



COMPASSION RESILIENCE Caregiver Resource Guide

The content in this guide is taken from the Compassion Resilience Parent and Caregiver Toolkit.





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Introduction to the Caregiver Resource Guide

Have you ever felt drained or notice it to be hard to find joy in your role as a caregiver? All caregivers experience these challenges. This resource guide is designed to help build your compassion resilience – your ability to maintain your physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing while responding compassionately to people who need your help. The eight sections of this guide include activities to build your wellbeing as a caregiver, including focus on self-compassion, exercises to identify what positively contributes to your wellbeing and what drains it, and opportunities to explore what is within your control and how to let go of things that are not. This resource guide also addresses the needs of those you care for by exploring the following: (1) temperament and its impact on your expectations of others; (2) expectations and boundaries that help to establish a consistent compassionate environment; (3) values and the importance of instilling them within the family to build a caring culture; (4) how to model, teach, correct, and develop compassionate behaviors; and (5) our response to behaviors our children and loved ones exhibit.

Each section has an introduction insert that provides you with an outline of what you can expect to gain from the activities provided. There are journaling opportunities throughout the resource guide to reference after you have finished an exercise as reminders of the strategies covered in the resource guide. Once you have finished each section, there will be a place to create a plan to put action behind the work you have done. This provides you with an opportunity to work towards the goal you have for that specific section or the overall resource guide.

The toolkit was adapted by the schools and health and human services toolkits after both toolkits were piloted in the community and the idea of a caregiver toolkit formed to help support parents and others in a caregiving role. We hope you enjoy the resource guide and the journey it takes you on.



Section One: Why We Gather and Where We Are Headed

Section one provides activities on values, including identifying your values, reflecting on why they are important, and identifying who instilled them in your life. This section also highlights self-compassion – how you take care of yourself to be able to care for and support others. It gives you a chance to think about what you need for you and revisit the foundational values received from your family.

ACTIVITY

Looking at the list below, choose the values that are most important to you.

LIST OF VALUES

Accountability	Contentment	Future generations	Justice	Power	Thrift
Achievement	Contribution	Generosity	Kindness	Pride	Time
Adaptability	Cooperation	Giving back	Knowledge	Recognition	Tradition
Adventure	Courage	Grace	Leadership	Reliability	Travel
Altruism	Creativity	Gratitude	Learning	Respect	Trust
Ambition	Dignity	Growth	Legacy	Resourcefulness	Truth
Authenticity	Diversity	Harmony	Leisure	Responsibility	Understanding
Balance	Efficiency	Health	Love	Risk-taking	Uniqueness
Beauty	Environment	Home	Loyalty	Safety	Usefulness
Being the best	Equality	Honesty	Making a difference	Security	Vision
Belonging	Ethics	Hope	Openness	Self-discipline	Vulnerability
Career	Excellence	Humility	Optimism	Self-expression	Wealth
Caring	Fairness	Humor	Order	Self-respect	Wellbeing
Collaboration	Faith	Inclusion	Nature	Serenity	Wholeheartedness
Commitment	Family	Independence	Parenting	Service	Wisdom
Community	Financial stability	Integrity	Patience	Simplicity	
Compassion	Forgiveness	Initiative	Patriotism	Spirituality	Write your own:
Competence	Freedom	Intuition	Peace	Stewardship	_____
Confidence	Friendship	Job security	Perseverance	Success	_____
Connection	Fun	Joy	Personal fulfillment	Teamwork	_____

1. What are 2-3 values you have for yourself? For your family?

2. Who and/or what influenced these values to be important in your life?

3. How do these values influence your family culture?

Self-Compassion

Dr. Kristen Neff, a pioneer in the study of self-compassion, defines self-compassion as “giving yourself the same compassion you’d naturally show a friend when you’re struggling or feeling badly about yourself. It means being supportive when you’re facing a life challenge, feel inadequate, or make a mistake. Instead of getting carried away by your negative thoughts and emotions, you stop to tell yourself, ‘This is really difficult right now,’ and ask, ‘How can I comfort and care for myself in this moment?’ But most importantly, having compassion for yourself means that you honor and accept your humanness.”*

Dr. Kristen Neff developed the Self-Compassion Scale for people to explore their strengths and areas for growth regarding self-compassion. Reflect on the questions on the next page to explore how self-compassion is used in your life.

What is Self-Compassion



Self-Kindness

Be loving towards ourselves instead of self-critical.



Common Humanity

Everyone suffers. You are not perfect. No one is. You are not alone.



Mindfulness

Notice our struggle. Feel it, instead of being reactive. Be with it, avoiding self-judgement or overreaction.

* Neff, Dr. K. (2024, August 20). *What is self-compassion?*
<https://self-compassion.org/what-is-self-compassion/#what-is-self-compassion>

Self-Compassion Scale

Used in this toolkit with permission from Dr. Kristin Neff

Please read each statement below carefully before answering. To the right of each item, indicate how often you behave in the stated manner. You can also [take this self-scale online](#). The online version will score the assessment for you.

Almost never	1	2	3	4	5	Almost always
	1. I'm disapproving and judgemental about my own flaws and inadequacies. _____					
	2. When I'm feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong. _____					
	3. When things are going badly for me, I see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through. _____					
	4. When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world. _____					
	5. I try to be loving towards myself when I'm feeling emotional pain. _____					
	6. When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy. _____					
	7. When I'm down and out, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like I am. _____					
	8. When times are really difficult, I tend to be tough on myself. _____					
	9. When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance. _____					
	10. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people. _____					
	11. I'm intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like. _____					
	12. When I'm going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need. _____					
	13. When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am. _____					
	14. When something painful happens I try to take a balanced view of the situation. _____					
	15. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition. _____					
	16. When I see aspects of myself that I don't like, I get down on myself. _____					
	17. When I fail at something important to me I try to keep things in perspective. _____					
	18. When I'm really struggling, I tend to feel like other people must be having an easier time of it. _____					
	19. I'm kind to myself when I'm experiencing suffering. _____					
	20. When something upsets me I get carried away with my feelings. _____					
	21. I can be a bit cold-hearted towards myself when I'm experiencing suffering. _____					
	22. When I'm feeling down I try to approach my feelings with curiosity and openness. _____					
	23. I'm tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies. _____					
	24. When something painful happens I tend to blow the incident out of proportion. _____					
	25. When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure. _____					
	26. I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like. _____					

