

Building Compassion Resilience

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Welcome

“Our human compassion binds us the one to the other — not in pity or patronizingly, but as human beings who have learned how to turn our common suffering into hope for the future.”

— Nelson Mandela

Agenda

- Connector
- Defining Our Terms
- The 6 Action Steps to Compassion Resilience
- Setting boundaries is Self Care.



Compassion exercises for adults

- Remember a time someone expressed compassion for us and did something to comfort a need they recognized in us. Sit comfortable, breath 3 deep, slow, mindful breaths, focus on the air. Think about that person who has shown love, compassion, kindness. Recall a time that they showed compassion to you. Bring as many details into focus as you recall this event. Imagine you have stepped back into time into that memory. When you return, reflect on the memory. How did it feel to be shown compassion? What sensations were felt in your body? Where in your body did you feel? Was there a change in the room or body temperature? What colors and shapes did you notice? Describe with as much detail as you can.

Definitions



Self-compassion: extending kindness to ourselves in instances of perceived inadequacy, failure, or our own general suffering.

Burn-out: exhaustion of physical or emotional strength or motivation usually as a result of prolonged stress related to very high workload, non-supportive work environment, and/or feeling that our efforts make no difference.

Secondary Trauma: (also known as secondary traumatic stress and vicarious trauma) can happen to us when we come to know the traumatically stressful events that the students we serve have experienced. Some helpers experience some of the same symptoms of trauma as if the experience had happened to them.

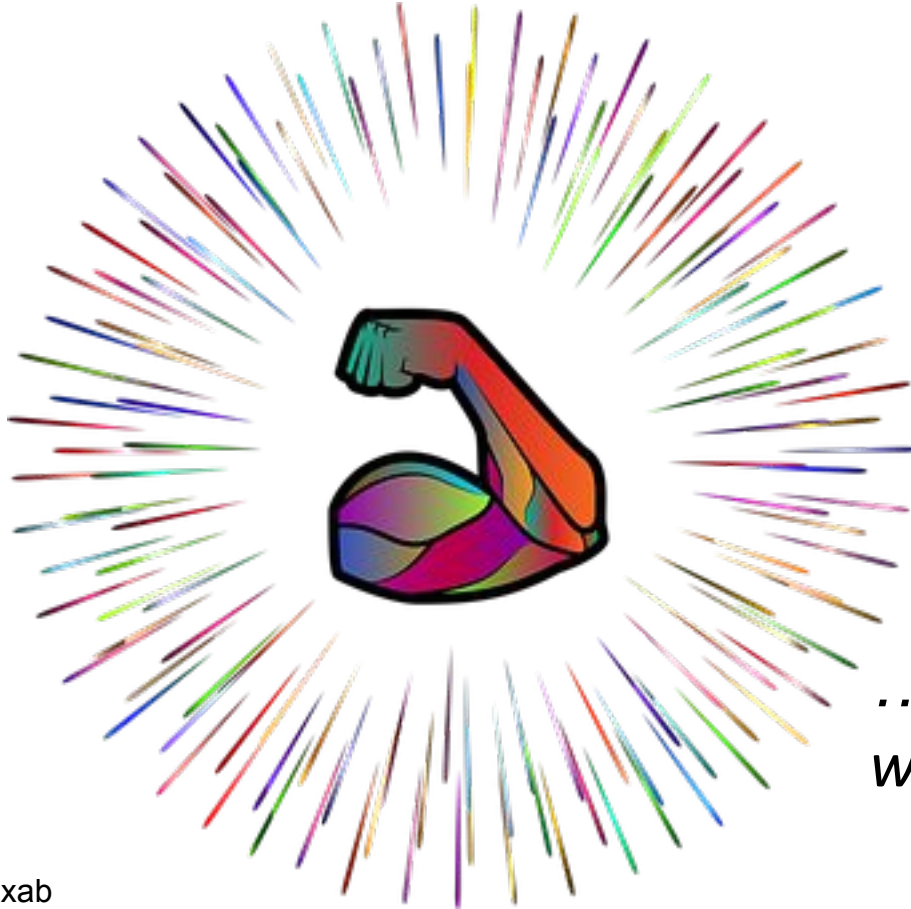
Compassion Fatigue: can be summed up as the feelings of depression, sadness, exhaustion, anxiety and irritation that may be experienced by people who are helpers in their work and/or personal life.

