



The Sustainable Helper  
**Workbook**



Amanda Rocheleau, BSW, MSW, RSW



*Hey  
there!*

## WELCOME TO YOUR HEALING JOURNEY

My name is Amanda. I am a Registered Social Worker in Ontario, Canada and a certified Compassion Fatigue Specialist. I specialize in supporting helping professionals prevent and recover from stress related issues as a result of their helping roles.

I am passionate about my work as a therapist and trainer because I believe that your psychological health and safety is important. My mission is to support helpers by teaching strategies for integrating effective wellness practices to help prevent and recover from empathy-based stress syndromes and burnout.

This workbook was designed to help you explore sustainable solutions so that you can strive to be the awesome, compassionate helper that you are meant to be, and still maintain your own wellness in the process.

# How To Use This Workbook: Hardcopy vs. Digital

You have the option of **printing this workbook** and filling out the worksheets by hand or **downloading a digital copy** and completing the worksheets by typing directly in the PDF.

See below for instructions on how to navigate this workbook in either format.

## *Hardcopy*

This work book can be printed in its entirety or individual worksheets can be printed as often as you need them. Throughout this workbook I have included a number of hyperlinks which lead to online resources. If you have printed a copy of this workbook, you will be able to access these same resources by visiting my website at <https://www.amandarocheleau.com/free-resources>

When you come across a page of this workbook that includes hyperlinks, you will see a reminder of my website link to ensure that you have access.

## *Digital*

### **Hyperlinks**

If you are using this workbook digitally, you will be able to click hyperlinks that bring you directly to various worksheets and online resources.

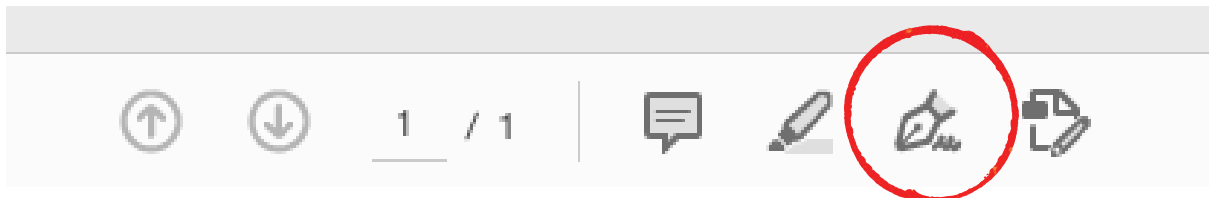
### **Filling in Worksheets**

There are a number of worksheets and activities throughout this workbook. You can type into these worksheets by opening the document with Adobe Acrobat Reader and following the steps on the next page.

# Using This Workbook Digitally

Begin by opening this workbook in Adobe Acrobat Reader

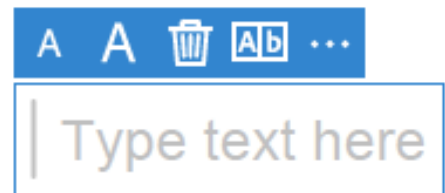
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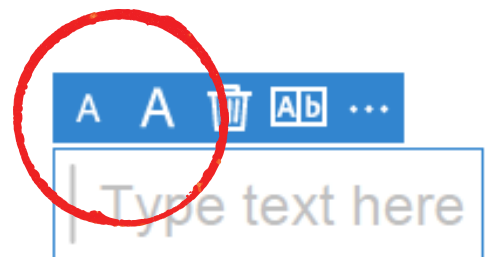
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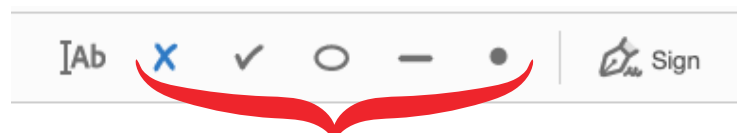
**03** Click anywhere on the page where you would like to type and a blue box will appear



