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Help! I Need Somebody!





What is Compassions Fatigue?


Compassion Fatigue

A state where the person who is helping traumatized people becomes preoccupied with those people by "re-experiencing the traumatic events avoidance/numbing of reminders persistent arousal (e.g., anxiety). It is a function of bearing witness to the suffering of others.”



Secondary Traumatic Stress

Feelings and behaviors that result from the indirect exposure to trauma by helping or wanting to help someone who has been traumatized.



Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Feelings and behaviors that result from directly experiencing a trauma and cause a significant disruption in a person's life.



Helpers

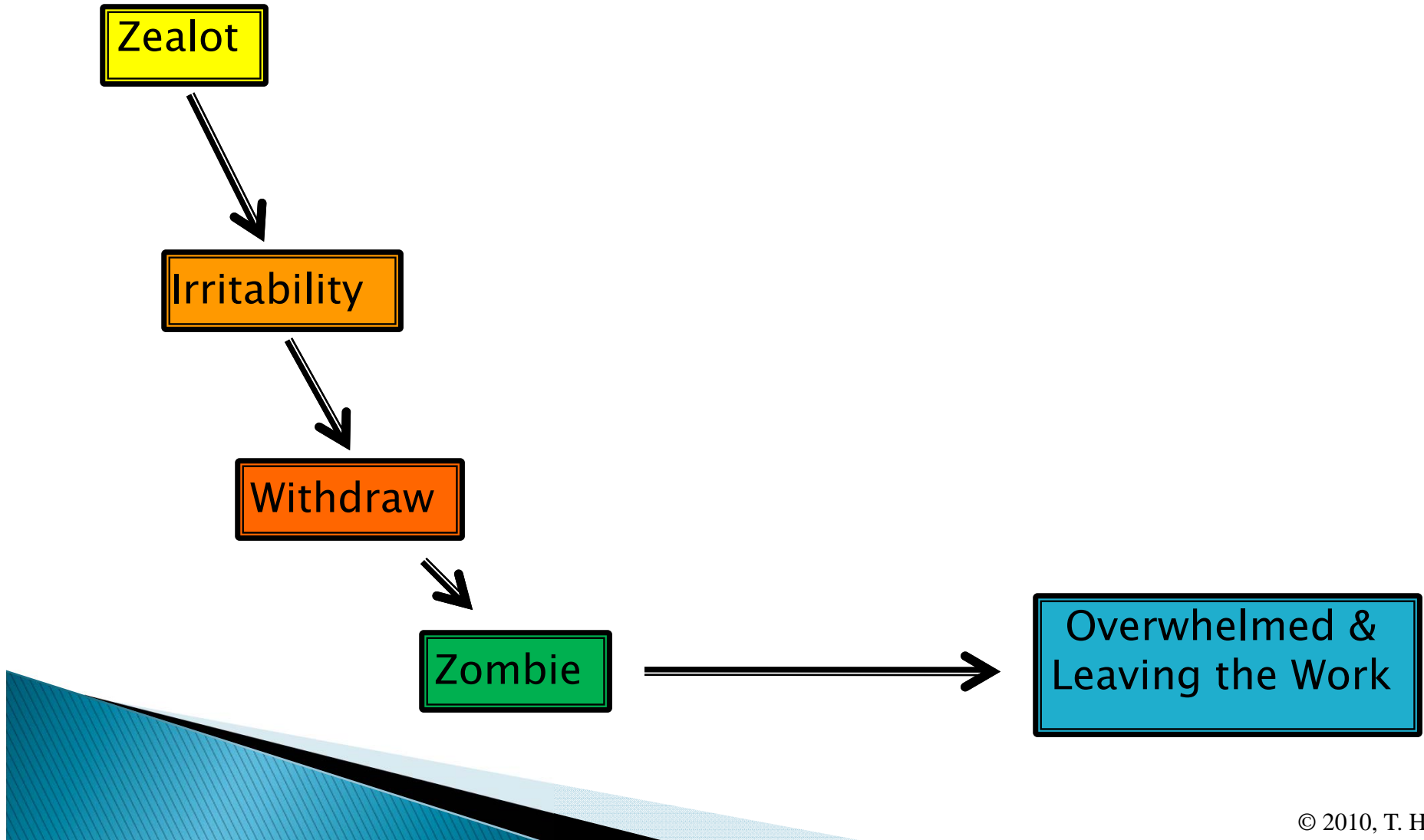
Anyone who provides a service or listens to another person. A helper can be a teacher, therapist, doctor, nurse, counselor, nursing home employees, friend, family member, caseworker, police officer, firefighter, journalist, first responders, etc.



