

Holistic Self-Care for the Caregiver Part 2 : How To Care For Yourself 2.0 CE Hours

[Quiz Button](#)

Objectives:

1. Identify the value of authenticity, transparency, receptivity, and vulnerability.
2. Explore the importance of discerning whether your needs are being met or not.
3. Learn how to discern whether you are open or closed to your needs being met.
4. Understand the concept of 'sacred space'.
5. List the process of opening your experience of discomfort in the presence of pain, confusion, and fear.
6. Identify the 'urgent/important grid'.
7. Discuss ways to learn to accept what is.
8. Understand the concept of self-compassion.
9. Learn how to engage in self-compassion.
10. Indicate ways you can meet your self-care needs.

Authenticity, Transparency, Receptivity And Vulnerability

Authenticity, transparency, receptivity and vulnerability all rely on being open to ourselves as well as others, and that puts us in the real stream of life where we are given customized opportunities to learn and grow. It is important to go a little deeper here, and point out a few key things that will help you know when it's safe to be open.

Authenticity and transparency require us to risk being real; to not pretend; to not deny our experience; to not hide our joy, brilliance, neediness, pain or confusion; and to not reject our human experience because we think it makes us better or worse than someone else.

Receptivity requires us to risk receiving experiences that help us learn and grow. All of these are healthy nourishment for our soul's journey.

While authenticity should be wholeheartedly encouraged, transparency and receptivity, vulnerability is **not** encouraged. We need look no further than the definition of *vulnerability* in most English language dictionaries:

- open to attack, assault, neglect, damage or other harm
- capable of, or susceptible to being physically or emotionally wounded or hurt

So by definition, *vulnerability* includes the probability of danger and harm. By harm, we don't mean pain, disappointment, confusion or fear, because these don't really harm us. In fact, pain, disappointment, confusion and fear are gifts because they show us where there is energy, life force or consciousness we have somehow **disconnected** from. When we become aware of our disconnection, we can then choose to open and **reconnect**.

True harm comes from physical or emotional **damage**, which is an important distinction.

For example, when a child walks alone along a busy highway, she is vulnerable. When people choose to have sex with a new partner without protection from STDs, they're vulnerable. When someone lives with a person who berates, demeans, punishes or controls him or her in some way, that person is vulnerable.

While receptivity and vulnerability both involve being 'open,' there is no wisdom in ignoring or downplaying probability of harm.

So discernment is important to practice along with being open. The interesting thing is that when we stay fully in touch with our feelings and needs, we are much less likely to put ourselves in harm's way, because honoring our feelings and needs is an essential part of effective discernment. As a person who values one's own soul's journey, you most likely value being discerning about how you affect yourself and how you affect others by your choices.

Discern Whether You Feel Open or Closed

To be in alignment with your highest health, happiness and stability, you are invited to pay attention to how your feelings of being open and closed... or another way of describing open and closed feelings might be 'expanded and contracted'. These two feelings can quickly help you identify if an experience is or is not meeting your needs, with 'Open' indicating, 'Yes, my needs are being met,' and, 'closed,' indicating, 'No, my needs are not being met'.

To take that a step further, you are invited to **commit to yourself** to engage with others only when you're in full 'YES' to do so, not in when you're in 'No' or 'Maybe'.

This will require you to accept what you can or cannot do in each moment, as you recognize what's right for you, and practice communicating a clear, 'No,' with compassion for yourself and for the other person. With a healthy, 'No,' in your pocket, you can then trust your true, 'Yes'.

This takes practice, and it gets easier. What you need to know is that it **is** possible to learn how to open yourself safely and authentically.

Here are the basic steps that will support your progress:

1. *Open to experiencing your authentic feelings and needs, including your memories of feelings and needs that have felt energetically costly in the past*
2. *Release the conditioning you're carrying in your energy field*
3. *Call for and receive healing, guiding Love and Light*

Honor Sacred Space

Sacred Space is the pure, safe and stable Divine Love that permeates Life. Sacred Space is always present with us. It's our reverence and sincerity, expressed in our invocation, which will *expand our perception* of what is here.

