



understanding care

 HeartMath®



## Understanding Care

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## Understanding Care

Care is a valuable and vital resource, more precious than people know. It revitalizes you and acts as a soothing tonic for the human system. The care we feel for others is also a powerful motivator in our lives. It is simply one of the most important and essential aspects of being human.

Care inspires and gently reassures us. Lending us a feeling of security and support, care reinforces our connection with others. Not only is it one of the best things we can do for our health, but it feels good—whether we're giving or receiving care.

### Part I: What is Care?

Have you ever noticed that when you care for someone else, it has a regenerative, uplifting effect on you? The experience is tangible. It goes directly to our hearts. And it's an experience we can pass on to someone else.

When we care for someone, we often express our feelings quite naturally by touching them. We automatically hug our friends or pat them on the back. In conversation, we might touch their arm to emphasize a point or share a joke. When we're introduced, even to strangers, we shake their hands—a moment of contact that makes a connection.

Anyone can see the bounce in your step, the glow in your eyes or the sheer happiness that emanates from you, when you're feeling a core

heart emotion like sincere care. Although they're not as visible to the naked eye, the physiological effects are equally dramatic. Your body's health and vitality are directly improved while you are holding a feeling like care in your heart.

A feeling like care, as well as other positive emotions like love, compassion, non-judgment, forgiveness and appreciation, increases the synchronization and coherence in your heart's rhythmic patterns. Coherent heart rhythms are good for the physical heart and the nervous system. They also trigger hormones that are regenerative. Coherent heart rhythms have a dynamic effect on improving brain function. In essence, care is regenerative for both the sender and the receiver.

### **The Power of Care**

Think about the people in your life that had the most positive influence on you. Perhaps it was a parent or grandparent, a teacher or a mentor. In thinking about them and their influence on you, you'll probably see that it was their care for you that made such a difference in your life.

Here's an example that illustrates the power of one caring gesture. It's a story presented in the book *The HeartMath Solution*, by co-author Howard Martin.

Happily entertaining himself with spit wads one day in fourth grade, Howard sat smiling in the back of the room. "Before too long, my teacher had had enough. She took me to the old

stucco wall at the back of the room. I think the wall was originally white, but by the time my class came along, it was three shades of brown. The teacher handed me a small pail of water and a rag and told me to start cleaning the wall that was so encrusted with dirt.

"An energetic fourth grader, looking for an outlet, I tackled the problem with both hands. An hour later I was still working away. All my attention was focused on digging the dirt out of the crevices in that rough, stucco wall.

"'You know,' my teacher said casually, 'if you work as hard at everything in life as you're working on that wall, you will be a very successful man.'

"She wasn't trying to boost my morale with exaggerated praise or sugar coating. It was a simple statement, across the board and sincere. An act of genuine care. I have remembered it my whole life."

For many people, care only occurs at random. Something in their environment stimulates a feeling of care. Perhaps it's seeing an adorable young child at the mall, watching a movie or talking with a friend. You feel the emotion of care in relation to that event and then the feeling subsides. If you don't know how to cultivate caring emotions, you have to wait until something outside you stimulates that feeling again.

Caring is certainly more important and beneficial than that. Care comes from the depth of our being—from the core of our hearts. Activating the care in your heart is not simply a way to cheer yourself up or boost your mood. Core heart feelings, such as care, aren't just pleasant sensations. They have muscle. Once you see the results, you'll understand why we say that, when properly directed, increasing care can change our lives and perhaps the world.

At HeartMath, one of the things we do is teach people how to bring positive, heart-based emotions like care into their lives as often as possible—on demand—so they don't have to rely on random events to reap the benefits of these feelings. Learning how to activate positive emotions on demand is an important skill that pays high dividends. Cultivating more care can quickly facilitate your personal growth and health. As you pass caring feelings on, you improve the lives of everyone around you as well.

As HeartMath's founder, Doc Childre, once said, "Care is love in action."