Compassion Fatigue Trajectory

- Zealot Phase
- Irritability Phase
- Withdrawal Phase
- Zombie Phase
- Leaving the Work

Compassion Fatigue Trajectory



Zealot Phase

- Committed, involved, available
- Solving problems/making a difference
- Willingly go the “extra mile”
- High enthusiasm
- Volunteers without being asked

The Irritability Phase

- Begin to cut corners
- Begin to avoid
- Begin to mock
- Begin to denigrate the people we serve
- Use of humor is inappropriate
- Oversights, mistakes and lapses of concentration
- Start distancing ourselves from friends , family members, church members

The Withdrawal Phase

- Enthusiasm turns sour
- Loved Ones become irritants, instead of persons
- We make complaints about our work life and our personal life
- Tired all the time, don't want to talk about what we do.
- We start to neglect our family, clients, and ourselves
- We try to avoid our pain and sadness

The Zombie Phase

- Our hopelessness turns to rage
- We begin to hate people...any/all people
- Others appear incompetent or ignorant to us
- We develop a real distain for our clients
- We have...no patience...no sense of humor...no time for fun



Victimization / Overwhelmed and Forced to Leave the Work

- Overwhelmed and leaving the profession
- Somatic Illness
- Perpetuity of Symptoms



Dangers

Misconceptions

- I will “fix” the problem...make everything O.K... save the world...
- I am responsible for outcomes.
- If I care enough, everything will be O.K.
- The sufferer/victim will appreciate everything I do for them.
- I will have enough resources (time, money, material, skills and training) to fix things.
- Significant people in my life with support and approve my absence from our relationship while I invest in this compassionate work.
- I know what I’m getting into.
- I can do it alone.
- If I’m informed enough, I can deal with the stress of working with suffering people.
- My definition of success is.....

Symptoms"

Nervousness and anxiety

Anger and irritability.

Mood swings

Flashbacks

Difficulty concentrating

Lowered self-esteem

Feeling less trusting of others

Withdrawing from others

Changes in appetite, sleep or other habits

Physical changes

Depression

Self-Medication

Self-Entitlement



Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue (intrusive)

- Thoughts and images associated with the loved ones problems and pain.
- Obsessive or compulsive desire to help
- Issues encroaching on personal time
- Inability to “let go” of mission related matters
- Perception of loved one as fragile and needing your assistance



Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue (intrusive, cont.)

- Sense of inadequacy
- Sense of entitlement
- Perception of the world in terms of victims and perpetrators
- Personal activities interrupted by the mission

Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue (avoidance)

- Silencing Response (avoiding stuff)
- Loss of enjoyment/cessation of self-care activities
- Loss of energy
- Loss of hope/sense of dread working with certain clients
- Loss of sense of competence/potency
- Isolation
- Secretive self-medication/addiction (alcohol, drugs, work, sex, food, spending, etc.)
- Relational dysfunction

Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue (arousal)

- Increased anxiety
- Impulsivity/reactivity
- Increased perception of demand/threat
(in both job and environment)
- Increased frustration/anger
- Sleep disturbance
- Difficulty concentrating
- Change in weight/appetite



Sleep

Sleep Disruption is a key indicator of Compassion Fatigue

When a care giver's sleep pattern is disrupted for an extended period of time, this is a key warning sign that something is wrong. If normal sleep patterns aren't reestablished, this combined with other symptoms may indicate that the caregiver is developing "Compassion Fatigue".