Calculating Your Level of Self-Compassion

Please record the score you gave for each item in the scale, and then calculate your Grand Compassion Average as given below:

Self-Kindness (SK) Items:	Self-Judgement (SJ) Items:
#5 _____	#1 _____
#12 _____	#8 _____
#19 _____	#11 _____
#23 _____	#16 _____
#26 _____	#21 _____
SK Subtotal of items: _____	SJ Subtotal of items: _____
SK Average (divide subtotal by 5): _____	SJ Average (divide subtotal by 5): _____
Common Humanity (CH) Items:	Isolation (I) Items:
#3 _____	#4 _____
#7 _____	#13 _____
#10 _____	#18 _____
#15 _____	#25 _____
CH Subtotal of items: _____	I Subtotal of items: _____
CH Average (divide subtotal by 4): _____	I Average (divide subtotal by 4): _____
Mindfulness (M) Items:	Over-identification (OI) Items:
#9 _____	#2 _____
#14 _____	#6 _____
#17 _____	#20 _____
#22 _____	#24 _____
M Subtotal of items: _____	OI Subtotal of items: _____
M Average (divide subtotal by 4): _____	OI Average (divide subtotal by 4): _____

Total Self-Compassion Score:

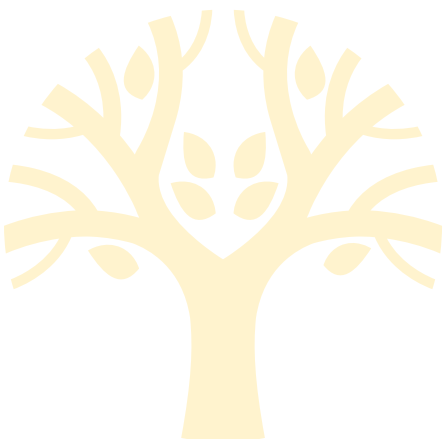
- Reverse-code (rc) the negatively worded subscales (SJ, I, and OI) by subtracting each average from 6.
 $6 - \text{SJ average} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$ $6 - \text{I average} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$ $6 - \text{OI average} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$
- Add the six averages: SK _____ + SJ (rc) _____ + CH _____ + I (rc) _____ + M _____ + OI (rc) _____ = _____
- Calculate Grand Self-Compassion Average (total average divided by 6) = _____



WHAT DOES YOUR SCORE MEAN?

Average scores tend to be around 3.0 on the 1–5 scale, so you can interpret your total self-compassion score accordingly. As a rough guide, a score of 1–2.5 indicates you are low in self-compassion, 2.5–3.5 indicates you are moderate, and 3.5–5.0 means you are high.

After completing the Self-Compassion Scale and reviewing your results,” what is there to celebrate, about how you use self-compassion in your life? What is one area of self-compassion you’d like to work on in the next two weeks?



Section Two: Compassion in Action

Section two focuses on how you show up and support your loved ones and yourself. Compassion is the combination of the awareness of others' distress and a desire to remove it, and is a basic quality needed to be able to meet the needs of those we care for.

The Compassion Action Steps help you, as a caregiver, decide if you have the capacity to show up for others in a compassionate way. These action steps require you to take a journey with someone. You support them in discovering the wisdom within themselves to come to a solution to a challenge they are facing. There are moments of pause for you to check-in with yourself throughout the process. These pauses provide a chance to put aside any judgements you may have and direct your full attention to the person in need. During these reminders to pause, you may realize you are not able to be mentally present for the person you are supporting. If that is the case, it may be more compassionate to both the person you are supporting and yourself if you let the person know you are not available at that time.

Within section two, you will have the opportunity to identify what keeps you calm when challenges arise. You will also look at emotional regulation plans for those you support that help them regulate their feelings and emotions when they are struggling. A mindfulness practice is also included in this section to help you generate compassion for others when it otherwise feels out of reach.

Compassionate Action Steps

With the compassionate action steps, the goal is to be able to lessen your loved one's distress while maintaining your wellbeing. You cannot "fix" another person's pain, however, you can find ways to support a person to navigate their way to a solution. As you walk through the visual, think of how you can use this for someone you love or work with and/or how this can be beneficial to you when you are facing a tough situation.

NOTICE – Be present in the moment and recognize signs of distress in people around us.

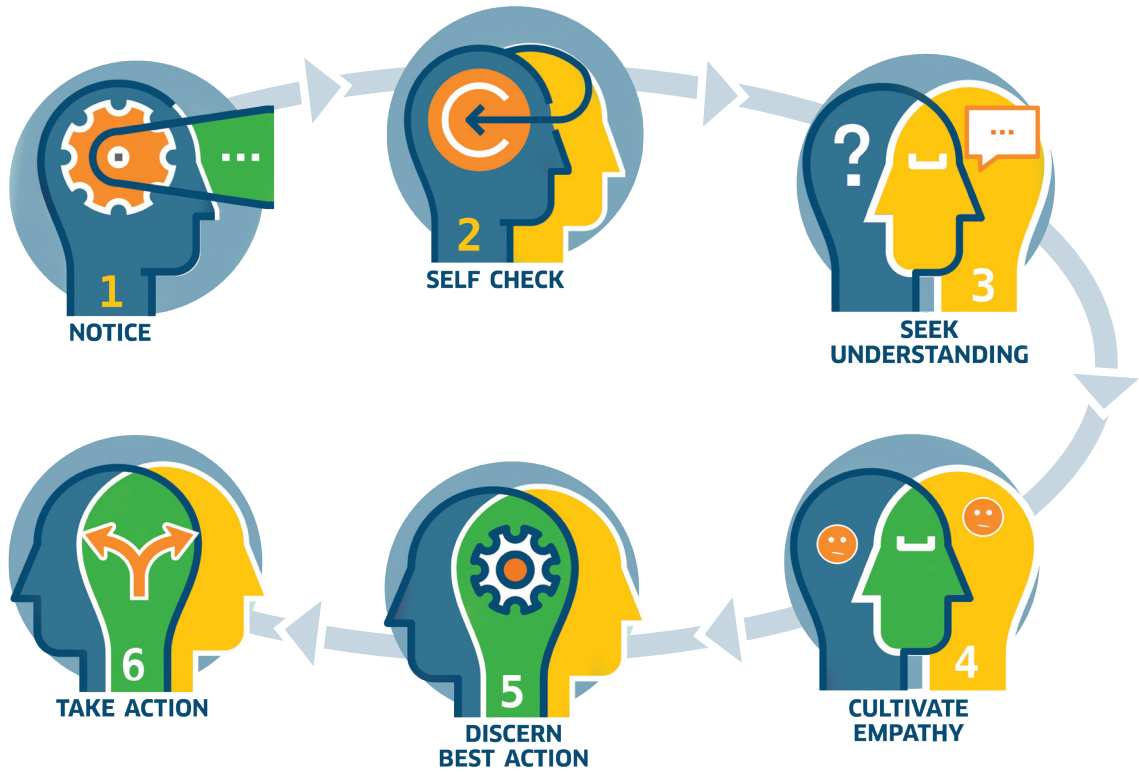
SELF CHECK – Be aware of how our biases and past experiences form emotions and judgements related to the other person in the moment. Also, check in with yourself; do you have the capacity to support the person you are caring for in tapping into their wisdom without overwhelming yourself? What do you need to do to settle your body in order to be mentally present for the person you are supporting?

