staffing?

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Key AWERB tasks

- Help to promote a **‘Culture of Care’** within the establishment and, as appropriate, in the wider community
- **Support** named persons, and other staff dealing with animals, on animal welfare, **ethical issues** and provision of **appropriate training**



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Photo: UAR

What could you do?

- Ask how the AWERB is fulfilling the Culture of Care function, including caring for staff
  - This should involve specific activities and leadership
- Ask for this to be discussed/on the agenda
- Support its initiatives
- Make sure there is input from animal technolog
- Share resources
- Tell someone if you are struggling



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Photo: UAR

“Support named persons, and other staff dealing with animals, on animal welfare, ethical issues and provision of appropriate training.”

See page 45



tinyurl.com/RSPCA-LASA-GP

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Support from the AWERB could take the form of:

- Ensuring **training and resources** for all roles and responsibilities to be discharged properly
  - e.g. people with multiple NP roles, NIOs
- Recognising and addressing **compassion fatigue**
- Ensuring that **input from techs and NPs** is properly discussed and issues addressed, either within the AWERB or in themed meetings with wider attendance
- Making sure your voices are **heard**



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Points to consider

- What does your AWERB do regarding **training and support**? How could you find out?
- Do you feel supported if you have concerns, or suggestions, around the **3Rs**?
- Are there **good communication channels** in place for you?
- Are you able to access all the **training and CPD** you would like to?
- If you are a named person, do you have the **information, support and resources** to fulfil your role(s)?

Looking after your compassion

- The emotional connection you feel when you care can be easily damaged. We need to look after it
- Keep a check on what is usual for you. If you are:
  - Not sleeping
  - Constantly on edge
  - Can't put your animals out of your mind
  - Waking up thinking about stress at work
  - Using unhealthy coping strategies
- Take steps to talk to support yourself – do not make yourself vulnerable on social media



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What do you do, to cope with stress and emotional labour?

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AI analysis of the responses (Google Gemini):

The responses to the poll reveal a complex interplay of coping mechanisms, ranging from active engagement to passive escapism. Many individuals turn to physical activities like walking, running, and exercise to manage stress. Social interaction, whether through talking, volunteering, or attending social events, also emerges as a common coping strategy. However, several responses indicate a reliance on unhealthy coping mechanisms such as drinking, smoking, and emotional eating. Additionally, many participants express a need for emotional release, turning to crying or internalizing their feelings. It is evident that individuals employ a variety of strategies to cope with stress, often combining multiple approaches to find relief.

