

# Substance Use Clinician TOOLKIT

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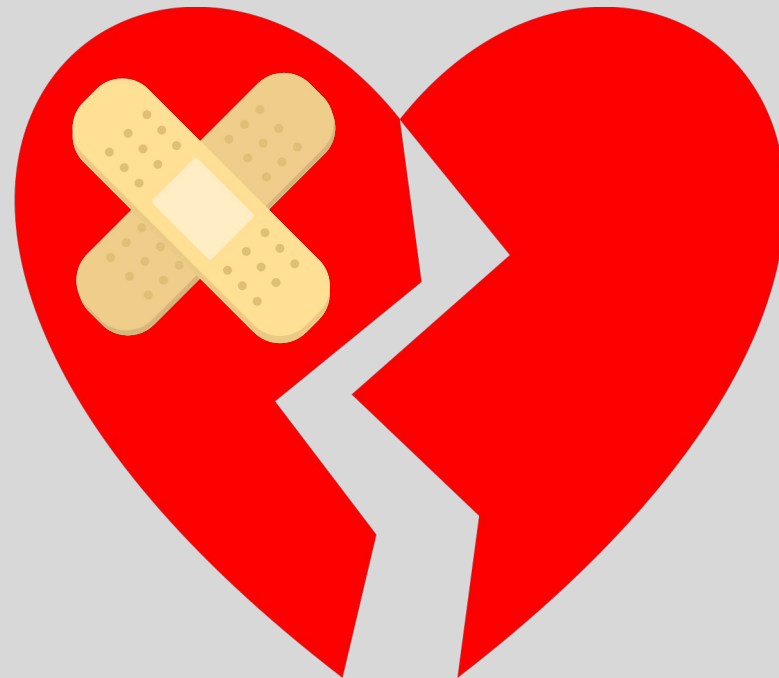
# Stoicism & Clinical Counselors

As Mental Health Counselors and/or Substance Use Clinicians, the pressure can feel encumbersome while our clients bring us the most difficult questions and issues their life has to offer; expecting us to have the answer. With no cure for addiction as of this time, a client returning to illicit substance use may feel like a professional failure as well. We may begin questioning our path in healthcare.

Stoicism can help us maintain self-care while thriving as Therapists.

In this toolkit, we'll talk about several strategies:

- *Take Care of your Big Heart*
- *Move Forward and Identify Action Steps*
- *See Your Challenges for What They Truly Are*

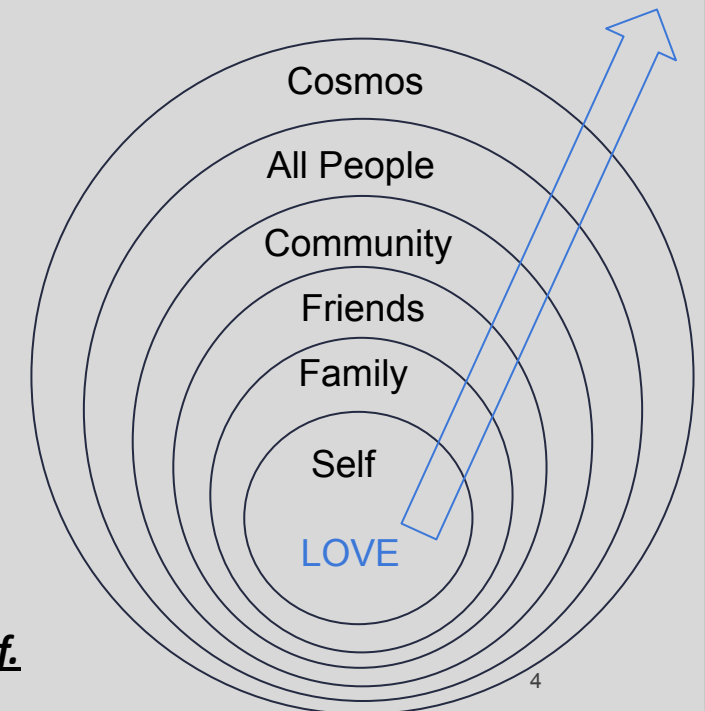


# The Cosmos Starts With You

- Our minds will be consistently challenged with choosing what seems to be the best interventions for our clients care; but what about the interventions we spring into action for our own care? Excellent client care will always begin with us and how excellent we can care for ourselves. To care for others we must first care for ourselves.
- **Cosmopolitanism** is the idea that we are all citizens to the same universe. It is the Stoic perspective of improving our relationships with family, friends, community, people, and even nature by first improving our relationship with our self. It is the practice of self-care with the understanding that we are better at caring for others when we first care for ourselves. Each category is known as a “Circle of Care”. There are 6 circles of care. You are the center circle of care: Self.

This is how it works: We take a “value” like love and then we apply this value in order

- 1.) Self – First we love ourselves before we give love to our family.
- 2.) Family – Family is next. After we love our family, we can move onto loving our friends.
- 3.) Friends – After we love our friends, we move onto loving our community and community members.
- 4.) Community – Then, we love the people within our community. This circle includes our clients.
- 5.) All people – Then we try to share this love with all people. Everyone in the world.
- 6.) Nature/Earth/Universe – Finally, we try to love the world.
- **REMEMBER: You are better at everything else you do in life if you first take care of yourself.**



# First Let Go, Then Act!

*"Of things, some are in our power, and others are not." Epictetus - Enchiridion*

**The Dichotomy of Control** is the most fundamental practice of Stoicism. It is the act of separating all events in life under two categories: what is within our control and what is not; and then taking action on what we can control. We can not control what our clients think, say, and do.

