

Self-Care for the Caregiver*

Good posture, efficient body patterning and breathing are important when you are working with others. Following is a list of other ways to care for yourself, throughout your days. As you read through the list, assess your own current level of self care.

Acknowledge the other things in your life which you enjoy and make time for them; music, dance, recreational pastimes, hobbies, classes, etc. Make a list that is meaningful to you.

Breathing: Be aware of your own breath. Breathing provides a perfect metaphor for healing, and experiencing the wholeness of life. Enjoy the process of breathing in (inspiration) what you need and letting go (expiration) of what you no longer need. Place a hand on your abdomen and feel the fullness of breath as it expands inside of you. Release and let go.

Nutrition: Be conscious of how you nourish yourself with food. Are you feeding your anxieties and fears, or are you feeding and respecting the body that allows you to do what you do? Enjoy sharing food with others.

Exercise: Move! Walk, run, dance, practice yoga. Do whatever you enjoy. Life is movement, and as you move, life nourishes you.

Peer Support: Talk with others, particularly those who understand you and can validate your process. Sometimes it is important to ask for help from a teacher or counselor, someone who has experience with the issues of concern to you. Peer support keeps us motivated, inspired, and energized.

Writing: If you are required to document your work, you can let that be an opportunity to bring closure to the session. It is also useful to write in a personal journal to record the feelings, thoughts and questions that arise in doing the work you do. Writing about your experience helps to enhance the quality of your on-going education in this field of caring for others.

Time in Nature: Let the natural world nourish you. Take a walk in nature, seeking out places away from the fast-paced energy of the city. Enjoy time in a garden. Get some flowers for yourself, savoring their scent and beauty. Let a natural object, such as a stone or a feather, be a focus of healing for you.

Simple Rituals:

- ***Washing hands*** before and after a session of caregiving is a practical necessity, but it can be an opportunity to focus your intention on the work you do. For example, as you wash your hands before seeing the client, say to yourself, "Now I let go of distractions, worries and concerns, so that I am can be fully present while I am with this person I am caring for." When you wash after the session, say, "Now I let go of this person's energy, with gratitude for what we have shared and learned, so that I can move on with my day."

- ***Drinking water*** or other liquid can be a conscious way of asking for and letting energy move through you during a session. Practically, it keeps you hydrated; emotionally it keeps you open and fluid in your interactions.
- ***Lighting a candle*** is a way of honoring the spirit of your interaction with others. Take just a few minutes to light the candle and let that flame represent whatever or whomever you choose. You can acknowledge your own personal intention in this process.

Rest and Stillness: Take time to do nothing; to sleep, to dream, to daydream, to meditate.

*Taken from the video DVD guide to

Comfort Touch: Massage for the Elderly and the Ill, by Mary Kathleen Rose, BA, CMT

Copyright 2004, 2008