



REVIVE and THRIVE

Empowering Nurses to Combat Compassion Fatigue With Sherry Tenge

Sherry Tenge, BSN, RN

As the Surrogacy Matching Services Manager at ConceiveAbilities, Sherry plays a pivotal role in creating meaningful matches between intended parents and surrogates.

With a robust leadership background in organ transplantation, she has overseen large, multidisciplinary clinical teams and led the growth of complex clinical programs. A Registered Nurse, Sherry holds a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

ConceiveAbilities is a leading surrogacy and egg donation agency with nearly 30 years of experience helping families grow. Through its innovative All-In offering, ConceiveAbilities provides exceptional support to both intended parents and surrogates, setting the standard for excellence in surrogacy and empowering families every step of the way.



The Vital Role of Nurses in Healthcare

Nurses: The Backbone of Healthcare

- Crucial in **patient care, advocacy, and emotional support**
- **Largest healthcare profession** in the U.S. with nearly **4.7 million RNs** nationwide (American Association of Colleges of Nursing)
- **89%** of licensed registered nurses are employed in nursing
- **Primary providers** of hospital patient care & **long-term medical care**
- **Most trusted profession: 78%** of Americans rate nurses' honesty and ethical standards as **high or very high**
- Nurses have held this distinction for **over 20 years**



#EmpowerNursesChallenge

We recognize the incredible compassion, care, and dedication nurses give every day. From fertility nurses to our staff nurses—and many of our surrogates who are nurses, we know that nurses give so much to others. That's why we're committed to not just celebrating the nurses in our lives—but truly understanding your challenges and standing beside you in support.

Through listening and learning, we saw how deeply compassion fatigue is affecting nurses. In response, we launched the #EmpowerNursesChallenge—a movement to uplift, support you.

Compassion Fatigue Resource Library Content by nurses for nurses to build resilience

Nurse Well-Being Survey We asked, and we're listening



What is Compassion Fatigue?

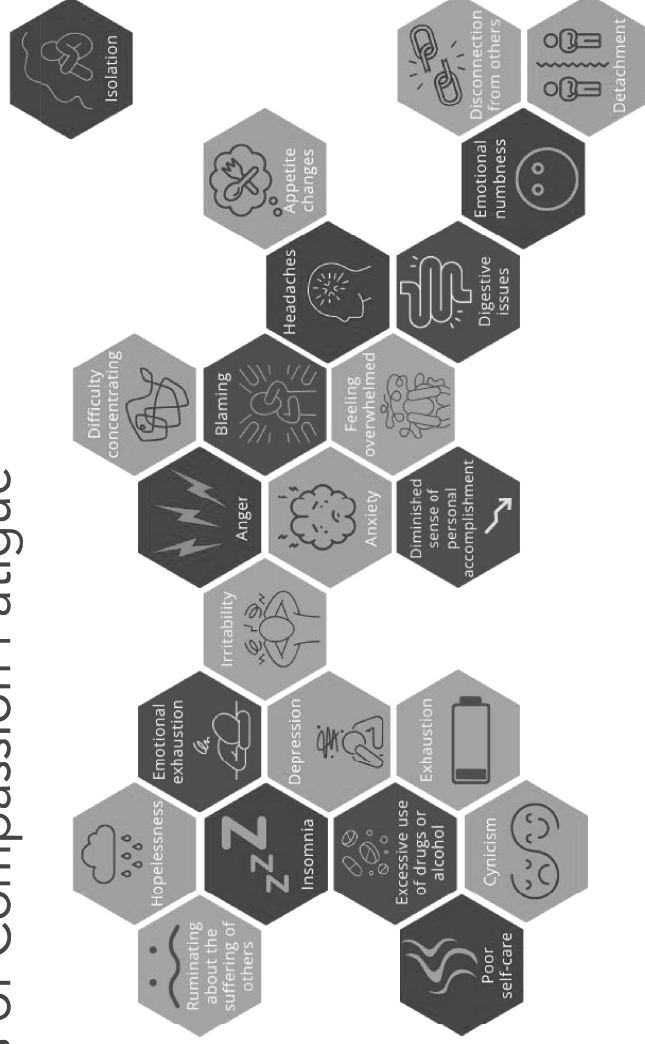
Defined by **National Institutes of Health** as **stress** resulting from exposure to a traumatized individual. It is the emotional and physical exhaustion resulting from continuous empathy and caring for others,

- **Impact of Compassion Fatigue:**

- Adversely affects **everyday life, patient care, and relationships with colleagues**
- Can lead to **serious mental health conditions** such as:
 - **PTSD** (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder)
 - **Anxiety**
 - **Depression**



Signs of Compassion Fatigue



Why Nurses Are Vulnerable

As the most trusted profession, the importance of nurses extends beyond clinical skills. Nurses give comfort and compassion to patients and families during some of the most vulnerable moments of their lives.