SEEK UNDERSTANDING – Listen with curiosity to understand the other's perspective. What strengths and feelings/emotions are you able to hear in their share? Simply listen to understand and do not provide advice.

INCREASE EMPATHY – Understand that we don't have the same experiences, but we are able to relate to similar feelings of others. Empathy grows when we move away from judgement and move towards understanding others through connection.

DISCERN BEST ACTION – Support the person to decide what would be helpful to them in the present and future. Avoid being quick to offer advice or "fix" the situation once a connection through feelings is made. Ask for the person's permission before giving a suggestion. Asking "how can I help you in this moment" may be helpful.

TAKE ACTION – Do what you promise and do not promise what you cannot do. Agree to actions that you can fulfill, and that the person believes will be helpful to them. If supporting this person was stressful to you, take time to release that stress after the conversation. Not taking time to release the stress will negatively impact your wellbeing and your future interactions with others. Consider activities such as physical movement, breathing exercises, singing, meditation, or dancing.



ACTIVITY

1. When is a time someone has shown you compassion?

2. When is a time you've shown compassion to others?

(continued)



ACTIVITY *(continued)*

3. It can be tempting to take on more than you can handle when you see someone in pain. Don't forget, taking care of yourself is an important part of the process. What are feelings and thoughts that came out for you in both situations?

4. What wellness practice can you include in these steps for yourself?

5. What step from the Compassionate Action Steps is easiest for you? Which one is the hardest?

6. How can you see using these steps with someone you care for when they are in need of support?

Moving from Empathy to Discern Best Action

Empathy is the ability to relate and connect with a person through the feelings and emotions they are expressing. Listening and sitting without judgement are examples of empathy. Moving to discerning best action in the compassionate action steps, is taking the empathy you have for the person and allowing them to come to a solution on their own, while asking what support they may need. Asking what support they may need, or using one of the prompts below, allows you to refrain from jumping to problem solving or offering advice without permission.

1. Focus on the moment and what's manageable:

- a. "What seems like the next best step for you to do?"
- b. "What feels doable right now?"
- c. "How can I/we be helpful to you, right now?"

2. Listen for and reconnect them to their strengths to open their minds to solutions:

- a. "I heard your frustration and anger. I also saw your strength. You seem to have some ideas about what you'd like to do about this."
- b. "Who helps you see your strengths?"

3. Focus on the recent past, when the challenge was not a barrier for them:

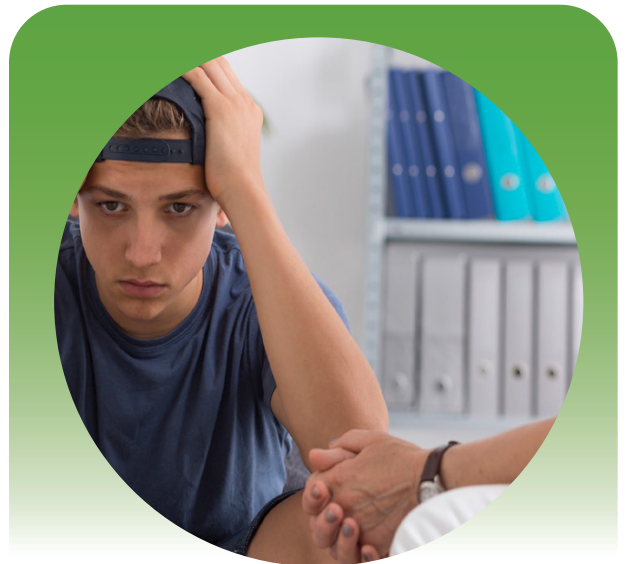
- a. "I noticed recently that you were able to ____ (feel or act in a certain way). What was different about that time?"
- b. "Sounds like this has come up for you in the past. Is there anything about how you dealt with it then that would be helpful to remember now?"
- c. "When you felt this in the past, what was one of your strengths that allowed you to deal with it?"

4. Change perspective and focus on desire to change:

- a. "What do you see as the benefits of dealing with this challenge?" "What might be the effects if you do not?"
- b. "If you could have a clear head and light heart right now, what do you imagine you would do?"

5. Recognize when the person feels stuck and assist them to think about what it would take to become unstuck: (If you want to offer suggestions, be sure to ask for permission first.)

- a. "You seem stuck right now. Do you need some time before you can think about next steps?"
- b. "Who is 'on your team' that you trust to offer suggestions?"
- c. "You seem a bit stuck when it comes to ideas for what to do next. Would you like me to offer some options to get your own ideas flowing?"
- d. "We both have seen others face similar challenges, would it be helpful to talk about what we remember worked for them?"



ACTIVITY

1. What statements help you to feel supported when dealing with a challenging situation?

2. Choose one statement that you can use in the future to support someone else. Why is it a comfortable statement to use and how do you think it will support the other person?



Strategies to Keep Calm

ACTIVITY

Use the visual below to help you identify what activities help bring you a sense of calm. Write out the activities that help you. Add any other activities you do to increase your sense of calm.





Emotional Regulations Plans

As you look through the emotional regulation plan and begin to think through the questions, write out your reflections and thoughts in the space below.