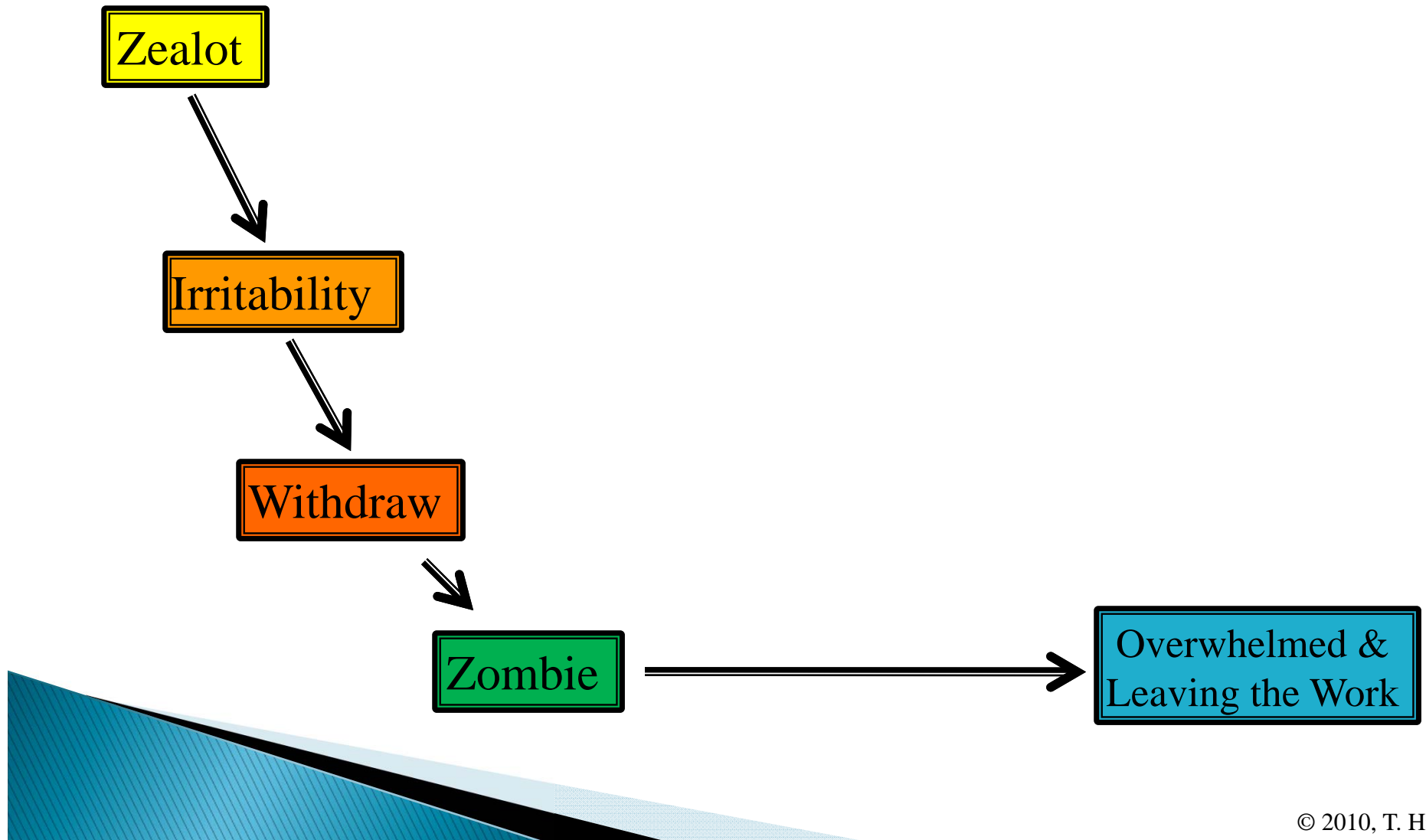
Disruption of Normal Sleep Patterns can be a primary cause of Compassion Fatigue

It is during normal “deep” sleep that much of the processing of the traumatic experiences occur. When sleep is disrupted (either shorten or disturbed), the traumatic experience can become lodged in the sympathetic nervous system. Over time an accumulation of these unprocessed traumatic experiences can lead to Compassion Fatigue.

