

Description

Centering You!

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Introduction

It's uncomfortable and sometimes painful to know where midwives and student midwives sit between the societal assumption (It must be the most wonderful job in the world!) and the villainous status assigned when things don't go well or when expectations aren't met.[1] How do we care for ourselves and each other in this complexed and potentially damaging landscape?

As passionate, creative individuals, skilful in the emotional and spiritual work of being with women, it's not easy to be fully engaged in the deep emotional work of Midwifery whilst protecting ourselves from the potential moral injury and trauma of working in a system that doesn't always serve us or the families we care for. Unfortunately we are not always afforded the psychological safety at work that we deserve and would mitigate some of the injury caused.[2] Hopefully things are improving. In an ideal world we would feel psychologically safe in our workspace so that we can acknowledge as humans that we will make errors and things will not always go as planned. Having the love and support around us to feel confident in sharing our vulnerabilities and fears and create a safer space for ourselves and the families we look after is crucial to safety and wellbeing.[3]

Fill your love tanks – the joy is with the people

Connection with those we look after, those we work with, our friends and family is vital. Some connections will be fleeting, I remember smiling at a woman who was standing on a train station platform once, I was on the train. She smiled back at me when the train pulled away. I was shocked at the power of that shared smile and can still remember it. Other connections are deep rooted and life-changing and we may get less of those (a bit like countdown, you only get a few big ones from the top!). Invest in them, nurture them and let them nourish you. If someone fills your heart with laughter and joy, make sure you keep them close. As Ina May Gaskin advised 'keep your sense of humour',[4] the power of laughter is immeasurable and can be a protective factor to burn out and stress.[5]

Move your chair into the sun

Self-care is often used as a big stick for us to beat ourselves with, something else on the to-do list that personally I

struggle to maintain. However what I can manage are little moments of magic. A moment to breathe and look up at the sky when my husband encourages me to walk up a mountain, knowing how much I need to escape and feel the wind on my face. A moment of release whilst singing along to Billy Joel really loudly in the shower. A moment of relaxation when a hug goes on a little longer than expected, when that person is kind enough to take my weight for a few extra seconds and shows me with love and compassion that everything is going to be okay. Whatever that looks like to you, be it loving kindness meditation, preparing your favourite meal or engaging with nature, these moments sustain us. Seek them out, take control and move your chair into the sunshine, even if only for a minute.

Be brave and share with the people you trust; you don't have to go it alone. Nobody is expecting you to be perfect, we are glorious, messy, complicated, wonderful human beings and we learn so much from the things that don't go quite right, as painful as that can be. Be brave, be vulnerable and inspire others around you to do the same. **TPM**

> "If someone fills your heart with laughter and joy, make sure you keep them close."

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