



The Helper's Capacity Toolkit

Three practical tools for nurses, teachers, social workers, frontline workers, and clinicians · Created by Simar Gill Lowther, MACP, RP (CRPO)

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Helpers are often excellent at tracking everyone else's wellbeing and have little sense of their own. These tools are a starting point for checking in honestly. They are for reflection, not diagnosis.

Tool 1: The Capacity Check

Rate each statement for the **past four weeks**: 0 = rarely, 1 = sometimes, 2 = often, 3 = almost always.

#	Statement	Score (0-3)
1	I feel tired before my workday even begins.	
2	Rest on days off doesn't seem to restore me.	
3	I feel less patience or warmth toward the people I serve.	
4	I use sarcasm or distance to get through the day.	
5	I doubt that my work makes a real difference.	
6	I think about work when I'm trying to be with family or friends.	
7	I've let go of things that used to recharge me.	
8	My body is sending signals: headaches, tension, poor sleep, frequent illness.	
9	I feel guilty when I set a limit or say no.	
10	I've thought about leaving my field, not just my job.	

Total: _____ / 30

- **0-9 · Steady.** You likely have enough recovery built in. Keep protecting it.
- **10-19 · Stretched.** Your reserves are running low. This is the best time to make changes.
- **20-30 · Depleted.** You're giving far more than is coming back. Please don't wait this out alone.

Notice item 10 especially. Thinking of leaving your whole profession often signals moral distress or deep exhaustion, not a lack of calling.

Tool 2: The Drain and Refill Ledger

For one week, jot down what takes from you and what gives back. Rate each from 1 (a little) to 5 (a lot).

Day	What drained me	1–5	What refilled me	1–5
Mon				
Tue				
Wed				
Thu				
Fri				
Sat				
Sun				

At the end of the week, reflect:

1. Which drains are part of the job, and which are extra (unclear expectations, conflict, unpaid overtime, technology)?
2. Which refills actually restored me, and which just numbed me?
3. What is one drain I could reduce, delegate, or raise with my manager?
4. What is one refill I could protect in my calendar like an appointment?

Tool 3: The 90-Second Transition Reset

Use this between patients, classes, clients, or calls, or in the car before you walk into your home.

1. **Name it (10 sec).** Silently label what you're carrying: "That was heavy."
2. **Long exhale (30 sec).** Breathe in through your nose, take a small second sip of air, then exhale slowly through your mouth. Repeat three to five times.
3. **Shake it out (15 sec).** Roll your shoulders, unclench your jaw, open and close your hands.
4. **Close the loop (15 sec).** "I did what I could in that moment. I'm leaving this here for now."
5. **Arrive (20 sec).** Notice a sound, a colour, and your feet on the floor. Then set your next intention: "Now I'm going to listen" or "Now I'm home."

When to reach out

If your score lands in the Stretched or Depleted range, or what you feel at work is following you everywhere, support can help you sort out what needs to change.

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