ACTIVITY: DEVELOPING AN EMOTIONAL REGULATION PLAN

We all experience times when we feel overwhelmed and allow our feelings to control our actions. But to successfully cope with stressful events, we must learn to inhibit some responses while employing other, more positive ones. The ability to identify and name emotions, assess internal strategies and external supports, and act to make our environment safer are key to regulating negative, reactive emotions.

Answer the following questions to lay out what your own emotional regulation plan would look like:

1. When stressful events occur, what emotion(s) do I show that may be of concern or that I wish I had more control over? (e.g., fear, anger, jealousy, sadness, shame, etc.)

2. What do you see as your primary triggers and warning signs of stress? (e.g., not having a say or not being listened to, feeling lonely, feeling pressured, etc.)

3. What might other people notice me doing if I begin to lose control or my emotions? (e.g., pacing, becoming very quiet, being rude, isolating, etc.)

4. What strategies can you (or do you) use to increase your ability to calm and regulate your emotions? (e.g., time to myself, humor, listening to music, talking to others, breathing, etc.)

(continued)

ACTIVITY *(continued)*

5. What things do NOT help you keep calm or regulate your emotions? (e.g., being alone, being around people, not being listened to, etc.)

6. What external social supports are available to you that may help?

Additional Strategies for Emotional Regulation:

One way of regulating our emotions is to manage our self-talk. By asking ourselves new questions we can come up with options when upset. Here's what a balanced conversation may sound like...

- What am I reacting to? What is it that's really pushing my buttons here?
- Am I jumping to conclusions?
- Is there another way of dealing with this?
- Is it fact or opinion?
- Is there a different point of view to see the situation through? Think bigger picture.
- What meaning am I giving this situation?

When feeling particularly overwhelmed or when dealing with intense emotions, try the STOPP technique to help you regulate your emotions and stay calm:

- **Stop.** Don't act immediately – pause for a moment.
- **Take a deep breath.** Notice your breathing as you breathe in and out.
- **Observe.** What am I thinking right now? What is your focus of attention? What are you reacting to? What sensations do you notice in your body?
- **Pull back.** Zoom out. Put in some perspective and ask yourself what is the bigger picture? Is this thought a fact or opinion? What is another way of looking at this situation and/or a more reasonable explanation? How important is this or will it be?
- **Practice your skills.** What is the best thing to do right now (best for me, for others, for the situation)? Do what will be effective and appropriate.



Just Like Me

At times it can be difficult to access compassion for those we care for. This exercise can help you generate some extra compassion for the person you are caring for during challenging times. Take a moment to bring to mind someone with whom feelings of compassion feel out of reach. With your attention geared towards this other person, read through the “Just Like Me” mindfulness practice.

“JUST LIKE ME” MINDFULNESS PRACTICE

Often our compassion resilience relies on our ability to step back from negative encounters. Try this 5-step mindfulness exercise when you are with someone you care for and feelings of compassion seem out of reach. Do it discreetly. With your attention geared towards the other person, tell yourself:

- Just like me, this person is seeking happiness in their life.
- Just like me, this person is trying to avoid suffering in their life.
- Just like me, this person has known sadness, loneliness, and despair.
- Just like me, this person is seeking to fill their needs.
- Just like me, this person is learning about life.

ACTIVITY

1. What line in the exercise stood out to you the most and why?

2. How did focusing on these statements impact your level of compassion towards the person you visualized during the exercise?

Section Three: Compassion Fatigue Cycle

Section three helps guide you more deeply into the concept of compassion fatigue, defined by clinical child psychologist, Dr. Ross Greene, as a decreased capacity to empathize with those who are suffering.* As you go through the complexities of caregiving (balancing routines and schedules, managing your own workload, societal pressures, etc.) it can become challenging to maintain compassion. It is a natural human response to start to develop fatigue when presented with consistently overwhelming situations.

This section outlines the Compassion Fatigue Cycle to provide a snapshot of what you may experience if your fatigue is not addressed. It is helpful to point out that the cycle is not linear. You can jump from one stage to another throughout the day. However, it is best to think of a self-care practice when you feel “stuck” in a stage to help get you out of that place of fatigue sooner and to a place of compassion resilience.

