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# The Hidden Costs of Empathic Healing

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**Y**ears ago I received a call from a practitioner who was panicked about the sustainability of her client practice. As a PhD psychologist, she knew the implications of countertransference and maintained impeccable personal and professional boundaries — yet she was burning out. At risk was her ability to make a living as well as to be a neutral, effective resource to her clients. This was a critical juncture in her professional life.

She suspected that her empathy technique was a major factor in bringing her to the precipice of personal disaster. Her academic and clinical training reinforced her natural tendency to take on and hold other people's emotions. Emotions that, in any therapy practice, run the gamut from stress and fear to rage, trauma and grief.

This burnout story is one I have heard repeatedly from clinical, therapeutic, alternative and allopathic practitioners. Their training either ignores or champions behaviors that can create an enormous tax on practitioners' well-being. This problem exists in any helping profession: bodywork, fitness and yoga practices, Reiki Masters, spiritual counselors and healing touch. Because practitioners assist, support, advocate, advise and guide, they are potentially awash in their clients' emotions.

This therapist's story is more than 25 years old. Today, she is still practicing. She uses simple, profound self-care and energy-hygiene practices to hold her energetic space and to interact without taking emotional energy into her field. She has made the transition from being an empathic healer,<sup>1</sup> feeling someone else's feelings, into a compassionate practitioner — observing, witnessing and holding space for clients to acknowledge and maintain sovereignty, responsibility and relationship to their emotions and experience.

*She uses simple, profound self-care and energy-hygiene practices to hold her energetic space and to interact without taking emotional energy into her field.*



The costs of burnout are clear. But there is more to consider. There are hidden costs and unintended consequences. Over time, empathic healing can skew the accuracy of what a practitioner senses from clients because the content is overlaid with similar energies from other client cases over the course of years of practice.

People exchange energy all the time. We all have others' energy in our field. For those in helping and healing professions, the sheer volume becomes significant. Some practitioners may notice they feel exhilarated and amped up by some clients and depleted by others; however, at other times it can be challenging to differentiate your energy from that of your clients.

Your emotions can be amplified when you take in similar emotional content from others. By relating to clients empathically, you allow their anger, fear, anxiety, depression to exacerbate your own.

Without tools such as energy hygiene and clairvoyance, I would have merged energetically with each of those clients, displacing my own energy with theirs. Eventually there would be little of me left to notice I was gone! I would have been unable to perceive the most useful strategy for facilitating their process and evolution. Nor would I have had clear insights into which aspects of their energy were tied most directly to the source of their current experience.

When a practitioner senses into client stories, they pick up energy fragments from each scenario: pain fragments, anxiety fragments, rage fragments, fear fragments. They add up. And there is little thought to the accumulation of these energy fragments. They are held in the field and completely overlooked. But because these fragments coalesce and congeal, they can create malaise, illness or disturbance in the practitioner's field.

### *There is a common phenomenon of attracting clients with similar issues to your own.*

Successful, busy practitioners see up to 25-30 clients/week. Certain types of practitioners like chiropractors, doctors and nurses may see far more than that! They hear similar stories repeatedly over the years, relevant to the modality they practice. That is a lot of emotional energy to hold.

There is a common phenomenon of attracting clients with similar issues to your own. If a practitioner is anxious about money or relationship issues, an influx of money and relationship themes emerge in client cases. Vibrations attract similar vibrations,<sup>5</sup> creating a field of resonance. During the early stages of my very tightly and quietly held divorce, I arrived at my practice in Boston one day and sat across from seven clients who were in different stages of relationships ending.

Practitioners who use empathic or felt-sense tools to guide their assessment and treatment strategy can miss an important part of facilitating healing: determining the root cause. It takes internal clarity and aligned, conscious awareness to separate the energies of others and to elevate perspective beyond the empathic. When you can perceive a client scenario without an overlay of historical fragmented energies, you have access to refined and clear information about the situation, root cause and treatment strategy.


Practitioners who learn to shift their energy from empathic lower chakra felt sense to upper chakra perception and compassionate assessment routinely share their appreciation of the increased accuracy and ease in their work. They also escape the depletion that comes from taking on and holding





energetic fragments from their client caseloads. Here is a practice to shift from lower chakra, felt-sense awareness to the Compassion Center:

- Take a breath, take a moment.
- Bring your awareness to your 2nd chakra, 2 fingers below the navel.
- Imagine closing the chakra petals to 15-20%, to retain your emotional awareness and minimize felt-sense awareness.
- Bring your awareness to your upper chest, your compassion center.
- Using your breath, and perhaps placing your hand on your upper chest, imagine opening and expanding your compassion center.
- Stream rose quartz colored energy, the frequency of compassion, from the horizon into your compassion center.
- Notice the rose quartz energy stream generates a flow-state in your field, elevating your perspective and ability to connect and engage with others.

May all practitioners have the energetic tools they need to run their practices (and their lives) with clarity, vigor and authenticity! 



Learn more about author Jill Leigh at [EnergyHealingInstitute.Org.](https://energyhealinginstitute.org)

## References

1. Leigh, Jill. (2019). What is Your Vibration? Retrieved from <https://energyhealinginstitute.org/what-is-your-vibration/>.