

K y c z y   H a w k

# SELF CARE PRACTICES

COMPASSION TRAINING



# Table Of Contents

SOME DEFINITIONS	2
WHAT DOES COMPASSION MEAN TO YOU?	3
AUTHENTIC COMPASSION RATHER THAN PITY	4
WHAT IF PRACTICING COMPASSION BECOMES DEPLETING?	5
HOW DO WE REPLENISH OUR RESERVES?	6
COMPASSION TRAINING IS SELF CARE TRAINING	7
ASSESS HOW YOU ARE DOING RIGHT NOW	8
HOW CAN YOU CREATE BETTER BOUNDARIES FOR YOURSELF?	9
IN THE MOMENT TOOLS	10
WELL CARE CHART	16
CONCLUSION	19

## SOME DEFINITIONS

**Compassion:** Tenderhearted, kind, feeling for others, sympathy and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others. Deep awareness of the suffering of another, coupled with the wish to relieve it. Sometimes pity (more on this later.)

**Training:** Demonstrated process, practice, imparting and acquiring skills. In a word; practice.

**Selfcare:** The goal of selfcare is to take steps to manage or prevent disease and to promote feelings of wellbeing.

Living in alignment with your values is a form of wellbeing and when stress or challenges prevent us from fulfilling our emotional and spiritual ideals we suffer. Our selfcare suffers.

The World Health Organization defines selfcare like this:

"self-care is a broad term and there are many facets of a person's life that come into play, including: Hygiene (general and personal) Nutrition Lifestyle factors such as exercise level and leisure activities Environmental factors such as a person's living conditions or social habits Socioeconomic factors such as a person's income level or cultural beliefs Self-medication and following treatment plans for current illnesses For a person to practice true self-care, they must utilize personal responsibility and self-reliance in a way that positively impacts their health in the current moment and in the future."

## WHAT DOES COMPASSION MEAN TO YOU?

A strong belief such as compassion can become a part of our identity. Perhaps we have chosen a job or profession in which compassion plays a part; health professional, teacher, counselor, therapist. Perhaps we include volunteerism in our daily lives.

Being a member of a community, group and our families dips into this reservoir of compassion in which we feel for and with one another.

We listen to our friends, our children, our co-workers, our students, our clients with an ear of support and understanding. Sometimes our role is to give advice, but often it is just to listen. To understand and to support with careful comments of identification, the assertion that you, too have experienced something similar and understand.

We may also extend our open heart beyond people we know to others outside of our community and around the world. There are times that we, ourselves, don't have to have experienced the harm, the pain, the challenge in order to feel compassionate. We believe the suffering of another and feel tenderness and sorrow for them and their experiences.

Between home and work, society and internal conflict and readjustments we can become fatigued. We can become so tired we forget or cannot take care of ourselves. In that case our value, our identity of being compassionate actually harms us. We begin to burn out and lose joy, spontaneity and genuine compassion. In forgetting that we belong and that we matter, our actions may seem compassionate but they become rote. They may dissolve into pity as **we have forgotten ourselves** in the equation of care.

## AUTHENTIC COMPASSION RATHER THAN PITY

Whether it is for yourself or for others, compassion is a more uplifting and reinforcing concept than pity. Even though we may be sorry for something someone is going through- it is said with humility; "I have been there- there is a way out" rather than "poor you". In understanding we can stand by one another and together walk through a situation.

*"If you have come here to help me you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."*

— Lilla Watson

Pity separates us. It can give a false sense of elevation; that we are above the person, the incident, the circumstance. Those ideas can cause separation. Separation causes isolation and that, in turn, depletes us.

Recognize that we are not alone. We are connected survivors of a *pandemic of emotional and social trauma* exacerbated by the pandemic of COVID-19.

But being connected does not mean we all process the same. We have individual stress responses and individual resilience tools. We are the same AND we are unique. Each one of us may respond at a different point in the challenge, and perhaps in a different manner. Don't judge yourself by the responses of others. Honor yourself. Save your energy for recovery.

## WHAT IF PRACTICING COMPASSION BECOMES DEPLETING?

What happens when the well dries up?

Physically- exhaustion, over taxing the body systems, indigestion, insomnia, susceptibility to cold and flus, disordered breathing, chronic pain and others.

Emotionally- feeling dull and disconnected, feeling over stimulated, tender or vulnerable, contrary or angry, stuck in one emotion or another

Cognitively- difficulty remembering things, difficulty learning new things, less able to draw considered and unrushed conclusions or make decisions, losing interest in acquiring knowledge

Spiritually / connection - feeling alone, apart, disconnected, isolated, as if there were no support or if there were that you are too exhausted to ask for it, to reach out.

The suggestion is that we give to others from our "Excess Not Reserves" of care, concern, energy, witness listening, problem solving suggestions and so on.

## HOW DO WE REPLENISH OUR RESERVES?

What is the distinction between self care and selfishness?

