

Easing “Empathy Distress” with Compassion Worksheet

“While empathy helps us understand the pain of another person, compassion opens up the possibility for us to do something about it by stimulating our desire to help” (Shapiro, 2020).

Feeling another’s pain or sadness results in our brain mirroring the difficult emotion, causing *empathic distress*. Compassion stops us from becoming overwhelmed by negative feelings registered as a result of empathy, replacing them with positive ones, and a desire to help (Turner & Gill, 2019).

To turn a potential negative into a positive, we need to transform empathy into compassion and foster feelings of connection and care.

The Easing “Empathy Distress” with Compassion worksheet includes seven steps and can be used with individuals or groups, by following the instructions below:

1. Sit quietly, and breathe easily.
2. Ground yourself in the present moment by focusing on your breath.
3. Bring to mind someone in your life who is facing a difficult time.
 - Feel this person’s pain.
 - Explore your feelings of empathy and notice the tension that results in your body.
4. Ask yourself, what causes my pain? Most likely, it is because you care about them.
5. Go deeper, spend some time feeling the need to help the person.
6. Ask yourself what you would say to that person.
7. Afterward write down an action for yourself to help that person or ease their difficulty.

References

- Shapiro, S. L. (2020). *Rewire your mind: Discover the science + practice of mindfulness*. London: Aster.
- Turner, S., & Gill, L. (2019). *Employee welfare: Developing change strategies to address empathy burnout in caring professions*. Retrieved September 04, 2020, from <https://www.thescopes.org/flexible-learning-4/employee-welfare-developing-change-strategies-to-address-empathy-burnout-in-caring-professions/>

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