

# Compassion Fatigue and Mental Fortitude

TOM STARLING, ED.D.



# MHA of the MidSouth

- ▶ Mental Health First Aid
- ▶ Aging & Alzheimer's education and supports for caregivers
- ▶ Continuing education for professionals
- ▶ “Don't Duck Mental Health” school program for youth
- ▶ Workplace Wellness resources and presentations
- ▶ Multicultural outreach program includes trafficking victim assistance
- ▶ Helpline for information and referrals
- ▶ Advocacy coalitions, task forces, board of directors, volunteers
- ▶ Zero Suicide program
- ▶ Mental Health Screenings [www.mhascreening.org](http://www.mhascreening.org)



[www.mhamidsouth.org](http://www.mhamidsouth.org)

# Mental Health

- ▶ 1 in 5 people have a diagnosable mental illness every year!
- ▶ Suicide is the 9<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in TN
- ▶ Alzheimer's is the 6<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in TN
- ▶ Depression is the leading cause of disability in the world
- ▶ Half of all lifetime mental illnesses begin by age 14 (75% by age 21)
- ▶ **B4Stage4**



DO ANY OF YOUR  
RELATIVES SUFFER  
FROM MENTAL ILLNESS?

NO....THEY  
ALL SEEM  
TO ENJOY  
IT!!!



edgar 02 0290

# My Own Compassion Fatigue....

- ▶ Isolation: everyone wanted something from me, but I'm depleted
- ▶ Irritability: emotional outbursts, anger, depression
- ▶ Depression: Feels like I'm working under water
- ▶ Minor Illnesses: lower back, scratchy throat, intestinal issues
- ▶ "Other-Directedness": blame others, me versus them
- ▶ Apathy, Desensitized, Desired office over people

# Others might feel . . .

- ▶ Escape: shopping, substance use, gambling, pornography, alcohol
- ▶ Sadness, depression, uselessness
- ▶ Poor sleep - too much/little
- ▶ Flashbacks, nightmares

Your sensitivity is  
replaced by

... nothing

Life Isn't simply  
being alive, but  
to be well



# Mark 1:32-34

That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed **many** who had various diseases. He also drove out **many** demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

# Mark 1:35

- ▶ Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

# Mark 1:36-39

- ▶ Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, **they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!”** **Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else**—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

# Resiliency & Mental Fortitude

- ▶ Brene' Brown is a vulnerability and shame researcher
  - ▶ *I Thought It Was Just Me (but it isn't): Telling the Truth About Perfectionism, Inadequacy, and Power* ([Penguin/Gotham](#), 2007)
  - ▶ *The Gifts of Imperfection: Letting Go of Who We Think We Should Be and Embracing Who We Are* ([Hazelden](#), 2010),
  - ▶ *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead* (Gotham, 2012)
  - ▶ *Rising Strong: The Reckoning. The Rumble. The Revolution.* ([Spiegel & Grau](#), 2015),
  - ▶ *Braving the Wilderness: The Quest for True Belonging, The Courage to Stand Alone* (2017)
  - ▶ *Dare to Lead* (2018). Her articles have appeared in many national newspapers.



# Resiliency & Mental Fortitude

- ▶ 1 in 5 people annually have a diagnosable mental illness: no necessarily an SMPI
- ▶ Suicide is at an all-time high
- ▶ Imposter Syndrome
- ▶ Inability to cope, so let's blame others: If you disagree with me, then you're bullying me
- ▶ World prefers superheroes
- ▶ Instead of trying to make yourself tougher, try to serve others and make yourself more vulnerable



Greatness should  
be defined by  
being yourself,  
loving others, and  
making disciples

# My FaceBook Friend





*"It's a new anti-depressant—instead of swallowing it, you throw it at anyone who appears to be having a good time."*

# Resiliency & Mental Fortitude

- ▶ If you want a strong body, then you have to start going to the gym
- ▶ If you want a strong body, then you have to give up bad habits of a poor diet
- ▶ If you want to become mentally resilient, then you have to start practicing good habits like gratitude
- ▶ If you want to become mentally strong, then you have to give up the bad habits of envying your friends' success.