In Sacred Space the veil between worlds thins, we feel closer to Spirit, and we enjoy a more intimate connection with nature, the angelic beings, our spiritual guides, beings who have mastered human life, and the Infinite Source of All.

In Sacred Space we naturally and authentically honor ourselves, transparent in our humanness, available to the moment without adding any energy to drama. We are fully present with the many possibilities inherent in each soul's journey. We are in rapport and empathy with our self and others, without colluding or detaching.

You can easily open and honor Sacred Space by choosing that as your intention and expressing it through your actions and words. Examples include lighting a candle or incense, making sound with a bell, rattle, drum or your voice, and calling on your angels, spiritual guides, ancestors and/or allies who assist you.

Open Your Perception in the Presence of Pain, Confusion & Fear

With practice, we can open to our experience of discomfort in the presence of pain, confusion and fear and find that it morphs into curiosity, tenderness and wonder. We do this by opening to perceive our feelings and needs, then connecting with our inner strength.

Here is an effective the process, which allows for a natural flow and morph, in its own way. It is not always a linear process as this list suggests.

1. Open / honor Sacred Space with a short sincere prayer or invocation
 - Call upon your guardian angels, spiritual guides, ancestors and allies to assist you
 - Soften and open your awareness to you see *your own* limits, longings and needs
 - Acknowledge yourself with compassion and equanimity
2. Breathe through your heart center and let yourself open to *curiosity* about what the other person (or the situation) might be needing
3. Breathe through your heart center and let yourself open to *perceiving* the other person's limits, longings and needs with equanimity
4. Breathe through your heart center and let yourself open to *feeling compassion* for the other person (or the situation)
5. Return to step 1



The Urgent/Important Grid

Here's another tool that you can learn to use when feeling overwhelmed by demands. It is called the "Urgent/Important Grid". Use it like you would use a map to help find your way back to clarity when you start to "lose it". You are encouraged you to use this map to find fresh clarity for yourself.



Here are the instructions, plus see the example on the next page.

1. Make a blank grid on a piece of paper, with the words 'Urgent' and 'Not Urgent' at the top and the words 'Important' and 'Not Important' on the left side.
2. Write each thing that you feel you SHOULD be giving time to, inside one of the squares, based on if that thing is Urgent or not, and Important or not.
3. Once you've got all of the demands you're feeling inside the squares, then use the numbers at the center of the grid to guide you in setting your priorities.
4. **Take care of everything in square #1 first, then go to square #2, plus set boundaries, delegate to others, and/or ignore squares 3 and 4 until you're out of overwhelm.**
5. If you find you're having a hard time letting some things go, look at what that's costing you. Take responsibility for clearing your perception, and perform a soul retrieval or another healing process that releases you from the bondage of trying to 'do it all' or 'be it all.' *This is the best way I know of to prevent regrets.*



Accept What Is

“Serenity comes when you trade expectations for acceptance.”

Did you ever have a bad day and find yourself making a list of all the things that went wrong, or a morning when you wake up and imagine what could go wrong today?

If so, you are priming yourself for trouble! Pessimistic unhappy thinking that focuses on problems and risks and rehearses our negative projections again and again narrows our creativity and keeps us caught in self-undermining cycles.

It is better to release our attachments to pessimism by expanding our mind, and heart and energy body and accepting ‘what is’ with equanimity. In fact, researchers are finding that we affect the neuroplasticity and synaptic wiring of our brains whenever we consciously choose our responses to our situation.

Buddhism offers many exercises to help us strengthen our ability to accept what is. The Upaya Zen Center and the Metta Institute both offer programs to help people learn the Buddhist path to equanimity, and both have programs specifically designed to teach those skills related to working with dying people.

Another path is Byron Katie’s work. *The Work* is a way of identifying and questioning the pessimistic thoughts that cause anger, fear, depression, addiction, and violence. *The Work* invites you to discover: “Who would you be without your story?” and allows your mind to return to its awakened, peaceful, creative nature.

Self-Compassion is Required to Be a Healing Presence

This is a reminder that self-compassion is just as important as compassion for others.

It is part of our human history that many caring, empathic people have overlooked their own needs and become off-balance. It is time to shift that, and we have more help to do that than ever before.

