

WORKBOOK

ABC'S OF SELF-CARE

ADAPTABILITY

BOUNDARIES

COMPASSION

Adaptability

How do we find the **courage** and **capacity** to change our self-care methods in response to our changing lives?

Adaptability definition via dictionary.com:

"The quality of being able to adjust to new conditions" and "The capacity to be modified for a new use or purpose."

What is considered a "new condition?"

An environment with a baby, without a baby, with a partner, a new mood, receiving a phone call, not receiving a phone call, every moment of everyday, as monotonous and normal as some days may feel.

If adaptability means adjusting to new conditions, and new conditions arise all day long, then adaptability is essentially just like... living a life.

And yet, being the humans that we are, we exert a tremendous amount of energy RESISTING. More times than not, we pay a lot of lip service to the value of change and growth, all the while internally (or externally) kicking and screaming in response to discomfort, to growing pains. This can appear as complaints, worries, and self-doubt.

But don't fret! Adaptability has a partner, it's peace.

"Peace. It does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble, or hard work. It means to be in the midst of those things and still be calm in your heart." - Unknown

Many of us pride ourselves on going with the flow, changing with the seasons, doing what needs to be done.

But how do we FEEL in the midst of all this?

Is our pride our armor, when we actually feel like our insides are itching and we want to bust through the door, never looking back at our current situation?

Finding peace in your reality does NOT mean you're apathetic or indifferent or that you don't feel big feelings.

You ARE being gentle with yourself while experiencing your massive feelings. You ARE understanding that "this too shall pass."

Remember, although on individual journeys, we don't have to adapt alone.

How do I soften into this change?

Do I feel unprepared/unsupported for this transition or change, and am thus trying to distance myself from it by complaining, wallowing, or other avoidance tactics?

What do I need to do to feel more supported in where I am today?

Do I need to call someone?

Do I need to set a boundary?

Do I need an accountability partner?

Reflection:



Identify one event that happened in the last week that required you to adapt your behavior, language, or your perspective:



How did you feel when you had to adapt?



Did you experience resistance? How did it appear for you?
(ex: frustration, self-doubt, numbing behaviors)



In what way were your core values as a person expressed or not expressed through the way you adapted?



How do you feel after reflecting on this instance? Gentleness toward yourself, or muddled feelings? (any and all are "okay")

Boundaries

What boundaries do I need to establish in my life?

Something may immediately come to mind. Other ideas may wander in and out of your mind. Examine them with curiosity. This process includes deciding that a boundary even needs to be set, choosing WHO to set it with (yourself, your partner, a family member?), and HOW.

What the heck are boundaries? Take a looksie at these examples:

I will disable notifications on my phone and only check my e-mail twice per day.

I will ask my partner to put the children to bed instead of me doing it every night.

I will tell my mother to fly out 2 weeks after the birth of the baby instead of on my due date.

I will tell my girlfriend that I am unable to get together this week.

I will ask my partner for feedback instead of resorting to passive aggression.

I will request time off from work.

Check one, please:

_____ I don't need to establish any boundaries. (Yeah? Okay!)

_____ I can tell there are boundaries I need to establish but I can't figure out WHAT they are.

_____ I can tell there are boundaries I need to establish but I don't know WHO to establish them with.

_____ I already know the answer(s) but I'm trying to ignore this topic for as long as possible.

_____ None of the above for the moment, but I'm going to read on anyway.

Perfect. Now that we're starting on the same page...

~ When you fall asleep at night, what are you thinking about?

~ When you wake up in the morning, what's the first thought in your head?

~ Are these thoughts all consuming? Can you set them aside for a spell?

~ Is the fact that they're all consuming HELPFUL to you?

~ So, does an incessant thought inspire immediate action to move forward? If so, do you feel at peace with this action or does it cause you more anxiety? (ie: I HAVE to send that e-mail first thing in the morning and I've been thinking all night how I'm going to phrase this one thing and ahhh).

