

## **Separation and Restoration**

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Before a therapist is able to respond to a client, the therapist must care for his or herself. It is a matter of ethics. It is not ethical to respond to the suffering Other when the therapist can also qualify as a sufferer. Through self-care, the therapist is able to maintain separation from clients. Separation prepares a therapist to ethically respond, but separation can be disrupted by factors such as vicarious trauma. Encountering issues like vicarious trauma is the nature of being a therapist, and is a reason why self-care is practiced daily to maintain healthy separation. As an aspiring therapist, I learned this lesson early on. An experience with vicarious trauma impacted me after hearing the story of a small girl's sexual abuse. Through hearing her story, I lost my sense of separation. After this experience, I was able to create a self-care practice. Self-care allowed me to regain my separation before being able to ethically respond to other clients. The philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas supports my experience with vicarious trauma and the self-care practice that allowed me to reestablish my sense of separation. Through the support of Emmanuel Levinas' writings, this paper emphasizes the concept that self-care and separation precede ethics.