

The Greater Good Science Center

Resources for a compassionate and resilient society



Online Magazine: Find award-winning articles, parenting blog, videos, podcasts, and more at http://greatergood.berkeley.edu

Events: "The Science of A Meaningful Life"

Science: Research fellowships

Books: Born To Be Good; The Compassionate

Instinct; Raising Happiness; Are We Born Racist?

Self-Compassion and Emotional Resilience

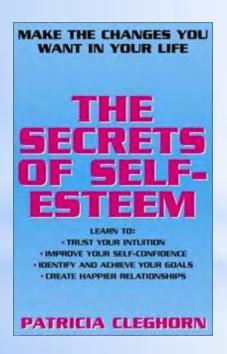


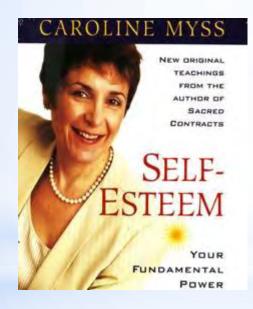
Kristin Neff, PhD
University of Texas at Austin

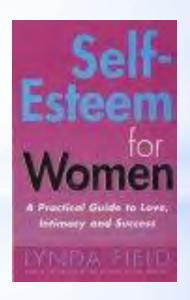
Agenda

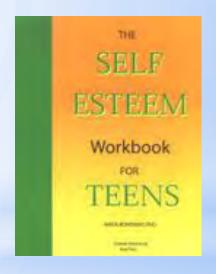
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9:00 - 10:30 - Self-compassion and well-being
10:30 - 10:45 - Break
10:45 - 12:00 - How to practice mindfulness,
loving-kindness, and self-compassion
12:00 - 1:00 - Lunch (on your own)
1:00 - 2:30 - Using self-compassion for
motivation and managing difficult emotions
2:30 - 2:45 - Break
2:45 - 4:30 - Self-compassion, positive
emotions, and happiness
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Is self-esteem all it's cracked up to be?









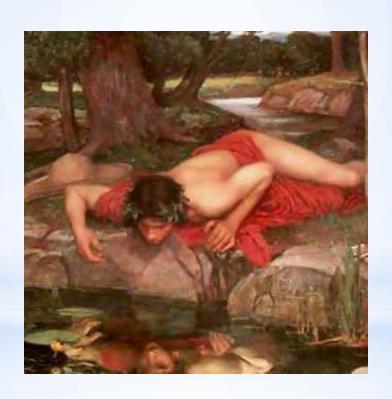


The need to be special and above average

Welcome to Lake Wobegon, where all the women are strong, all the men are good-looking, and all the children are above average.

-- Garrison Keillor

Narcissism



Social Comparison



Bullying and Prejudice





Ego-Defensive Anger



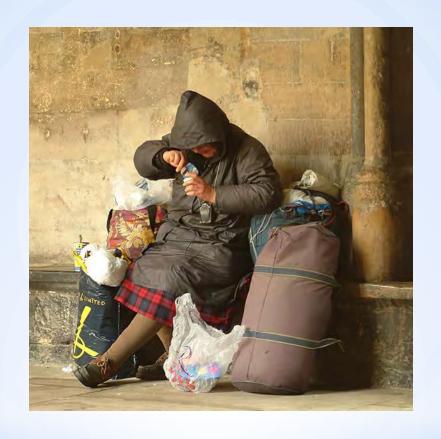
Contingency and Instability of Self-Worth







Self-Compassion



Compassion for Others

The three components of self-compassion:

Self-Kindness vs. Self-Judgment Common Humanity vs. Isolation Mindfulness vs. Over-identification

Self-Kindness vs. Self-Judgment:

- Treating self with care and understanding rather than harsh judgment
- Desire to alleviate one's own suffering
- Actively soothing and comforting oneself



Common humanity vs. Isolation

- Seeing own experience as part of larger human experience not isolating or abnormal
- Recognizing that life is imperfect (us too!)



Mindfulness vs. Over-identification

- Avoiding extremes of suppressing or running away with painful feelings
- Allows us to "be" with painful feelings as they are



Isn't suffering blindingly obvious?