Reflecting on how you respond to other people's boundary setting, including when they ask for help, says a lot about where you currently are in your own boundary-setting practice.

Check your own responses when others draw boundaries or ask for help:

A coworker tells you that she isn't interested in coming to your child's first birthday party. You enjoy spending time with her. No, she doesn't have anything else to do, she just doesn't want to come.

- a) You're pissed. You've known her for 7 years, everyone else is coming, and it's YOUR baby's birthday for heaven's sake!
- b) You complain to your other co-workers about how she always seems to be selfish and a little aloof. You don't want her to come anyway.
- c) You tell yourself, "No one even cares about this party."
- d) You acknowledge that she is spending her time the way she wants, don't take it personally, and continue to be excited for your child's party.

At a family gathering, your sister appears upset, pulls you aside, and asks you to stop talking about politics around her middle school aged children. In college she wrote passionately for a feminist magazine and has always stood up for what she believes in.

- a) "They're not even listening to me! Look at them on their phones!"
- b) "What are you trying to teach them then? You've really toned it down lately and I don't think it's for the better."
- c) "I always seem to say the wrong thing. I can never do anything right."
- d) "Okay, I will."
- e) "Okay. I'm curious about your reasons. Could we talk about this some other time too?"

A friend leaves a voicemail, confiding that she is struggling with her marriage and needs someone to talk to. You haven't spoken with this friend in a couple months. You're swamped at work and your 3-year-old has started requiring an elaborate nighttime routine to fall asleep.

- a) You ignore her calls and texts. She'll just ask someone else anyway.
- b) You call back the next day, but end the conversation frustrated that she never once asked about your life.
- c) You explain your current life situation and that even though you wish you could support her, you think she should ask another friend who may be more emotionally available.
- d) "It sounds like you're struggling. What kind of support do you need?"
- e) "I'd love to offer you support. I'll call you this Saturday and we can chat for about 30 minutes."

Some responses point to avoidance, self-shaming, anger, and other coping mechanisms. Others demonstrate a wide variety of different boundary setting with yourself and people asking you for help.

What answers were you most drawn to?

Are any of these responses technically “wrong?” Nope.

Do some of them feel extreme to you? Super normal? Maybe both.

Should only one of the responses sit totally well with you? No. You’re a human. You feel how you feel. Be pissed or frustrated or confused or choose two answers.

MAIN POINT: Look for the ways in which the people around you are setting boundaries.

Maybe you’d NEVER miss a birthday party, but you have your own meanings attached to that choice. Their boundaries may look very different than yours. They may not use that term, but it can be boundary setting all the same. Reflect this back to them with appreciation.



“It seems like you’re setting a boundary here. Thanks for modeling that for me too. I appreciate it.”

“It sounds like you could use some help. Here is what I have to offer right now.”

Let’s turn the tables.

Imagine you’re about to ask someone for a favor. This is a person who has offered help, but isn’t already intertwined in your everyday life, like a parent or partner may be.

Oftentimes, it’s not that we fear how the other person will respond when we ask, but rather we fear how WE will react to their response. What if someone says “no”? What if their response is unenthusiastic and then you feel hurt? Sometimes NOT asking for help is a way to protect ourselves from rejection. “Oh, I’m asking for too much. They shouldn’t need to help me. I’m such a burden.”

And here we are again, tied back into worthiness. It’s a big, mixed, messy life, yeah?!

LISTEN UP! YOU ARE WORTHY AND CAPABLE OF SETTING BOUNDARIES.

EVEN IF YOU'RE THROWING YOUR HANDS UP RIGHT NOW
LIKE "I DON'T KNOW HOW TO EVEN DO THIS," IT'S OKAY!

Maintain motivation. Rally your cheerleading squad. Create your own team with mantras, signs around the house, and reminders on your phone.

Without clear expectations (another name for boundaries) in our relationships with ourselves and others, the ground is fertile for resentment, bitterness, and frustration to bloom. Take charge of your own darn garden. Take charge of your reactions and requests everyday, first with small, seemingly minuscule steps.

