



CULTIVATING SELF-CARE THROUGH AWARENESS, ASSERTIVENESS, AND ATTACHMENT

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What do you value most in your life?

- *Write it on a sticky note*
- *Divide into groups*
- *Stick notes on wall*
- *Organize by themes*

THE GRANT STUDY

- ▶ Study of Adult Development at Harvard Medical School 1930
- ▶ Harvard & Inner City
- ▶ 75-year longitudinal study

(Stossel, 2013) (Waldinger, 2015)

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2013/05/thanks-mom/309287/>

https://www.ted.com/talks/robert_waldinger_what_makes_a_good_life_lessons_from_the_longest_study_on_happiness?language=en



GRANT STUDY FINDINGS

1) More social connections, happier, healthier, live longer

Loneliness is toxic

2) Quality of close relationships that matters

Most satisfied with relationships at 50 healthiest at age 80.

3) Good relationships don't just protect our bodies, protect our brains.

Memories stay sharper, longer in nurturing, supportive relationships.

“It was the capacity for intimate relationships that predicted flourishing in all aspects of these men’s lives.”

-George Vaillant

(Vaillant, 2012)

7 INGREDIENTS OF EFFECTIVE PSYCHOTHERAPY

1. Focus on affect and expression of **emotion**
2. Exploration of attempts to avoid **distressing thoughts and feelings**
3. Identification of **recurring themes and patterns**
4. Discussion of **past** experience (developmental focus)
5. Focus on **interpersonal relations**
6. Focus on the **therapy relationship**
7. Exploration of **fantasy life**

(Shedler, 2012)

OVERVIEW OF SELF-CARE CONCEPTS IN LITERATURE

Important concepts that have been included are:

- self-care is **deliberate care** performed throughout life by individuals to themselves and to others
- to **promote health** or improve both general health and mental health, and **cope with illness** or disability
- in **collaboration** with healthcare professionals or performed separately.
- includes **social support** and provides the continuity of care necessary to maintain wellbeing

(Godfrey, et al, 2011)

JOB HAZARDS – “HEMORRHAGING OF THE CARING SELF”

1. **Burnout** - difference between what people are and what they have to do. It represents an erosion in values, dignity, spirit, and will —and erosion of the human soul. exhaustion, cynicism, ineffectiveness
2. **Compassion Fatigue** - “the natural consequent behavior and emotion resulting from knowing about a traumatic event experienced by a significant other
3. **Vicarious Trauma** - cumulative effects of working with a traumatized population, interference with therapist’s feelings, cognitions, memories, feelings of safety
4. **Ambiguous Endings** - ending ...without an ending
5. **Professional Uncertainty** - human complexity, competing ways of knowing (empirical research, qualitative interview, clinical experience, wise elders, personal lives)

(Skovholt, T.M. & Rønnestad, M.H., 2003)

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SKOVHOLT RESILIENCY AND SELF-CARE INVENTORY – 4 ASPECTS

- Professional Vitality
- Personal Vitality
- Professional Stress
- Personal Stress

(Skovholt, T. M., & Trotter-Mathison 2014)

Download the test PDF http://www.leadership.umn.edu/news/documents/Gold_ResiliencyInventory.pdf

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Skovholt Practitioner Professional Resiliency and Self-Care Inventory

The purpose of the inventory is to provide self-reflection for practitioners and students in the caring professions. Practitioner here refers to individuals in the caring professions—such as the helping professions, teaching and health care. Examples are psychologist, counselor, social worker, academic advisor, K-12 teacher, college professor, clergy, human resources specialist, physician, registered nurse, dentist and family law attorney.

Questions are addressed to both active practitioners and also students in training programs. There is no total number that is considered best. In fact, some of the questions are not relevant to some professionals or students who fill out this inventory. The inventory is intended to help decrease stress, not increase it!

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The checklist consists of four sub-scales: Professional Vitality, Personal Vitality, Professional Stress and Personal Stress.

1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Undecided, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

Professional Vitality

Circle your Response

1. I find my work as a practitioner or as a student to be meaningful 1 2 3 4 5
2. I view self-care as an ongoing part of my professional work / student life 1 2 3 4 5
3. I am interested in making positive attachments with my
clients /students/patients 1 2 3 4 5
4. I have the energy to make these positive attachments with my
clients /students/patients 1 2 3 4 5
5. The director / chair at my site / school is dedicated to practitioner welfare 1 2 3 4 5
6. On the dimension of control of my work / schooling, I am closer to
high control than low control 1 2 3 4 5
7. On the dimension of demands at my work/ schooling, I have
reasonable demands rather than excessive demands from others 1 2 3 4 5
8. My work environment is like a greenhouse—where everything grows—because
the conditions are such that I feel supported in my professional work 1 2 3 4 5

Subscale Score for Professional Vitality (Possible score is 8-40) _____

Personal Vitality

9. I have plenty of humor and laughter in my life.....1 2 3 4 5
10. I have a strong code of values / ethics that gives me a sense of
direction and integrity..... 1 2 3 4 5
11. I feel loved by intimate others.....1 2 3 4 5
12. I have positive /close friendships.....1 2 3 4 5
13. I am physically active and receive the benefits of exercise 1 2 3 4 5
14. My financial life (expenses, savings and spending) is in balance.....1 2 3 4 5
15. I have lots of fun in my life..... 1 2 3 4 5
16. I have one or more abundant sources of high energy for my life.
(examples—other people, pleasurable hobby, enjoyable pet, the natural
world, a favorite activity)..... 1 2 3 4 5
17. To balance the ambiguity of work in the caring professions, I have some concrete
activities in my life that I enjoy where results are clear cut (e.g. a rock
collection, painting walls, growing tomatoes, washing the car) 1 2 3 4 5
18. My eating habits are good for my body.....1 2 3 4 5
19. My sleep pattern is restorative.....1 2 3 4 5