Our Western culture places a huge emphasis on self-esteem as a source of wellbeing. However, recent research suggests that self-compassion is a far more stable foundation for happiness. Symptoms of well-developed self-compassion include:

- Moderation
- Self-kindness
- Identifying oneself and one's experiences in common with humanity

Symptoms of under-developed self-compassion include:

- Isolation
- Critical self-judgment
- Identification with perceived mistakes or shortcomings (inadequacy)

You are wholeheartedly encouraged to give **yourself** care and compassion when you're facilitating health and healing for others.

Self-Compassion Break

It's important to engage in self-compassion everyday, and you

can't always wait until you're "off duty" to do it. When you're feeling stressed or overwhelmed, try giving yourself some self-compassion. Frank Ostaseski, founder of the Metta Institute, teaches us to find a place of rest in the midst of our work and our struggles.

The following exercise offers four practices for giving compassion to your self. These will help you keep your heart open plus care for and nurture yourself at the same time you're caring for and nurturing others. They can be used anytime, day or night.

Instructions

Recall a situation in your life that's difficult and causing you stress. Feel the stress in your body. Now choose one or more of the following four ways to give your self some compassion, and start by saying to yourself:

1. *This is a moment of suffering* (That's mindfulness.) Other examples include saying:

- *Ouch!*
- *This hurts*
- *This is stress*

2. *Suffering is a part of life* (That's common humanity.) Other examples include saying:

- *We all struggle in our lives*
- *I'm not alone, other people feel this way too*
- *Yes this is hard right now, and it's natural for me to feel stressed*

3. *May I be kind to myself* (That's self-kindness.) Other examples include saying:

- *May I give myself the compassion I need*
- *May I learn to accept myself as I am*
- *May I accept myself as I am*
- *May I be patient with myself*
- *May I be strong with myself*
- *May I forgive myself*

4. I choose to be calm, clear and loving to myself (That's self-soothing.)

- *Put your hands over your heart, feeling the warmth of your hands and their gentleness on your chest, or adopt a soothing touch that feels right to you*

Be as Healthy as You Can: Right Action

This section is designed to offer you many different ways for you to meet your self-care needs. If looking at this section makes your eyes glaze over in overwhelm, do a bit of the Heaven and Earth breath to relax and ground your energy, then gently let your eyes be drawn to a place that calls their attention and read a little bit there. Then come back again when you can. The purpose of choosing meaningful self-care action is to support you, not add to your overwhelm.

Quick Tips that May Help

- Refer to Step 2 for holistic ways to relax the stress responses, e.g.,
 - Try journaling, meditation, talking with an empathic listener, art, music, visual imaging, or breathing exercises help you relax before you go to bed


- Ask for “shift” help with medication administration so that you can get a full night’s sleep whenever you can
- Take over-the-counter pain medications like aspirin or acetaminophen before bed to reduce aches and pains
- Keep a running to-do list so you don’t have to remember everything
- Alcohol, caffeine, greasy foods and large fluid intake before sleep can affect the amount and quality of you and your loved one’s rest at night
- A 20-30 minute brisk walk, every day if possible, can significantly improve your sleep

Healthy Snacking

Nothing I can think of will keep your body, mind and spirit stable during stress like real food will. If possible, snack or eat a light meal about every 3 hours during your waking day to keep your blood sugar, energy and nerves steady and calmly alert.

The options for healthy natural snacks is vast and ever-changing. I favor raw fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, nut butters, hummus to dip my veggies in, popcorn without butter and lots of fresh pure water and tea.

Align with Nature to Renew Your Aliveness

When you’re stressed, having difficulty sleeping, or feeling fearful, first give attention to your basic foundations: slow down, breathe, eat nutritious food, drink plenty of fresh pure  water, clean your body and your living space, give attention to finances, etc. If you don’t have the energy to do care for yourself in these ways, **ask for help**. Sometimes attention to practical details can go a long way in restoring

your aliveness.

Also consider if you might be out of alignment with the Nature. A walk with your feet on the earth, breathing the air and absorbing the sun, wind and sounds of nature can help return you to your center, refresh your LEF, clear your mind and open your heart.