**04** Click the small "A" to make your font smaller and the larger "A" to increase size

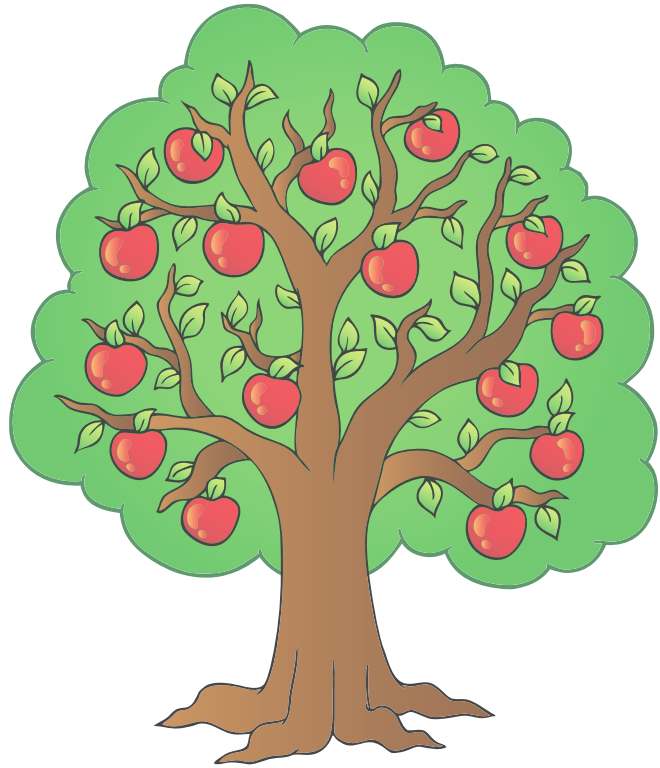


**05** Click the X, checkmark, circle, line or dot to add any of these symbols to your notes



**06** Save your work

# What does it mean to be a sustainable helper?



Helping professionals are often very comfortable and proficient with giving to others in need, but we also need to learn to take what we need to sustain our health and maintain a certain level of functioning. If we give too much to others without taking time to regenerate our inner resources, we will feel depleted and exhausted.

An apple tree, for example, can only thrive and produce fruit if it has what it needs - light, air, water, nutrients, and space to grow. Its sustainability is dependent on the continuation of the natural resources it can take in, and it continues to take everything it needs so that it, in turn, can produce additional resources to share with the world.

Helping professionals are the same. We can only keep giving to others in a sustainable way if we learn to take in what we need in a sustainable way.



*If you don't take time for wellness, you will be forced to take time for illness.*

# 1

## Chapter 1

# Recognize



It is important to understand the psychological health risks that come with being a helping professional. We often have a heavy workload and perform very psychologically demanding tasks. We not only experience our own work-related stress but we are also often working with people who are stressed, grieving, traumatized and experiencing mental illness too. Our empathetic response can lead to secondary wounding and leave helpers feeling emotionally vulnerable or even injured. This is often referred to as empathy-based stress and is an inevitable experience if we do human service work in a compassionate way.

It is really important that we begin by recognizing the potential (and likely) psychological impact that comes with our professional roles so that we can remain aware and intentionally working on maintaining our wellbeing.

**Self-Monitoring** is a skill that can assist you in identifying whether you are helping others in a sustainable way. Self-monitoring involves collecting information and being curious about yourself without judgement. You can check-in with yourself on a regular basis by assessing how you are doing physically, mentally and behaviourally. The following worksheets can help.

# What is Burnout, Vicarious Trauma, Secondary Traumatic Stress and Compassion Fatigue?



## Burnout

When we experience physical & emotional exhaustion as a result of prolonged stress & frustration. It is a syndrome resulting from long chronic stress episodes without adequate and regular stress recovery or support.



## Vicarious Trauma

When repetitive exposure to trauma information transforms our perspective of ourselves, the world and our work, and we adopt a negative or fearful point of view.

## Secondary Traumatic Stress

When an individual experiences a stress response (physiologically, emotionally, and/or behaviorally) after witnessing, listening, reading or learning about trauma.



## Compassion Fatigue

Compassion fatigue is not the loss of compassion for others, but rather, an increase in frustration that interferes with our ability to respond compassionately. Essentially, we become tired of caring.

# Common Symptoms

## ◆ Burnout

Common symptoms of burnout include feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; increased mental distance from work/role or feelings of negativism or cynicism; and reduced sense of efficacy and confidence.