Compassion Resilience is the ability to maintain our physical, emotional and mental well-being while responding compassionately to people who are suffering

Compassion Fatigue

- **Zealot** = “early career”, desire to change the world. We are committed, involved, and available, ready to problem solve and to make a difference. We are willing to go the extra mile.
- **Irritable** = realizing the imperfections of the people and systems needed to reach positive outcomes for those they serve. Anger and cynicism, diminished creativity, sadness, feeling helpless or hopeless.
- **Withdrawn** = escaping from the needs and expectations of the work environment . Overwhelmed by complexity, chronic exhaustion, physical illness, difficulty empathizing, feeling numb to other’s pain, absenteeism.
- **Zombie** = no longer connecting with your family, friends or colleagues. Auto-pilot mode to survive the realities of the workplace and job requirements. Lost your ability to empathize with students and lost your meaning and value in your role.

What is Compassion Resilience?



*...adapting well when faced
with stress*

Compassion in Action

“Our **intention**
creates
our **reality.**”

Wayne Dyer

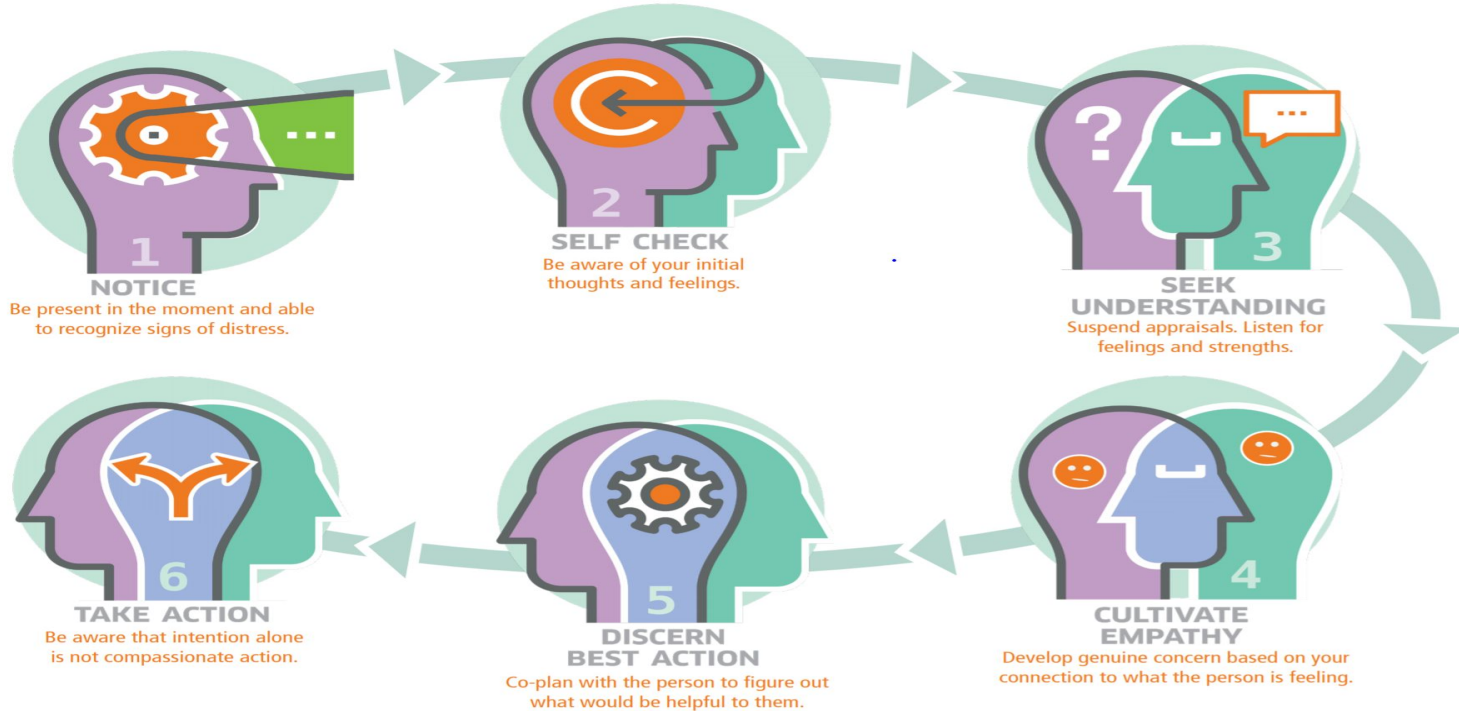
- ***Intentions turned into Actions:***

- What is Compassion Resilience?
- Compassion in Action



Action Steps for Compassion Resilience

Compassionate Action Steps



(Combined from works of Monica Worline, *Awakening Compassion at Work*, 2017 and Beth Lown, *The Schwartz Center for Compassionate Healthcare*, 2014)

Compassionate Action: Scenario 1

A colleague shares with you that one of her 8 year old students is really on her mind. His family struggles, and he has so much potential. He is shut down in class and acting out with tears and tantrums. Recently, he hit her and she didn't tell the principal to avoid consequences for him. She worries at night, loses sleep and wakes up with him on her mind. She tells you that she may be the only one who can get through to him. She is considering an outing with him on a Saturday to give his family a break. She clearly cares, and she is definitely stressed.

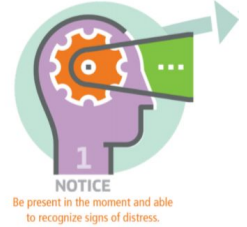


ACTIVITY