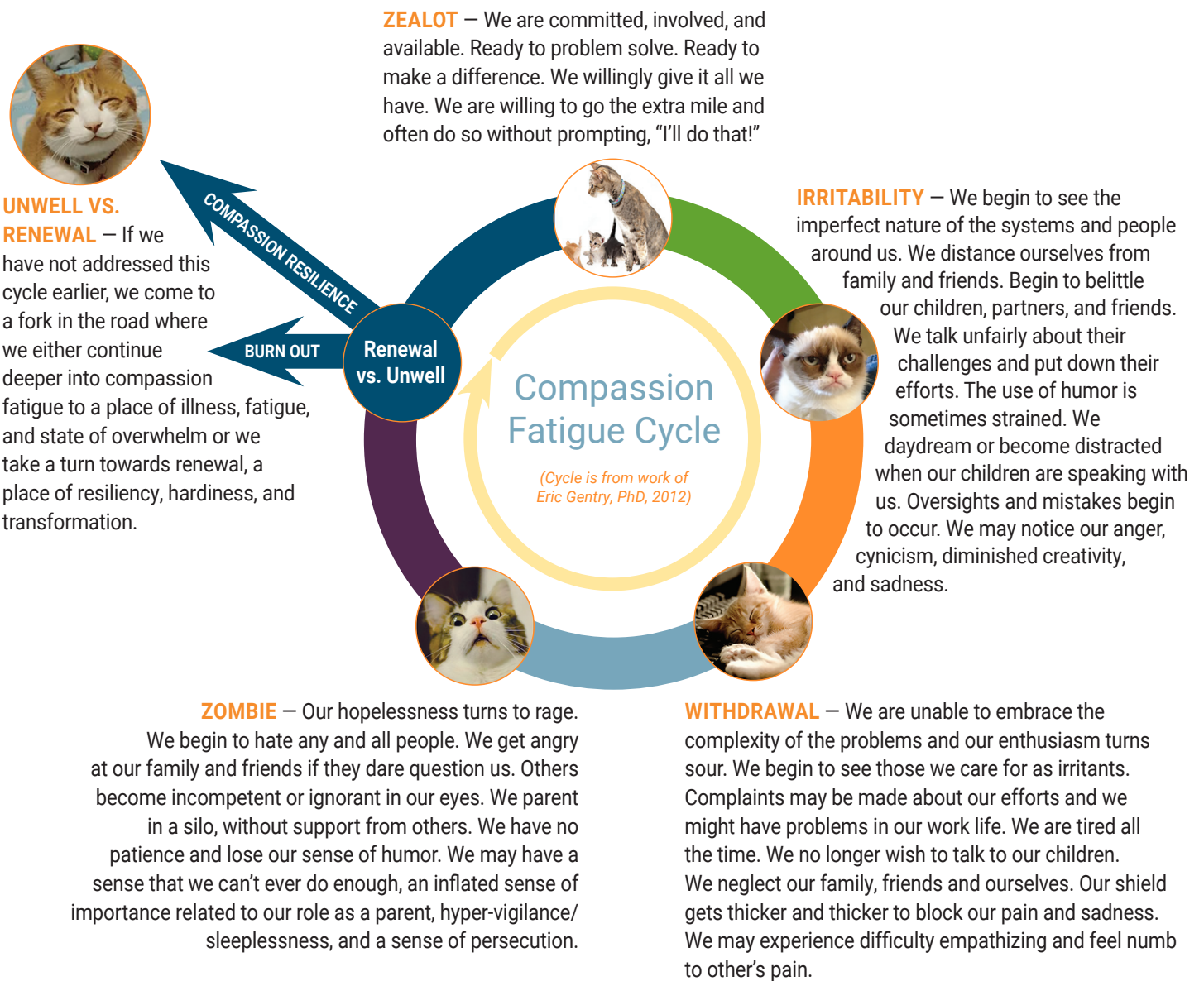


* Greene, Dr. R. (2022). Parents and Families.
<https://livesinthebalance.org/parents-and-families/>

Compassion Fatigue Cycle

Review the visual below beginning with the zealot phase and move clockwise. Take some time to consider the reflection questions below.

Compassion fatigue is a normal response to complex and overwhelming circumstances. After taking some time to understand the Compassion Fatigue Cycle, the rest of the materials in this resource guide will support you in identifying the causes for your compassion fatigue and strategies to help you move to a place of renewal and compassion resilience on a more consistent basis.





ACTIVITY

1. What feelings and thoughts came up for you from exploring the cycle?

2. What stages of the cycle have you seen yourself “hanging out” in most recently?

3. How do you think experiencing these stages has impacted your ability to act with compassion toward those that you care about?



Section Four: Locus of Control

Section four continues the discussion on fatigue. You will become more explicit about what is causing your feelings of fatigue and leaving you drained. You will explore your response to factors in your environment causing potential fatigue and consider the potential role they might have in making positive change.

Our families are imperfect systems made up of imperfect people. When we look outside of our own family to those whom we rely on to provide for our health and wellbeing, we find more imperfection. The first step in lessening the negative impact of the systems we rely on is naming and creating lists of what it is about the systems that contributes to our compassion fatigue. What about the family system, specifically, leaves you feeling depleted and what, specifically within the family system, motivates you to continue carrying out your role as a parent and/or caregiver. The second step is to discover which items on that list we can change, which ones can be addressed by those who support us, and which ones we would best be served by letting go. This section helps you to start to think about what you can begin to let go of to remove the feelings of fatigue.

Drivers of Fatigue/Resilience and Locus of Control

ACTIVITY

In the boxes below, write out a list of what drains your energy or leaves you feeling exhausted at the end of the day in the drivers of fatigue column. Once completed, write another list of what fills you up, keeps you motivated, and brings you energy in the drivers of resilience column.

DRIVERS OF FATIGUE	DRIVERS OF RESILIENCE



ACTIVITY *(continued)*

Think about feelings that came up for you as you complete the activity and write out your reflections below.

After completing the list of drivers, go back to your list and code the items you feel you have a sense of control with a “!”, code the items where there is a lack of sense of control with an “X”, and code the items that you feel you have some control by “circling” the item.

1. Where would you like to grow your sense of control, with support?

2. What might you not be able to control in the next few years and how could shifting your perspective help that item be less fatiguing?

3. When you look at the brainstorm list of what drives your fatigue, what is one thing you’d like to acknowledge having already found a way to let go of? What did letting go look like and what helped you let go?

Mid-Point Break and Check-in

You have made it halfway through the resource guide and at this point, it is a good time to pause and reflect. This break is a chance to give you time to think about how you may want to begin applying some of the activities you have completed into your everyday life.

Things to Think About While You Pause:

1. What initial thoughts and reflections do you have about the content you have explored so far?

2. How have activities from Sections one through four resonated with you? (*Answer all or pick any question to answer*)

- a. What activity do you see yourself applying over the next few weeks?
- b. What takeaways do you have?
- c. What barriers arise for you when thinking about how to apply the activities and how you can overcome them?

3. What support do you need to help keep these activities relevant for you?

Section Five: Expectations from Self and Others

Section five helps you to look at your expectations and adjust, if need be, to make sure they are clear, realistic, and attainable for those you care for and yourself.

To have clear expectations with others, it is helpful to understand the temperament of those you are caring for. Our temperament is the way we approach and react to the world. Each person has their own unique temperament style. Knowing that aids in creating realistic expectations for everyone to feel they are able to achieve what is “expected” of them.

It is important to assess the expectations you have of yourself. We put a lot of pressure on ourselves by creating unrealistic expectations, leading us to feel fatigued. This section provides the opportunity to change your unrealistic expectations into positive affirmations. This will give you tangible items to look at when you are having a hard time moving past a challenging situation or are considering adding unwanted stress to your plate. Additionally, there is a resource included to encourage you to take care of yourself.





Temperament

Think about your loved ones and the temperaments they hold. Reflect on your thoughts and answer the questions in the activity.

UNDERSTANDING TEMPERAMENT

Temperament is an important feature of social and emotional health. Temperament describes the way we approach and react to the world. It is our own personal “style” that is present from birth. There are three general types of temperaments often referred to as easy-going, slow-to-warm, and active.

Easy-going people are generally happy, active from birth and adjust easily to new situations and environments. A slow-to-warm person is generally observant, calm, and may need extra time in adjusting to new situations. People with active temperaments often have varied routines (e.g., eating, sleeping), and often approach life with zest. A person may fall into one of the three types of temperament, but often have varying behavior across the common temperament traits.

