Compassion: A Tool to Prevent Burnout

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What does burnout look like, sound like, and feel like?
Learning Goals

1. Learn the symptoms of burnout
2. Learn the impact of empathy and compassion on burnout
3. Build our skills for preventing burnout through compassion
What is burnout?
Definition

“Burnout is a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, and is defined by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy.”

Assessment:

Building self-awareness around our own stress management.
How empathy can contribute to burnout?
Definition of Empathy

Understanding and feeling the emotions of another person (emotional empathy)
Reflection:

Think of a time when you felt overwhelmed by your empathetic response to another person’s emotions. What was the impact of this?
Downside of Empathy

For ourselves:

- Activates areas of our brain associated with negative emotions, with emotional pain
- Can lead to feelings of overwhelm and distress
- Increases our fight or flight response

For others:

- Can create paralysis, avoidance, and burnout
How can compassion help us to avoid burnout?
Definition of Compassion

Feeling care and kindness for another person, combined with a desire to alleviate their suffering
Benefits of Compassion

For ourselves:

• Activates areas of the brain associated with positive emotions, with love and belonging
• Decreases heart rate and releases oxytocin—a bonding chemical

For others:

• Can lead to a greater sense of purpose, courage, and commitment
• Can increase pro-social behavior
How do empathy and compassion work together?
Let’s practice.
The Road to Compassion

• Empathy can be a pitstop to compassion—but it shouldn’t be a place we live permanently
• If we “stay” in empathy it can lead to emotional distress, which makes us less effective
• If this happens over and over, it can eventually lead to burnout
• Be aware, internally, of the shifts you make between empathy and compassion—and which is appropriate for you in each moment.
How can we strengthen our compassion?
Caring for Ourselves

1. Stay regulated

2. Remind yourself of emotional boundaries

1. Know what keeps you healthy
Caring for Others

1. Use loving-kindness practice
2. Remain curious
3. Trust others to be responsible for themselves
Exit Ticket

1. Three words to describe your experience today

2. What will you do differently after this workshop?

3. What’s one thing that would have made your experience today better?

4. Optional: Name and email (for a monthly newsletter)