Selfishness is doing something that benefits yourself only; sometimes to the exclusion of others. Self care is nurturing and replenishing yourself so that you are no longer overwhelmed by the challenges in life. In order that you flourish. From this space of grounded, repleted security compassion no longer depletes you.

There is a bit of selfishness in self care; but it is a good kind. You find opportunities and set boundaries so that you have sufficient time and energy to fulfill those parts of you that you value: your kindness and your compassion.

## COMPASSION TRAINING IS SELF CARE TRAINING

### TOOLS FOR SELF CARE

Everyone will have their own go-to tools of self care. We each have our own interests, energy level, and likes/dislikes. Sometimes it is good to challenge ourselves to try new ones. Reaching out of our comfort zone when we feel secure and grounded will help us accept unfamiliar ways of taking care of ourselves when we are tired and worn out.

What is common to us all is that having access to the remedies and replenishing activities has to be practiced; practices when we are not depleted so that they are easy to reach for when we are.

Self care is different from pampering or regular activities we have to keep us well and tidy: hair cuts, mani/pedis, regular activities that keep the surface in order. These are beyond those although perhaps in addition to them. These are extra, and perhaps, extra special.



## ASSESS HOW YOU ARE DOING RIGHT NOW

Check in to see how you are doing now, or have been doing in the recent past. Overwhelmed? Energy flickering on and off like an old lightbulb? Have you been losing the barrier between home life and worklife; one blending into the other because you are overworked and overstressed?

Our belief systems can tire us, set us up to be depleted. Perhaps I think I am the only one who can do a thing; that no one else can do it better. Perhaps I think that I can't ask anyone for help; they are already so busy, they already have enough to do, I would have to explain too much, they won't do it the right way/my way, and so on. We may think ourselves into an exhausting corner

We may also bring our difficult home situations to work and our busy work lives home. There is no clear distinction and we are always "On". There is no boundary between those two (or three) worlds. Sometimes this is necessary but it can become a habit and you, yourself, fall between the cracks at the same time you are noticing that you are not really "all there" at home or at work. Insomnia.

## HOW CAN YOU CREATE BETTER BOUNDARIES FOR YOURSELF?

First is to notice. FIND. Notice all the times you “check in” with home when at work, and work when at home. Do you bring work home and expect to do it when you want to have family time? Do you reach into your home life without trusting that you will be contacted if you are needed? Can you delegate more in either arena?

Then FORM a plan, a way to pause between work and home, home and work. Perhaps go for a walk, go to the gym, sit in your car for five minutes before going into the building or back into your home.

FASHION a way to reflect and refine your process, your pause, your plan. Things change and requirements do, too. So be willing to change your “pause” as well, and to adjust your overlap when necessary.

Filling these energy leaks and energy drains can help you retain your energy for those things that are truly important to you.

(See workbooks by [PositivePsychology.com](http://PositivePsychology.com) to help you find your beliefs about work and home and how they drive your behavior. These can help clarify how sometimes your belief system can clash with what is important to you.)

## IN THE MOMENT TOOLS

Here are some categories of self care tools. You may have a few of each or several of a few. It is good to have a variety in mind so you can have some available when you are at work, at home, by yourself, or in the presence of others. You never know when you will need to reach for self care.

- Breathe
- Move
- Observe the world / nature
- Set time to play / recreation / games
- Have hobbies

## BREATHE

Let us begin with a basic tool of "authentic interchange". The breath! Inhale and exhale - the most basic of exchanges.

First: the check in - how are you feeling now? Curious? Anxious? Eager? Bored? A combination of feelings? PERFECT- you checked in.

We start with box breathing to "trapezoid" breath. Begin with a 3/3/3/3 box breath and slowly move, one number at a time to 3/3/6/3 and then back again to 3/3/3/3. This is a way to do this:

Begin by breathing in and out noticing the breath change to its observable comfortable pace. Do this for 3 or 4 rounds of inhale and exhale cycles. Next pace your inhale to the count of three and set your internal metronome for that rhythm. The only suggestion is that you keep the pace comfortable and the count to THREE.

To breathe in the box breath you inhale for a steady count (three), hold the breath for three, exhale for three and hold the breath outside the body for three.

Continue three or four more cycles and extend the exhale to four beats.

Continue three or four more cycles and extend the exhale to five beats.

Again repeat for several cycles and extend the exhale to six. All beats are even; you are now breathing 3/3/6/3. Continue for any length of time.

Now is the time to decrease; reduce the exhale by one beat to 5, one count at a time, and so on until you are breathing 3/3/3/3.

Cease the counting and return to your natural breath rhythm. Notice how you feel now.

This is one of your basic tools of selfcare, centering and can be a foundation for authentic compassion.