Difference between mindfulness and self compassion

Mindfulness is aimed at *experience*: pos./neg./neutral Self-compassion is aimed at the suffering of *experiencer*

Involves active self-soothing





Exercise

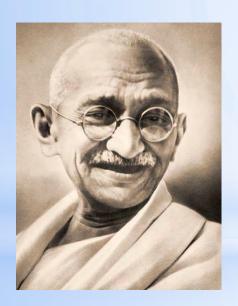
Gestures of Self-Compassion

Why isn't self-compassion more prevalent in Western culture?



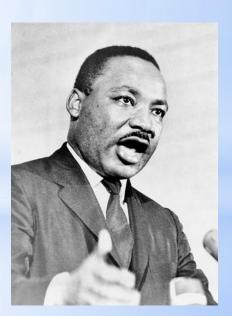


Compassion can be a strong, powerful force for change









Confusion with self-pity



Confusion between

Harsh Judgment







Confusion with Self-Indulgence





Confusion with "Making excuses"



Belief that motivation requires self-criticism



Motivation with Self-Criticism





Fear of being bad or worthless

Motivation with Self-Compassion



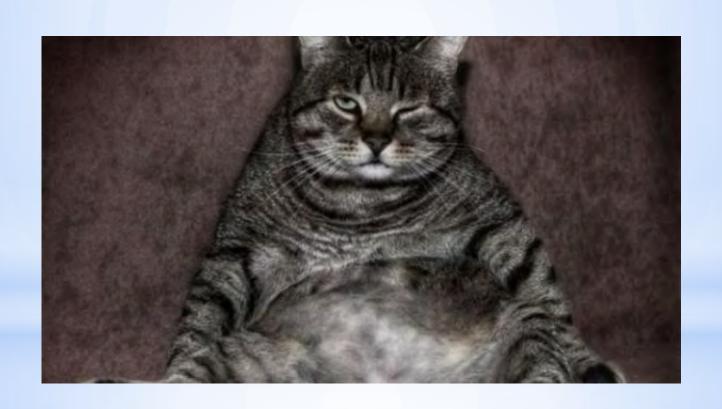
Desire for health and well-being

Self-compassion focuses on self-acceptance, not self-improvement

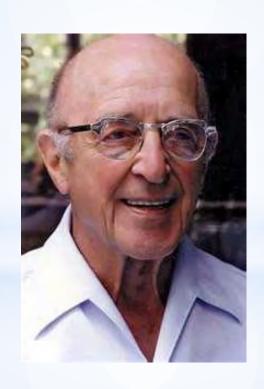




Doesn't self-acceptance mean being passive or complacent?



The curious paradox is that when I accept myself as I am, then I can change - Carl Rogers



Self-compassion provides the safety needed to see ourselves clearly



Provides the emotionally supportive environment needed for change and growth



If possible....



"Yeah, well, the Dalai Lama never had to deal with your whining."

Research on Self-Compassion



Sample Self-Compassion Scale Items

- Self-Kindness Subscale: I try to be understanding and patient toward those aspects of my personality I don't like.
- Self-Judgment Subscale: I'm disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.
- Common Humanity Subscale: I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.
- Isolation Subscale: When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.
- Mindfulness Subscale: When I'm feeling down I try to approach my feelings with curiosity and openness.
- Over-identified Subscale: When something upsets me I get carried away with my feelings.

Populations studied Ages 14 – 83

United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Belgium, Netherlands, Thailand, Taiwan, Korea, Turkey, Germany, Norway

Self-compassion linked to well-being

Reductions in:

Anxiety, depression, stress, rumination, perfectionism, body shame, fear of failure

Self-compassion linked to well-being

Increases in:

Life satisfaction, happiness, self-confidence, optimism, curiosity, creativity, gratitude

Self-compassion linked to well-being

Physiological changes:

- Increased heart rate variability (flexible responding, emotion regulation),
- Reduced cortisol (stress)
- Greater activation in insula (empathy)

Linked to motivation

- Greater intrinsic motivation, desire to learn and grow
- Personal standards just as high, not as upset when don't meet them
- Less fear of failure
- More likely to try again when fail

Linked to health behaviors











Linked to personal accountability

- ➤ More conscientiousness
- Taking greater responsibility for past mistakes
- Shame-free guilt (don't externalize blame)
- Disposition to apologize