Subscale Score for Personal Vitality (Possible score is 10-55) _____

Professional Stress

20. There are many contradictory messages about both practicing
self-care and meeting expectations of being a highly competent
practitioner / student. I am working to find a way through
these contradictory messages. 1 2 3 4 5
21. Overall, I have been able to find a satisfactory level of "bounded generosity"
(defined as having both limits and giving of oneself) in my work with
clients / students / patients 1 2 3 4 5

22. Witnessing human suffering is central in the caring professions
(e.g. client grief, student failure, patient physical pain). I am able to be
very present to this suffering, but not be overwhelmed by it or experience
too much of what is called 'sadness of the soul.'1 2 3 4 5
23. I have found a way to have high standards for my work yet avoid
unreachable perfectionism. 1 2 3 4 5
24. My work is intrinsically pleasurable most of the time..... 1 2 3 4 5
25. Although judging success in the caring professions is often
confusing, I have been able to find useful ways to judge my own
professional success.....1 2 3 4 5
26. I have at least one very positive relationship with a clinical supervisor /
mentor / teacher. 1 2 3 4 5
27. I am excited to learn new ideas—methods—theories—techniques in
my field.....1 2 3 4 5
28. The level of conflict between staff / faculty at my organization is low..... 1 2 3 4 5
- Subscale Score for Professional Stress (Possible score is 8-40) _____**

Personal Stress

29. There are different ways that I can get away from stress and relax
(examples-- TV, meditating, reading for fun, watching sports)..... 1 2 3 4 5
30. My personal life does not have an excessive number of one-way caring
relationships where I am the caring one..... 1 2 3 4 5
31. My level of physical pain / disability is tolerable.....1 2 3 4 5
32. My family relations are satisfying..... 1 2 3 4 5
33. I derive strength from my religious /spiritual practices and beliefs 1 2 3 4 5
34. I am not facing major betrayal in my personal life.....1 2 3 4 5
35. I have a supportive community where I feel connected.....1 2 3 4 5
36. I am able to cope with significant losses in my life..... 1 2 3 4 5
37. I have time for reflective activities such as journaling-expressive writing
or solitude.....1 2 3 4 5

or solitude1 2 3 4 5

38. When I feel the need, I am able to get help for myself1 2 3 4 5

Subscale Score for Personal Stress (Possible score is 10-50) _____

Total Score for the Four Subscales (Possible score is 38-195) _____

There are a total of 38 questions in the Skovholt Professional Resiliency and Self-Care Inventory. All are scored in a positive direction with 0 low and 5 high. As stated earlier, the scoring system is a method for self-reflection by practitioners and students in the caring professions. There is no total number that is considered best. In fact, some of the questions are not relevant to some professionals or students who fill out this inventory. The inventory is intended to help decrease stress, not increase it!

As a way to consider professional resiliency and self-care in your career work, consider these questions. First, scan the questions and focus on your high answers, those with 4 and 5 responses. What do you conclude? Write here.

Then focus on your low answers, those with 1 and 2 responses. What do you conclude? Write here.

Then look across the four categories of Professional Vitality, Personal Vitality, Professional Stress and Personal Stress. Are they in balance? If not in balance, what remedies could you consider? Write here.

Finally, consider the different topics covered in the inventory, your answers and the comments you made for future self-reflection, clinical supervision and discussion with others. Best wishes!

Tom Skovholt

5 SKILLS TO CULTIVATE SELF-CARE & SECURE RELATIONSHIPS

1. Self-Reflection
 - Clarity
2. Self-Awareness
 - Confidence
3. Self-Soothing
 - Calmness
4. Self-Expression
 - Connection
5. Self-Expansion
 - Compassion



1) SELF-REFLECTION

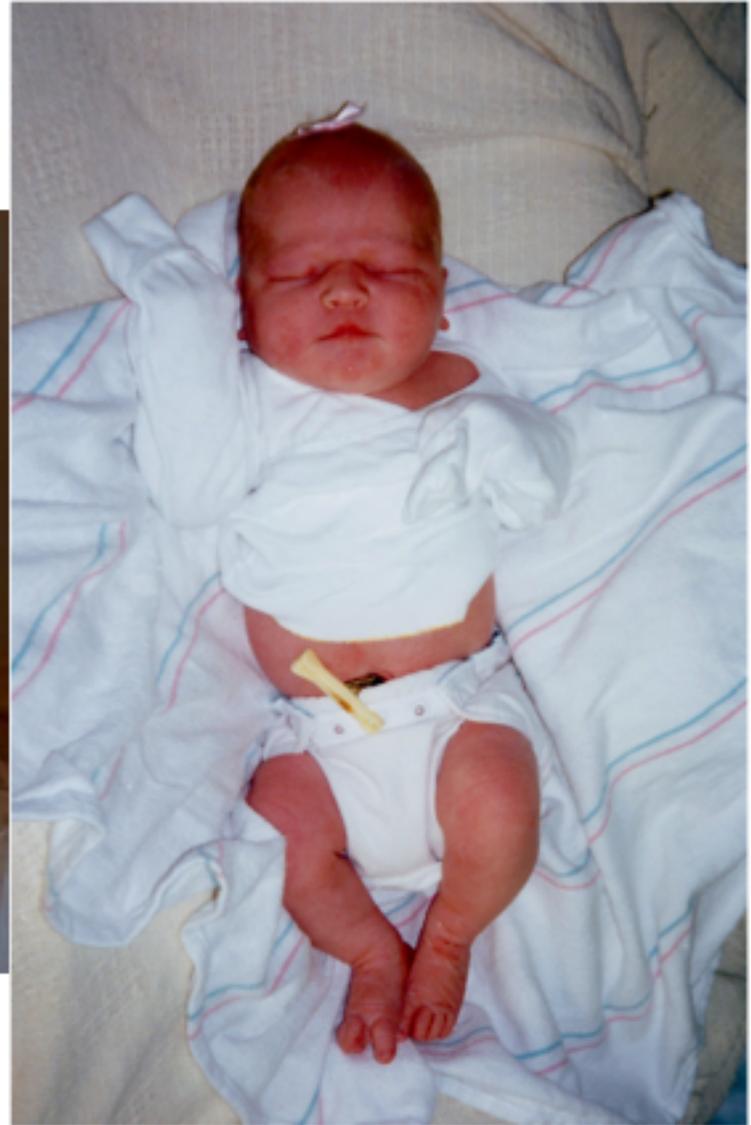
Attachment Style, Differentiation Level, Family Relationships, Personal Trauma



