Introduction

For several years we have collaborated in leading sessions on stress reduction and other ways to combat compassion fatigue for members of the animal-care community. We’ve spent many hours poring over journals, books, and websites in an effort to find the most pertinent information for our unique audience. Despite our best efforts, we have been unable to find one source that focused solely on compassion fatigue among animal-care professionals. *Compassion Fatigue in the Animal-Care Community* is designed to fill that void.

This book focuses on the dedicated professionals who care deeply for their work. These animal-shelter workers, managers, veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and veterinary staff continue in their work because they care. In fact, they care so much that their work becomes their lives. While at work these professionals experience joy and satisfaction, but they also experience incredible pain and suffering. Their work—their jobs—hurts, yet they persevere. While there may be several reasons for this dedication, no doubt one is the powerful human-animal bond that ties the worker to the animal. While this bond may bring professionals extreme joy and satisfaction, it also has all the ingredients necessary for development of compassion fatigue in those professionals.

We hope that by explaining what compassion fatigue is and what causes it, how it differs from compassion satisfaction and burnout, and how it is affected by the different types of relationships the animal-care professional develops, we can then introduce the caregiver to the idea of a framework of self-care. We believe this framework of self-care to be the most important part of our efforts to combat compassion fatigue.

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