Linked to Coping and Resilience









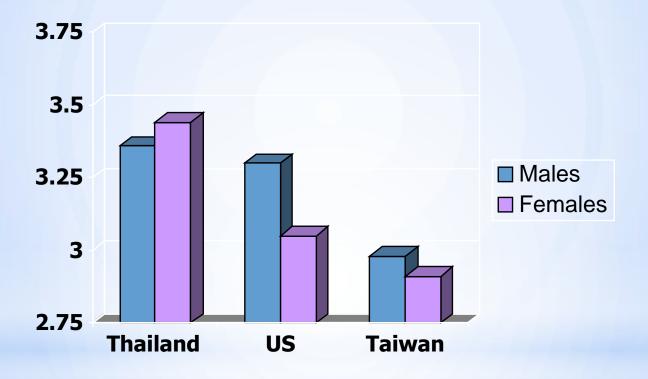
Self-Compassion versus Self-Esteem

- ♦ Fewer social comparisons
- Less ego-defensive anger
- ♦ More stable self-worth
- ♦ No association with narcissism

Self-Compassion Linked to Other-Focused Concern

- → More forgiveness of others
- More caring and supportive relationship behavior (as rated by partners)

Cultural differences in self-compassion



Culture main effect: F(2, 613) = 31.37, p < .001, $R^2 = .18$

Culture and sex interaction: $F(1, 613) = 3.04, p < .05, R^2 = .01$

It's All Natural!

Paul Gilbert Social Mentality Theory

Physiological underpinnings of self-esteem Social rank system





Dopamine activation

Physiological underpinnings of self-criticism

Threat defense system





Cortisol and adrenaline

Physiological underpinnings of self-compassion

Mammalian care-giving system





Oxytocin and opiates

Family influences on self-compassion



Attachment security
Parental criticism
Conflict in home

The development of self-compassion



Mindful Self-Compassion Program

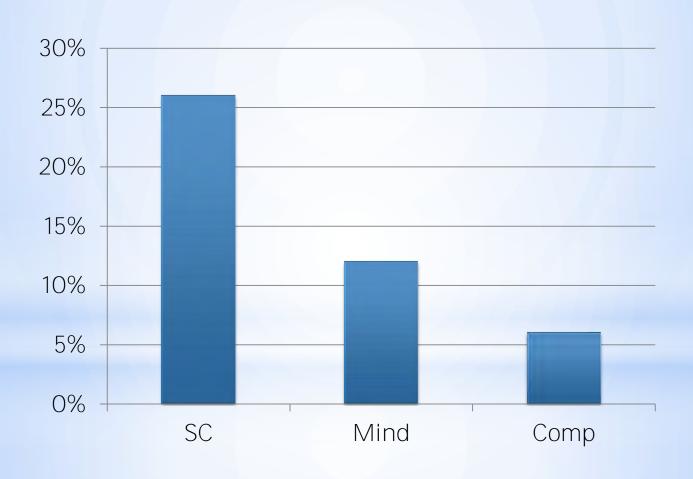
8-week workshop designed to explicitly teach skills of self-compassion

Uses meditation, informal practice, group discussion and homework exercises

Research on Mindful Self-Compassion program

Randomized clinical trial Intervention group vs. wait-list control group

Percent change in self-compassion, mindfulness, and compassion for others



Percent change in well-being



All well-being gains maintained over time



Self-Compassion

Informal Practice

Self-Compassionate Language



MY CONTINUAL SELF - REMINDER.

Informal Practice

Soothing Touch



Informal Practice

Self-Compassion Mantra

This is a moment of suffering
Suffering is part of life
May I be kind to myself in this moment
May I give myself the compassion I need

Mary Oliver
The Journey

Meditation Affectionate Breathing



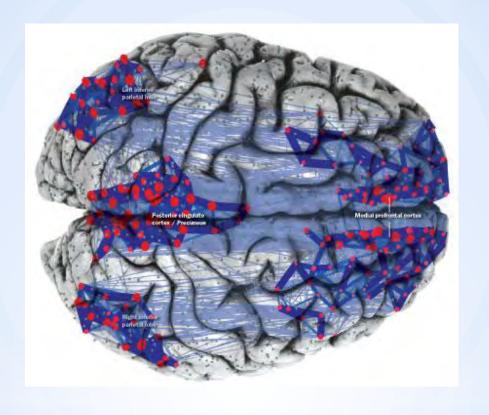
MINDFULNESS



Paying attention to what's happening, while it's happening, on purpose



MIND WANDERING



DEFAULT MODE NETWORK



I REALIZE I'VE ONLY BEEN AT IT FOR 5 MINUTES, BUT MEDITATION ISN'T BRINGING ME THE PEACE OF MIND I WAS PROMISED.