## ◆ Vicarious Trauma and Secondary Traumatic Stress

Common symptoms of vicarious trauma include taking on the views of the traumatized person and seeing the world as a dangerous place. This can include feelings of hopelessness, frustration, and fear.

Common symptoms of secondary trauma stress include having difficulty regulating yourself back to homeostasis (a stable, relaxed state).

Individuals can feel trapped in a state of stress, be pre-occupied with traumatic information, or feel avoidant and disengaged.

## ◆ Compassion Fatigue

Common symptoms of compassion fatigue include feeling less sensitive and responsive to the suffering of others, feeling cynical and detached, hopeless and discouraged.

*Symptoms are like common ingredients in a recipe. Assessment tools give us a general idea of what to look out for but we are all unique. Use the following worksheets in this chapter to assess your own personal warning signs.*







# Self-Assessments



Self-assessments can be beneficial for self-monitoring and collecting data about ourselves. These can help you identify your strengths and behaviours to monitor.

*If you printed this workbook, visit <https://www.amandarocheleau.com/free-resources> to access these resources online.*

*If you are using this workbook digitally, click the boxes to open the hyperlink.*

## Professional Quality of Life Scale (PROQOL)

Measures your compassion satisfaction, burnout and secondary traumatic stress.

## Compassion Fatigue Self-Test

Measure behaviors and experiences that can lead to compassion fatigue

## Mood Tracker

Track your daily mood, major symptoms, behaviours and activities.

## Stress and Burnout Questionnaire

This questionnaire will help you discover the warning signals of excessive stress

## Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale

Assess your level of secondary traumatic stress.

# Personal Warning Signs

Symptoms can appear on a continuum of intensity and act as warning signs for traumatization or further complications in one's psychological or physical health.



Psychological Symptoms

- **Thoughts**
- **Beliefs**
- **Feelings**

Physical Symptoms

- **Health**
- **Sensations in the body**
- **Sleep**
- **Appetite**

Behavioural Symptoms

- **Decisions**
- **Actions**
- **Social interactions**
- **Professional conduct**

What are your psychological, physical and behavioural symptoms in the green, yellow and red zones?

The **green zone** doesn't indicate an absence of stress, but rather an ability to work through it.

Many of us are aware of our **red zone** symptoms, and it's equally important to understand what wellness looks like for you.

# Warning Signs

What are your warning signs in the green, yellow, and red zones?