Section 1: Scenarios for Discussion



Step 1: Notice



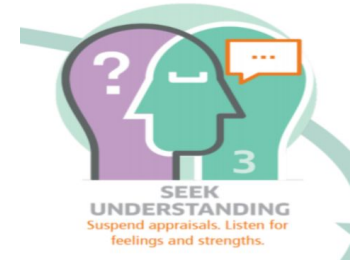
- Be present in the moment and able to recognize signs of distress.
 - a) What times or situations in your day are you most likely to have things get in the way of you being present?
 - a) Consider the scenario as happening in such a time. What can you do to be more present in these times?

Step 2: Self-Check



- Be aware of your initial feelings (What am I connecting to from my past?) and thoughts about this person or situation. Appraisals are natural and dependent on your frame of reference from your experience and “training” and often incomplete or inaccurate.
 - a) What emotions arise for you in relation to this scenario?
 - a) What might your initial judgments be? What might your “old tapes” play back to you?

Step 3: Seek to Understand



- Suspend appraisals. Listen with curiosity to understand the concerns/distress from the other's perspective. Listen for feelings and any insights or strengths that the person shares.
 - a) How might you invite the person to share information with you? What strategies do you use to encourage them to open up with you?
 - a) What are three possible insights or strengths you might hear if you listen long enough?

Step 4: Cultivate Empathy



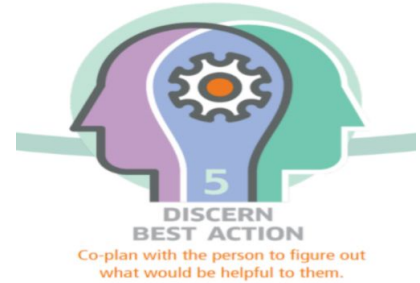
- Genuine concern develops based on the feelings you have come to understand and can relate to your own experience of such feelings. This leads to a growing desire and intention to help. Keep listening for understanding if empathy seems out of reach.
 - a) What situations do you find most difficult for you to tap into your genuine empathy? What feelings might you be able to relate to even if you cannot relate to the situation?

Step 4: Cultivating Empathy Video Clip

- Brené Brown, leading researcher in the study of empathy
- Explanation of empathy in real-life terms



Step 5: Discern Best Action



- Work with the person to figure out what would actually be helpful to them rather than what you think would be helpful or was helpful to you in past, similar circumstances.
 - a) Compare your ideas for what you think the person “should” do with what others would do.

