



You Can't Pour from an Empty Vessel: The Wisdom of Self-Care

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“You can’t pour from an empty vessel,” is a phrase I will always remember, spoken to me by one of my most cherished mentors. She observed that as a therapist, I had a habit of placing the well-being of others before myself, a way of life, normalized in our society. I was caught in a loop of over-doing and over-care that left me depleted, exhausted and out of balance, I would rest and recuperate for short spurts, only to repeat this cycle over again. I was stuck on a hamster wheel with no end in site.

Sound familiar? The majority of us grow up learning that caring for others rather than ourselves is a noble value. For example, in families where parents work themselves to exhaustion in caring for their children doing realize that they are unconsciously modeling this way of being. Nurses and health care providers are experts at over-care, resulting in depletion and burnout, as are massage, cranial therapists and other forms of body based practitioners. When surrounded by peers and colleagues who normalize this form of depletion as a way of life with no attention to self-care, it is no wonder that these professions lead the way in burnout.

Over time, living this way erodes our resilience and vital energy, leading to elevated levels of stress hormones, and also threatening depression and chronic fatigue. Our energy pathways become strained and begin to rely on our adrenals for additional

energy. We can manage this for short periods of time, but if this becomes habitual, the energy of our nervous system begins to rely on our adrenals. This can lead to a host of health issues including anxiety, sleep disturbance, mental fog and difficulty with focus. When our body shifts to utilizing adrenals for everyday activities, it increases the wear and tear on cell tissue, resulting in a chronic state of imbalance and breakdown. In fact, we age more rapidly when this pattern becomes a way of life.

Since hearing the above mentioned phrase from my mentor and exploring how to balance self-care with service to others, I have integrated its wisdom into my Craniosacral practice. At first, it felt selfish to take time out for myself. But as I continued, I discovered that feeling balanced in fact, improved my therapeutic skills. In my case, it began with scheduling bodywork sessions for myself. After a few at regular intervals, I felt so much better that I began to feel the threat of burnout dissipate. This ritual grew into more work-life balance and even more self-care. In addition to receiving bodywork, I also made sleep a priority, which meant changing my sleep hygiene. I also began eating more consciously, respectful of my body's needs. I began to eat cleanly with emphasis on anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant rich foods. I stopped eating processed and junk food. This healed my body aches, headaches and unhealthy emotional state. Conscious eating also became an integral part of my self-care regimen.

Currently, my self-care practice also includes periods of silence. Where I was once uncomfortable with silence and filled it with music, noise and television, I have learned how to be comfortable in it for longer and longer periods where now I crave it to restore balance. It has helped me stay more grounded and manage my stress more efficiently.

So, remember, "You can't pour from an empty vessel." Honor yourself and your body. You might consider making Craniosacral therapy a part of your regular self-care regimen. Give it a try! It may be the very modality that can offer you the balance and peace you are seeking.

I wish you great health and well-being in 2022. May this next trip around the sun be abundant with love, joy, gratitude and peace for all of humanity.

©January2022, Emily Klik, LMT, CST is a CranioSacral Therapist at Ommani. She sees clients who are free of symptoms on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Call our office at 262.695.5311 to schedule an appointment.