This, like everything else, is a PRACTICE. Practicing has no predetermined timeframe, no end date, it's lifelong. Help yourself maintain strength by sharing with others what you're trying to practice. Your voice matters.

Okay, time to check in with your recent past self...



In the past week, what boundary have you established with yourself or someone else?



What feelings arose after you set this boundary?



Are you at peace with the way you established this boundary? Is there something you will do differently next time? (ie: different language used, timing, tone of voice, asking for MORE than you did)

Where are you right now?



Where do you feel like you're stretching yourself thin? (ie: in a relationship, with your child, in a project or other commitment)



Is there anything that you keep telling yourself is "okay" and "not an issue" and will "just pass", but you're actually a bit skeptical of that?



If you could say whatever's on your mind to ONE person you want to set a boundary with, what would it be? (could be yourself, could be the mailman)

Compassion

How do I show more compassion to MYSELF?

We commonly use this word to describe how we want to engage with others in our lives. Every religion encourages compassion. It's a normalized, well established value in our society. But how does "compassion" come off the pages of books, out of rhetoric, and into our actual everyday lives?

Compassion arises when we see the suffering of others, or suffering within ourselves. We then offer understanding and kindness.

An *enemy* of compassion is self-deprecation and taking things personally. For example, when we identify with something (ie: take it personally), our lens makes it seem that whatever is occurring has some bearing on us as a person.

Ex: I forgot to let the dog out before rushing out of the house today - the dog peed on the carpet - I am so absent-minded - I have so much to do tonight and I can't find the carpet cleaner and this is such a burden on me - I'm a shit dog owner, how am I going to be a mother? (SEE?!?! That escalated quickly.)

Down the rabbit hole you go!

It was the perfect time to practice self-compassion after noting that the dog had done a number on the carpet.

Maybe you're reading this and you're like, "I never go deep down those rabbit holes, I never get down on myself. I'm so good at this compassion thing."

If that's your reality, okay! And... continue to practice.

Regardless of our culture's obsession with perfection and mastery, living a compassionate life is not to be mastered, nor can it be.

It is to be practiced. Let this be a reminder to you to continue practicing.

Exercise:

Visit www.self-compassion.org and "Test your level of compassion."

Their scoring system identifies "self-kindness," "common humanity," and "mindfulness." Alongside these qualities there's "self-judgment," "isolation," and "over-identification."

None of these are opposites. They all intermingle. Remember that even if your scores are high in "self-judgement" for example, you are not as far from "self-kindness" as you may believe.

As the site notes, practicing self-compassion intentionally can **cause discomfort and pain**, particularly at the beginning. The amount of self work that you see ahead of you may feel overwhelming and impossible to accomplish.

Here you go!

This is the perfect opportunity to show yourself compassion. The habit pattern of your mind is to fix, produce, manage, and when this doesn't happen in expected ways and in specific timelines, we become deflated. And the cycle goes on and on, week after week. You are not alone in this cycle. *We have all been taught for years to operate this way.*

Reflection:



Think about one of the most prominent mental chatter topics for you. Where does your mind go when all is quiet? Do you notice any themes?



Imagine a friend comes to you, confiding in you about their own incessant mental patterns/chatter, demons, and self image. How do you best listen to them? What do you say in response?



Identify THREE words or phrases that you want to remind yourself to keep in mind, or say to yourself more frequently (heck, everyday).

I'm proud of you for getting this far.

Go forth and use the ABC's of self-care as you will. Please, create your own. Someone else's words and thoughts may strike a chord and inspire you, but what YOU produce and claim will truly, deeply resonate with you.

I believe these tenets form a basis.

With self-care in mind, “self-management” occurs when you are aligned with your values and living life attuned to these. Management may include choosing to nourish yourself with certain books, TV, people, food, and activities that align with your ideal way of being. It can look like discipline, whether it's a time limit on using social media, running every morning, or choosing to use particular self-talk.

*This is hard work you're doing.
Continue to practice.*