There are nine common traits that can help to describe a person’s temperament and the way they react to and experience the world. These traits include:

1. **Activity Level** – How active the person is generally
2. **Distractibility** – The degree of concentration and attention the person shows when they are not particularly interested in an activity
3. **Intensity** – The energy level of a response, whether positive or negative
4. **Regularity** – The predictability of biological functions like appetite and sleep
5. **Sensory Threshold** – How sensitive a person is to physical stimuli
6. **Approach/Withdrawal** – The person’s characteristic response to a new situation or strangers
7. **Adaptability** – How easily the person adapts to transitions and changes
8. **Persistence** – The length of time a person continues in activities in the face of obstacles
9. **Mood** – The tendency to react to the world primarily in a positive or negative way

ACTIVITY

1. How would understanding the temperament of your loved ones help you set realistic and aspirational expectations for them?

2. What barriers may arise when you, as a caregiver, and loved one have different temperaments and how might you work through those differences?

Affirmations

Affirmations are a declaration of what you believe to be true. Removal of any doubt and confusion, with the statements such as: "I am," "I will," and "I have." An example of an affirmation is "I am learning with the resources I have accessible to me, and I am proud of the person I am today."



ACTIVITY: DEVELOPING POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS

This exercise is designed to help identify unrealistic self-expectations and transform them into positive affirmations.

Step 1: List some of your unrealistic self-expectations related to caregiving. These often contain words such as always, never, must, should, no one.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Step 2: Take each unrealistic self-expectation and change it into an alternative belief that feels right to you. These affirmations should be positive, short yet specific, stated as if it already exists, and be only about you. See the table on the next page for examples.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



**Step 1:
Examples of Unrealistic
Hurtful Self-expectations**

No matter how well I parent, it will never be good enough for my loved one.

I can't feel good about myself unless I am successful in taking away my loved one's problems.



**Step 2:
Examples of
Positive Self-affirmations**

I am good enough today as the person I am. While I will strive to do better in my parenting, I accept who I am today.

I will be there with my loved one(s) as they face complex challenges. Together, we will learn what works and how to deal with what we cannot change.

Step 3: When you have some privacy, sit comfortably with a straight spine. Relax your body and calm your mind. Release your thoughts, insecurities, and doubts. When your mind gets restless, focus on your breathing, taking slow breaths.

Step 4: As you relax, open your mind. Suspend judgement and disbelief. Allow yourself to accept the idea that you are good enough just as you are.

Step 5: Choose one affirmation from above that especially appeals to you. Say it to yourself with increasing focus and intention repeating and accepting the affirmation. At some point, notice the affirmation repeating itself even when you do not consciously try to repeat it. Feel a growing sense of calm, clarity, and peacefulness as it begins to take root.

Step 6: Imagine how you will be and feel when the affirmation has become real. Visualize how you might perceive a usually stressful or frustrating situation from a place of calm and confidence. Sense how you will respond to others from this secure place. As you visualize the new perceptions, thoughts, and emotions that may follow from living out this affirmation, allow yourself to feel a sense of gratitude for allowing your self-worth to grow and take root in your body and mind.

* Adapted from the [Traumatology Institute](#).



ACTIVITY

1. How does changing your unrealistic expectations to a positive affirmation impact the relationships you have with yourself and others?

Caregiver Bill of Rights

Take a bit of time to reflect on the Bill of Rights created by the site, A Place for Mom. These Bill of Rights were created with the lens of caring for an aging relative but are applicable to most caregiving relationships. After taking a moment to reflect on the list, write out what thoughts come to mind.

I have the right . . .

- to take care of myself. This is not an act of selfishness. It will give me the capability of taking better care of my relative.
- to seek help from others even though my relatives may object. I recognize the limits of my own endurance and strength.
- to maintain facets of my own life that do not include the person I care for, just as I would if he or she were healthy. I know that I do everything that I reasonably can for this person, and I have the right to do some things just for myself.
- to get angry, be depressed, and express other difficult feelings occasionally.
- to reject any attempts by my relative (either conscious or unconscious) to manipulate me through guilt and/or depression.
- to receive consideration, affection, forgiveness, and acceptance from my loved one for what I do, for as long as I offer these qualities in return.
- to take pride in what I am accomplishing and to applaud the courage it has sometimes taken to meet the needs of my relative.
- to protect my individuality and my right to make a life for myself that will sustain me in the time when my relative no longer needs my full-time help.
- to expect and demand that as new strides are made in finding resources to aid physically and mentally impaired persons in our country, similar strides will be made towards aiding and supporting caregivers.



Source: [A Place for Mom](#)

ACTIVITY

1. What statement resonates with you and why?

Section Six: Compassionate Boundary Setting

In the last section, you looked at expectations and the impact your expectations have on your wellbeing and your family. Here, you are going to look at how to use those expectations to set compassionate boundaries with others. This is one more step in addressing and positively affecting your compassion fatigue. You must know what you are saying “yes” to in order to have clear boundaries. This section provides tips on what it means to set boundaries and the conversations you will engage in when boundaries are not being honored. These conversations and tips help you become clear on what you need, as well as gaining awareness on whether your boundaries need to be adjusted or flexible in the context of your current situation.

Compassionate Boundary Setting

When it comes to setting compassionate boundaries, for yourself and others, it is helpful to think about what you want to say “yes” to and what you are saying “no” to in order for your “yeses” (boundaries) to hold firm. This activity is called Healthy Behaviors. Brainstorm and write out what you want to say “yes” to, so that you can begin to establish boundaries. An example of a “yes” would be – sitting together for dinner to check in with one another. An example of a “no” would be – no phones at the dinner table to give full attention to everyone. After you’ve thought through your “yeses” and “nos,” see a full example of the healthy behaviors on the next page.

ACTIVITY

What are you and/or your loved ones saying and doing when you are at your best? If you think about “respect,” what behaviors are you and your loved ones showing to demonstrate “respect?” What are you or your loved ones saying or doing to say “NO” to uphold the “YES” boundary? Write out your thoughts below in the boxes.

