

Caring for the Carer

**MINDFULNESS & SELF-COMPASSION PRACTICES FOR
THE HELPING PROFESSIONAL**

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Where We're Heading

Goal

- Learn and practice mindfulness & self-compassion to support yourself in navigating the stress response related to empathic distress and move back to empathic care.

Objectives

- Understand the differences between empathic care/compassion and empathic distress.
- Learn and practice the STOP practice to cultivate greater mindful awareness.
- Learn and practice the self-compassion break as an antidote to the internalized stress response.

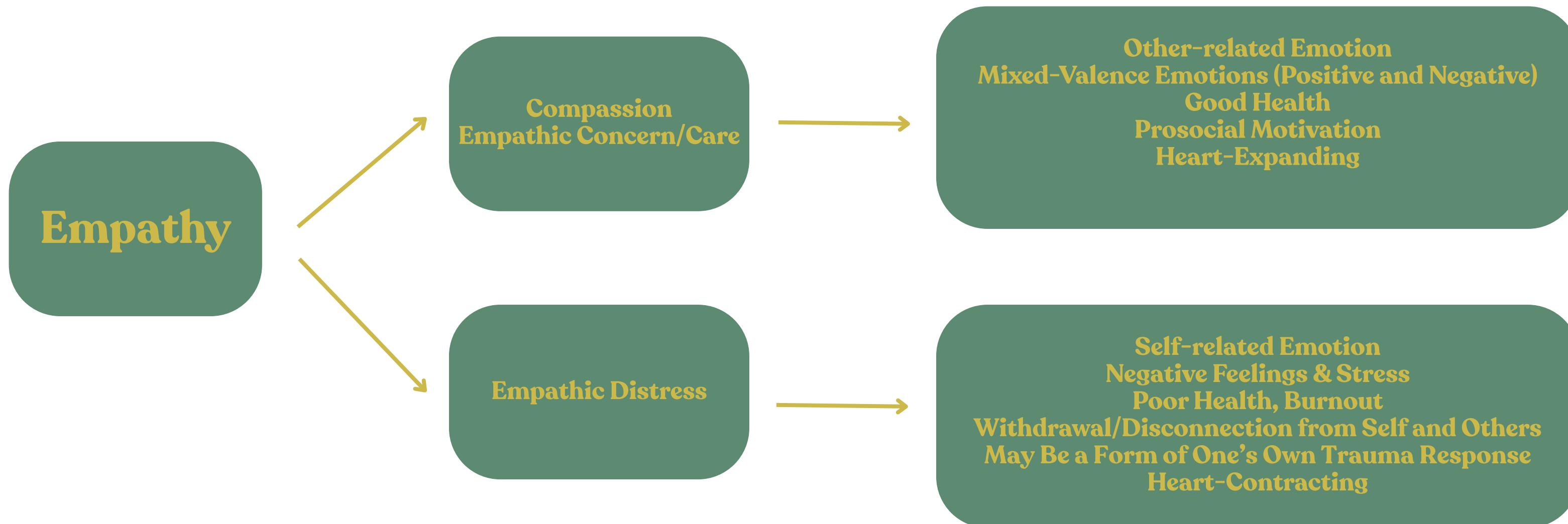


Considerations



- **Attend to your needs**
 - Eyes open/closed
 - Stretch/stand up as needed
 - Sip of water
 - Disengage from the practice if needed
- **Remain in choice**
 - Adjust guidance as needed
- **Proceed gently**
 - There's not a right/wrong way to feel as you practice
 - Soften expectations on yourself

Empathic Care vs. Empathic Distress



Dowling T. Compassion does not fatigue! Can Vet J. 2018 Jul;59(7):749-750. PMID: 30026620; PMCID: PMC6005077.

STOP Practice

An opportunity to cultivate
mindfulness

Awareness developed by paying attention

- 1) on purpose
- 2) in the present moment
- 3) nonjudgmentally

STOP

PAUSING PRACTICE

S

STOP AND COME
TO STILLNESS

T

TAKE A BREATH

O

OBSERVE
BODY, THOUGHTS,
EMOTIONS

P

PROCEED
“WHAT IS NEEDED
NOW?”



Reflection

What did you notice during that practice?

Were you able to notice body sensations?
Emotions? Thoughts?

How might this practice be beneficial in your
life--personally and professionally?

Self-Compassion Break



**Soothing the stress response
and opening the heart**



Self- COMPASSION



**ANTIDOTE
FOR**

Self-Criticism

Fight

Isolation

Flight

Rumination

Freeze

Self-Compassion Break

SELF-KINDNESS

TREAT OURSELVES WITH KINDNESS, THE SAME AS WE WOULD TREAT A DEAR FRIEND.

“MAY I BE KIND TO MYSELF.”

COMMON HUMANITY

SEE OUR IMPERFECTIONS AND STRESS AS PART OF THE LARGER HUMAN EXPERIENCE.

“I AM NOT ALONE.”

MINDFULNESS

ACKNOWLEDGE THE STRESS--ESPECIALLY WHERE YOU FEEL IT IN YOUR BODY.

“THIS IS HARD. THIS IS STRESSFUL.”



Reflection



What did you notice during that practice?

Which element of self-compassion was most accessible for you? Which was the hardest to access?

How might this practice be beneficial in your life--personally and professionally?

Recommended Applications/ Next Steps



- **Schedule Time & Reminders for Regular, Formal Practice:**
 - STOP Practice
 - Self-Compassion Break
 - Other focused attention, open attention, or compassion practices
- **Self-Monitor when moving into empathic distress, recognize the signs. Then:**
 - Ground into sensations in your own body, recognize yourself distinct from the person in front of you.
 - Offer compassion to yourself (perhaps via self-compassion break), then widen out compassion to the other person.
 - Find your own mantra/lovingkindness phrase/other statement to help you stay open-hearted.

Questions



Closing Practice



Practice Resources

5-Minute Practices

<https://www.dhutah.org/mindfulness/audio-recordings/>

15+ Minute Practices

<https://www.dhutah.org/mindfulness/resources/practices/>



References/ Further Reading

Ashar, Y., Andrews-Hanna, J. R., Dimidjian, S., & Wager, T. D. (2017). Empathic care and distress: Predictive brain markers and dissociable brain systems. *Neuron*, 94(6), 1263–1273. [Empathic Care and Distress: Predictive Brain Markers and Dissociable Brain Systems | Ashar, Y., Andrews-Hanna, J.R., Dimidjian, S., and Wager, T.D. \(2017\)](#)

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Neff, K. (2024, February 23). Exercise 2: Self-compassion break. Self-Compassion. <https://self-compassion.org/exercises/exercise-2-self-compassion-break/>

Neff, K. D., Knox, M. C., Long, P., & Gregory, K. (2020). Caring for others without losing yourself: An adaptation of the Mindful Self-Compassion program for healthcare communities. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 76(9), 1543–1562. [Caring for others without losing yourself: An adaptation of the Mindful Self-Compassion Program for Healthcare Communities | Neff, K.D., Knox, M.C., Long, P., Gregory, K. \(2020\)](#)

Contact

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**Classes Available through the
Davis Mindfulness Center at
Davis Behavioral Health**

www.dbhutah.org/mindfulness