Write them down on this worksheet

## Green

Thoughts/Feelings

## Yellow

Thoughts/Feelings

## Red

Thoughts/Feelings

Physical Symptoms

Physical Symptoms

Physical Symptoms

Behavioural Symptoms

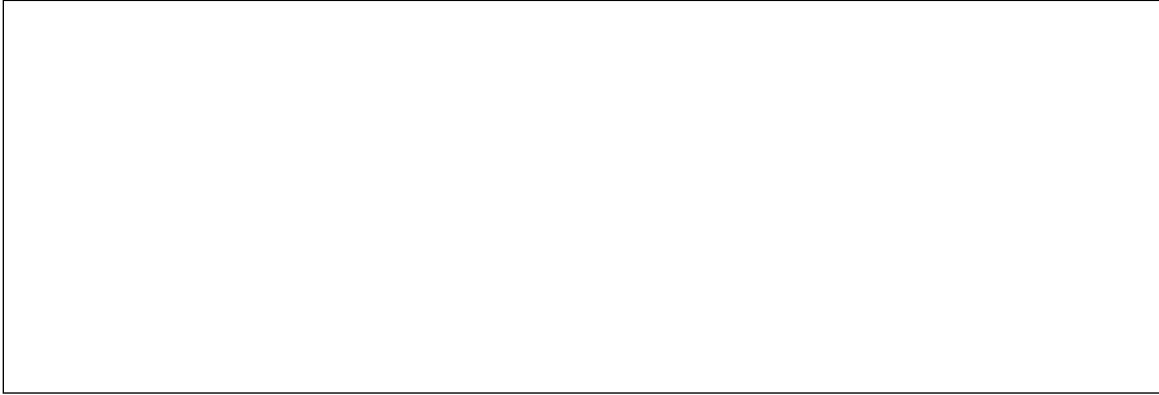
Behavioural Symptoms

Behavioural Symptoms

# Recognize Mindful Moment

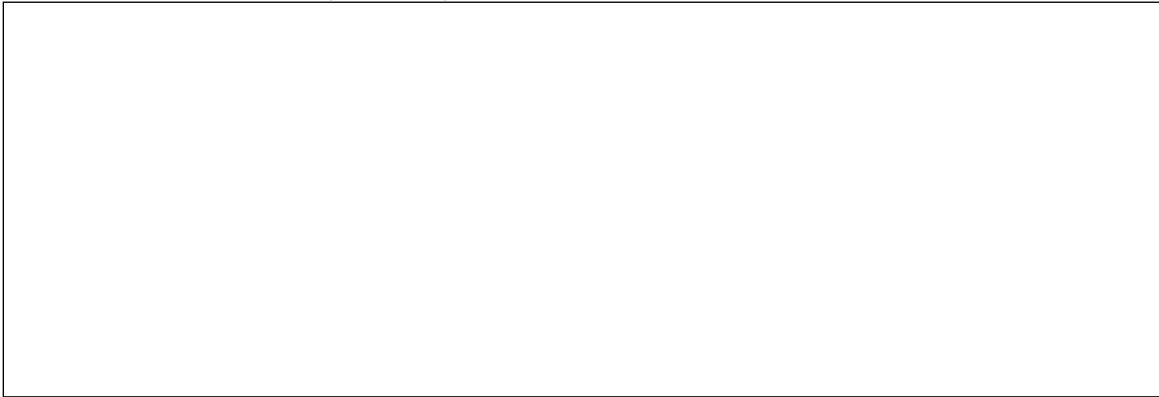
## What am I feeling?

Consider your emotions and mood.



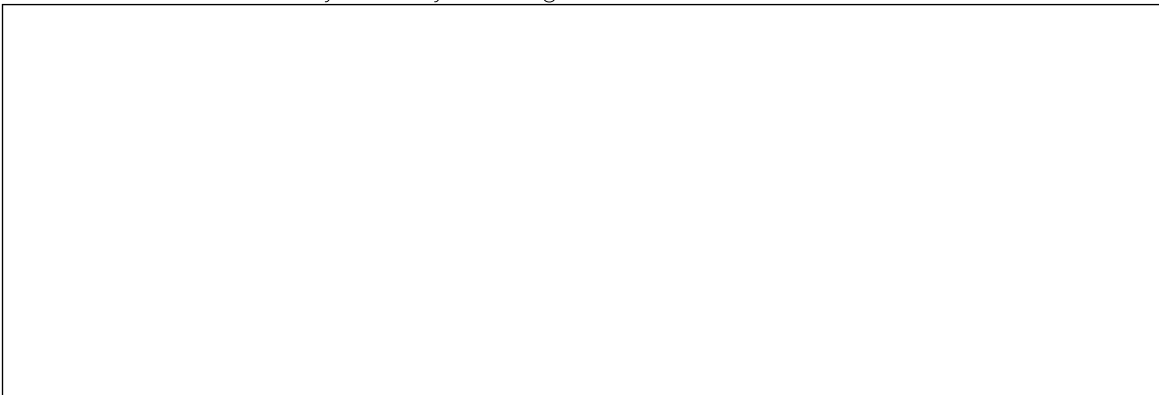
## What am I thinking?

Consider your inner monologue, thoughts and beliefs.



## What is happening in my body?

Consider sensations, how your body is feeling and overall health.





# 2

## Chapter 2

# Reverse



Once you recognize your warning signs, you can take action to reverse back towards the green zone and improved psychological health. But change can be a tricky thing. Often times, people think that big outcomes require big changes, but this often means we end up making plans that we can't realistically sustain over time.

In reality, the accumulation of small behavioural changes actually attribute to the most sustainable growth. If we take a simple act of wellness and repeat it often, we form healthy habits that then make up a healthy lifestyle. We want to be able to integrate these wellness practices right into our daily lives, instead of always waiting for a break in the stress to finally be able to relax. As you may have discovered already, that break can often feel just out of reach!