## **Part II: Care vs. Overcare**

It is critical to learn the difference between care and what we call overcare. We all know that caring for ourselves and others is an essential part of a rewarding life. Unfortunately, caring can also be stressful. When our care goes too far, it turns into *overcare*, the term we use to describe a burdensome sense of responsibility, accompanied by worry, anxiety or insecurity.

We've all heard the phrase "too much of a good thing." That's overcare.

Have you ever had a slice of rich, creamy cheesecake that was so irresistible you practically gobbled it down? You just can't help having another piece. But when that second piece of cheesecake hit your stomach, you suddenly regretted it. You experienced the full, bloated—maybe even nauseous—feeling of having way too much of something good. Believe it or not, the same thing can happen with care.

Since caring is closely associated with love, it's hard to imagine that you can have too much love or too much care, but it happens all the time. If we become *over-identified* or *over-attached* to what we care about, our care becomes overcare. Suddenly, instead of feeling the wonderful feeling we started out with, we find ourselves worried and anxious. The sensation is so unpleasant that it can even turn into guilt and anger. Ultimately, our care, when not balanced, can become draining instead of regenerative.

We've probably all known mothers who don't feel like they are caring unless they are worrying and anxious about their children. Years ago, when Doc Childre was looking at his own life, he recognized that this was also true for him. "The more I cared for my family, my friends or my work, the more worry and anxiety I felt. What I cared about most was giving me the most stress! 'Why?' I kept asking myself. It was because I cared. And I saw that the same thing was true for most people."

Doc used the term *overcare* to describe the kind of care that creates stress. Overload, overwhelm, going overboard—all these terms mean *too much to the point of falling over*. That's overcare. Ironically enough, it starts out with the best intentions. Overcare occurs when the unmanaged mind turns our genuinely caring intentions into a mental and emotional drain.

The draining cycle begins as we over-identify with a situation, an issue, or a person we care about—in other words, we identify too much. We begin to overcare and want to see things go a certain way. We get over-attached to how we want things to turn out. As a result, we're less able to let go and we become obsessive.

Once overcare takes hold, it can bring about just the opposite of what we wanted. We get fired instead of promoted. The person we wanted to be closer to avoids us. And we're astonished. After all, we cared so much!

Learning to care without the drain of overcare is about balance, walking a fine line. Balanced care paves the way for intuition. Overcare eats up the pavement, and then we don't have a road to travel on any more. That's why we don't get anywhere.

Care is such a wonderful feeling to experience because it provides a conduit for our spirits to express themselves in the midst of our human existence. The more we truly care, the deeper we will come to know ourselves and the others we care about. This provides the key to unlocking our potential and making it real. Learning the difference

between care and overcare holds an important key to becoming our “real self”.

### **Finding Balanced Care**

Genuine, balanced care is regenerative to our bodies and minds, and can help us adapt to situations or see what common sense things we can do. Genuine care can motivate us to help a religious, political or social cause with balanced and intelligent attitudes and contributions.

Overcare, on the other hand, can turn us into obsessed crusaders. Overcare never results in any real solutions to a problem; it can't. It siphons off our original caring intentions and passion, then decreases our ability to find solutions. In fact, people who say they care about the same issue often get into conflict with one another about what to do, because they've plummeted from the balanced state of care into overcare.

Here's a simple question you can ask yourself from time to time. “Is what I am caring about adding quality to my life or is it adding stress?” Once, you've answered that question, you want to be on the lookout for overcare. It's through managing overcare that you can come back to center and regain balanced care.

Keep in mind that balanced care is not some placid state that lacks drive and passion. Balance is a dynamic place in the heart that allows us to flex through stress and stay resilient under pressure. It builds emotional stamina and opens our minds to more options.

When overcare stacks up, our capacity to handle challenges or see clearly diminishes. By releasing our overcare, we prevent stress from building and we increase our creative capacities. Then we can enjoy the fruits of *wholeness* by renewing genuine care. Our hearts can guide us in this process, so we can express our care without letting its regenerating warmth and reassuring power slip away.