What are you and/or your loved ones saying and doing when you are at your best? Our Yeses	What do you need to say NO to in order to fulfill your YES? Our Nos

**What are you and/or your loved ones saying and doing when you are at your best?
Our Yeses**

- Calm behaviors – settle bodies
- Sitting around the table together
- When we all get together
- Spending time together
- Good communication and understanding
- Helping each other
- Sensitive to other’s needs
- Laughing, humor, enjoying each other
- Showing compassion and empathy for each other
- Having fun together – playing minigolf, cards and board games
- Volunteer together

**What do you need to say NO to in order to fulfill your YES?
Our Nos**

- Raised voices and aggressive language
- Making decisions that are not based in our values and do not respect our boundaries
- “Disrespectful” body language – rolling eyes
- Not taking time for myself when I truly need a break
- Activities that take me away from the family more than three nights a week
- Being distracted during family time – for example, being on phone, email
- Behaviors that leave others not feeling heard – being ignored when talking

Now that you have completed the healthy behaviors activity, below are tips on how to have conversations with those you care for around the boundaries set to help keep you and others from feeling fatigued.

Tips for Setting Compassionate Boundaries



1. **Know what you want to say “Yes” to** in your life (values, behaviors, and priorities).
2. **Be proactive.** Have “meetings” to discuss boundaries. Structure offers safety for both sides.
3. **Just say it!** Don’t make them guess. Use simple and direct language.
4. Reinforce by pointing out the violations **IN THE MOMENT.**
5. **Give explanations that are specific,** relevant to the other person, and offer shared solutions.
6. **Back up your boundary with action.** If you give in, you invite people to ignore your needs.
7. **Remember your locus of control.** Boundaries aren’t about perfection. When you must say “yes,” look for where you have control.



ACTIVITY

1. Practice writing out a yes and no statement to create a clear boundary in the space below.

2. How has setting boundaries helped you stay out of a place of feeling fatigued?

3. Read quote and answer question to follow: *“Compassionate people ask for what they need. They say no when they need to, and when they say yes, they mean it. They’re compassionate because their boundaries keep them out of resentment.”* – Brené Brown

a. After reflecting on the connection between boundaries and resentment, what is one boundary you plan to begin or continue to uphold to keep you out of a place of resentment?



Section Seven: The Culture of Those You Care For

Section seven brings together everything that has been discussed and allows you to put it into motion. First, pause and think about the culture you want to have for your family or those you care for. What behaviors are you modeling for others that are ideal in a caregiving culture? Your values, how you show compassion for yourself, what drains you and builds you up, your expectations and boundaries, all help shape the caregiving culture. The model of influence activity gives you the opportunity to write down behaviors you want to see those you care for to exhibit which will maintain a caregiving culture.



MODEL OF INFLUENCE

Knowledge	Will
Information	Attitude
Example	Consequences
Experience	Grace



The Model of Influence – Self-Reflection Sheet

Uses the spaces within the activity to write out your thoughts and responses. After the activity, answer the questions in the spaces provided on the next page.

ACTIVITY

1. What is one behavior that is part of your caregiving culture that you would like to see your loved one exhibit more frequently?

2. Please walk through the six steps from the Model of Influence using the behavior you identified in question 1. What can you say about each step regarding how you are handling this behavior? Put a star by the area where you are doing well. Underline the area you'd like to do more of in influencing your loved one's behavior.

- a. **Information:** What am I telling my loved one about this behavior, including expectations and boundaries? Is my communication clear (verbal and non-verbal)?

- b. **Example:** How does my loved one see me modeling the desired behavior in our caregiving culture?

- c. **Information:** What am I telling my loved one about this behavior, including expectations and boundaries? Is my communication clear (verbal and non-verbal)?

(continued)

ACTIVITY *(continued)*

d. **Attitude:** Do I believe that my loved one can do the behavior? How do I convey this attitude to my loved one with my words and non-verbally?

e. **Consequences:** Do I acknowledge and reward the positive behavior when I see it? How do I let my loved one experience consequences when appropriate?

f. **Grace:** How do I respond when my loved one doesn't meet an expectation regarding the behavior? How do I acknowledge the mistake and plan for improvement while sustaining feelings of belonging and being unconditionally loved?

3. How can this model help with supporting the caregiving culture?

4. What is a step you can take to improve the overall culture of caregiving?



Section Eight: Wellness and Resilience Strategies

Being a caregiver is not always easy! Section eight provides resources to build up your individual wellbeing. How are you showing up and tending to your needs? Through the wellness compass assessment, you will have an opportunity to see what is currently working for you and what activities you may want to incorporate into your life. Starting these activities can help keep you out of a place of fatigue and motivate you to continue the wonderful job you're doing as a caregiver. This section also provides an appreciative inquiry activity, giving you a chance to recognize and honor your strengths.

To complete the activity electronically, here is the link: https://eliminatestigma.org/wp-content/uploads/PC_Section8_WellnessCompassAssessment_Fillable.pdf.


The Wellness Compass Practices Assessment



"Self-care is not an indulgence. Self-care is a discipline. It requires tough-mindedness, a deep and personal understanding of your priorities, and a respect for both yourself and the people you choose to spend your life with." – Tami Forman

The following activity is meant to be a reflection tool on how you care for yourself. It has many wellness practice options for your consideration. Feel free to add areas of self-care that are relevant for you, your family, and community culture and mark those that are not with N/A. When you are finished, look for patterns in your responses that are clues about how you have been taking care of yourself recently. Are you more active in some areas of self-care but ignore others? Pay attention to your likes and dislikes. What items did you find interesting that you might want to try or do more of? Celebrate your areas of strength in your self-care. What do you say to yourself about making yourself a priority? Consider who you might talk to about this self-assessment that would listen to your reflections and reinforce your chosen self-care practices.



