COMpassion and burnouT reFLECTION guIDE

For Self and Team

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Overview

Our ability to extend compassion comes from the capacity we have available to us in the moment. We need the capacity to be present. We need the capacity to have empathy and to act.

Our time, energy, abilities, strengths, and our gifts are the resources we extend to others in moments of compassion. At times, the resources we have to share are things in our possession - physically or tangibly - and at other times, resources are internal, like our ability to have empathy or the capacity to notice when someone is in need. Resources can also be personal and professional - both are important for a balanced approach to leadership and how we show up in our work.

Many resources are finite and need to be replenished. They are not an endless reservoir that we can draw from without self-care and maintenance.

When we have the time, ability, and energy we can extend compassion abundantly and authentically. Compassion in those moments can be unexpected and transformational for both you and the person you are extending to. It can change everything. Because it can be so unexpected.

When our resources dwindle, we can feel it. When we are depleted - and our resources low -, we can feel burned out and empty. Silent in our ability to respond to the moment. Rather than transformational, extending our resources can feel transactional - and forced. Blank. And bare.

On the following pages, you will have space to reflect on where compassion or burnout may be showing up in your life and ultimately how it may impact your ability to lead with compassion.

The Compassion and Burnout Reflection Guide is a guided reflection and discussion tool used to prepare individuals and teams to have candid discussions about burnout and compassion. It includes instructions, reflection questions, and an opportunity for you to consider how compassion and burnout are showing up in the many facets of your life.
Instructions

Filling Out Individual Questions
To best use this guide, answer each question in as much detail as possible. You might find that you need to sit with each question before you begin writing. Please take the time you need to be comfortable with your answers. Pause. Reflect and be present in the moment.

How the Discussion Will Be Facilitated
Once you are finished, or your team has completed the questions, you will be asked to share your answers with others. Someone will volunteer to go first and in a round robin fashion, each person should follow. The first person will start with the three open-ended questions and then allow others to share their answers. The group should take time to reflect, share reactions, or provide encouragement.

Next, the group should move to the next section, going section by section and ending with the last several questions. The goal in sharing is to build capacity and learn from the experiences of others. Take note of what you hear and what patterns you see emerging.

As a matter of practice, you are invited to share at your comfort level. You are welcome to simply listen if you prefer. Engage at a level that elevates your leadership, restores your compassion, and builds your resource ability. As you share and listen, you might find that long held burdens lift, resources return, and compassion overflows. Pay attention to those moments and to what moves you.

There is no expectation for you or your team. There is only anticipation of what could be if we lead from a place of positivity and how we transform the world around us.
Teaching and Facilitation Note

If you are using this tool as a team building or discussion exercise, you might consider breaking up each section, using the guide over a series of meetings, or as prework prior to an intentional team gathering or offsite retreat.

The guide could take up to an hour or more to fully answer each question, including the reflection, the need to sit with questions in silence, and the courage to step into the answers. There is vulnerability in each area and each answer. It will be important to honor that space and acknowledge the growth. Each person could respond differently, and that is okay.

You might notice patterns, some uncomfortableness, or even some outward emotion. Experiencing compassion and burnout are personal episodes. You are encouraged to take each answer, each person speaking, and each instance of openness at face value and to encourage sharing where it is most appropriate. Segment by segment, space by space, or conversation by conversation.
A General Perspective: Questions to Help Think Forward

When you think about the word compassion, what meaning does that word have for you personally and/or professionally?

Feeling burned out - exhausted and depleted - is a common experience and can manifest in many forms. When you think about burnout, where in your life - personally or professionally - have you experienced episodes of burnout?

Can compassion and burnout live in the same space? Can you think of a time in your life where an over-extension of compassion led to episodes of burnout, or when they seemingly lived in the same experience? Write in as much detail as you can about these experiences.
Resources for Compassion

Instructions
Having abundant resources for compassion is important. It is hard to give our compassionate selves when we are depleted and tired and have nothing to give. When that happens, burnout is a likely outcome. For example, if our calendar is full and someone is asking for our time, it is hard to be present in two places at once. We can feel the pull of burnout setting in. Think through the following questions and reflect on where in your personal and professional life you are building the resources for sharing compassion with others without burning out.

*On a scale of 1 - 5, with 1 being No Resources and 5 being Full of Resources, what is your current level of ability to be compassionate:*

*Think about the number you wrote down. Pause and reflect on why you choose that number and how your resources are impacting your ability to lead right now.*

*Where - if any place - in your life do you need/want to increase your resources for compassion? What if you got it right - what would change?*

*What is one concrete thing that you could do this week that would increase your personal ability for extending compassion without burning out?*
Compassion and Self

Instructions
How and where we extend compassion to ourselves is an important indicator of how close we are to burnout. Not enough compassion for ourselves and burnout will quickly set in. Examples of self-compassion could be making the time to care for yourself through exercise, relaxation, guided meditation, or spending quality time with family or friends. Having the presence to strike the right balance and learning to support compassion in our own life is an important and balanced skill.

On a scale of 1 - 5, with 1 being No Self-Compassion and 5 being High Self-Compassion, where would you rate your current level of self-compassion:

What burdens - if any - are you carrying that are weighing you down and keeping you from being more self-compassionate? Where in your life do you need to give yourself permission to be more compassionate with yourself?

Where in your life do you need to be more generous with yourself? Name at least one specific area that you could focus on over the next week that would shift how you experience compassion for yourself in new ways.
Compassion and Work

Instructions
For many of us, work is place where we spend an enormous amount of our time. For some of us, work is a space of thriving. For others, a place of depletion. Often, these experiences come in cycles and are rooted in moments. These moments can be personal- they ultimately effect how we lead and what work feels like. Think through the following questions and reflect on where in your professional life you are building the ability to share compassion and avoid burnout.

*What are the strengths that you uniquely bring into your work and workplace and how do they impact those around you?*

*Name two strengths you are most proud of bringing to your work environment.*

*What about your work can result in feelings of burnout (be as specific as you can)?*

*What resources could you leverage, or draw from, that would result in higher levels of compassion in your work instead of experiencing burnout? Are there boundaries you need to put into place or positive habits that could help?*
Compassion and Family

Instructions
Some of us have families and others have circles of loved ones that we spend time in. At times, however - family and friends can deplete us. Without the proper boundaries in place, compassion can be difficult to extend. However, when we are clear about those boundaries and what we need to be fulfilled, we are kind to both ourselves and those we love.

*On a scale of 1 - 5, with 1 being No Boundaries and 5 being Clear Boundaries, what is your current level of ability to extend your resources to your family without feeling burned out:*

*Over the last few weeks, can you think of a specific time where you practiced compassion with someone in your circle. How did you do it and how did you feel afterward?*

*Are there habits in your life that are holding you back from being more compassionate with your family or friends or that may be leading you to experience burnout? If you only slightly changed those habits, how would your ability to extend compassion be different?*

*What is one immediate action step that you could take this week that would increase your ability to extend compassion to your family circle - however that might be defined?*
Summative Reflection: Questions to Help Make Meaning

As you look back over how you answered each question, how do you see or experience compassion being a force in your ability to positively lead?

What commitments are you willing to make today that could change how you experience compassion and lead more positively in each moment?

As you think about compassion - and burnout - we all have origin stories. We learn patterns from our history. Is there a place in your life where you need to turn a page or shift the story? Name that in the space below and include actionable steps you can take.

What reflections or moments have you had today that have shifted how you think about compassion and burnout and your ability to positively lead right now?
About Dr. Shuck