If you can't be in nature and you long to connect with its power and wisdom, there are many alternative ways. Here are a few:

- Connect with the water in your bath or shower
 - Connect with the fire in a candle, oil lamp or fireplace
 - Stand in a sunny window where the sun bathes you in its natural light
 - Connect with the plants or animals who share space with you
 - In an emergency (for instance if you're trapped in an elevator, etc.)
- Hold, pat or rub yourself and connect with your body, breath and heartbeat, remembering that your body is a sacred part of nature
 - Connect with the bits of Nature in your medicine bag, if you're carrying one

In addition to the above, here are more self-care practices you can explore:

- **Water:** Water blesses us in the form of rain, snow, coffee, tea, hot baths, lakes, streams, oceans, clouds and so much more. Sit with or in Water and thank Water for its loving presence and gifts. Ask Water to cleanse the heavy energy from you, to take whatever heavy energy it can recycle and to release the remaining energy to our Source.
- **Earth:** Lie on the Earth, thank the Earth for its loving

presence and gifts. Ask the Earth to absorb the heavy energy from you, take whatever heavy energy it can recycle and release the remaining energy to our Source. I often use this way to clear heavy energy from myself. I especially experience deep clearing when I sit or lie down next to a large tree.

- **Animals:** Sit or lie next to an animal who you trust, preferably with its back against your back or with its belly against your belly. Thank the animal for its loving presence and gifts, and ask the animal to absorb the heavy energy from you, taking whatever energy it can recycle and releasing the remaining energy to our Source.
- **Sacred Fire:** Fire is a rapid transformer of energy, prayers, and intention. Blow your heavy energy into a burnable item and place it in a fire, releasing the heavy energy to the Creator with the prayer “Thy Will Be Done.”
- **Earth Paintings:** Earth paintings are a simple and profound way to clear heavy energy in a mythic and energetic way. Like the sand paintings made by Navajo and Tibetan people, you can prayerfully create a mandala using natural materials to represent any situation in your life. More details will be given in the next program.
- **Release or dissolve heavy energy through your breath, sound, movement and visualization,** engaging all of your senses in authentic ways and engaging the soul (mythic) and spirit (energetic) layers of your being. As much as possible, let your self do this without thought, judgment or analysis.

Gratitude Practice

I recommend having a time every day to practice gratitude.

For example, I have a “moment for God” that’s actually more

like three minutes, and occurs four or five times a day. As part of that moment, I consciously thank God and all beings that are helping me for their love and support.

When I was first doing this, I programmed recurring gentle reminders on my cell phone. Now it's a habit. What this practice gives me is a regular, frequent moment of connecting with the peace that passes all understanding. Try it!

Self-Care Plan

I encourage you to make a written self-care plan today!

You can use this easy and effective form to create it, or make your own. Remember the purpose is to **support you** in meeting your needs, not add to your feelings of overwhelm and exhaustion. So in determining your plan:

- Be **honest** about your feelings and needs
- Be **specific** when you request support from others; don't assume they know what you need
- **Include** the top priorities: healthy eating, exercise, sleep and time away
- **Be gentle** with yourself
- **Know you're not alone.** Support is available in person or online 24/7.

Instructions

1. Start by listing your strengths, and then list your needs.
 - Refer to the *Feelings and Needs* lists if necessary.
2. Choose ONE need you'd like to meet, as a starting place.
3. Then list the action steps you'll take to meet this need.

4. Identify requests you can make to receive support from others.
5. When you've met your first need, celebrate your success!
6. Then identify another need and use the same process to meet it, and continue focusing on one need at a time for as long as this process serves you.
7. Share what you've learned with a friend.

Four of My Personal Strengths

1. My Needs Today:	
• One need I choose to meet:	
• Action steps to meet my need:	
• Supports I can request from others:	
• Celebration for meeting my needs:	
2. My New Needs & Date:	
• One need I choose to meet:	
• Action steps to meet my need:	
• Supports I can request from others:	
• Celebration for meeting my needs:	
3. My New Needs & Date	
• One need I choose to meet:	
• Action steps to meet my need:	
• Supports I can request:	
• Celebration for meeting my needs:	

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