“

The quality of the helping relationship, or therapeutic alliance, is the **most important** factor in client outcomes.

(Lambert & Barley, 2001; Horvath & Symonds, 1991)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kZW8e79Bm0>

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ATTACHMENT THEORY

- John Bowlby (1958) humans innate physiological need to form an emotional bond with caregivers and that having a strong bond is crucial to healthy development.
- Mary Ainsworth (1979) “**The Strange Situation,**”
 - a structured way to observe the attachment relationships between a caregiver and child at twelve months old. Patterns emerged:
 - **Secure (60%)**: distress when separated from caregiver, joy upon reunification with caregiver, ability to be close to others, trusting of others to meet needs
 - **Anxious (20%)**: distraught upon separation, difficult to soothe upon reunification, clingy and overwhelmed
 - **Avoidant (20%)**: minimal distress upon separation, does not seek contact when the caregiver returns
 - **(Disorganized - no coherent attachment strategy)**

ATTACHMENT STYLES

- *Adaptive strategies* developed to *maintain connection* with caregivers.
- *Adaptive strategies* to *manage emotions* and attachment needs.



DIFFERENTIATION OF SELF

.....

- ▶ Ability to be a unique individuals *and* closely connected to others.
- ▶ Our ability to navigate the tension between our desire for individuality and our desire for connection through relationships is called *differentiation*.

“ Our attachment style impacts our relationship, our response to client’s trauma, and our own self-care practices.

“ Differentiation of self is crucial when working with clients who have experienced trauma.

The ability to form **healthy attachment** without becoming overwhelmed or detaching is a critical aspect of self-care.

ANXIOUS ATTACHMENT STYLE

➤ General Patterns

- Seeks more closeness in relationships than others
- Worries about being rejected, not measuring up, abandoned
- Easily overwhelmed by intense emotions
- Difficulty separating thoughts and feelings
- Low differentiation level

WHAT'S YOUR ADULT ATTACHMENT STYLE?

Which of the following best describes you?

Type 1

I often seek out approval from other people.

I worry about my loved ones when we are physically apart.

I worry that my intensity will unintentionally push people away.

I usually want to be closer to my friends, family, and lover than they want to be to me.

Type 2

I need space in my relationships, especially with intimate partners.

I feel best about myself when I'm independent and autonomous.

I have been called "level-headed" one in my relationships

I often wonder why other people get so upset about trivial things.

I tend to let things "roll off of my back."

Type 3

I like being with friends and family and also spending quiet time alone.

I don't worry much about my loved ones when we're apart.

I feel things deeply, but I rarely "lose my cool."

Most of the time, I am aware of what I am feeling inside.

AVOIDANT ATTACHMENT STYLE

- **General Patterns:**
 - Discomfort becoming too emotionally close to others
 - Feels content interacting on a surface level
 - “Level-headed”, Let’s things “roll of his/her back”
 - Difficulty experiencing and connecting to emotions
 - Is often unaware of feelings and thoughts
 - Low differentiation level

SECURE ATTACHMENT STYLE

- **General patterns:**
 - Can form close relationships and is comfortable spending time alone
 - Effectively able to manage emotions and reach out for help
 - Can differentiate thoughts and feelings
 - Can identify and assert feelings, thoughts, needs and wants
 - High differentiation level

ATTACHMENT STYLES, BURNOUT AND SELF-CARE

➤ **Anxious**

- May emotionally overwhelm partner or colleagues
- May become preoccupied with client's needs / low differentiation
- Easily overwhelmed by feelings, thoughts, needs, wants
- Feels powerless, unable to take action toward self-care

➤ **Avoidant**

- May withdraw from close relationships
- Disconnect from client when trauma, difficulties emerge / low differentiation
- Detached from own feelings thought, needs, wants
- Minimizes need for self-care

➤ **Secure**

- High differentiation allows for closeness *and* healthy working distance
- Ability to share burnout with loved ones and able to self-soothe
- Able to identify feelings, thoughts, needs, wants
- Able to ask for emotional support and practice self-care strategies