This chapter provides worksheets that can help you identify some simple practices that will contribute to enhancing your wellness by doing the small things on a regular basis.

# Complete the Stress Cycle

Even when a stressor is long gone, we can still end up *stuck* in stress. Practice **regulating** often to help break the stress cycle and replenish your physical and emotional resources.



## Slow down your breathing

- Hit the pause button on what you're doing, just sit comfortably and bring your attention to your breath. Slowly inhale and then slowly exhale at least a few times. This signals the nervous system to send a message to your brain that you're not in danger.



## Physical activity

- Yoga; walk; run; bike; dance; swim; play with your children or pets; etc.

## Engage your body

- Tune in to your 5 senses; shake your arms and legs; place your hand on your heart; do a body scan while relaxing each part of your body; etc.



## Connection

- Enjoy the presence of another person; connect with a happy memory; hold an object that has sentimental value; let someone know you could use some support; reflect on your core values and connect back to your purpose; etc



## Tranquil Rest

- Sit in a restful manner while intentionally trying to truly relax. Rest your body, rest your mind. Put away distractions, the phone and the to-do list, and just drop into a restorative, quiet moment for yourself.



## Self-Compassion

- Try showing yourself the same compassion that you offer others. Offer yourself understanding, forgiveness, comfort and kindness.

## Gratitude

- Commit to reflecting on the good in your life each day. Scan the world for 3 positive things and really embrace the feeling of gratitude

# Reversing Your Warning Signs

In the previous chapter you listed your warning signs. Now take a moment to reflect on the strategies that you can use to reverse your yellow or red zone warning signs. For example, if my warning sign is that I raise my voice with my family, my reverse strategy could be to take a time out and focus on my breathing.

Warning Sign	Reverse Strategy



*Try to make a clear and consistent association between each warning sign and reverse strategy. Small changes can have big impacts. Remember that this takes time, practice and self-love.*





# The Mindful S.T.O.P.

 **Stop** what you are doing

 **Take** a deep breath (or two)

 **Observe** your experience and notice if there is a familiar warning sign

 **Proceed** intentionally with a reverse strategy



Reverse

# Mindful Moment

What do I want to feel today?

What might support me in cultivating that?

What commitment can I make to myself today?

# My Self-Care

Take a moment to reflect on how you currently engage in self-care and which forms of self-care below you can incorporate in your life:

## Physical Self-Care

Exercise, massage, sleep, taking a break from the screen, getting the medical care you need, eating healthy, dancing, walking, etc.

What I can incorporate in my life:

## Psychological Self-Care

Making time for self-reflection, writing in a journal, reading literature that is unrelated to work, therapy, self-help books, being curious, etc.

## Emotional Self-Care

Spend time with others whose company you enjoy, praise yourself, allow yourself to cry, find things that make you laugh, etc.

## Spiritual Self-Care

Make time for reflection, spend time with nature, find a spiritual connection or community, meditate, pray, sing, be open to inspiration, etc.

## Workplace or Professional Self-Care

Take a lunch break, chat with co-workers, set limits with your clients and colleagues, arrange your workspace so it is comfortable, have a peer support group, etc.

Adapted from: Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization. Saakvitne, Pearlman & Staff of TSI/CAAP (Norton, 1996)

W e e k l y

# Self-Care Commitment Tracker

P R I O R I T I E S :

M O N D A Y :

T U E S D A Y :

W E D N E S D A Y :

T H U R S D A Y :

N O T E S :

F R I D A Y :

S A T U R D A Y :

S U N D A Y :



# 3 Chapter 3 Resiliency



Resilience is not the ability to live “stress-free” but rather a process of positive adaptation before, during and after stressful experiences. Increasing your resilience takes time and intentionality.

People can become more resilient by adopting a set of flexible cognitive, behavioural and emotional responses to acute or chronic stressors that allow them to anticipate, cope with and recover from the effects of adversity. In other words, we must be careful not to get stuck in patterns where we continuously try to avoid the unpleasant parts of life. As human beings, suffering is inevitable but if we can learn to stay present with these experiences without letting them take over we can actually experience personal growth and feel more resilient.

