

THE 4 TRAPS OF CARE-ING



These are the reflexive, unconscious compromises we make when the weight of our work becomes too heavy. They occur when our need for control, efficiency, or validation overrides the messy, inconvenient reality of the human need of connection, support, and belonging to be successful.

BETTER. **TEAMS** • **LEADERS** • **CULTURE** • **ENVIRONMENTS** • **OUTCOMES**

01 THE EMPATHY TRAP

We trade **compassion** for **empathy**. Because the work is hard and resources are scarce, we often default to conserving our energy rather than expending it. We settle for the passive act of “feeling for” someone, forgetting that we were called to “suffer with” them. In the face of difficult circumstances, we compromise on compassion and settle for the low bar of empathy.

Note: Empathy isn't bad—it's just not enough. When you notice empathy being used as a final solution, treat it as a starting point. Let empathy be the catalyst that moves you from feeling to acting. That is compassion at work.

03 THE ENTITLEMENT TRAP

We trade **resilience** for **entitlement**. We start to believe that because we are the “helper,” we are owed the trust and respect of those we serve. Instead of building connection, we require compliance. We stop working to earn the relationship and start expecting it as a given. We confuse the nature of resilience: instead of building a system of support that adapts to the unexpected, we demand that others adapt to us. When we feel entitled, we begin to believe that we deserve a “yes” from those we serve simply because we showed up.

Note: Entitlement is the opposite of resilience. When you feel frustrated that a client or colleague isn't “listening” to your expertise, remember: you aren't entitled to their trust. You have to earn it, every single day, regardless of your role.

02 THE AUTHORITY TRAP

We trade **authenticity** for **authority**. When our impact doesn't match our expectations, we lean on our titles, degrees, and credentials as evidence that we are “doing enough.” We start to believe that our influence comes from our position rather than our presence. We hide behind the limitations of our role instead of being honest about what we can actually offer. Because we cannot guarantee outcomes, we retreat into our professional armor, forgetting that true impact only happens when we are willing to be “actually and exactly” who we are.

Note: Authority is a tool, not a destination. When you feel the urge to hide behind your title to create distance, pause and ask: “Am I using my role to help, or to protect myself?” Own your “yes” and your “no.” Credentials and degrees don't change lives—authentic connections do.

04 THE ISOLATION TRAP

We trade **empowerment** for **isolation**. We fall into the trap of believing we are the sole solution to a problem. We stop looking for ways to engage the client's network—their family, community, or even our own colleagues—and instead try to carry the entire burden of care alone. We write people off too quickly, labeling them as “part of the problem” rather than potential partners in the solution. This doesn't just lead to burnout; it makes the work dependent on our own limited capacity.

Note: Empowerment is about expanding the safety net. If you find yourself carrying the weight of a client's success entirely on your own shoulders, you aren't empowering them—you are isolating yourself. Ask: “Who else can be part of this solution?”

WHAT TRAP ARE YOU DEALING WITH RIGHT NOW?

NAME IT. WRITE IT. SAY IT TO ONE PERSON THIS WEEK.