The same qualities that make someone a great nurse are also the same qualities that make someone a great surrogate and we do see many nurses become surrogates with our agency.

- Nurses are naturally:
 - Compassionate
 - Giving
 - Selfless
 - Courageous



Compassion Fatigue: The Impact on Nurses and the Care They Provide

Compassion fatigue is taking a significant toll on nurses. It not only affects nurse well-being but also impacts the care they deliver:

- Proper self care including hydration and nutrition
- Mental health
- Sacrificing personal time and well-being
- Struggling to be present at work and at home

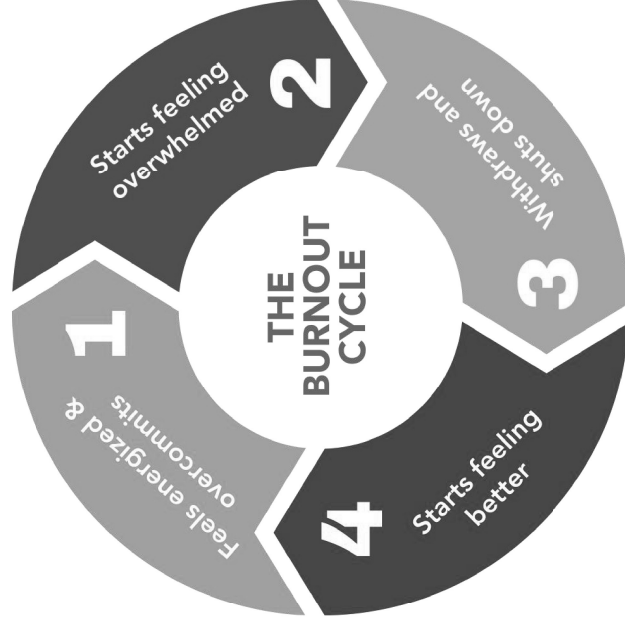


Who Can Relate?



The Cycle of Burnout

- **Starts at work:**
 - Long hours
 - Emotional labor
 - Skipped self-care
- **Continues at home:**
 - No energy for family
 - Irritability and detachment
- **Impacts work again:**
 - Brain fog
 - Reduced patient care quality



My Personal Experience with Burnout

If you are experiencing compassion fatigue or burnout you are not alone. There is power in knowledge and sharing your experience.

- Signs of My Burnout
 - Snapping at loved ones
 - Ignoring health concerns
 - Not taking care of myself
 - Feeling disconnected from family
 - Mentally checking out



Share Your Story

**How has compassion fatigue or
burnout affected you?**



How to Revive and Thrive

Sharing our coping strategies is incredibly empowering and necessary for building resilience.

How I Built Resilience

- Mindset Shift: Work always got my best, I had to prioritize myself and put on **my** “oxygen mask”:
 - Going to the gym at 5 AM every day.
 - Finding balance between work and life.
- Results:
 - Improved well-being,
 - Better nurse,
 - Better wife and mother



Hope is the key to building compassion fatigue resilience

During the COVID-19 shutdown, there was a survey of professionals in the performing arts to understand how positive mindsets supported their ability to navigate work-related stress.

What they found? **Hope Matters. A Lot.**

Hope emerged as a powerful predictor of professional engagement, resilience, and reduced tension and distress over time.

- Those with higher levels of hope reported more positive emotions, which helped them stay motivated and connected to their work.
- Even in the face of uncertainty, hope fueled forward-thinking, adaptability, and action.

Takeaway In moments of adversity, hope is more than optimism—it's a resource for recovery, connection, and perseverance.



Compassion Fatigue & Resilience in Nursing

Featuring Barbara Rubel *Award-Winning Author & Leading Authority on Secondary Traumatic Stress*

Barbara Rubel recently joined our podcast, **All Things Conceivable: A Surrogacy Podcast with Nazca Fontes**, to discuss the profound impact of **compassion fatigue on nurses**.

