

Ethics as Self Care

Caring for Yourself Inside and Outside the Therapeutic Relationship ~

Is self-care an ethical issue? Does lack of self care disrupt our ability to be present with our clients? Are we uneducated in rest? What does nourishment feel like? When do we know we are headed for burn-out? How do we care for ourselves inside & outside the therapeutic relationship? How do we define the therapeutic self? Take a moment, allow yourself to pause and sit with these questions.

For many of us not a day goes by without our being called upon to help one another ~ at home, at work, on the street, wherever. We do what we can. Yet so much comes up to complicate this natural response. As helping professionals we tend to focus our energies and attention toward service and care of others to the detriment of our own care. Out of our deep commitment to service and healing, we frequently forget that when we are burned out our clients won't be getting the level of professional care we are capable of offering. In their book; *How Can I Help*, authors Ram Dass & Paul Gorman address the state of burn out. They share the following. Helping out can get heavy. The care of others starts to be real work. A growing burden of personal responsibility leads to exhaustion and frustration. We feel we are putting out more than we are getting back. And are we making any difference anyway? We get tired of being with needy people, and embarrassed or guilty about feeling that way. As our heart begins to close down, joy and inspiration give way to apathy and resignation. There arises a range of emotions and responses we've come to call burnout. Having started out to help others, we're somehow getting wounded ourselves. What we had in mind was expressing compassion. Instead, what we seem to be adding to the universe is more suffering ~ our own ~ while we are supposedly helping.

I believe many massage therapists and bodyworkers can relate to the above words. Is it possible that nothing may be more important in all this, than being gentle with ourselves? Finding and exploring our own rhythm, learning the value of recognizing our own limits, and acknowledging our own needs may be a worth while pursuit. We understand that to have compassion for others we must have compassion for ourselves.

With all this said along with continued respect for our ongoing work; is caring for ourselves an ethical issue? Is this a worth while topic to explore? I believe it is! I invite you to explore this topic of self care with me. By offering mutual support, insight, and methods for change~ we can continue to heal the world one client at a time.

Kathy will be offering her class: *Ethics as Self Care ~ Caring for yourself Inside and Outside the Therapeutic Relationship* at the upcoming AMTA –WI Chapter Educational Conference August 22-24, 2008 in the Wisconsin Dells.

May we continue to Learn, Grow, and Live in Peace!

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