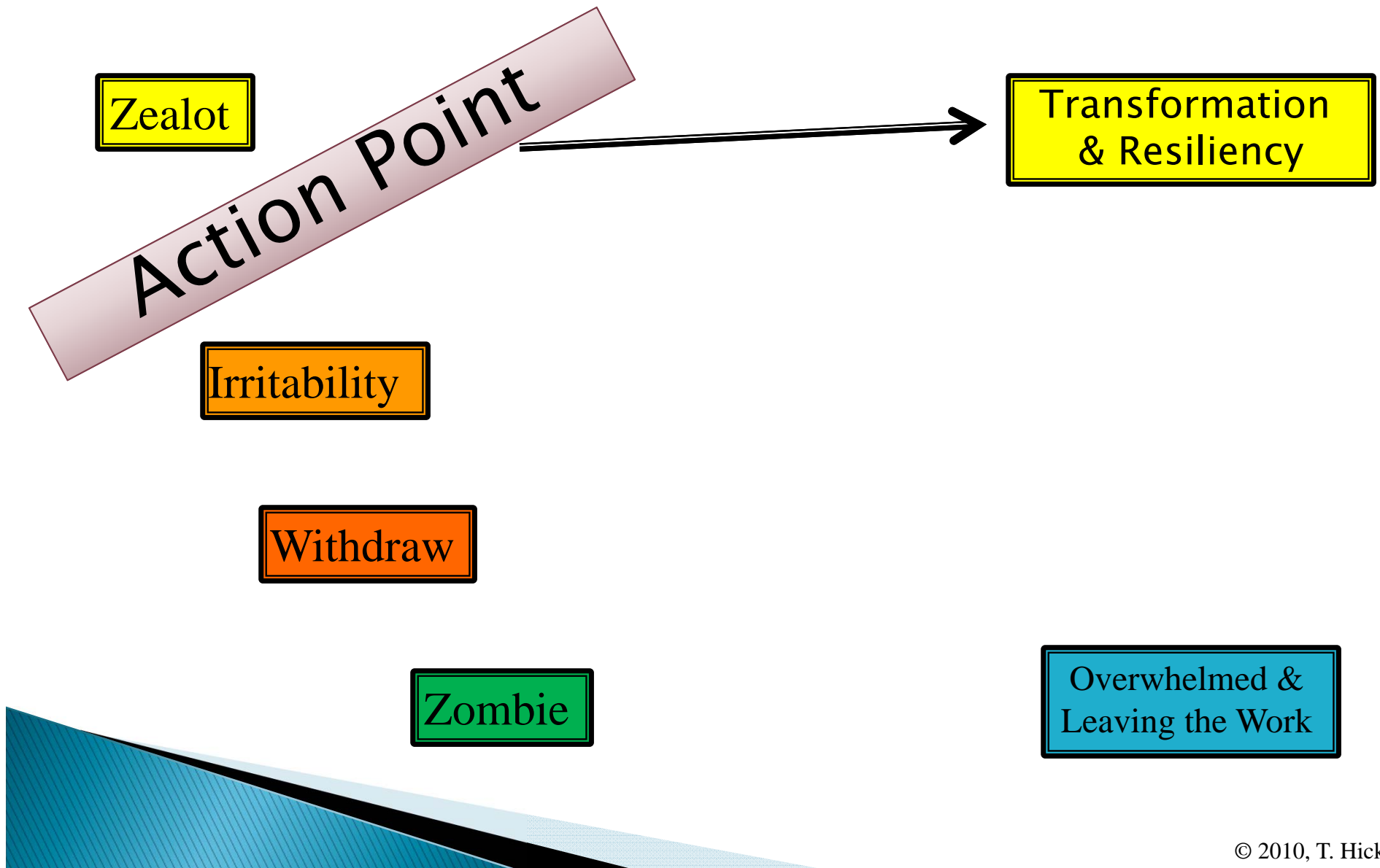


Recovery

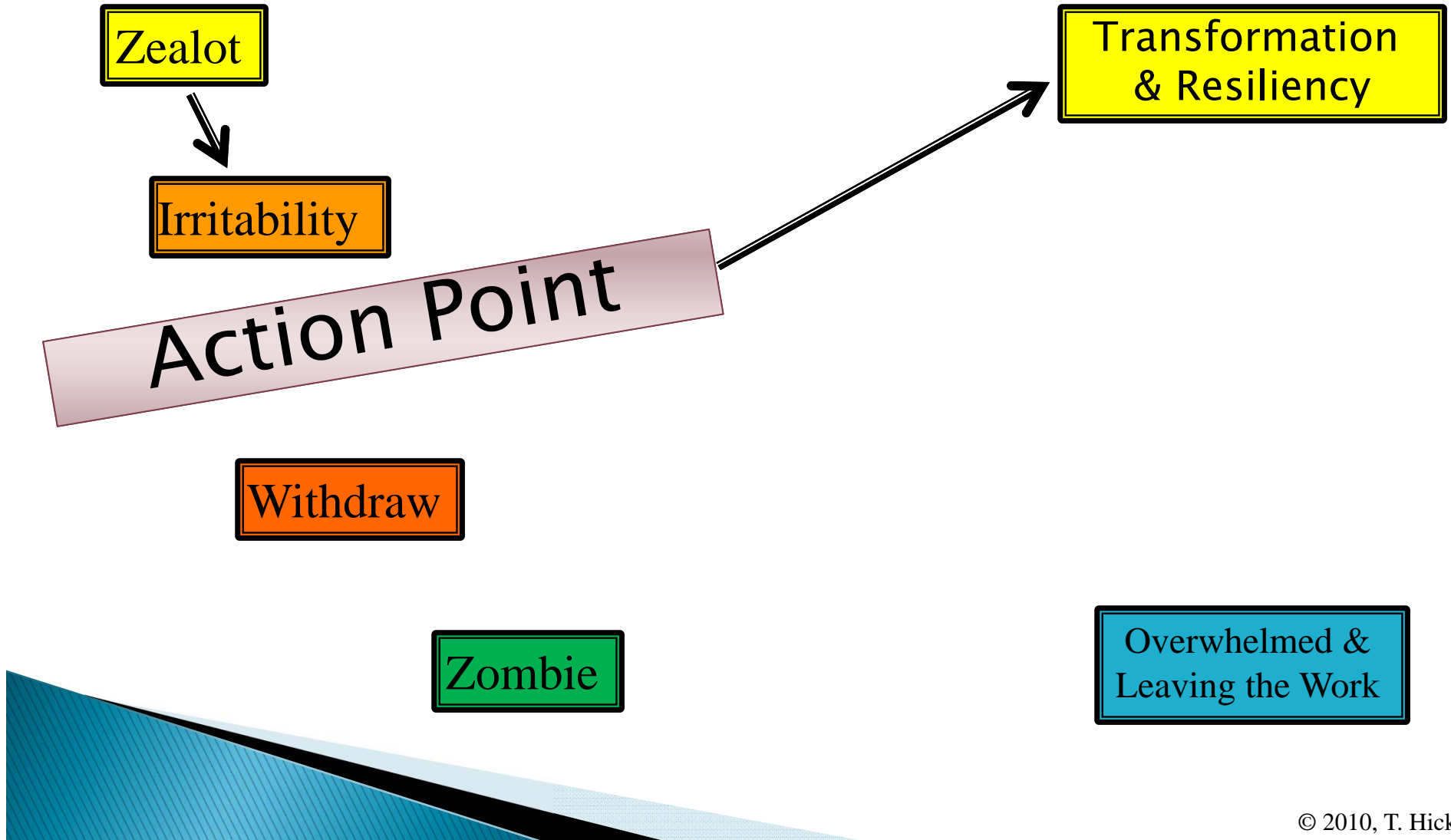