- **Benefit of Practice (What is Within Control - Focusing on Self, Reactions to Stuff, and Influence Upon the Cosmos):**

Increased ability to focus on changing treatment and trying new interventions, as well as allowing us to remain engaged in our work as many clients still require our full attention, and increases the energy and time to spend on self-care and the separation of work life and personal life.

- **Risk of Non Practice:**

Increased risk of anger/sadness/depression, burnout and fatigue, quitting our job(s), and even changing careers entirely. This includes the loss of the passion that once drove us to this field as it increases the risk of personalizing the work and adding hero like burdens onto us. This can effect interventions and emotional regulation at work and can increase the risk of projecting this abnormally inappropriate sense of responsibilities through outbursts and frustration onto our clients and our loved ones at home; outward to our circles of care all the way to the cosmos.

Within Control	Out of Control
1.) Our Response  <i>Use coping skills then respond</i>	1.) Outcome of Intervention
2.) Our Self  <i>Choices we make</i>	2.) Client Returns to Illicit Substance Use
3.) Our Influence  <i>Remember our values/virtues</i>	3.) What Clients Think, Say, and Do

# The Power of Perspective

*“...It requires no set material to work upon, but, under proper reservation, needs but the incitement to pursue, and makes matter for its activities out of every opposition. Even so a fire masters that which is cast upon it, and though a small flame would have been extinguished, your great blaze quickly makes the added fuel its own, consumes it, and grows mightier therefrom.” Marcus Aurelius - Meditations*



Our feelings will be the most viscerally true sensations we ever experience in life. However, if we change our perspective we can change how we feel. Stoicism provides us with a perspective that can help us see our challenges as Mental Health Clinicians for what they truly are; an opportunity.

- *Marcus Aurelius describes our problems and character with a metaphor:*

Our character is like a fire and our problems are like logs. When we approach our struggles and conquer them, it is like taking a log and throwing it in our fire. The obstacles become fuel. When we overcome these challenges they feed our character making our own flames warmer, bigger, brighter, and more resilient. Transforming from difficult issues to ash scattered in the wind. They charge the embers of our character and we endure because of it. In this regard, we should be seeing our problems in life for what they are; and opportunity to become the best versions of ourselves and the best therapists we can be. With this we can take our strifes and instead of avoiding them we can meet them with courage. Instead of loathing our struggles we can love them. We can love that we have an opportunity to test our might and add fuel to our flames.

- *The power of perspective is always in your pocket:*

A client is not a ‘problem’ client but rather a challenging case. Our identities are never defined by our most difficult issues and illnesses. A challenge is not scary but rather an opportunity. The opportunity to work hard today to secure who we will become tomorrow.

# Applying the 4 Cs of Stoicism

*Remember the 4 Cs of Stoicism from Stoicare.com? Let's apply them specifically to your role in healthcare.*

- **Character**

- Your true character shines in darkness. Be prepared for your character to be tested. Before you start your day consider contemplating how an excellent therapist behaves in the face of adversity. What kind of professional do you want to be?

- **Cosmos**

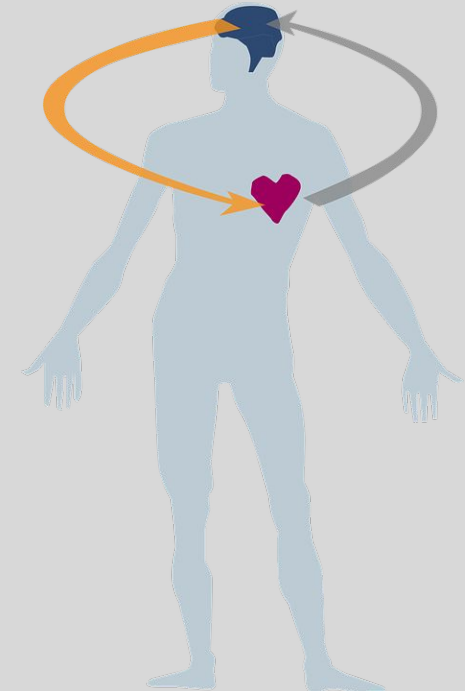
- You are at your highest performance when you first take care of yourself. Advocate for your needs both small and grand. Try asking for help or time off. Consider taking a personal day for self care or a vacation.

- **Control**

- Reminding ourselves that we can not control how our clients behavior and reactions first leads to acceptance and allows us to not absorb ineffective interventions as personal and professional attacks/failures.

- **Choice**

- Your choice is your action. Take action first on your self care, then on your clients care. Utilize your finite energy on what you can control and choose your next best intervention!



# Resources

- [The Enchiridion by Epictetus - The Internet Classics Archive](#)
- [Meditations by Marcus Aurelius](#)
- [The Philosophy of CBT by Donald Robertson](#)
- [The Art of Living by Epictetus](#)
- [Stoicism and the Art of Archery by Modern Stoicism](#)
- [Stoic Blogs, Grief & Recovery Classes, Charity Events, and Stoic Mentorship at StoicArcherAcademy.com](#)



# Inspiration

- “First say to yourself what you would be; then go do what you have to do.”

- Epictetus

- “No wind blows in favor of a ship without direction”

- Seneca

- “Take the case of one whose task it is to shoot a spear or arrow straight at some target. One’s ultimate aim is to do all in one’s power to shoot straight, and the same applies with our ultimate goal. In this kind of example, it is to shoot straight that one must do all one can; nonetheless, it is to do all one can to accomplish the task that is really the ultimate aim. It is just the same with what we call the supreme good in life. To actually hit the target is, as we say, to be selected but not sought.”

- Cicero