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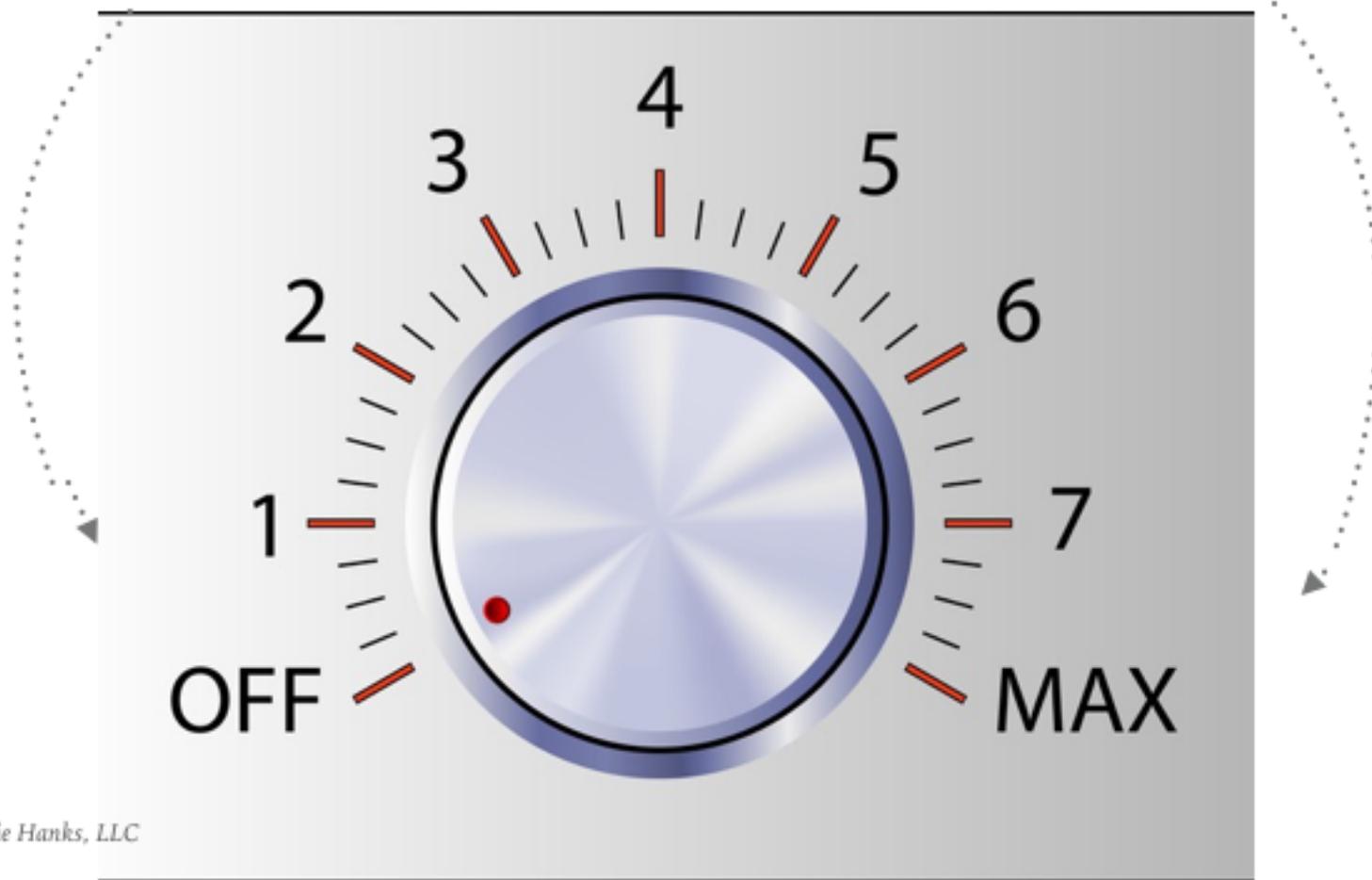
Turn it down

AVOIDANT

SECURE

Turn it up

ANXIOUS



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What is my general attachment style?

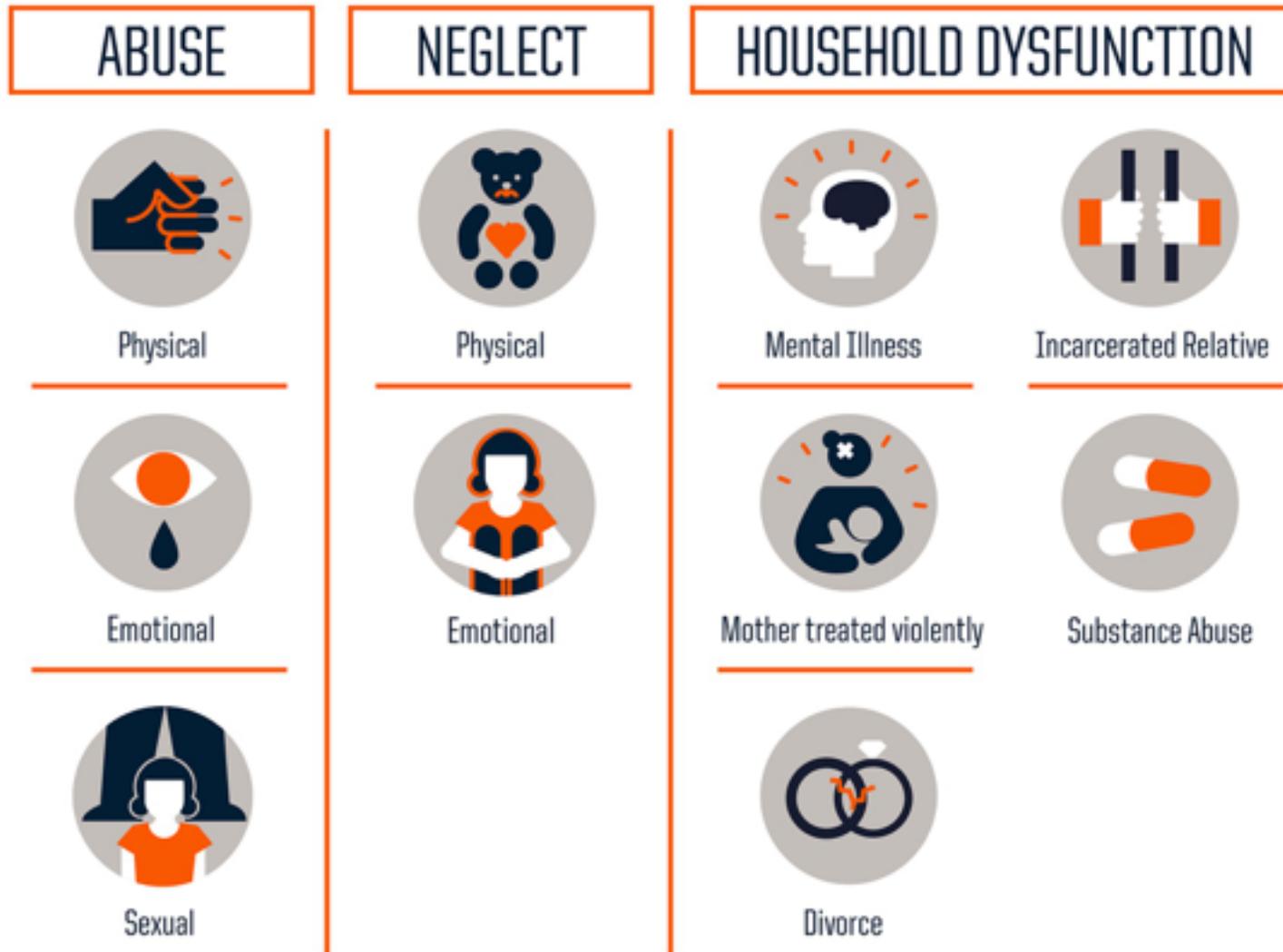
How does it impact my therapeutic alliance?