Compassion Fatigue Trajectory



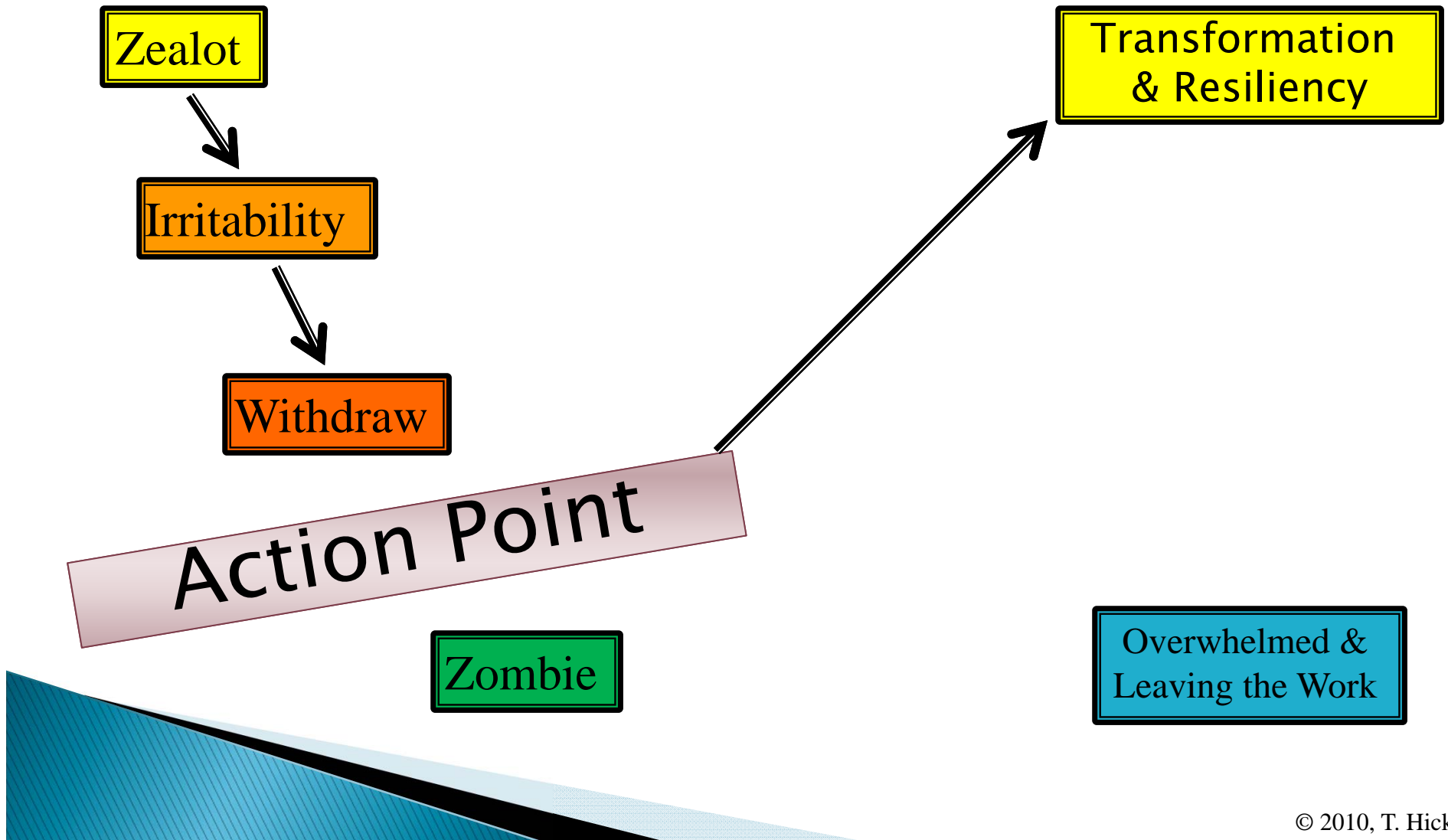
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