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Self-compassion Workshop



Exercise

Appreciating yourself

List five things about yourself that you really like or appreciate. The qualities you list don't have to be ones you display all the time. As you write down each quality, see if you can notice any uncomfortable feelings - embarrassment,

fear of vanity, unfamiliarity? If discomfort comes up, remind yourself that you are not claiming you're better than anyone else, nor that you're perfect. You're simply noting the good qualities that you sometimes display. See if you can acknowledge and enjoy the positive qualities you have, lingering over them and really taking them in.

Concepts and research on self-compassion

Pity is a feeling of discomfort for another's distress. Generally, it is a negative judgment of another and their situation and can carry condescending overtones. For example, you might pass a homeless person and feel pity but simply just keep walking. In the wake of this pity, you might reflect on your own good fortune but without any compulsion to address another's misfortune. In this way, pity is demeaning for the one who is pitied. Hence the phrase, "Don't pity me."

The word sympathy is derived from the Greek "sum" meaning "with" and "pathos" meaning "feeling." So ... with feeling. Sympathy may be understood as a lesser form of empathy, a cognitive and emotional acknowledgment of someone's pain and a desire to see them happier. But there is no inherent requirement of agency.

The meaning of empathy is slightly different. "Em" means "in." So, empathy translates as "in feeling." Empathy is donning the emotional clothing of another — a sort of emotional contagiousness. Someone's sadness may trigger your sadness, but equally another's joy may elicit your own joyfulness. Unlike pity and sympathy, empathy is not confined to misfortune.

Compassion is among the highest vibrational states of being. It means “to suffer with” or to identify someone else’s suffering as your own. It is lovingkindness in the presence of another’s suffering in a manner that actively seeks to alleviate that suffering. It’s always positive, expansive and effusive, and it often carries a call to action to assuage someone’s pain.

Brene Brown states that “Compassion is a daily practice and empathy is a skill set that is one of the most powerful tools of compassion”

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Compassion is fueled by understanding and accepting that we’re all **made of strength and struggle**—no one is immune to pain or suffering. Compassion is not a practice of ‘better than’ or ‘I can fix you’—it’s a practice based in the beauty and pain of shared humanity.

“Self compassion is the ability to notice our own suffering and to be moved by it making us want to actively do something to alleviate our own suffering

Kristin Neff



Studies have found that self compassionate people tend to brood and ruminate less. They also report fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Holding our experience with self compassion, we actively care for our emotional and physical well-being. We learn to respond to challenges with more agility and emotional resilience.



I'm sorry you are suffering

DISTANT

I can imagine what this feels like

SHARED

You are suffering and I will do everything I can to alleviate it

CONNECTED AND ACTION ORIENTED

Kristin Neff author of “Self-compassion, “Stop beating yourself up and leave Insecurity behind”, has proposed that there are 3 aspects to self-compassion.

Self-kindness instead of self-judgment

Approaching our experience with non-judgmental curiosity and emotional warmth. A willingness to take care of ourselves.

Common humanity instead of isolation

Embracing imperfection and making sense of our experience as a shared human experience. Recognising and understanding other people’s suffering.

Mindfulness instead of over-identification

Turning our attention towards our thoughts and emotions as they are (whether a positive or negative emotion). Not holding on to them nor dismissing them. This is especially crucial for negative thoughts.

Common misconceptions about self-compassion

Myth 1 - Self-compassion is Weak

Some people see self-compassion as a failure or frailty. You might believe that you have to “act tough” and show grit in order to be accepted and have nice things. The toughness can sometimes be worn as a mark of pride, one that even provides a sense of security.

The Truth

Self-compassion takes a great deal of strength, and the research even shows that people who use it are more resilient and able to overcome life's challenges.

Myth 2 - Self-compassion is Selfish

Rather than give themselves love, some they feel they need to only give it to others. They see those around them as struggling more, needing more, and they believe that practicing kindness and care towards themselves would harm those around them. Self-neglect feels like a noble choice to make.

The Truth

When we are able to practice self-compassion, we actually create more space for taking care of others. Self-compassionate people are more in tune with their needs and are better at meeting them than others, which then means that they are less likely to burn out.

Myth 3 - Self-compassion is self-indulgent

Some see self-compassion as a luxury, one that only the most self-centred and undisciplined people will entertain. They might feel that self-compassion is childish or immature. This is similar to the myth of selfishness in that people worry about how others might see them should they act in a self-compassionate way.

The Truth

Self-compassion is appropriate and healthy for people of all ages. Research has indicated that self-compassion even leads to better health behaviours and improved medical outcomes.

Myth 4 – Self-compassion Kills Motivation

Some people tell themselves that the key to success and overcoming is not by treating oneself with care, but by being harder and less forgiving towards oneself. Self-compassion is seen by them as a risk to one's success – if I slow down and am good to myself, will I be able to get my work done?

The Truth

Self-compassion not only provides motivation and inspiration, but it reduces the fear of failure. If we know that we can mess up and not hate ourselves, we tend to make choices that are more about getting what we want rather than avoiding what we fear.

Exercise

One easy way to soothe and comfort yourself when you're feeling dis-regulated is to give yourself a gentle hug or caress, or simply put your hand on your heart and feel the warmth of your hand. It may feel awkward or embarrassing at first, but your body doesn't know that. It just responds to the physical gesture of warmth and care, just as a baby responds to being cuddled in its mother's arms. Our skin is an incredibly sensitive organ.

Research indicates that physical touch releases oxytocin, “the hormone of love and bonding” which provides a sense of security, soothes distressing emotions and calms our cardiovascular system.

Hand on Heart

When you notice you're under stress, take 2-3 deep, satisfying breaths.

Gently place your hand over your heart, feeling the gentle pressure and warmth of your hand.

Feel the touch of your hand on your chest.

Feel the the natural rising and falling of your chest as you breathe in and as you breathe out.

Hopefully you'll start to develop the habit of physically comforting yourself when needed, taking full advantage of this surprisingly simple and straightforward technique.





Compassion Stone

When you are emotionally upset, find your stone and bring your attention to the sensation of touching the stone.

Notice how the stone feels in your hand, turning it around with your fingers.

Contemplate how old it might be, maybe as old as the earth itself.

Reach for this stone to comfort you whenever you feel anxious or distressed or agitated.

Mantra to say to yourself if feeling upset or anxious.

