



LET'S CONNECT SPECIAL SEMINAR

BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH SELF-COMPASSION

WHAT IT IS, WHY IT MATTERS AND HOW DO WE PRACTICE IT

Marzia Hassan MSW, RSW

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Online via Zoom

AGENDA

1 Definitions

2 Why self-compassion matters

3 Distinction between guidance and criticism

4 Learning and practicing self-compassion

An aerial photograph of a beach and ocean. The top half shows a wide, sandy beach with many small footprints. The bottom half shows the ocean with a white, foamy wave breaking. The water is a vibrant turquoise color. A dark blue rectangular box is positioned in the upper left, and a thin dark blue rectangular border is in the center.

PART ONE

DEFINITIONS

WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

Resilience is the ability to face adversity, to go through challenges without being overwhelmed by them.

Resilience is *the capacity to manage challenge and to recover from adversity.*

WHY RESILIENCE MATTERS

- 1) Face challenges without being overwhelmed by them
AND
- 2) If we are overwhelmed or 'knocked down', it helps us get back on our feet quickly.

WHAT IS COMPASSION?

The wish that a being not suffer, Usually with the feelings of warm-hearted concern
A desire to alleviate that suffering

WHAT COMPASSION IS NOT

Compassion is not the same as:

- Liking the other person
- Agreement, approval, or forgiveness
- Thinking that the person's reactions are reasonable
- Waiving your own rights

You can have compassion for people who you believe have “caused” their own suffering.

Compassion wants to help – even if you can't

Studies show that compassion
“warms up” the neural circuitry of action, the
inclination to help.

But your compassion is still real even if you
cannot do anything to reduce the suffering.

WHAT IS SELF-COMPASSION

Self-compassion simply applies the wish and warmth of compassion to the one being . . .
who wears your name tag.

WHAT SELF-COMPASSION IS NOT

Self-compassion is not:

- Whining, self-pity (in the negative sense)
- Wallowing in misery, giving up
- Blaming
- Trying to get sympathy from others
- Avoiding responsibility

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PART TWO

WHY SELF- COMPASSION MATTERS

BENEFITS OF SELF-COMPASSION

- Studied by behavioral scientists as well as neuroscientists for the last 20 years, along with gratitude, kindness, generosity, joy, awe, delight, and love.
- Self-compassion is especially potent because it activates the care-giving system and moves us to act, care, and protect.
- Researchers have found that daily practices of these positive, pro-social emotions have many benefits, a few among which are:

BENEFITS OF SELF-COMPASSION

- Less stress, anxiety, depression, loneliness
- More friendships, social support, collaboration
- Shift in perspectives, more optimism
- More creativity, productivity
- Better health, better sleep
- Longer lives, by 7-9 years, on average
- Resilience is a direct outcome of these practices. More compassion leads to more resilience.

SELF-COMPASSION MAKES YOU RESILIENT

- All of us will go through challenges and adversity
- When we encounter adversity, self-compassion means that we generate kindness towards ourselves rather than self-criticism
- We are then motivated to act and change not because we're worthless or inadequate, but because we care about ourselves and want to lessen our suffering

YOUTH AND SELF JUDGEMENT

- The intense pressures faced by most adolescents, such as stress over academic performance, the need to be popular and “fit in” with the right peer crowd, body image, concerns with attractiveness, and so on, means that the self-evaluations of young people are often unfavorable
- Negative self-judgments are strongly implicated in the high rates of anxiety, depression, and attempted suicide found during this period.

SELF-ESTEEM VERSUS SELF-COMPASSION

- Western psychologists and educators have frequently focused on enhancing self-esteem as a response to adolescents' negative self-evaluations
- 1) self-esteem is difficult to raise
- 2) most school-based self-esteem programs have failed
- 3) the need for high self-esteem has been found to contribute to certain problematic behaviors, including bullying, aggression, self-enhancement bias, and narcissism
- 4) Focus on self-esteem very much tied to competition – the need to be better than someone else
- 5) Social comparison and competition also foster disconnection by causing us to view others as obstacles to overcome in order to keep our position, mark our territory, and vanquish potential rivals.

YOUTH AND SELF JUDGEMENT

- Self-compassion provides an alternative model for thinking about self-views that may promote resilience among adolescents.

SELF-COMPASSION

- With self-compassion, you value yourself not because you've judged yourself positively and others negatively but because you're intrinsically deserving of care and concern like everyone else. Where self-esteem leaves us powerless and distraught, self-compassion is at the heart of empowerment, learning, and inner strength.

DEALING WITH FAILURE

- When you are motivated by self-compassion, you see failure as the best learning opportunity.
- Criticism, for example, usually consists of a grain of truth that pertains to us and a grain of resentment or untruth that pertains to the critic's perception.
- Because of the sting that accompanies criticisms, we either become defensive or beat ourselves up — and ultimately miss the useful lesson.
- With self-compassion, however, we view failure with greater calm and understand it as an opportunity from which growth can follow.

DEALING WITH FAILURE

- Self-compassion allows us to maintain peace of mind and thereby retain our energy.
- By remaining level-headed and understanding in the face of rejection, failure, or criticism, we develop an unshakable strength and ensure emotional stability independent of external circumstances.
- Self-compassion provides a stable sense of self-worth that fluctuates much less over time, because it is not contingent on looking a certain way or competing successfully.

