

Beyond the Physical

Deeper Levels of Self-Care: Living the Questions

by Tom Myers

I have been a hands-on practitioner for 35 years now, so longevity in this business is on my mind. Too many talented people choose this trade and then exit within a few years.

Many of these practitioners are simply hurting after a few years in practice. Good body use is the first level of self-care, the nitty-gritty, physical aspect. Getting good, early training in dynamic biomechanics is absolutely your best investment in the longevity of your career. If you are hurting after work, then definitely start here.

However, let's look beyond the physical to deeper dimensions of self-care.

Emotional

The second level is emotional, and here the best form of self-care is to maintain good boundaries. Boundary issues are presented in school as the cornerstone of practice ethics, and indeed they are. What is not emphasized enough is that sticking to your own boundaries makes your practice a well-maintained vehicle to drive for many years.

If you find yourself dreading the arrival of certain clients or beating yourself up after work about others, get help with your boundaries. If you have that ever-so-common feeling of being squeezed between the implicit or explicit promises you make to your clients versus what you can actually professionally deliver, please do not live in this state—seek therapy or talk to someone with experience.

Mental

The third level of self-care is mental, and here the simple answer is continuing education. Refresh yourself early and often with new training—be that a class, mentoring, exchanging with other colleagues (and not only the same old friends). Budget for it. The surest sign of needing this level of self-care is feeling bored. If you are bored, take the most exciting class you can find. It is the 11th commandment, after all: "Thou Shalt Not Bore God."

Delving into something new keeps your mind alive, an essential part of the hum of an active practice.

Every once in a while, take a class that is totally left field for you, not your normal work. Even though you may not enjoy that class (in polarity, say) as much as you do your tried and true (another myofascial release course), you might be amazed at how much the new information will sneak into your work in unexpected ways.

Spiritual

The fourth level is spiritual, and here that oft-quoted exhortation to "live the questions" comes in. There is no simple or magic formula for renewing the spirit. For one, it requires attentive patience over time. It is also entirely individual, fully linked to your particular story.

Why are you doing this? What is unfinished in yourself? It is entirely fair—if you are heeding the boundaries we discussed above—to use your practice as a tool for your own spiritual development. Why not?

Being awake to and patient with your own inner pathways—whatever yours are—may be a little rough on the ego, but for your essence, it is one of the deepest joys of a healing practice.

We are so fortunate in that our chosen work is also a form of meditation. When you enter the trance of connection with another person, you can deny, but you cannot avoid, a connection with the divine. What use are you making of it? What questions are you living?

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