Rate the following areas according to how well you think you are doing:

3 = I do this well (e.g., frequently)	0 = I never do this
2 = I do this OK (e.g., occasionally)	? = This never occurred to me. I might be interested
1 = I barely or rarely do this	N/A = doesn't apply or it's not of interest to m

	<p>Relationships</p>	<p>_____ Spend time with others whose company I enjoy</p> <p>_____ Stay in contact with important people in my life</p> <p>_____ Make time to reply to personal emails/letters; send holiday cards</p> <p>_____ Allow others to do things for me</p> <p>_____ Enlarge my social circle</p> <p>_____ Ask for help when I need it</p> <p>_____ Share a fear, hope, or secret with someone I trust</p> <p>_____ Resolve a conflict with people in a productive way</p> <p>_____ If relevant, spend time with my companion animals</p> <p>_____ If relevant, schedule regular dates with my partner or spouse</p> <p>_____ If relevant, schedule regular activities with my children</p> <p>_____ Other:</p>
	<p>Emotions</p>	<p>_____ Give myself affirmations, praise myself</p> <p>_____ Practice self-compassion</p> <p>_____ Practice being mindfully present</p> <p>_____ Re-read favorite books, re-view favorite movies</p> <p>_____ Seek out comforting activities, objects, people, and places</p> <p>_____ Allow myself to cry</p> <p>_____ Find things that make me laugh</p> <p>_____ Notice my inner experience – my thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, feelings</p> <p>_____ Express my outrage in social action, letters, donations, marches, protests</p> <p>_____ Use emotional regulation strategies</p> <p>_____ Other:</p>

 SPRIT	Core Values	<input type="checkbox"/> Identify what is meaningful and notice its place in my life <input type="checkbox"/> Find a connection/community that shares my values <input type="checkbox"/> Have experiences of awe <input type="checkbox"/> Contribute my time or other resources to causes in which I believe <input type="checkbox"/> Read books or listen to talks/music that inspire me <input type="checkbox"/> Choose to focus my attention on ideas, people and situations that nurture my optimism and hope <input type="checkbox"/> Be aware of the non-material aspects of life that I value <input type="checkbox"/> Be curious and engage in conversations with other people about their values <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
	Rest & Play	<input type="checkbox"/> Explore how to maintain balance in my work and non-work life <input type="checkbox"/> Make time for reflection to balance time spent doing <input type="checkbox"/> Take vacations <input type="checkbox"/> Take day trips or mini-vacations <input type="checkbox"/> Do something that makes me laugh <input type="checkbox"/> Take rest breaks in the day – a walk at work, brief nap, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Spend time in nature <input type="checkbox"/> Sing <input type="checkbox"/> Meditate <input type="checkbox"/> Dance, swim, walk/run, play sports, or other physical activities <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
 STRENGTH	Stress Resilience	<input type="checkbox"/> Make time away from telephones, email, and the Internet <input type="checkbox"/> Make time for self-reflection <input type="checkbox"/> Have my own personal support – professional or peer <input type="checkbox"/> Write in a journal <input type="checkbox"/> Read about things that are unrelated to work <input type="checkbox"/> Do something at which I am not an expert or in charge <input type="checkbox"/> Attend to minimizing stress in my life <input type="checkbox"/> Learn something new <input type="checkbox"/> Say no to extra responsibilities sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Practice accepting discomfort <input type="checkbox"/> Practice gratitude <input type="checkbox"/> Other:



 <p style="text-align: center;">STRENGTH</p>	<p>Care for Body</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Eat regularly (e.g., breakfast, lunch, and dinner) <input type="checkbox"/> Eat healthily <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise on a regular basis <input type="checkbox"/> Explore new ways to exercise <input type="checkbox"/> Get regular medical care for prevention <input type="checkbox"/> Get medical care when needed <input type="checkbox"/> Take time off when sick <input type="checkbox"/> Get regular comforting, relaxing and/or healing touch <input type="checkbox"/> If relevant, take time to be sexual – with myself, with a partner <input type="checkbox"/> Get enough sleep <input type="checkbox"/> Wear clothes I like <input type="checkbox"/> Make healthy decisions around use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
 <p style="text-align: center;">MIND</p>	<p>School/Work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Take a break during the workday (e.g., lunch) <input type="checkbox"/> Have intentional conversations with co-workers <input type="checkbox"/> Make quiet time to complete tasks <input type="checkbox"/> Identify projects or tasks that are exciting and rewarding <input type="checkbox"/> Set limits/boundaries with colleagues and people you serve <input type="checkbox"/> Balance work so that no one day or part of a day is “too much” <input type="checkbox"/> Get regular supervision or consultation <input type="checkbox"/> Negotiate for my needs <input type="checkbox"/> Have a peer support group <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
	<p>Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Make a budget for how I plan to spend and save money <input type="checkbox"/> Keep track of how I spend my money <input type="checkbox"/> Use a calendar to plan my day, week, month, year <input type="checkbox"/> Prioritize how I spend my time <input type="checkbox"/> Arrange my living space so it is comfortable and comforting <input type="checkbox"/> Arrange my workspace so it is comfortable and supports my efficiency <input type="checkbox"/> Accomplish the tasks I plan each day <input type="checkbox"/> Other:

1. What reflections do you have after completing the assessment?

2. What are a few activities from the assessment that stood out to you and that you'd like to improve or try (if it's new) in the next few weeks?

Appreciative Inquiry

To wrap up the section, think about your time as a caregiver and write down your responses to the following questions. Putting your thoughts on paper and moving them out of your head helps you to clarify them.

Appreciative Inquiry Reflection Sheet

Taking time to recognize and honor our strengths is a helpful strategy in building our compassion resilience. Take a moment to reflect on your strengths as it relates to parenting and caregiving.

1. Considering your entire time as a parent/caregiver, recall when you feel most alive, most involved, or most excited about your role as a parent/caregiver?

2. Using the example you wrote down for question one, answer the following questions.

a. What makes it an exciting experience? What gives it energy?

b. What is it about you that contributes to the experience?

c. What do you value the most about yourself – as a human being, a citizen, a caregiver?

Post Resource Guide and Check-in

You have now completed the resource guide in its entirety. There are a lot of activities to take away and it can be overwhelming to think about applying everything at once. It may be helpful to go back to each section of the guide to refresh yourself on your thoughts and notes and begin to pull out or highlight key things that you want to become intentional about utilizing. Thinking about what specific activity from section one, for example, goes hand in hand with an activity from another section. As you look ahead and think about the changes you want to make, here are a few things to consider:

1. What components tie together for you – values to boundaries, as an example, how are your values tied into the boundaries you have established and how can your values help to create firm boundaries for yourself?

2. Which activities do you envision yourself utilizing over the next few months?

a. What strengths, about yourself, are you able to continue to build on as you navigate your way through implementing the activity/activities?

b. What challenges do you see arising as you make changes and applying the activities to your life?

3. When you think about what support looks like for you, is there someone that you'd like to be an accountability partner to keep you on top of the changes you want to see happen for you and your loved ones.



Thank you for taking time to work through the Compassion Resilience Resource Guide.