### Part III: The Cut-Thru® Technique

The *Cut-Thru* technique shows people how to *cut-thru* their overcares, over-identities, over-attachments—their emotional stress. Used properly, the Cut-Thru technique can help eliminate overcare and bring in a balanced state of genuine care. The best way to approach this technique is to first read through the explanation, then go back and practice the steps. It's worth taking the time to explore each step of Cut-Thru carefully. The easiest way to learn the Cut-Thru steps is to practice on an issue as you read through the steps. Try not to pick your biggest or most emotionally charged issue first. Pick a minor issue to start.

Here are the steps:

Step 1—Be aware of *how you feel* about the issue at hand.

(When any issue comes up, learn to observe your feelings about it more closely, and honestly acknowledge what they are)

Step 2— Center yourself by breathing in through the heart and out through the solar plexus. *Breathe love and appreciation*

through this area for thirty seconds or longer to help anchor your attention there.

(The solar plexus is located about four inches below your sternum and above your navel. Feeling love and appreciation as you breathe helps create the heart rhythm coherence needed to shift your feelings toward a calmer and clearer state.)

Step 3—*Assume objectivity* about the feeling or issue—as if it were someone else’s problem.

(Try to disengage from an issue for a few moments, to let the emotions come back to balance. You can pretend you are watching another person dealing with your issue.)

Step 4—*Rest in neutral*—in your rational, mature heart.

(By trying to find more objectivity, you enter into a state of neutral and can rest in a more peaceful heart. Being neutral doesn’t mean you feel release or that you have to buy into anything. It just means surrendering your thoughts and feelings to your heart.)

Step 5—*Soak and relax* any disturbed or perplexing feelings in the compassion of the heart. Dissolve the significance a little at a time. Remember it’s not the problem that causes energy drain as much as the stored significance you have assigned to the problem.

(Use the coherent power of the heart to help dissolve the over-identity, over-attachment and significance (meaning) that you've placed in the issue. Taking out the emotional investment will help bring you back to balanced care.)

Step 6—After dissolving as much significance as you can, *from your deep heart sincerely ask* for appropriate guidance or insight. If you don't get an answer, *find something to appreciate for a while.*

(After having done Steps 1 through 5, you can more easily hear your heart intuition. Don't despair if you can't release an uncomfortable feeling all the way or if you don't get an intuitive answer on the spot. Sincerely ask your heart to help and let intuition come to you. As you maintain balanced care, it will.)

Repeat these steps as needed. Some issues take more heart soak time to mature into new understanding and release.

It's well worth the time it takes to memorize the steps and create reminders for yourself so you practice them. Try writing the key words of each step on 3" x 5" sticky notes and place them on your computer screen at work, on your bathroom mirror or your refrigerator at home, and at other convenient places to remind you to use the steps in the moment when you need them.

The more you use the Cut-Thru technique, the easier it gets. At the

beginning, you may feel like you did when you first learned to use a computer—hunting and pecking at the keys, not sure which command to use next. Don't worry. With some practice, you'll be gaining access to your ability to cut through a lot of your overcare as easily as you now turn on your computer each morning.

### **Why Eliminating Overcare is Important**

Curiously enough, when overcare exists in one area, it usually results in a lack of care in another area. It's like squeezing a balloon at one end so that it pops out at the other end. This lack of balance in care is causing much of the increased stress and burnout we see in individuals and society today.

In a condition of chronic imbalance, small incidents—like being late for an appointment, waiting in traffic, or standing in line at a store—can trigger heightened states of worry and stress. In fact, it's often the smallest things that cause the biggest stress. The problem is that these little things can stack up until “one last straw breaks the camel's back” and we have a mental or emotional crash or health crisis.

Millions in our society today are caught up in overcare about the world. With terrorism, economic uncertainty and global warming, it's hard not to move from care to overcare about what might happen next. We tell ourselves, “How can I not care about that!” You can care, but overcare won't help. It squelches clarity, incapacitates people, induces panic and dilutes creative thinking.

Just watching the news at night can drive people into overcare. Before they know it, they're railing at the president, crying over the horrible abuses going on around the world and sinking into a fearful state of uncertainty. An evening of news and overcare is enough to send people to bed emotionally drained!