Two Components of Mindfulness



Being in the Present Moment Direct perception of experience

Thought is not a direct perception of reality

APPLE



The past and future are thoughts



Non-judgmentally accepting the reality of the present moment







Resistance Attack or Avoidance

What we resist, persists!

Avoidance







Attacking or trying to control



THIS SHOULD NOT BE HAPPENING!





Suffering = Pain x Resistance

Negative emotion ⇒ Resistance ⇒ React

Negative emotion ⇒ Mindfulness ⇒ Respond

Three Skills of Mindfulness Practice



Concentration

Mindfulness

Kindness/Compassion



Concentration
One-pointed awareness



Anchor for attention Calming and grounding









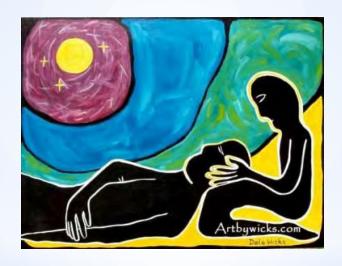




Mindfulness (Open Monitoring)



COMPASSION



Emotional Attitude Accompanying Mindfulness

THREE SKILLS

Concentration - Calm difficult emotions

Mindfulness - Accept difficult emotions

Compassion - Comfort self for difficult emotions

Important to Remember!

We give ourselves compassion not to feel better but *because* we feel pain.

Naomi Shihab Nye Kindness



Loving-Kindness (Metta)

Compassion (Karuna)



Exercise

Interpersonal Connection

(adapted from Joanna Macy and Jack Kornfield)

Loving-kindness Meditation

Words
Feelings
Images

May you be safe
May you be peaceful
May you be healthy
May you live with ease

Meditation Loving-Kindness and Self-Compassion



Loving-Kindness meditation works on the level of *intention*



Derek Walcott Love after love

Research on Loving-Kindness Meditation





Loving-Kindness meditation changes the brain (Dose dependent)

Research with Long-Term Meditators

- Higher levels of left-prefrontal activity (joy)
- > Stronger activity in right insula (empathy)
- Increased activity in regions of brain involved in planned movement (readiness to help)

Research with New Meditators Frederickson et al. (2008)

- Taught LKM for 7 weeks
- Compared to wait-list controls
- More positive emotions (e.g., happiness, love, gratitude, hope, awe, contentment, etc.)

Research with New Meditators Davidson et al. (submitted)

- Taught LKM over internet for two weeks
- Controls taught cognitive reappraisal
- > Significantly increased self-compassion
- Gains in self-compassion associated with increased insula activity (empathy)
- Insula activity predicted altruism

Self-compassion for caregivers

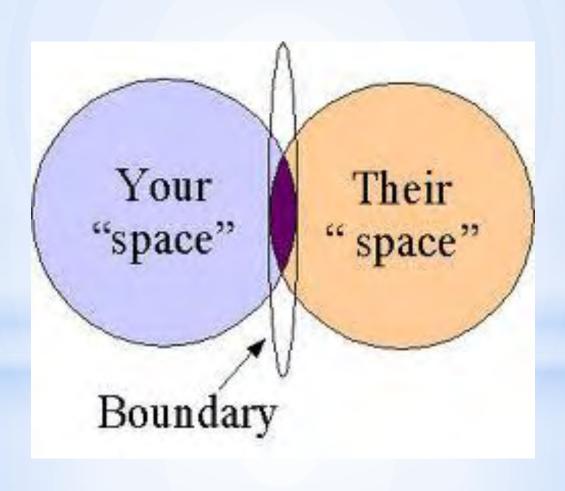


Caregivers are often extremely hard on themselves, and push beyond their limits





Setting boundaries usually recommended



Self-Care Strategies









Is compassion fatigue really *empathy* fatigue?