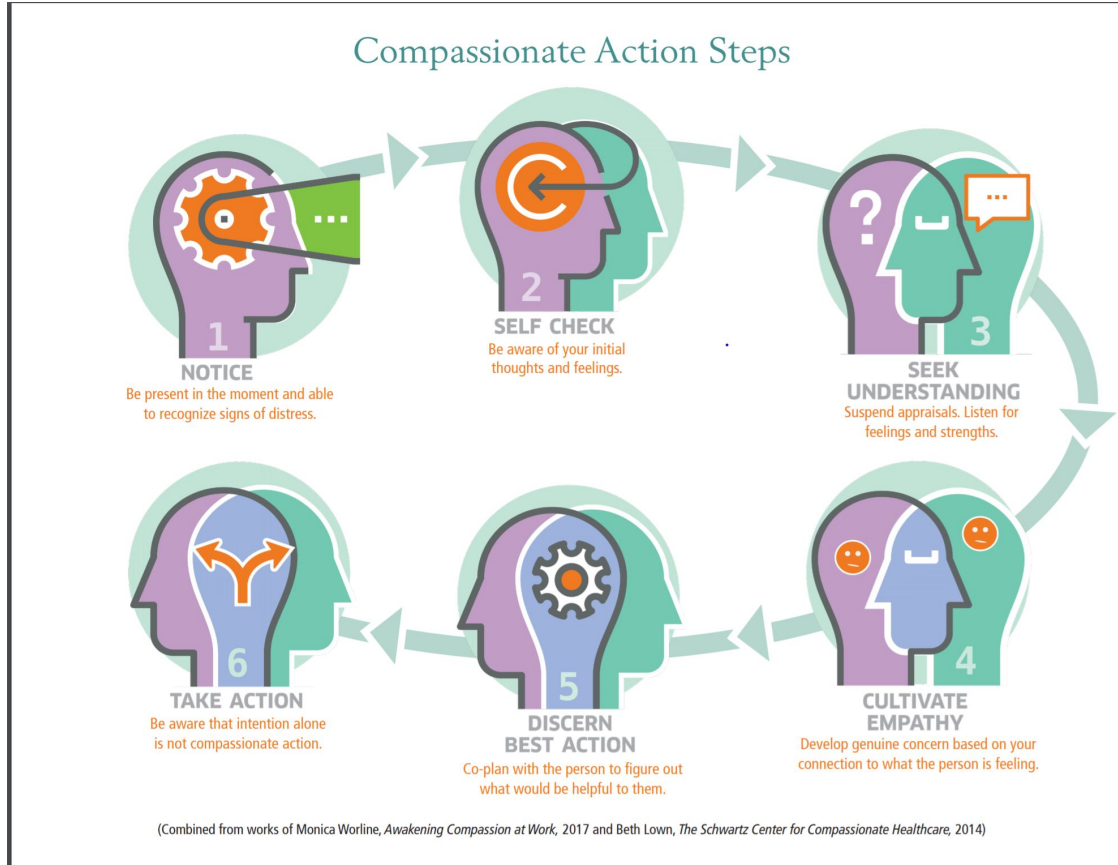
Step 6: Take Action



- Take action – Be aware that intention alone is not compassionate action.
 - a) What typically gets in your way of taking compassionate action?
 - b) What can you do to minimize those barriers?

Putting into Practice

What steps of the Compassion Action have you used to help a colleague?
What step(s) might be the most challenging for you to use?



Resilience & Fatigue

*“Forget your perfect offering.
There is a crack in everything.
That’s how the light gets in.”*

— Leonard Cohen

Compassionate Boundary Setting

“Without boundaries, you will act, sleep, work, groan, feel used and fulfill basic responsibilities rather than make choices to live and love fully, to work hard and nobly, to fulfill your purpose and to contribute passionately to your world.” - Better Boundaries: Owning and Treasuring Your Life



Personal Boundaries:

guidelines, rules or limits that a person creates to identify for him- or herself what are reasonable, safe and permissible ways for other people to behave around him or her and how he or she will respond when someone steps outside those limits.