DEALING WITH FAILURE

- Harsh self-criticism activates the sympathetic nervous system (“fight or flight”) and elevates stress hormones such as cortisol in our bloodstream.
- When this sting has a hold on us, we cannot learn from or engage with the kernel of truth that may be there to serve us.
- Self-compassion, on the other hand, may trigger the mammalian care-giving system and hormones of affiliation and love, such as oxytocin which is associated with feelings of well-being, allowing us to hold the truth without attacking ourselves.

FOR SUPER ACHIEVERS

- “Stanford floating duck” syndrome: On the surface they look like they are calmly gliding along, but if you look underneath the water you’ll observe their legs pedaling away furiously, just to stay afloat.
- When we stop being self-critical and self-harming and start being kind to ourselves, it opens up the pathway to increase resilience.
- Rather than wasting energy pretending to be calm while being closet workaholics and overachievers, students can actually learn to take care of themselves and to be balanced and happy.

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PART THREE

**BLOCKS TO SELF-
COMPASSION**

THE BLOCKS TO SELF COMPASSION

- Fears it will make you weak, complacent
- Habit of self-criticism
Thinking it will make you selfish
- Feeling you don't deserve it

THE MYTHS AROUND SELF COMPASSION

1. Self-compassion is a form of self-pity

THE MYTHS AROUND SELF COMPASSION

2. Self-compassion means weakness

THE MYTHS AROUND SELF COMPASSION

3. Self-compassion will make me complacent

THE MYTHS AROUND SELF COMPASSION

4. Self-compassion is narcissistic

THE MYTHS AROUND SELF COMPASSION

5. Self-compassion is selfish

THE MYTHS AROUND SELF COMPASSION

6. Self-compassion is un-Islamic

THE BENEFITS OF SELF COMPASSION

- Protection against stress
- Recovery from painful experiences
- Self-worth
- Improved performance after setbacks
- More optimism, happiness
- Less depression, anger
- Increase in motivation
- Increase in positive action
- Increase in compassion towards others

ISLAM – THE RELIGION OF RAHMA

- The Beneficent Lord
- Created based on Rahma
- Sent a Prophet of Rahma
- A book of Rahma
- Asks us to practice Rahma

WHY DO WE EXCLUDE OURSELVES FROM THIS?

An aerial photograph of a beach and ocean. The top half shows a wide, sandy beach with some footprints. The bottom half shows the ocean with greenish water and white waves breaking near the shore. A dark blue rectangular box is positioned in the upper left, and a larger white rectangular box with a dark blue border is in the center, both containing text.

PART FOUR

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN GUIDANCE AND CRITICISM

THE COSTS OF SELF-CRITICISM

- Feels bad
- More stress
- Bad for physical and mental health
- Less learning . . . so more self-criticism!
- Low self-worth
- Sensitivity to criticism from others

SELF-GUIDANCE VS. SELF-CRITICISM

Self-guidance builds you up:

- Faces moral faults with appropriate guilt or remorse
- Focuses on where you could be more skillful
- Is positive and solution- and future-focused

Self-criticism tears you down:

- Exaggerates faults, guilt, and remorse
- Focuses on where you messed up
- Is negative and problem- and past-focused

WHY YOU DESERVE SELF-COMPASSION

- All beings deserve compassion – including you.
- You should offer the most compassion toward the person you have the most power over: your future self.
- It is good for others to be compassionate toward yourself. – YOU CANNOT GIVE TO OTHERS WHAT YOU DO NOT HAVE

“Self-compassion is not self-pity, it is not wallowing in pain, and it is not selfish. Studies have shown that self-compassion helps you be more resilient and confident , and kinder to others.”

Rick Hanson, Ph.D.

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PART FIVE

LEARNING AND PRACTICING SELF- COMPASSION

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

- Treating ourselves the same way we would treat a friend – with compassion

Common humanity vs. Isolation

- Seeing own experience as part of larger human experience not isolating or abnormal
- Recognizing that life is imperfect (us too!)
- Asking ourselves, “How am I the same as others?” instead of “How am I better than others?”
- Being human, by definition, makes us imperfect, along with our imperfect lives. Difficulty and failure are shared human experiences.

Mindfulness vs. Over-identification

- Avoiding extremes of suppressing or running away with painful feelings
- Allows us to “be” with painful feelings as they are
- This can be defined as being with what is in the present moment. Being aware of our hurt feelings gives us the opportunity to respond with self-compassion. Having compassion rather than “shoulding’ ourselves.

Develop the habit of self-compassion.

- Notice what happens in your mind when you feel hurt, worried, or irritated.
- Can you get in the habit of starting with at least a few seconds of self-compassion as soon as you feel bothered by something?
- And then you can move into more active coping.
- Self-compassion is where we start, not where we stop.

SELF-COMPASSION PRACTICES

1) Self-compassion break

SELF-COMPASSION PRACTICES

2) Write Yourself a Letter

Take the perspective of being a compassionate friend, so you can imagine that you are this other person. Ask yourself, “What would a compassionate and kind friend say to me right now? What would his or her words be?” Later, come back and read the letter, and receive it from yourself.

SELF-COMPASSION PRACTICES

3) Write Down Your Self-Talk

If you are self-criticizing because your jeans don't fit or you said the wrong thing in a situation, write down the self-critical words that come to mind, and then ask if you would ever say these words to a friend. What would a friend say?

SELF-COMPASSION PRACTICES

4) Develop a Self-Compassion Mantra

Neff suggests developing something that is easily memorized, so that when something difficult happens you can go to your phrases. These are not positive affirmations but reminders. Here is the self-compassion she developed for herself: “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 that I need.”

GROUP

DISCUSSION

What are the main takeaways from today?
What will you do differently?



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MARZIA HASSAN

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www.marziahassan.com

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