



Tending to the Helpers

There are many helping professions: teaching, social work, nursing, environmental specialist, child welfare, counseling, veterinarians, and the list goes on. Helpers have deep compassion for others and a desire to walk alongside them in their journey. But the journey is hard right now, and helpers need loving support as well.

Our hope is that you use this information as a giant permission slip. Permission to tend to yourself and to allow yourself to be supported. Permission to rest, to restore. Permission to use 30 seconds to show compassion to yourself right now, and in the many small and big moments that will follow.

Journal Prompts for Holistic Care

There are barriers, both concrete and constructed, to caring for yourself in this work. Each section below includes journal prompts that can be used to simultaneously explore barriers you encounter, and then take small steps to begin the restoration process. Consider using one prompt each day to jump start your journaling.

Whether you're new to journaling, or have a well-established practice, it can be helpful to find a quiet space and dedicated time to write (or draw). Journaling can feel restorative *and* sometimes bring up big emotions; make sure to notice if you need a sip of water, a few deep breaths, or a long walk afterward.

Mind

- Which times of the day do you feel most alert? Most drained?
- Write about your intention for today. For tomorrow.
- What does self-compassion mean to you?

Body

- What body sensations are you experiencing in this moment?
- Where in your body are you carrying additional tension?
- Briefly stretch a part of your body that is holding tension; notice, then write down what you notice.

Emotions

- Get curious about guilt and shame you've been holding; when does it come up/how might you release it?
- How might you infuse joy into your day?
- Write about a time you witnessed healing and growth.

Spirit

- What are you grateful for today?
- Write about activities or experiences that make you feel connected to your ancestors.
- What spiritual practice do you want more of—or less of—in your life?

Work

- What brought you to the work?
- Write about the impact this work has on you. Which aspects of the impact do you like? Which do you dislike?
- How can you help cultivate the work environment you want?

Relationships

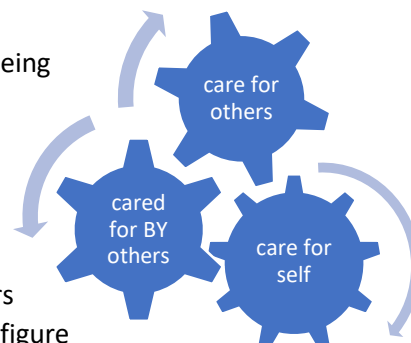
- Which relationships provide you respite, joy, comfort?
- How are you experiencing vulnerability in your relationships with others?
- Write about five people who have impacted your life.



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Tend to Your Relationships

Remaining physically distant from loved ones, or being forced to engage in ways that are not consistent with what you want, can create or increase a strain on relationships. Because helpers spend many hours caring for others, it is equally important to consider how you *receive care*. Our ability to feel like our true selves and to help others diminishes when we are out of balance. Using the figure on the right, consider which cog in the wheel is smaller than you would like right now. Use some of the strategies below to adjust.



Release and Restore

As helpers, we can be quick to compare and then minimize our suffering in response to the increased global suffering. As our own emotions—*anxiety, fear, sadness, anger, guilt*—ebb and flow, the pain involved in being present with how we authentically feel at that moment can feel overwhelming. Helpers must give attention to intentional release and restoration of emotions, both to continue providing high-level care to others, and as a means of moving difficult emotions through their bodies rather than allowing them to become stuck.

Allow yourself to receive care.

- What barriers do you encounter or construct that take away from your ability to be cared for?
- Say "yes" when someone offers you support. If support isn't being offered, seek it out.

Rest.

- Engage in only one activity at a time.
- Say "no" sometimes. No explanation required.
- Release what you have no control over.

Set (and stick to) limits on work-time.

- Don't check your email after ____ pm.
- Have a Google phone number to provide to clients rather than a personal number.
- Dedicate hours in the day or space(s) where you live as "no work zones".

Create. Engage in activities that bring you joy.

- Create a five-word poem about how your day is going.
- Let your feelings out! Try drawing how you feel with your non-dominant hand.
- Make a list of three things that bring you joy or that you look forward to. Consider what these three things have in common, and seek out activities with the same commonality.

Identify your work and non-work support systems.

- Who listens to you and provides empathy when you need it? (e.g., talk on the phone for 5 minutes or 50, sit in comfortable silence)
- Who will do something helpful with or without asking? (e.g., color with your children, support you with a work task, help order takeout)
- Who will provide rest, relief, distraction and/or laughter from difficult emotions or difficult tasks? (e.g., take long walks, tell silly jokes, or watch a tv show together virtually)