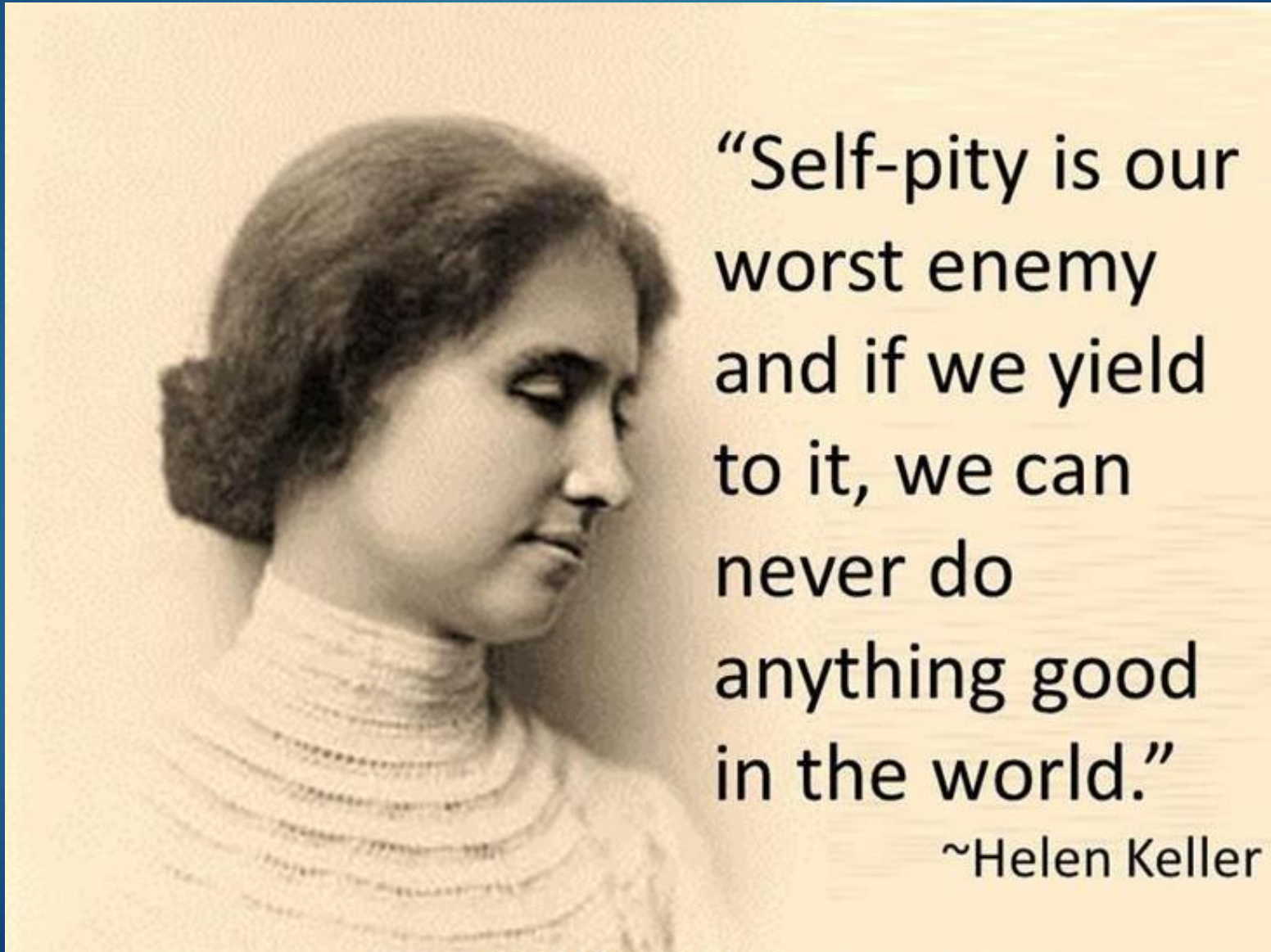


# Countering Unhealthy Mental Habits with Healthier Ones

- ▶ We have unhealthy beliefs about ourselves
- ▶ We hold unhealthy beliefs about others
- ▶ We have unhealthy beliefs about the world
  
- ▶ How do you train your brain for good mental health? It begins by countering unhealthy habits (3 above) with healthier ones.



# Unhealthy Beliefs about Yourself



“Self-pity is our worst enemy and if we yield to it, we can never do anything good in the world.”

~Helen Keller

# Unhealthy Beliefs about Others



You get to determine how you're going to respond to others.



The only person you should compare yourself to, is the person you were yesterday.



# Unhealthy Thoughts about the World



# 13 Things Mentally Strong People Do



- ▶ 1. They Don't Waste Time Feeling Sorry for Themselves
- ▶ 2. They Don't Give Away Their Power
- ▶ 3. They Don't Shy Away from Change
- ▶ 4. They Don't Waste Energy on Things They Can't Control
- ▶ 5. They Don't Worry About Pleasing Everyone



# 13 Things Mentally Strong People Do



- ▶ 6. They Don't Fear Taking Calculated Risks
- ▶ 7. They Don't Dwell on the Past
- ▶ 8. They Don't Make the Same Mistakes Over and Over
- ▶ 9. They Don't Resent Other People's Success

# 13 Things Mentally Strong People Do

- ▶ 10. They Don't Give Up After the First Failure
- ▶ 11. They Don't Fear Alone Time
- ▶ 12. They Don't Feel the World Owes Them Anything
- ▶ 13. They Don't Expect Immediate Results

# References

- ▶ Badger, K. (2008). Preventing compassion fatigue: Caring for ourselves while caring for others. *Phoenix Society's Burn Support News*. Retrieved from <http://www.phoenix-society.org/resources/entry/preventing-compassion-fatigue>
- ▶ Brooks, C. (2013, March 5). Career success means work-life balance, study finds. Retrieved from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/05/career-success-means-work-life-balance\\_n\\_2812707.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/05/career-success-means-work-life-balance_n_2812707.html)
- ▶ Boyle, D. A. (2011, January). Countering compassion fatigue: A requisite nursing agenda. *The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing*, 16, (1). Retrieved from <http://www.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/ANAMarketplace/ANAPeriodicals/OJIN/TableofContents/Vol-16-2011/No1-Jan-2011/Countering-Compassion-Fatigue.html>
- ▶ Mathieu, F. (2007). Running on empty: Compassion fatigue in health professionals. *Rehab & Community Care Medicine*. Retrieved from: <http://www.compassionfatigue.org/pages/RunningOnEmpty.pdf>
- ▶ Morin, Amy. (2014). 13 Things Mentally Strong People Don't Do: Take Back Your Power, Embrace Change, Face Your Fears, and Train Your Brain for Happiness and Success. Published by William Morrow.