How does it impact my personal relationships?

How does it impact my self-care practices?

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YOUR HISTORY – ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/ Credit: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation <http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2015/03/02/387007941/take-the-ace-quiz-and-learn-what-it-does-and-doesnt-mean>

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THERAPIST'S CHILDHOOD TRAUMA

- **Study of psychologists**
 - 70% of female psychologists reported history of childhood physical or sexual abuse as children
 - 33% of male psychologists reported history of childhood physical or sexual abuse as children
 - More than 1/3 of experienced some form of abuse as adults
- **Female mental health professionals** (compared to other professionals) reported:
 - greater histories of childhood abuse
 - more parental alcoholism
 - more dysfunction in their family of origin
 - more likely to have experienced the death of a family member
 - more likely to have experience psychiatric hospitalization of a parent.

(Barnett, J. E., Baker, E. K., Elman, N. S., & Schoener, G. R., 2007).

SELF-REFLECTION —> SELF-CARE ACTIONS

- Understand attachment style and differentiation level
- Resolve own trauma and attachment wounds
- Prioritize close relationships
- Psychotherapy, family therapy, support groups

SUMMARY

1) SELF-REFLECTION

Develops Clarity

An understanding of your **attachment style**, **differentiation level**, and **relationship patterns** develops a sense of **clarity** about your own development and how your past effects quality of relationships and your ability to practice self-care.

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SELF-REFLECTION

Develops clarity

The result of self-reflection is a sense of *clarity* about your own development, your relationship patterns, and how your past is impacting your ability to practice self-care.



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2) SELF-AWARENESS

What do I think, feel, want, need?

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IDENTIFYING RELATIONSHIP & SELF-CARE NEEDS



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WHAT ARE MY...

.....

Feelings?

Thoughts?



Needs?

Wants?