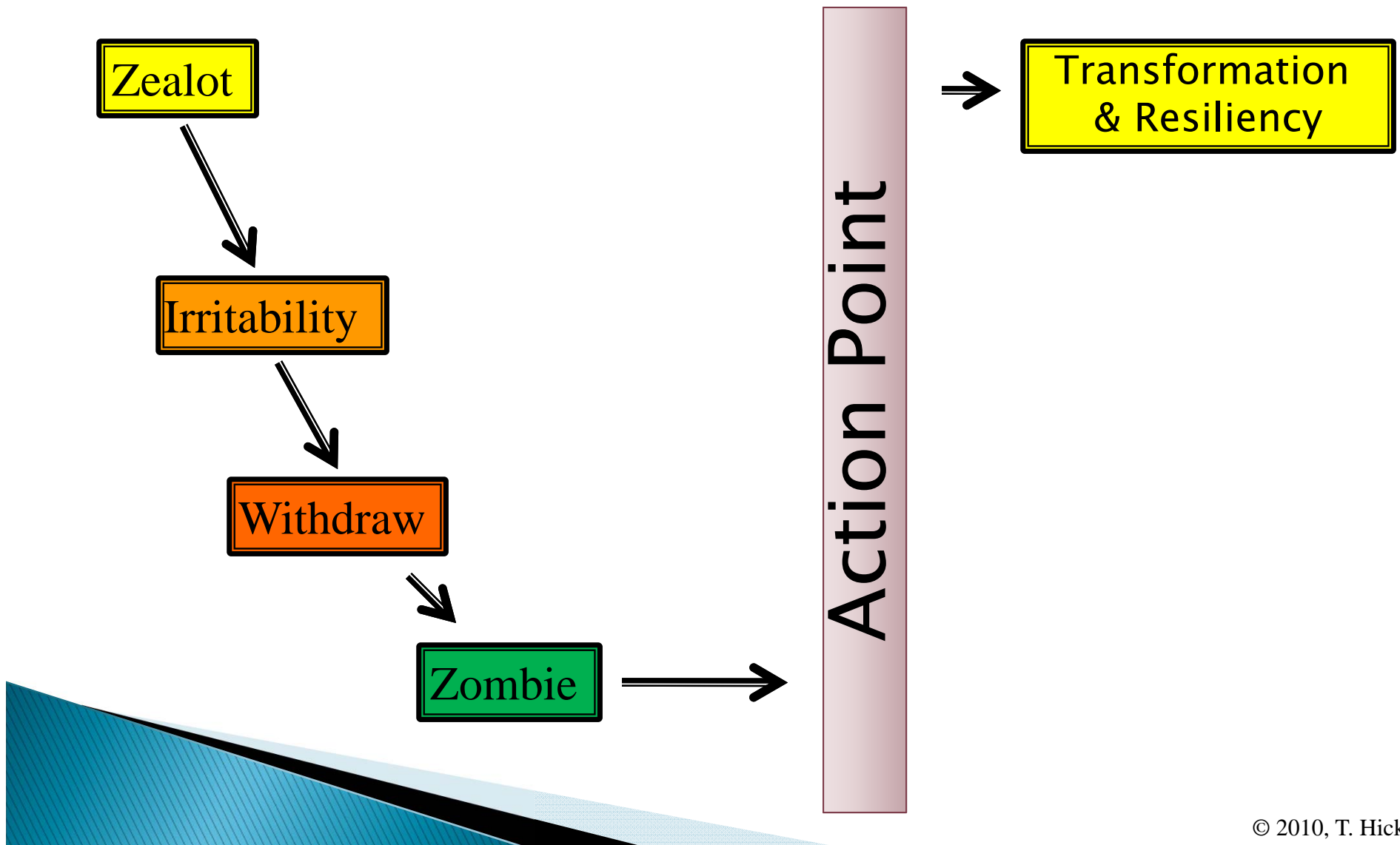
Compassion Fatigue Trajectory