They are built out of a mix of beliefs, opinions, attitudes, past experiences and social learning.

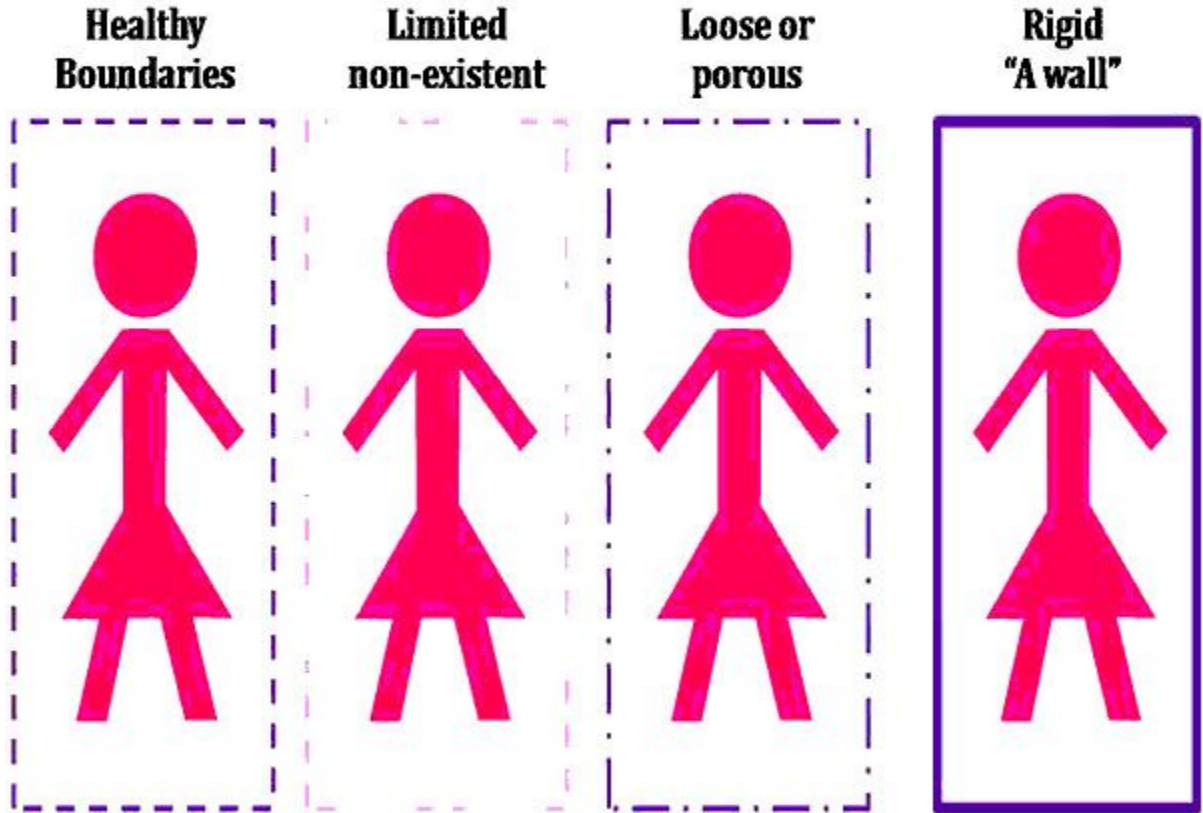
- Wikipedia

Why do we set boundaries?



What sort of Personal Boundary do you have?

Discussion



Tips for Setting Compassionate Boundaries



1. **Know what you want to say "Yes"** to in your life (values, behaviors and priorities).
2. **Be proactive.** Have "meetings" to discuss boundaries. Structure offers safety for both sides.
3. **Just say it!** Don't make them guess. Use simple and direct language.
4. Reinforce by pointing out the violations **IN THE MOMENT.**
5. **Give explanations that are specific,** relevant to the other person, and offer shared solutions.
6. **Back up your boundary with action.** If you give in, you invite people to ignore your needs.