While all these human emotional reactions are understandable and there's nothing wrong with them, our mature intelligence tells us they need to be managed. We need to come back into balance, to our deeper heart values. The intelligence we need, in order to return to genuine care, is a harmonization of feelings and thoughts that brings us emotional balance and intuitive common sense. If we use our feelings to open our hearts and find heart balance, we can bring our stressed-out overcare back to a balanced, heart-warming state of real care.

No matter what the situation, it is vitally important that we learn how to manage our mental and emotional energies. We need these skills so we can adapt to the unpredictable events going on all around us—whether they be natural disasters, social upheaval, or personal turmoil.

Whatever happens, we will eventually have to adapt anyway! Overcare only lengthens the adaptation time and prevents us from thinking clearly. The sooner we can get back to a balanced state of care, the better off we'll be. Balanced care saves us energy and shortens the time it takes for us to find new possibilities. Understanding the

purpose of adaptability and how to sustain it is extremely important in this era of rapid and unpredictable change.

### **Living in Balance**

Learning to identify your overcare will not only start to free you from stress; it will also give you new direction on how to enhance your life and unfold who *you* really are. As you cut through overcare, you'll bring yourself back into balance and connect with your heart intelligence to express genuine care.

The core heart feeling of genuine care will create an inner security that adds to your energy and results in joyous living. Life will have enhanced value and positive meaning for you. Hope will appear once again on the horizon in areas you saw no hope. As you unfold new potentials hidden within your heart that you didn't know were there, you will become more of who you really are. It's not our love, compassion, appreciation or care that squelches hope, but the tendency to allow these core heart feelings to become compromised by overcare.

The wonderful thing is that, once you relinquish overcare in even one area, you'll suddenly find that it starts to unravel overcare in many other areas at the same time. This experience comes with a tremendous sense of freedom and hope. And with new hope comes a renewal of energy and passion for life.

As Doc Childre and Howard Martin say in their book *The HeartMath Solution*, "The bridge between all that we can be and all that we are lies in the heart. There we can find the Bridge of Care clearly marked."

### **Next Steps**

In this e-booklet you've been learning about the importance of care, the drain of overcare, and the Cut-Thru technique for bringing overcare back to balanced and genuine care. Cultivating the power of genuine care requires heart intent. To help you enjoy this core heart feeling of care more fully, we'd like to suggest some additional resources.

Doc Childre has co-authored many great books. There are two we'd like to recommend that can help deepen your understanding of care and your practice of the Cut-Thru technique. *The HeartMath Solution* and *Transforming Anxiety* both talk about care from different angles and provide more in-depth instruction on how to use the Cut-Thru technique. Reading either or both of these books can help considerably in creating more care and less overcare in your life.

The *emWave® Personal Stress Reliever® PSR* and the *emWave® Desktop* are technology tools, especially designed to increase your ability to feel positive emotions and less stress.

The *emWave PSR* is a convenient, easy-to-use mobile device that monitors your heart rhythms, scores them for what researchers refer to as your coherence level, then guides you through applying simple techniques to increase your coherence level. Practicing Cut-Thru with

the *emWave PSR* will make it easier to feel coherent positive emotions like care while eliminating stressful feelings of overcare.

The *emWave PSR* uses patented technology found in the *emWave Desktop*, a software/hardware system that operates on both PC and Mac computers. The *emWave Desktop* displays your changing heart rhythms and coherence levels in real time, and has coherence-building games you can play. Actually seeing how your emotions are affecting your heart rhythms and coherence levels provides valuable insight and training, useful in developing your ability to generate positive emotions like care.

Combining these resources with your genuine effort to eliminate overcare and experience more real care can make a marked difference in your life.

To learn more about the tools, techniques, resources and training programs that can help you have more care in your life and cultivate a state of coherence and emotional balance, please visit our web site at [www.heartmath.com](http://www.heartmath.com) or call us toll free at 800-450-9111.

From all of us at HeartMath, take care!