Compassion Fatigue Trajectory



Compassion Fatigue Trajectory



“Steps to Recovery”

- **Intentionality**
- **Connection”**
- **Anxiety Management/Self-soothing**
- **Self-care**
- **Narrative**
- **Desensitization and Reprocessing**
- **Self-supervision**

There are a number of different practices that can be utilized to help move a person from fatigued to refreshed.

Envision a kitchen and you are creating a masterpiece dish. That dish is made up of multiple ingredients including ...

1 part	Self-Knowledge
1 part	Self-Examination
1 part	Resourcing
1 part	Expectations
1 part	Self-Care Strategy
1 part	Plan for Re-entering a Normal Life





Body

Active body work that exercises the body and elevates heart, respiratory rates to a moderate extent such as brisk walking, running, swimming, biking, etc.

Studies show that 30 minutes of moderate exercise (this can be broken up in several blocks throughout the day) done throughout the week is quite beneficial. If done most days of the week, this exercise will bring significant payoffs in physical and emotional health.

What other things might we do to move us from fatigued to refreshed?



Mind

Feeding our minds and imaginations with things that clarify our mission, vision and values. This could be reading uplifting materials, autobiographies, or even religious devotional materials.

What other things might we do to move us from fatigued to refreshed?



Spirit

The ability to “tune in” to the often-subtle voice inside us brings heart wisdom, compassion, and creativity. Set aside daily quiet time, writing your thoughts down, and reviewing them.


Weekly artist date: Do something creative and fulfilling that brings you deep joy, such as writing poetry, playing music, doing pottery, woodworking, caring for plants, etc. Whatever you choose, do it in the awareness that the purpose is to feed you through creative activities, not to produce something, even though you may be involved in production activity. The activity you choose should leave you feeling energized, centered, renewed, and grateful for life.

**What other things might we do to move us
from fatigued to refreshed?**



Thoughts to Walk Away With...

- You're only responsible for your task.
- You're not God.
- The need will always be greater than the resources.
- Use care in how you measure "success"
- Value small victories.
- Who you are is as important to the mission as what you do.
- Their pain is not your pain.
- Don't take them home with you.
- Remember to care for your spirit, emotions and body so that there will be something left to give.

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- Compassion Fatigue is always a possibility for those who care for others.
 - There is no compassion fatigue when all our caring is “successful”.
 - If you don’t care for yourself, physically, emotionally and spiritually, then eventually there will not be enough of you left to care for anyone else.
 - Compassion Fatigue – It’s not a character flaw!



Do not let the nature of this work
destroy your effectiveness! A lot of
people are counting on you!