Empathy: Emotional Resonance



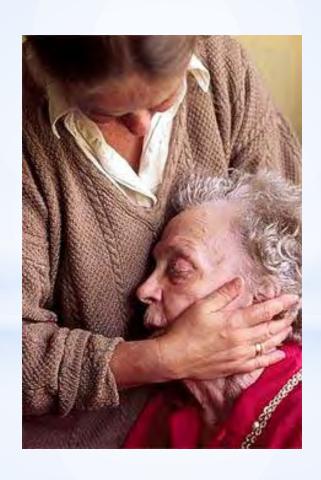


Compassion: Embracing suffering with kindness





Self-compassion allows us to be in the presence of suffering with equanimity



Provides the emotional resources needed to care for others



Self-Care

Self-Compassion





Research on self-compassion for caregivers

Self-compassion is associated with less burnout and "compassion" fatigue

Associated with more satisfaction with caregiving role



Meditation Equanimity Phrases and Breathing Compassion In and Out

Working with Difficult Emotions



Backdraft



How to deal with backdraft









Meditation

Soften, soothe, allow



Softening is physical compassion

Soothing is emotional compassion

Allowing is mental compassion

Mary Oliver Wild Geese

Working with Positive Emotions



NEGATIVITY BIAS

Positive Emotions

Negative Emotions

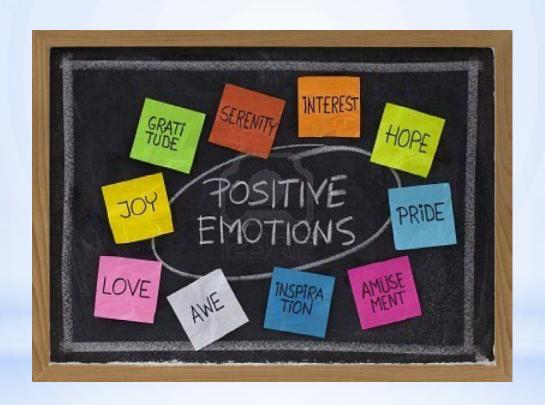




"The deeper that sorrow carves into your being the more joy you can contain. Is not the cup that holds your wine the very cup that was burned in the potter's oven?"

- Kahlil Gibran

Though focused on suffering, self-compassion linked to positive emotions





Barbara Frederickson

Broaden and Build Theory

Negative emotions narrow focus, allow people to be aware of dangers



Positive emotions broaden focus, allow people to notice opportunities





"When one door of happiness closes, another opens, but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one that has been opened for us."

- Helen Keller

Exercise: Silver Linings





Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K. M., & Schkade, D. (2005). Pursuing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change. *Review of General Psychology*, 9, 111-131.

SAVORING

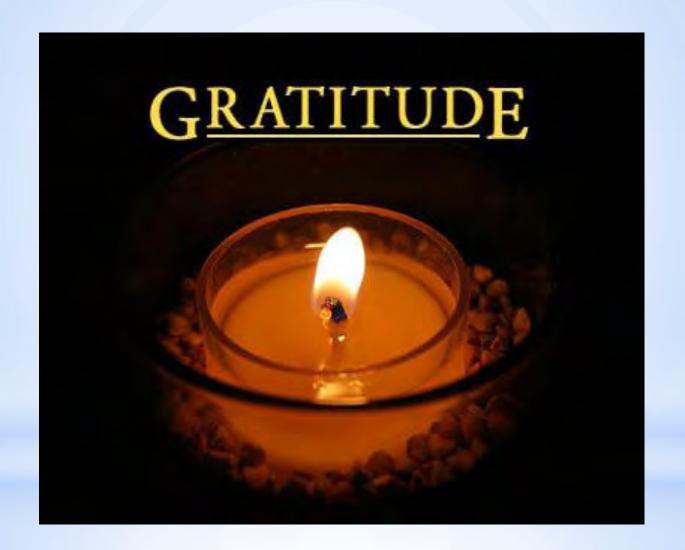


Billy Collins Aimless Love

Informal Practice

Pleasure Walk





Self-Appreciation



Why is it so hard to take a compliment?



The three components of self-appreciation:

Self-Kindness

Common Humanity

Mindfulness

Self-Kindness

Appreciating your own good qualities without taking them for granted

Common humanity

♦ Remembering that all people have strengths as well as weaknesses

Mindfulness

- Noticing and paying attention to what's good about yourself
- Countering the tendency to always focus on problems

Exercise

Giving yourself permission to shine

Self-compassion allows us to recognize the richness and complexity of life



Perfection is boring!



David Whyte Everything is Waiting for You

Closing Meditation

Deepest wish for yourself and all beings

Self-compassion calculator, guided meditations, exercises available at: www.self-compassion.org



Thank you!

http://greatergood.berkeley.edu

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