She emphasized the **importance of self-care** and shared expert strategies to help nurses:

- Build **resilience** in the face of adversity
- Combat **compassion fatigue**
- Preserve their **mental and emotional well-being**



8 Pillars of Work Resilience

Barbara Rubel's **FABULOUS Framework**
An **eight-step process** designed to empower nurses with practical tools for **daily work resilience**.

F lexibility	L aughter
A ttitude	O ptimism
B oundaries	U nited
U nderstanding	S elf-Compassion



Flexibility

Building a Flexible & Supportive Nursing Workplace Boosts Nurse Retention and Satisfaction

Key strategies:

- Collaborate with leadership to remove work barriers and support autonomy
- Offering mentorship for new employees, hybrid or remote work options where feasible
- Team-oriented tasks can strengthen social support
- Peer supervisory roles, salary recognition, rewards, and training
- Improving organizational communication and conducting meaningful stay interviews



Attitude

Attitude shapes how we perceive and respond to people, situations, and our work environment. It impacts our behavior, relationships, and overall performance.

Key Factors for Maintaining a Positive Attitude:

- **Good Sleep Hygiene:**
 - Manage room temperature, create a calming bedtime routine (e.g., reading, meditation), limit screen time, reduce noise
 - Avoid caffeine and alcohol within 3 hours of bedtime
 - Prioritize sleep for a healthy attitude at work
- **Workplace Interventions:**
 - Schedule regular breaks, adjust shift sequences
 - Educate on sleep and circadian rhythms
 - Implement nap strategies and give more control over hours
- **Gratitude Practice:**
 - Appreciate people, places, or things around you
 - Focus on what you have, not what you lack
 - Express gratitude and incorporate small acts of kindness daily



#EmpowerNursesChallenge Champions

“As nurses, we can’t control everything—but we can choose how we show up. Burnout pushed me to **take back my power**: to travel, to grow, to find fresh perspectives. I may not control outcomes, but I can offer comfort, warmth, and presence. That matters.”

- Nurse Tori



Boundaries

Compassionate individuals often struggle to maintain boundaries, leading to burnout.

Key Questions to Ask Yourself:

- Are you letting a coworker’s bad day affect your own?
- Are you skipping sick or mental health days?
- Are you working before or after hours?
- Are you advocating for others but not for yourself?
- Are you stepping away when needed and taking time for yourself



#EmpowerNursesChallenge Champions

"In nursing school, we were taught to be stoic—to push down emotion. But that's not sustainable. Nurses witness some of life's most heartbreaking moments—things most people will never see—and we're expected to carry that weight in silence. Compassion fatigue is real, and if we don't acknowledge it, it leads straight to burnout. The shift starts when we advocate for ourselves—setting **boundaries**, taking real time off, and letting go of guilt for needing rest. Yes, we carry the hard things. But we also have the power to bring light into the darkest moments. That's the beauty of what we do."



- ThatNurseTia



Boundaries: The Importance of Saying No

One of the hardest things nurses report is saying no

Setting boundaries is **crucial** to protect your time and well-being.

Set time aside and really **practice** respectful but firm ways to maintain your boundaries

- "I'm not comfortable doing that."
- "I can't fit that into my schedule."
- "I'm honored you asked, but I need to pass."
- "I don't have the capacity to help with that right now."
- "I have to say no so I can honor my current priorities."
- "Let's circle back another time—right now my plate is full."



Understanding the Why

Job satisfaction is rooted in understanding why you love what you do. It's about the meaningful connections with your team, the positive outlook you bring to work, and the purpose you find in your role.

- Recognize how your work makes a difference
- Find meaning in helping others and fulfilling a higher purpose
- Understanding your purpose reduces mental distress and enhances physical health



Laughter: Finding Joy

Laughter is essential for mental health. It reduces tension, relieves stress, and boosts mood.

Benefits of Laughter:

- Mentally: Provides new insights
- Physically: Increases blood flow and releases endorphins



Optimism: Finding Hope

Optimism is rooted in spirituality, which supports well-being and quality of life.

Benefits of Optimism:

- Helps cope with work stress
- Affirms life's purpose
- Enhances well-being, especially for those in public service roles like nursing, healthcare, and social work



United: Finding The Support You Need

Managers must deeply understand the balance between work pressure and personal life to provide meaningful support.