EMOTIONS ARE INFORMATION

EMOTIONS = ENERGY IN MOTION

BASIC 6 EMOTIONS

Happy

Mad

Sad

Scared

Surprise

Disgust

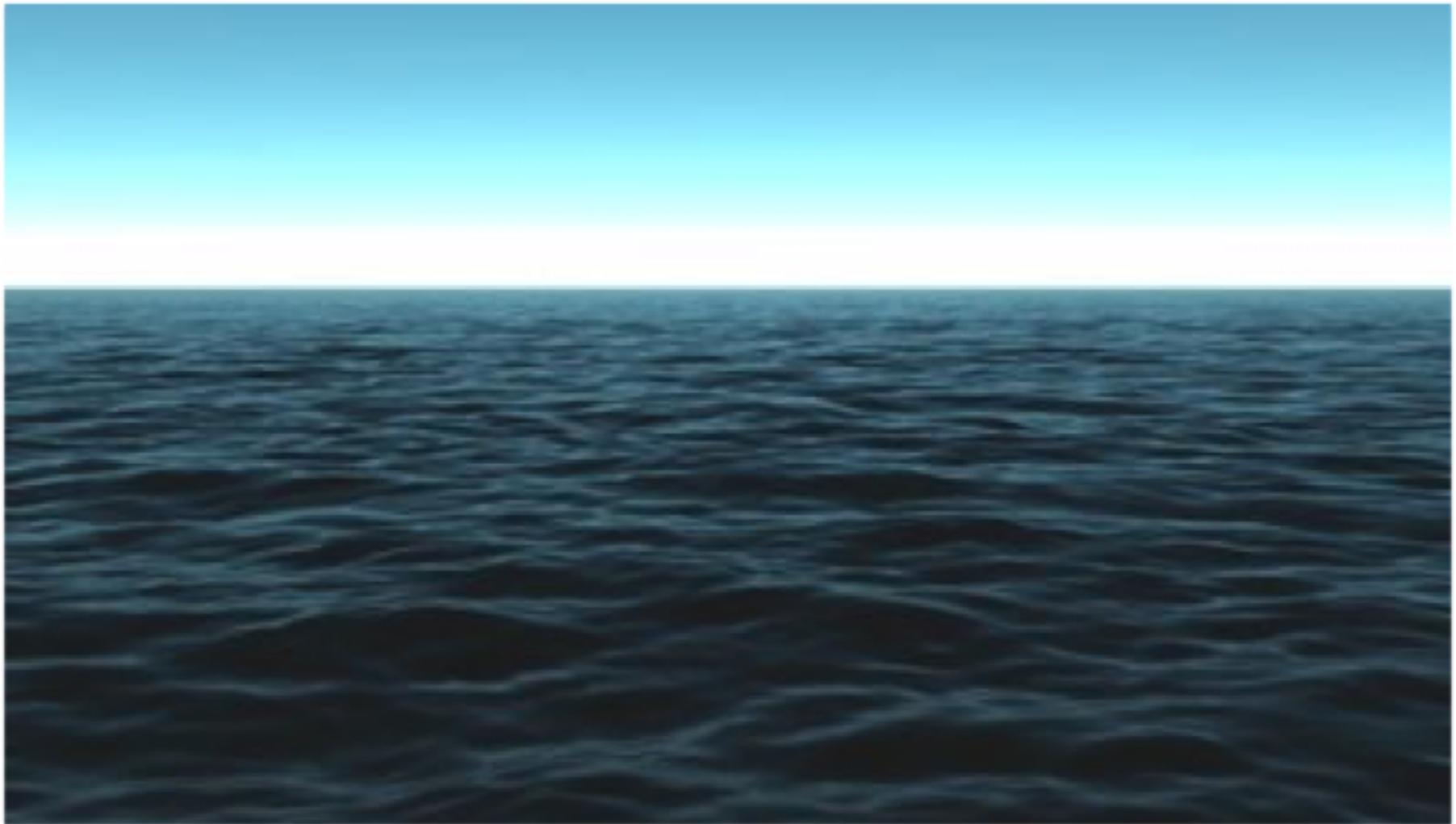
“NAME IT TO TAME IT” DANIEL SIEGEL MD



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EMOTION OCEAN

and the messy room



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VULNERABLE EMOTIONS



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What are barriers to identify
your relational and self-care
needs and wants?

SUMMARY

SELF-AWARENESS

Develops Confidence

An awareness of your **feelings, thoughts, needs, and wants** resulting in a sense of *confidence* about what you need to express, ask for, and identify areas of self-care.

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SELF-AWARENESS —> SELF-CARE ACTIONS

- ▶ Daily check in...
 - ▶ feelings
 - ▶ thoughts
 - ▶ needs
 - ▶ wants



3) SELF-SOOTHING

.....
*Mindfulness, Emotional Connection, and Emotional
Management*

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“

“Mindfulness means **paying attention** in a particular way; **on purpose**, in the **present** moment, and **nonjudgmentally**.”

-Jon Kabat-Zinn (1994)

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HOW MINDFULNESS PRACTICE CAN HELP

➤ **Anxious**

- “turn down the emotional volume”
- manage overwhelming emotions
- tolerate the anxiety and soothe your own emotions

➤ **Avoidant**

- “turn up the emotional volume”
- connect with detached emotions
- acknowledge attachment needs
- ask for support to soothe emotions

➤ **Secure**

- Soothe painful emotions
- Identify needs and wants
- Self-awareness

RAIN

“R” is to recognize when a strong emotion is present

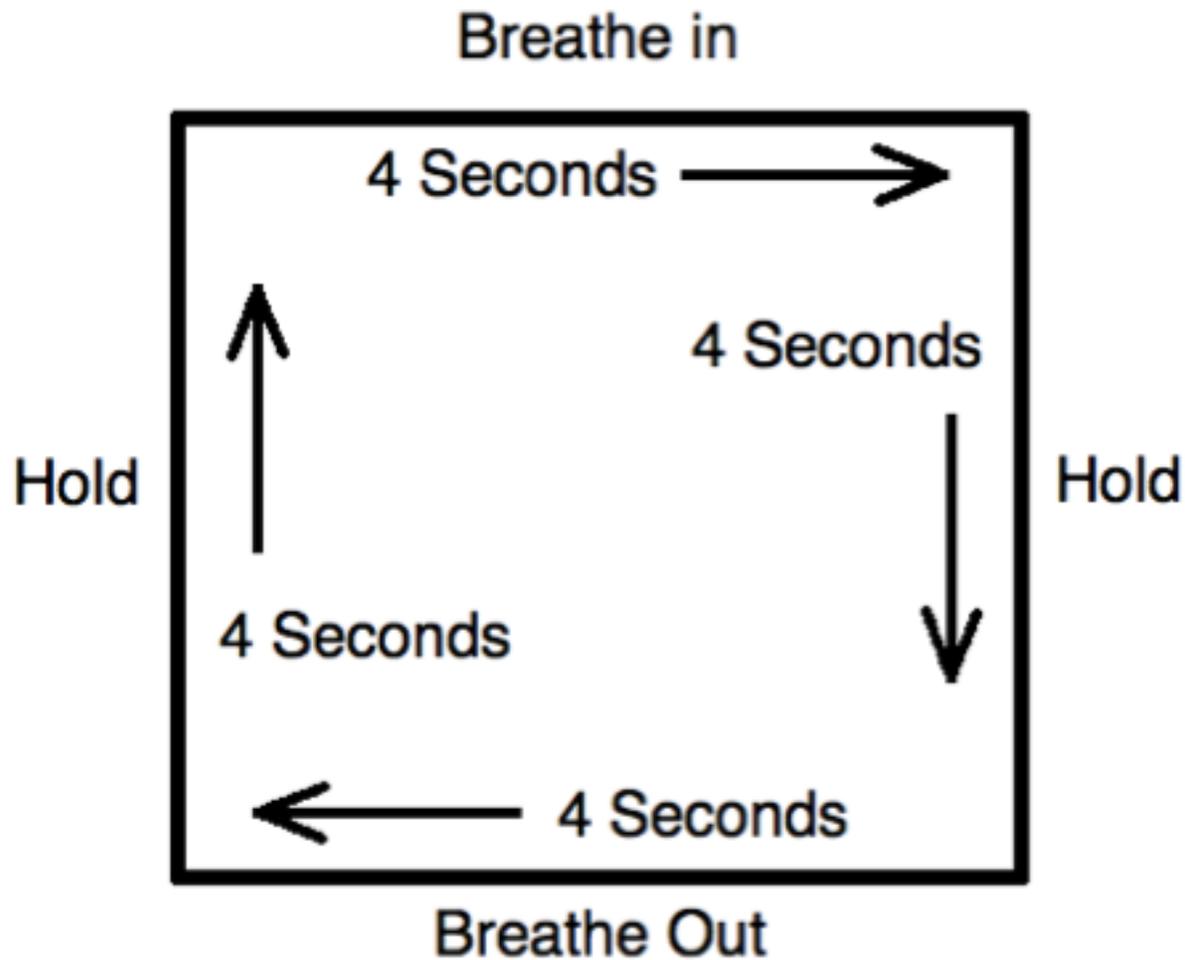
“A” is to allow or acknowledge that it is indeed there

