



Who Takes Care of You?

Professionals in the “helping” professions are essential to the well-being and mental health of our society and we all expect them to be ready and able to help as needs arise. These professionals are found in the fields of law enforcement, fire/safety protection, medical, social services, counseling and spiritual development. They range from the dispatcher when you call in an emergency to the spiritual advisor who comforts you in times of sorrow to the therapist who helps you put your life back together. After our crisis or need is over and has been resolved we move on in our lives never thinking about the professional “helper” again until the next crisis or need.

Professional in the “helping” professionals help us but who helps them? Often those who help others forget to care for themselves or think they are expected to be stronger and weather the storms of life without needing support. This is a serious expectation mistake that can harm them, their families and ultimately all of us. Professionals in the helping professionals need to take care of themselves and need to be supported/cared for by everyone in our society. Here are important components of both self-care and care by others.

Caring for Yourself as a “Helping” Professional

- 1) Give yourself permission to take care of yourself and let others care for you: too often helping professionals put themselves last and shrug off offers by others to care for them. This is harmful for everyone involved. Sometimes the strongest thing you can do is allow someone else to care for you
- 2) Admit when you need a break and take it. Everyone needs time off on a regular basis
- 3) Refresh yourself physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually, on a daily basis, so you do not run out of resources and energy.
- 4) Set aside quality family time: Everyone is dependent on those we love and who love us. We are all re-charged when we spend time together sharing, having fun and building memories.
- 5) Build friendships and share enjoyable activities: Strong consistent friendships coupled with enjoyable activities brings us hope, confidence and a sense of value.. all essential for wellbeing.

How Others can care for a “Helping” Professional

- 1) **Show gratitude:** By offering thanks and providing support we reinforce the value of the helping professional
- 2) **Lend a hand:** No one can do everything by themselves. Offer to help in the manner most appropriate to the situation so the professional “helper” can maximize the use of their talents and resources

- 3) **Replenish** that which has been depleted so that resources are always available. We forget that when we are helped resources are utilized. Consider how you can restore resources so they are available for the next person in need

- 4) **Listen:** Everyone needs to share their feelings and experiences as they process and incorporate them into their lives. Being a good listener helps with the process and does not require “fixing” the situation.

- 5) **Share Affection:** We all need appropriate physical, loving contact to renew ourselves. “Skin touch” is vital to our sense of belonging whether it is a handshake, High 5, back slap or hug. We thrive on human contact.

“When we bring our concern for ourselves into harmony with our concern for others, our life comes in balance.” 17th Karmapa