Compassion fatigue - NA3RsC

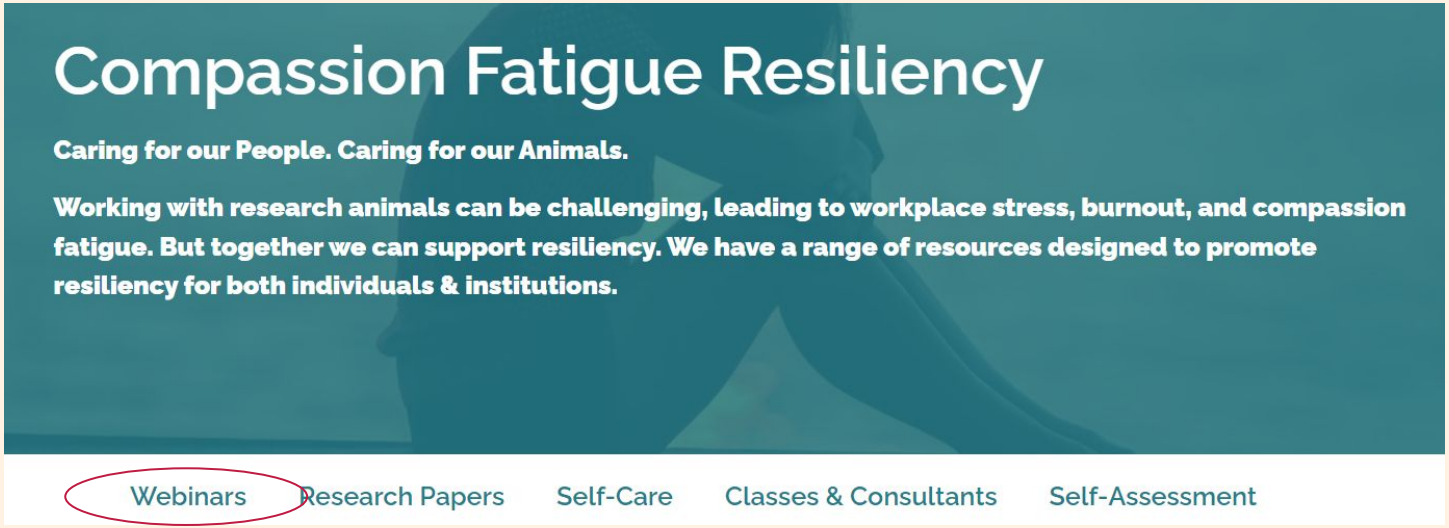


- ☒ Less social support
- ☒ Higher severity procedures
- ☒ Desire for more enrichment
- ☒ Physical euthanasia methods
- ☒ Long working hours, understaffing
- ☒ Poor relationships with managers

- ✔ Encourage social support
- ✔ Communicate the value of the human-animal bond
- ✔ Support for animal welfare and 3Rs
- ✔ Choice around euthanasia
- ✔ Open atmosphere of dialogue
- ✔ Promote self-care

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na3rsc.org/compassion-fatigue/



Resources on the NA3RsC website

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Link to webinar recording (one hour) is here – it will make you register but you'll be able to access it straight away and you won't be committed to anything else

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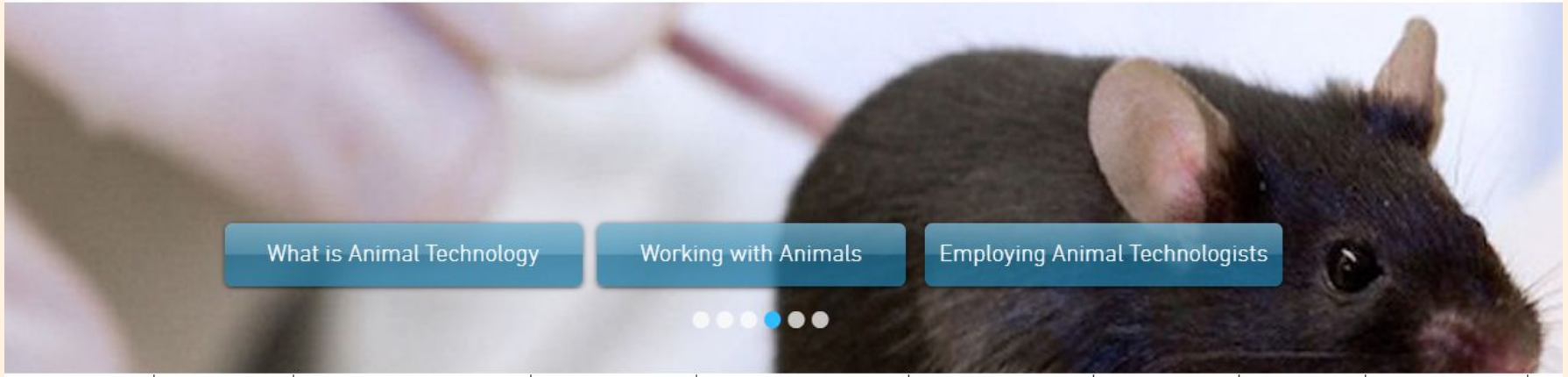
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Mental Health First Aid

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What would you like your employer to do, to better support you?

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AI analysis of the responses (Google Gemini):

The responses reveal a strong desire for improved work-life balance, increased support, and better communication. Many respondents expressed a need for reduced workloads, more flexible working arrangements, and adequate staffing levels. There's also a clear call for recognition, appreciation, and empathy from management. Mental health support and reduced stress are recurring themes, highlighting the importance of employee well-being. Additionally, there's a desire for more social events and opportunities for team-building to foster a positive work environment.

Thank you



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