Putting into Practice

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-WpdsRPzKco>

“Compassionate people ask for what they need. They say no when they need to, and when they say yes, they mean it. They’re compassionate because their boundaries keep them out of resentment.” Brene Brown

What is the connection between boundaries and resentment?

Reflection: What is one boundary you plan to begin, or continue to uphold, to keep you out of a place of resentment?

Grounding/Wellness Exercise

Take Your Break Activity:

<https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/newsletter/healthy-break-activities>

Calming	Energizing	Relaxing
Take 10 minutes to tidy up	Desk Dancing	Staff yoga
Gratitude Journal	Drink more water	Staff nature walk
Sharing Inspirational Quotes	Take a walk to deliver mail to other staff	Staff crafts
Gardening	Desk Stretches	Staff breathe
Spa	Play music while you plan or grade	Staff walk and smile
Meditate	Have some caffeine or sugar	Share a comic and laugh together

Choose Nourishing vs. Depleting!

In our demanding lives, we can easily get caught in simply getting the tasks done and losing all enjoyment. We can get sucked into an **Exhaustion Funnel**, a term coined by Marie Asberg, Karolinska Institute, Stockholm.



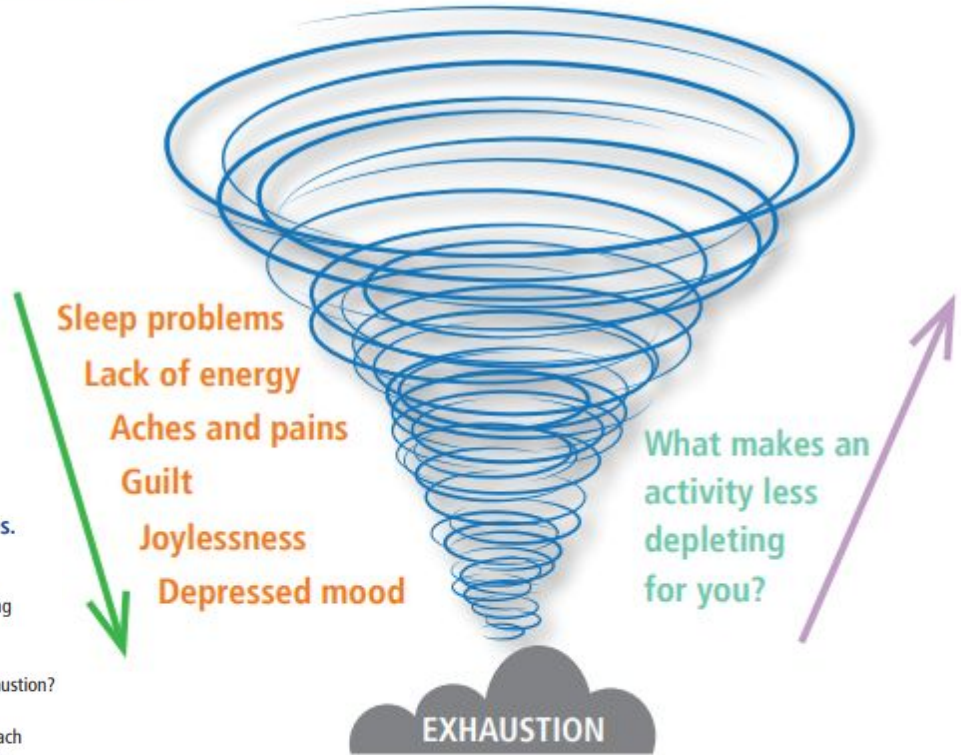
Our colleagues can help us transform depleting activities into more nourishing ones.



What activities do your colleagues find depleting that you do not?

Which do they seem to do without feeling exhaustion?

What are different ways your colleagues approach an activity that is typically depleting for you but not for them?



Contagion Effect Activity - L.I.D.

