

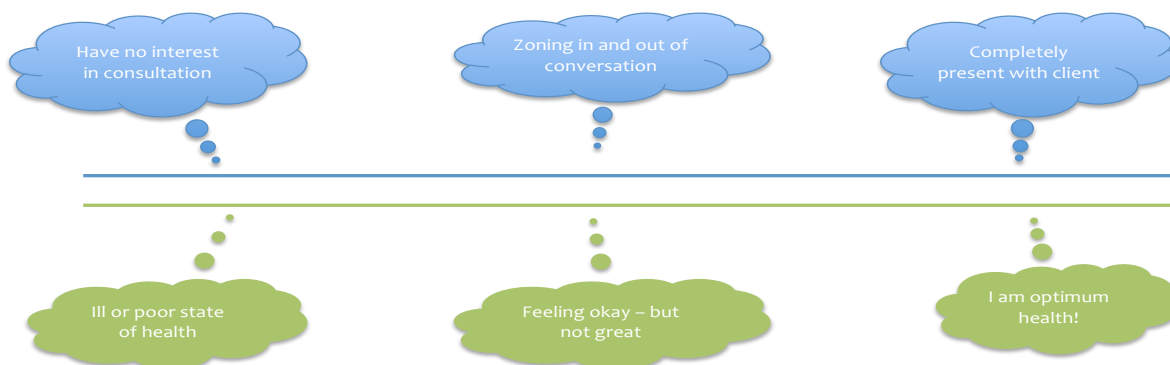
How well do you look after yourself?

In order for us to best look after our clients needs, we need to ensure we look after our own.

Common myths about looking after yourself as a Therapist¹

- 1) Self-care is optional.
- 2) Knowing how to look after your self is the same as doing it.
- 3) I'm a therapist I can cope.

MENTAL HEALTH



PHYSICAL HEALTH

5 Steps to looking after your professional self

1) Looking after your own body and mind

Includes food, water, fresh air and exercise – fitness includes strength, stamina and suppleness. Mental exercises that challenge the mind, mental relaxation to calm the mind, and sleep.

2) Monitoring your stress levels, coping with stress and burnout²

- ✓ Do you have time within the week to do things you enjoy?
- ✓ Are work stressors having an impact on your home life?
- ✓ Are you able to find time within the day to relax?
- ✓ Have you found yourself using stimulants, such as caffeine, sugar, alcohol drinking or recreational drugs because you are feeling stressed?

3) Making time for self-reflection – book it in your diary³

Formulate the problem and assess your needs

- ✓ What am I feeling/thinking?
- ✓ What made me react in this way/why am I upset?
- ✓ How is this impacting on my behaviour - towards my client – others?
- ✓ What can I conclude from this?
- ✓ What do I know about my attitude to work as a therapist and know about to myself to understand what is happening here?
- ✓ What is/is not working well?
- ✓ What do I want or need to change?



4) Professional Resources^{1,2,3}

Professional resources include people or groups that help you feel good about yourself, motivated, enthusiastic and give you confidence to continue, stretch you in a positive way, or support you to wind down, rest or stop. We all need support whether newly qualified or with years of experience under our belt.

- ✓ How often do you use your professional support network?
- ✓ What do you use, and what could you make more use of?
- ✓ Do you use a therapist or mentor?
- ✓ If there is a gap? What can you do to fill it?

Resources may include: Journals, books, colleagues, websites, social media groups, supervision, mentors, conferences, webinars, and workshops.

5) Moving Forward - Tips for Managing Your Health^{1,2,3}

- ✓ Give yourself space to process thoughts, emotions and feelings
- ✓ Engage in restorative activities
- ✓ Maintain nurturing relationships outside of work
- ✓ Consider your work load – try and balance easy and complex cases
- ✓ Is there an overlap between your own life and your clinical life – e.g. if you have recently been bereaved, then you may find it hard to support someone else's grief.
- ✓ Be realistic with the expectation you have of yourself.

Further Reading:

See The Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council (CNHC) Code of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (C12) on self care and wellbeing

(<http://www.cnhc.org.uk/assets/pdf/1-033.pdf>)

Kottler (2011) The Therapist's Workbook: Self-Assessment, Self-Care, and Self-Improvement Exercises for Mental Health Professionals

CPD Events

Title: Running on Empty. Self Care for Therapists - Compassion Fatigue

Date: Distance learning short course (3 hrs)

Further information:

<http://www.siteceu.com/runningindex.html>

Title: Therapists Burnout - Professional, Personal and Familial Aspects of Burnout

Date: Online

Further information:

<http://zurinstitute.com/burnoutcourse.html>

References:

¹ Oxford Guide to Surviving as a CBT Therapist

² Royal College of Psychiatrists – Looking after Yourself [www.rcpsych.ac.uk]

³ Fox (2008) Relating to Clients. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London.

