The One Word English Sorely Needs

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http://www.amazon.com/Destructive-Emotions-Scientific-Dialogue-Dalai/dp/0553381059/ref=sr\_1\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1441221506&sr=1-1&keywords=destructive+emotions&pebp=1441221514959&perid=0QMRP47GRB5N5Z0GQ3J6

In a scientific dialogue amongst social scientists and the Dalai Lama, published under the title *Destructive Emotions* the notion of American compassion was raised.  It was explained that in the U.S., many people have great compassion for others, yet suffer greatly with low self-worth and self-contempt.   Our American understanding of compassion applies only to others and not to the self.   On hearing this, the Dalai Lama was incredulous:  the very idea of self-loathing was foreign to him. He understands that caring for oneself and others is fundamental to human existence, and to leave out the SELF in the Western view of compassion is a drastic omission.   That is, compassion is more than feeling empathy, but a concerned, heartfelt caring; a wanting to do something to relieve the person's suffering. And that holds whether the being involved is oneself,   someone else or an animal you care for. Perhaps we need a new word that sets our own wellbeing as the highest priority, along with the wellbeing of others.

I have a client I work with who is a self-described “care-aholic” in which she has created a life pattern of putting the needs of others before her own.  Daily caretaking an abusive elderly father and being expected to care for grandkids on a moment’s notice, she realized her feelings of resentment and anger were not good for her. She began to direct her compassion toward herself. She thoughtfully decided ahead of time what she was willing to do for others, in a resentment-free way. She set boundaries on how and when she was to visit her father (leaves the moment it turns abusive) , and takes the grandkids only on her terms. She told her loved ones in a firm and friendly way what she was willing to do and drastically cut back on the caretaking and the worrying over others. Slowly, over time she has reclaimed herself and feels empowered and strong, has far more positive emotions and her relationships have improved.   She has demonstrated firsthand that self-love is not always egotistical, it involves respecting the self.

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