- Recognize how home life impacts work performance and offer empathetic support
- Foster a culture of connection, trust, and mutual respect within teams
- Provide resources for work-life balance, such as flexible schedules or mental health support
- Distance from negative or insincere individuals, and surround yourself with supportive, trustworthy people
- Encourage open communication and ensure employees feel heard and valued
Mental Health Professional • Friends & Family • Colleagues • Support Groups



Self Compassion

Self Compassion means offering yourself the same kindness and support you would give a close friend in difficult times.

Key Points:

- Acknowledge mistakes and imperfections without self-judgment
- Practice self-kindness and recognize your shared humanity
- Avoid isolation and over-identifying with failures

Practice Self Care • Stepping Away • Exercise • Meditation & Yoga



The Oxygen Mask Analogy

On a plane, you must put on your oxygen mask first before helping others.

In caregiving, you must prioritize your well-being to effectively care for others.

- What happens when we don't?
 - We neglect personal needs.
 - Our work and relationships suffer.



VIDEO: compassion fatigue

#EmpowerNursesChallenge Champions

Powerful Coping Strategies from Nurses Like You

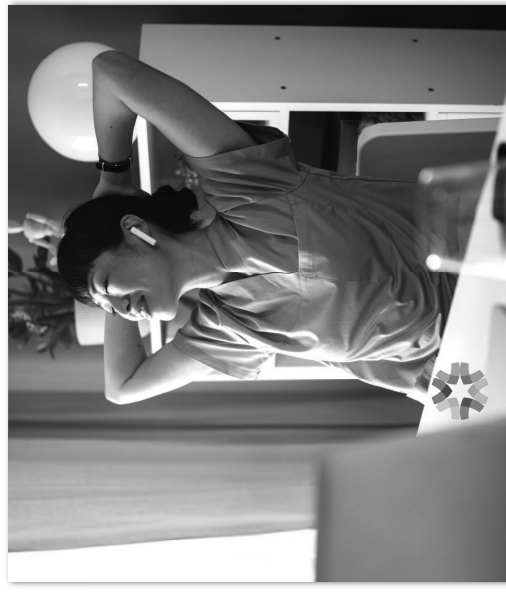


Lauren Leckliter, PRN Sarcasm, Nurse Influencer



Share Your Coping Tips

How do you build
compassion fatigue
RESILIENCE through HOPE?



Empowered Women Empower Women.

Empowerment is at the heart of who we are at ConceiveAbilities. We are committed to empowering women to find their purpose and create meaningful change in their communities and beyond. Surrogacy is a powerful means to do so, but also:

- Supporting nurse and healthcare professionals through **#EmpowerNursesChallenge**
- **#MilkDonationChallenge** - inspiring women to donate over 15% of the national milk bank supply
- **Spreading** vital information about surrogacy and family building



Empowered: Surrogacy Is A Purposeful Decision

Our surrogates share they feel empowered by helping build families. With independent, third-party research conducted by Accelerant Research, we gained deep insight into who she is and what drives her.

What We Learned:

- 87% are primarily motivated by joy in helping others become parents
- 83% influenced by knowing someone who has personally struggled with infertility
- 73% want to empower and support other women
- 7 out of 10 are significantly motivated by enjoyment of being pregnant
- Most Community-driven: Actively volunteers, fosters pets and gives back
- She is well-researched and confident in her choice to be a surrogate



Surrogacy Stories from Nurses Like You

"Nurses are natural givers—we find fulfillment in helping others, in making someone else's life better. Just being there for someone fills our cup. So it doesn't surprise me that so many nurses are drawn to surrogacy—it's another way to care deeply and make a meaningful difference.

Seeing my intended parents meet their daughter was indescribable. They were crying, holding each other, just staring at their baby with pure love and disbelief. That moment reminded me exactly why I chose to be a surrogate."

- Jessie, Hospice Nurse

"Being a school nurse, a gymnastics coach, a wife and a mother to two children of my own, I didn't know if surrogacy was going to be something I could accomplish but it was something I always dreamed of doing. Not only did surrogacy allow me to change the lives of the intended parents and their families but also taught me about how precious life is and how it takes a village to raise a family. Surrogacy allowed our family the financial flexibility to create some extra memories through travel and just life experiences and we are extremely grateful."

- Michelle, Nurse



Questions?

Ask Me Anything!



THANK

YOU



Any Questions?

THANK YOU