As helpers, we also bear witness to the suffering of others on a regular basis. Occasionally, over time, we become discouraged and disheartened through all this exposure. But we must develop our awareness to actually see the resiliency in these encounters as well. Despite their struggle, they are there with you and asking for help because they haven't given up. Witnessing their efforts to overcome adversity and actually reflecting back to them how we see their strength and resiliency can have a positive impact on us as well. We can absorb that strength we see in them and it can grow into compassion with us.

# What can you do to cultivate resiliency?



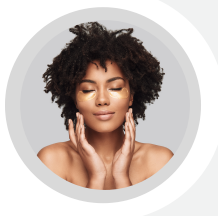
Believe that you have the power to do something to help yourself get through. Honour your own strengths and ways of coping.



Cultivate supportive relationships in your life and really lean into them. Challenge yourself to reach out to others often and build strong connections with people in your professional and personal life that make you feel comfortable and safe.



Ask for help. I mean, really let people in to support you and don't wait until you are so sick and broken that you have no choice but to accept it. Ask for help, collaborate, delegate and share the load on a regular basis.



Be in a caring relationship...with yourself. Be authentically you and accept yourself as a flawed being. Cultivate self-awareness by being curious about what makes you "tick" and cultivate self-compassion by being kind and non-judgmental.

*Take some time to get to know yourself by writing down some of your resiliency factors in the following worksheets.*



# My Values and Beliefs

Our values are the things that we consider most important in life. Clarifying what they are can help us create a sense of purpose in our work and life.

## List your core values

What you believe matters most in your life

01

02

03

## List your Inner Resources

Qualities, strengths, capabilities, traits, skills, and special assets

01

02

03

## List your Beliefs about your Purpose

What you believe is fundamentally guiding you in your work

01

02

03



# My People

Helpers need help too. You don't always have to be the one providing support and care.

You can receive support, ask for help and lean on others too.

All human beings (even helpers) need their people - those that work to understand us and care for us.

Ways that I can ask for support:

My People who will offer me support if I ask:

01

02

03

04

05

06

I will be sure to reach out for support when I am going through things like:

# My Needs



*Self-Care is the deliberate practice of knowing your needs and desires, taking responsibility for them, and then living your life in a way that honours them.*

## What do you need?

In order to be a Sustainable Helper, you need to replenish your inner resources. So you have to get in the habit of asking yourself "what do I need?" Another way of asking it is "what are my unmet needs?"

Self-care is continuously checking in with ourselves and then taking time and energy to tend to unmet needs.

These questions can help us with self-reflection:

*Am I considering my own needs each day, or just someone else's?*

*What brings me joy?*

*What nourishes me?*

*What do I wish I could do more of?*

*What is getting in the way of me meeting my needs?*

*How am I feeling physically? What does my body need?*

*What kind of rest do I need?*

*What kind of nourishment do I need?*

*What does my mind need?*

*How am I doing socially?*



# Tips for Success

01

Cultivate a mindset that fosters resiliency. In other words, believe that you are capable of coping.



02

Develop daily practices and rituals that include self-care and self-compassion. Small gestures go a long way.



03

Remember that self-care is rarely done alone. We need support to be able to take time to care for ourselves. Don't be afraid to ask for help.



04

Remember that we are helpers, not heroes. You are imperfect, vulnerable human being as well. Treat yourself with kindness and respect.



# My Daily Check-In

Energy Level          

MY BODY IS TELLING ME:

MY MOOD:



MY MOOD IS TELLING ME:

MY PRIORITIES TODAY

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

I AM GRATEFUL FOR:

- 
- 
- 

WAYS I SHOW MYSELF CARE:

- 
- 
-

Resiliency

# Mindful Moment

What ways did I adapt when I faced challenges ?

How did I show myself comfort and care?

How did I honour my values and purpose today?





I hope that this workbook has been helpful for you.  
There are many more helpful resources available for you on my  
website, [www.amandrocheleau.com](http://www.amandrocheleau.com)

I want to thank Vanessa Bascelli, the amazing MSW student that helped  
me put this workbook together and left it as a legacy after her  
placement.

I also want to thank you for all that you do as a helping professional.  
I am wishing you all wellness.

Take gentle care,  
*Amanda Rocheleau*

*let's connect*  
@compassionfatiguetherapy

