

# Presence is Self-Care.

Self-care is not just about what we are doing outside of sessions. How we relate to our moment-to-moment experience as psychotherapists plays a foundational role in how the of suffering, pain, and distress we witness in our work impacts us. Working with our presence is a form of self-care.

## How are you *being* as you are doing?

Here are some tips to help you change to a protective presence during your hours and days.

### ADOPT A BREATHING PRACTICE TO USE DURING SESSION.

- The breath is a powerful tool that offers mutual communication between our nervous system, mind, and body. Your breath is always with you and shifting it to a state of relative calm will lead to an inevitable result in the rest of your being.
- Try this: Focus on belly breathing during session, slow and steady, seeing if you can keep the practice going in the background.

### SET AN INTENTION BEFORE SEEING EACH CLIENT.

- Begin seeing your session as truly beginning in the few moments before greeting your client. Pause and focus on what quality you would like to bring to the session with them, for them or for you. Being intentional with your presence in this way helps to create a boundary around what you are experiencing in the session.
- Try this: “May I offer acceptance.” “I want my client to feel safe with me.” “I intend to keep awareness of my spine in my chair.”

### USE COMPASSION AS A WAY TO GROUND DURING MOMENTS OF DISTRESS.

- Recall that empathic resonance alone leaves us vulnerable to the effects of the emotional distress we witness all day. Inviting compassion in moments of crisis or high distress provides an opportunity to buffer this effect.
- Try this: In a moment of crisis, before moving right to problem-solving or empathic resonance, take a deep breath and offer compassion to yourself or your client: “May your suffering reduce.” “May I be patient with myself as I work through this crisis.” This is not an either-or suggestion but rather a both-and.

Invite self-care into your day, life, and the therapy hour. Presence is self-care.