“I” is to investigate and bring self-inquiry to the body, feelings, and mind

“N” is to non-identify with what’s there

(Goldstein, E. 2009)

BOX BREATHING



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SELF-ESTEEM VS. SELF-COMPASSION SMACK DOWN



.....
SELF-COMPASSION WINS!

- Self-esteem is a cognitive evaluation of any given part of yourself or your life.
- Self-compassion is based on how you respond to your own suffering.

PRACTICE SELF-COMPASSION

- **3 Components of Self-Compassion**
 - Common suffering
 - Mindfulness
 - Self-kindness

(Neff, Kristin D., and R. Vonk. 2009, Neff, Kristin. 2011)

SUMMARY

3) SELF-SOOTHING

Develops Calmness

When you can **connect to your emotions** without becoming overwhelmed by them or detaching from them you develop a sense of *calmness*, which allows you to clearly assert your feelings, thoughts, needs, wants.

SELF-SOOTHING —> SELF-CARE ACTIONS

- Practice mindfulness
 - anxious —> manage emotions
 - avoidant —> experience emotions
- Practice self-compassion
 - How would I respond if someone else was suffering?



4) SELF-EXPRESSION

Effective interpersonal communication

Doormat, Sword, Lantern & setting healthy boundaries

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DOORMAT STANCE

.....

- Run over by others or by own emotions
- Fear of disappointing others
- Attempt to maintain relationships by pleasing others
- Passive
- Payoff is not taking responsibility
- Anxious - Overwhelmed by emotions, pleaser
- Avoidant - Disconnected or cut off from your emotions
“whatever”

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SWORD STANCE

- ▶ Temporarily powerful
- ▶ May sense that your self-worth is threatened and that you aren't emotionally safe.
- ▶ Protect your *primary* emotions (fear, sadness, vulnerability, loneliness)
- ▶ Pushes people away and creates disconnection
- ▶ Hidden Sword Stance (passive aggressive)
- ▶ Anxious - Overwhelmed with difficulty distinguishing thoughts and feelings
- ▶ Avoidant - Protection from awareness of and access to vulnerable emotions

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LANTERN STANCE

.....

- Assertive approach to communication
- emotional awareness and are already able to distinguish your thoughts from your feelings.
- Observe / narrate
- Hold space for differences
- Soft start (Gottman)
- Integration and application of all five skills:
 - self-reflection
 - self-awareness
 - self-soothing
 - self-expression
 - self-expansion

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Burnout, compassion fatigue,
vicarious trauma, ambiguous
endings, and professional uncertainty
lead to *doormat* or *sword* stance.

Lantern Stance is the goal.

.....



PERSONAL EXAMPLE – SAYING NO DIRECT CLINICAL PRACTICE

- Dec. 2014
- Preparing to defend doctoral dissertation
- Fatigue, lack of vitality about my clinical work
- More energized about writing, media, speaking, e-courses, mentoring, and research
- Took me 6 months to get up courage to talk to clients
 - Guilt
 - Balance self and other / attachment and differentiation

WAYS TO SAY NO – FUNDAMENTAL BOUNDARY

- “No.” (no is a complete sentence)
- “That’s just not going to work for me.”
- “I can’t give you an answer right now, will you check back with me?”
- “I want to, but I’m unable to.”
- “I’m not able to commit to that right now.”
- “I really appreciate you asking me, but I can’t do it.”
- “I understand you really need my help, but I’m just not able to say yes to that.”
- “I’m going to say no for now. I’ll let you know if something changes.”
- “I’m honored that you would ask me, but my answer is no.”
- “No, I can’t do that, but here’s what I *can* do...”
- “I just don’t have that to give right now” (Hanks, 2013)



What brought you joy as a child?
How can you incorporate that
activity into your life?

