

Manage Your **Empathic Engagement** with **Trauma Energy** to Sustain Your Vitality

As a helping professional you use your empathy to connect with your clients, patients or students. When you extend yourself beyond your body to connect with others, you can sense what they are feeling. This empathic engagement is probably the most important tool you use in your work. Maintaining your connections in a sustainable way is necessary for longevity in any helping field, especially if you work with people who have experienced trauma.

Trauma Energy and Secondary Traumatization

Trauma energy has an intense quality because it contains all of the emotions that the person experienced and was not able to process at the time. The shock, fear, anger, betrayal and sadness stay in the body until the skills and support become available to release them. These pockets of energy may be active or become active during therapy, conscious movement and bodywork.

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releasing, it can cause secondary traumatization. They may feel tired or overwhelmed or experience physical pains or symptoms of post-traumatic stress. They may become cynical or closed off over time as a protective mechanism to avoid taking in too much energy. By developing your skills with energy you can find a balance in your empathy that is effective for you.

In a recent workshop I led, a child and family therapist recalled an awareness of a client's trauma going into her body. As her young client was talking, the therapist could feel a pain starting in her hip and she knew she would need to somehow remove it later. By practicing grounding and separating energy in the workshop, she realized that she didn't need to let the energy



enter her body in the first place. And if it did come in, she knew how to release it. The therapist was very excited when she learned how to be present with the energy while keeping it outside of her body.

Empathic Engagement Skills

Energetic skills to manage your empathic engagement include grounding, clearing, holding energetic boundaries and separating energy. Everyone has their own way of sensing and interpreting energy and you can use your awareness to find what works best for you. There is no right or wrong way to do it.

Grounding is the most important skill because energy needs a

place to go. Like the grounding wire on an electrical outlet, energetic grounding provides a path for discharged energy to get to the earth. As a practitioner you have permission to ground yourself and the room you work in. Grounding yourself allows you to discharge stress and act as a role model for others to ground themselves.

Energy takes the path of least resistance and it will flow through the person who is most grounded if their system is open to it. That will likely be you as the helper, so by grounding the room you work in you provide a path for client energy that is outside your body. You will take

in less energy and be just as present with people and the energy as it is released. Play around with the room grounding method at the end of this article and be sure to notice other ways that you are grounding yourself and rooms already.

Your empathy is critical for the helping work you do and the idea of actively managing your empathic engagement is new for a lot of people. But you can develop your skills and awareness so that your work continues to be effective, fulfilling and personally sustainable.

Try Grounding the Room

In a room where you are working with a client or group, imagine tree roots or a grounding cord going from the floor down into the earth. This provides a place for intense energy to go and you can set a specific intention if you wish. Imagine the energy flowing into the ground as it is released. Play around with it and try different things until you find what works best for you.