### MOVE

Stretch and move through 5 minutes of focussed joint/gland and move the spine in 6 directions

- Rotate hands around wrists, feet around ankles, torso around hips.
- Turn the head from side to side. Rotate the shoulders forward and back.
- Pretend to hula hoop with your hips.
- Have the eyes look up to the left, then diagonally down to the right several times. Do the same from upper right to lower left.
- For more see the booklet on Mindful Movement

*Whenever you move, whether it is aerobic or contemplative it is good to do some self inquiry:*

- How do you feel? Individual sensations, where in the body? Intense or mild?
- Notice the location of your body, your limbs as you move. Try this with eyes open and then with eyes shut.
- What do you notice? What was pleasant / unpleasant?
- This process of noticing helps the body brain connection of the nervous system

### OBSERVE

Contemplate and consider your identity (the roles you play in life, who and how you want to be) and the driving force(s) in your life. What is important to you?



Often feelings of depletion come when you are unable to attend to things that you personally hold as important. It could be activities like spending time with family or friends, being able to be of service in a community that is important to you, being alone and reading or engaging in a hobby.

What do you like about yourself? What is a characteristic about yourself that you savor, are pleased with, are proud of? Has your work work work life wrung you out so that you are no longer able to behave in congruence with your best self?

Have you forgotten about yourself, your values, your attitude and behavior that supports these values, have you abandoned your own needs. No criticism here; just observe and note this.

### PLAY

Do you replenish with activities? Are you better in groups? Do you prefer to be alone? Do you like to hike with others or walk along safe trails by yourself?

Here are other considerations. We all need down time. What is yours?

Can you play? Learn something new? Pick up a hobby you have let fall by the wayside?

How are you eating, sleeping, hydrating, exercising? Can you re-invigorate the discipline to attend to these things?

Can you rest without guilt? Do you know the difference between isolation and "closed for repairs"?

### SELF CARE CONCERNS

Compassion fatigue:

Can occur when we are consistently exposed to the suffering of others (in your job, caring for a sick relative, relationship challenges, counseling roles among other examples.)

By not having clear boundaries between work and home, time spent helping others and time for self care, forgetting your priorities, perfectionism and so on.)

Absorbing the pain of others; when exhausted you might be unable to disengage from the problems and challenges of other people.

Empathetic overload; not getting a break from feelings and then stuffing your own.

Codependency: defining yourself by what you DO for others rather than by your own standards and behavior. You sacrifice your own needs and well being for the sake of another person and identify yourself by this process.

•



## WELL CARE CHART

Make a list of activities and experiences that nurture you. Make a resolution to attend to (your choice of number) each and every day.

Take time to consider an activity or two for each category and then do just one a day. Give yourself options and avoid committing to too many as then they become a pressure, a stressor, another "to do" that can overtax your nervous system. Be kind. Look for fun and regularity. The consistent routine itself can be a powerful self care tool. "I can rely on myself to do something for myself each day" is a heartfelt promise that can increase your sense of wellbeing.

M T W Th F Sat Sun

**Contemplation/ Meditation/ Breathing**

**Mindful movement (yoga, Tai Chi, Qi Gong, etc.)**

**Exercise**

**Hobby**

**Music**

**Art**

**Companionship**

**Spiritual engagement**

**Reading**

**Nutrition (cooking, planning, investigating, and eating)**

**Journaling/writing**

---

**Daydreaming**

---

**Being out in nature**

---

**Learning new things**

---

**Other**

---

**Other**

---

**Other**

## CONCLUSION

Compassion comes from a sincere desire to be present for another person in an authentic way. An outward manifestation of compassion arises in its most honest fashion when we feel competent, capable and well grounded. When our energetic, emotional, intellectual, and/or physical reserves have been depleted we give what we don't have. Being generous with our care can be unkindness to ourselves.

Resilience practices can replenish our reserves, but we also need rest and to honor our own need for silence, play, creativity and relaxation. It is then we can be fully authentic in being there for others, continuing in our client and patient care with all our "faculties intact". This allows us to act from our authentic selves.

All this is possible where there has been adequate practice. Be kind to yourself. Take breaks and come back fresh.

# Kyczy Hawk

Author of "Yoga and the Twelve Step Path" , "Life in Bite-Sized Morsels" and "From Burnout to Balance" she continues to submit articles to recovery and yoga oriented publications. She has recently released a book and workbook through Central Recovery Press: "A Yogic Tools for Recovery; A Guide To working The Steps" along with its companion workbook. Recorded meditations and poses are available for free to accompany the book and workbook. She has also created and published some WORD PUZZLE books (searches and jumbles) that use positive words and quotes as part of the easy to read puzzles, designed to keep the mind focuses on the healthy and the healing.

Kyczy continues to present workshops and retreats expanding on her deeper understanding of somatics and other healing practices. You can also join Kyczy and a host of other people in recovery every Sunday morning at 8am PT (11 am ET) on In The Rooms at the Yoga Recovery meeting. Kyczy is very proud of her family; husband, kids, grandkids, and great-grandkid, all who amaze her in unique and wonderful ways. More about her work can be found at [www.yogarecovery.com](http://www.yogarecovery.com).

This work is created by Kyczy Hawk E-RYT500 and is copywrited. Contact her directly for all permissions. [kyczy@yogarecovery.com](mailto:kyczy@yogarecovery.com).