“

It is essential to our well-being, and to our lives, that we play and enjoy life. **Every single day do something that makes your heart sing.**

-Marcia Wieder

(Weider, 1999)



JOY



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SELF-EXPRESSION —> SELF-CARE ACTIONS

- Based on information your feelings thoughts, needs, and wants ask for support
- Pay attention to stress, burnout, vicarious trauma, ambiguous endings, professional uncertainty
 - Ask for professional consultation
 - Ask for personal support and comfort
- Notice communication stances
 - Practice lantern stance
- Give yourself permission to say “no”
- Cultivate joy

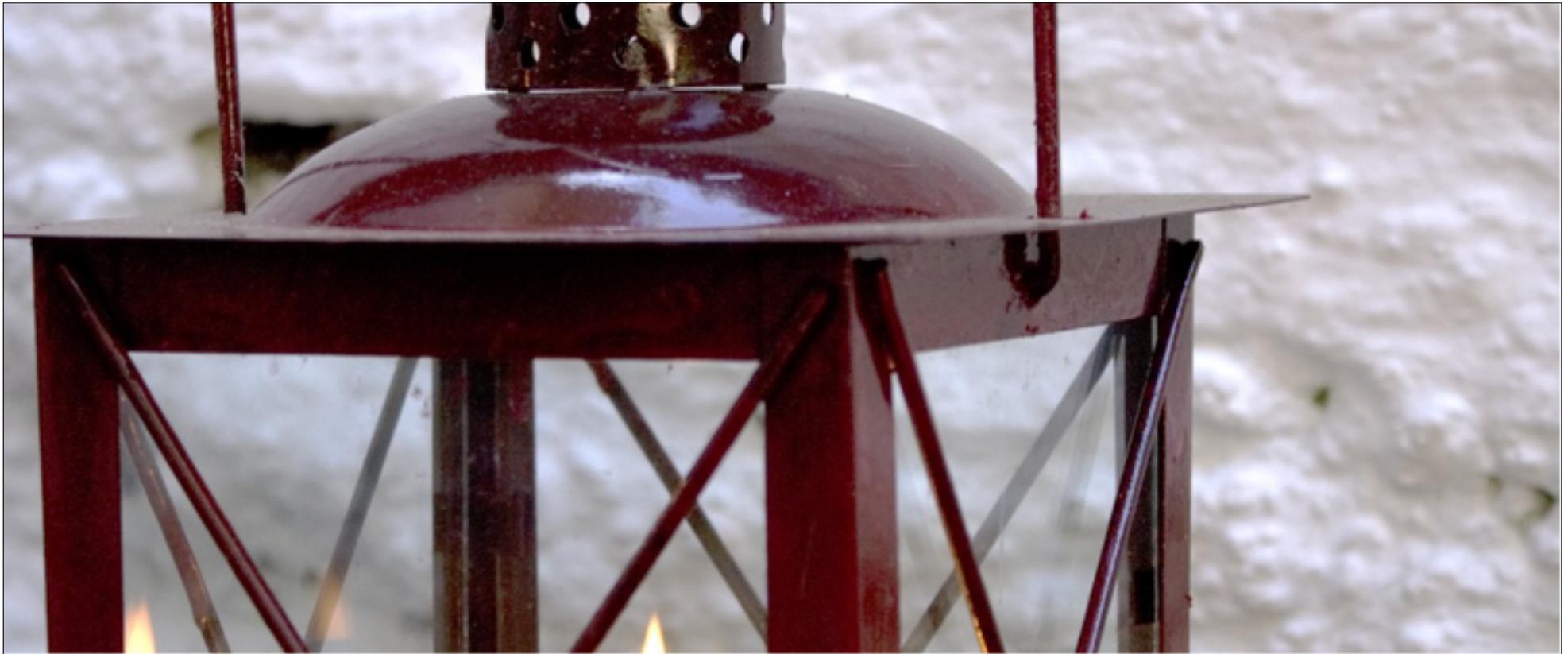
SUMMARY

4) SELF-EXPRESSION

Develops Connection

Say and do what you need to do to **care for self** and be more **available to other relationships**.

Communicating your feelings, thoughts, needs, and wants clearly to others and a willingness to take action leads to a stronger and deeper **connection** with yourself and others.



5) SELF-EXPANSION

*“Holding space” for another’s point of view
Promote growth and develop compassion*

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SELF-EXPANSION GROWS COMPASSION

This is self-expansion—an awareness of others' experiences, a willingness to feel *with* them, to be changed by them, and be moved by them in a way that inspires you to do something to ease *their* pain.

When we bring our aware, attached, assertive selves to our work we are transformed.

Who is the healer in the therapeutic relationship?

Working with clients who've experienced trauma provides opportunity to develop deep compassion...

as long as it is **balanced by nurturing relationships and self-care.**



How has your trauma work expanded your thinking and emotions?

How has your work expanded your view of the world?

5 SKILLS OF ASSERTIVE SELF-CARE

1. **Self-Reflection** ➤ Clarity
2. **Self-Awareness** ➤ Confidence
3. **Self-Soothing** ➤ Calmness
4. **Self-Expression** ➤ Connection
5. **Self-Expansion** ➤ Compassion

SELF-EXPANSION —> SELF-CARE ACTIONS

Practice these 5 skills to increase **awareness**, use **assertiveness**, and develop secure **attachments**

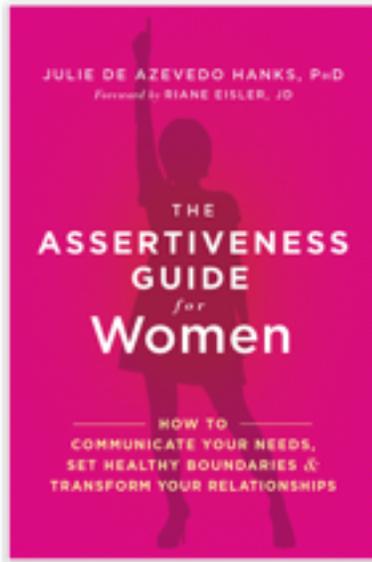
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4. **Self-Expression** ➤ Connection
5. **Self-Expansion** ➤ Compassion

SUMMARY

5) SELF-EXPANSION

Develops Compassion

The openness to another's point of view as being valid, the willingness to "hold space" for differences, and the desire to grow through your relationships. The practice of hearing and valuing another's experience leads to deeper feelings of *compassion* for another's experience.



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