

Resilience

Focus on Self-Compassion

Compassion: The feeling that arises when witnessing another's suffering and that motivates a subsequent desire to help (Goetz, Keltner, & Simon-Thomas, 2010, p. 351).

Self-Compassion has the same elements of compassion but turned inward. It involves the clear seeing of our own suffering, a caring response to our suffering that includes the desire to help, and recognition that suffering is a part of the shared human condition (Neff, 2016).

Three Elements of Self-Compassion



Self-Kindness versus Self-Judgment: Self-kindness involves actively opening our hearts up to ourselves, responding to our suffering as we would a dear friend in need. It includes accepting ourselves without judgment while providing self-soothing and comfort for ourselves in the midst of emotional turmoil.

Common Humanity versus Isolation: Self-compassion is embedded with a sense of interconnection rather than separation. By definition, self-compassion is relational. Self-judgement isolates us from others. With self-compassion we recognize that life challenges and personal failures are part of being human; these are experiences we all share. Flaws and weaknesses are what make us human

Mindfulness versus Over-identification: In order to have compassion for ourselves, we must be able to turn toward our own pain, and acknowledge it with mindfulness. Mindfulness is a type of balanced awareness that neither resists, avoids, nor exaggerates our moment-to-moment experience, but it does involve, paying attention in a different way, on purpose, in the present moment (Kabat-Zin, 1994). Mindfulness prevents us with over-identifying with our perceived inadequacies. It offers flexibility of attention. Mindfulness is the pillar on which self-compassion rests. The acceptance of mindfulness helps to lessen self-judgement and provides insights we need to recognize our common humanity.

Tips for Practice

<https://self-compassion.org/tips-for-practice/>

Self-compassion is often a radically new way of relating to ourselves. There are a few tips to practicing self-compassion that are important to keep in mind for novice and experienced practitioners alike.

Self-compassion is a practice of goodwill, not good feelings. In other words, even though the friendly, supportive stance of self-compassion is aimed at the alleviation of suffering, we can't always control the way things are. If we use self-compassion practice to try to make our pain go away by suppressing it or fighting against it, things will likely just get worse. With self-compassion we mindfully accept that the moment is painful, and embrace ourselves with kindness and care in response, remembering that imperfection is part of the shared human experience. This allows us to hold ourselves in love and connection, giving ourselves the support and comfort needed to bear the pain, while providing the optimal conditions for growth, self-forgiveness and transformation.

Some people find that when they practice self-compassion, their pain actually increases at first. We call this phenomena *backdraft*, a firefighting term that describes what happens when a door in a burning house is opened – oxygen goes in and flames rush out. A similar process can occur when we open the door of our hearts – love goes in and old pain comes out. There are a couple sayings that describe this process: “When we give ourselves unconditional love, we discover the conditions under which we were unloved” or “Love reveals everything unlike itself.” Fortunately, we can meet old pain with the resources of mindfulness and self-compassion and the heart will naturally begin to heal. Still, it means we have to allow ourselves to be slow learners when it comes to practicing self-compassion. And if we ever feel overwhelmed by difficult emotions, the most self-compassionate response may be to pull back temporarily – focus on the breath, the sensation of the soles of our feet on the ground, or engage in ordinary, behavioral acts of self-care such as having a cup of tea or petting the cat. By doing so we reinforce the habit of self-compassion – giving ourselves what we need in the moment – planting seeds that will eventually blossom and grow.

Resources:

Books and Articles

Garcia, G. (2017). *Listening with my heart: A story of kindness and self-compassion*. Austin, TX: Skinned Knee Publishing.

Goetz, J., Keltner, D., & Simon-Thomas, E. (2010). Compassion: An evolutionary analysis and empirical review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 136 (3), 351-374.

Neff, K., & Germer, C. (2018). *The mindful self-compassion workbook*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Neff, K. (2015). *Self-compassion: The proven power of being kind to yourself*. New York, NY: William Morrow Publishing.

Websites

Self-Compassion Website <https://self-compassion.org/>

Self-Compassion Guided Meditations <https://self-compassion.org/category/exercises/#guided-meditations>

Self-Compassion Exercises <https://self-compassion.org/category/exercises/#exercises>

“A MOMENT OF SELF-
COMPASSION CAN CHANGE YOUR
ENTIRE DAY. A STRING OF SUCH
MOMENTS CAN CHANGE THE
COURSE OF YOUR LIFE.”
- CHRISTOPHER GERMER