“Helpers who bear witness to many stories of abuse and violence notice that their own beliefs about the world are altered and possibly damaged by repeatedly being exposed to traumatic material.” Karen Saakvitne and Laurie Anne Pearlman, *Transforming the Pain*, p. 49



The four steps of L.I.D. (low impact disclosure)

- Increased Self-Awareness
- Fair Warning
- Consent
- Low Impact Disclosure

Questions to ask yourself before sharing graphic details.

Is this conversation a: Debriefing? Consultation? Work lunch? Parking lot chat? A social event? Pillow talk? Other...

Is the listener: Aware that you are about to share graphic details? Able to control the flow of what you are about to share with them?

If it is a consultation or a debriefing: Has the listener been informed that it is a debriefing, or are you sitting in their office chatting about your day? Have you given them fair warning? How much detail is enough? How much is too much? If this is a staff meeting or a case conference, is sharing the graphic detail necessary to the discussion? Sometimes it is, often it is not. Eg: discussing a child being removed from the home, you may need to say *"The child suffered severe neglect and some physical abuse at the hands of his mother"* and that may be enough. Don't assume you need to disclose all the details right away.

Some additional suggestions: Experiment with Low Impact Disclosure (LID) and see whether you can still feel properly debriefed without giving all the tough details. You may find that at times you do need to disclose all the details which is an important process in staying healthy as helpers. And at other times you may find that you did not need this.



Putting it into Practice

I need to debrief something with you. Is now a good time?

I heard something really hard today, and I could really use a debrief. Could I talk to you about it?

***Yes**, I have about 15 minutes, and I can hear some of your story, but would you be able to tell me without the gory details?

***Not right now**. I am not prepared to take in additional information. Is there a time later that we can meet?

***No**. I don't have space or capacity right now.

Strategy for Self-care – Stress Resilience

https://www.ted.com/talks/kelly_mcgonigal_how_to_make_stress_your_friend

Strength

- a. Energizer Breaks Strategy
[Brain Breaks - 20 awesome ways to energize your students FAST!](#)
- b. Tapping In and Out Strategy

Spirit

- a. Rest and Play
- b. Sharing uplifting stories

Mind

- a. Mindfulness
- b. Fixed Mindset
- c. Practice the Pause
- d. Positive Words of Affirmation

Heart

- a. Healthy relationships
- b. Connections
- c. Self-Compassion

Make a personal mission statement.

Physical self-care	Psychological self-care	Emotional self-care
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise • Get regular health check-up • Get medical care when required • Take time off when you are sick • Get enough sleep • Eat regularly (e.g. breakfast, lunch and dinner) • Eat healthily • Take vacations • Do physical activities which you think are fun (e.g. dance, swim, walk, run, play sports, sing, etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make time for self-reflection • Notice your inner experience – listen to your thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and feelings • Write a journal • Make art • Take day trips or mini vacations • Make time away from your mobile phone, email and the internet • Read literature that's unrelated to work • Engage your intelligence in new area, e.g. go to an art show, sports event, theatre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give yourself affirmations • Praise yourself • Love yourself • Spend time with others whose company you enjoy • Stay in contact with important people in your life • Re-visit your favourite books, movies, etc. • Identify comforting activities, objects, people, places and seek them out • Allow yourself to cry • Find things that make you laugh
Spiritual self-care	Personal self-care	Professional self-care
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make time for reflection • Spend time in nature • Find a spiritual connection or community • Identify what's meaningful to you and notice its place in life • Meditate • Pray • Read inspirational literature or listen to inspirational talks, music • Volunteer for a cause 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule regular dates with your partner or spouse • Schedule regular activities with your children • Make time to see friends • Spend time with your pets • Make time to reply to personal emails and letters or send holiday cards • Allow others to do things for you • Enlarge your social circle • Ask for help when you need it • Share a fear, hope, or secret with someone you trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a break during the workday (e.g. lunch) • Take time to chat with co-workers • Make quiet time to complete tasks • Identify projects or tasks that are exciting and rewarding • Leave work at work • Balance your workload • Arrange your work space so it is comfortable and comforting • Get regular supervision or consultation

Closing

- Something you became aware of about yourself or others in this experience today?
- Something you learned.