

Self-Compassion: Training for Caregivers

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3:30-5 PM

*For someone to develop genuine compassion towards others,
first he or she must have a basis upon which to cultivate compassion,
and that basis is the ability to connect to one's own feelings
and to care for one's own welfare...
Caring for others requires caring for oneself.*

- Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama –

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For more on the theory, research, and practice of self-compassion,
and for downloadable, guided meditations, please go to:

www.CenterForMSC.org

www.MindfulSelfCompassion.org

www.Self-Compassion.org

www.CompassionateMind.co.uk

SELF-COMPASSION IN DAILY LIFE

Mindful self-compassion means to (1) know when you're under stress or suffering (*mindfulness*) and (2) to respond with care and kindness (*self-compassion*). The simplest approach is to discover how you *already* care for yourself, and then remind yourself to do those things when your life becomes difficult.

PHYSICALLY – soften the body

How do you care for yourself physically (e.g., exercise, massage, warm bath, cup of tea)?

Can you think of new ways to release the tension and stress that builds up in your body?

MENTALLY – reduce agitation

How do you care for your mind, especially when you're under stress (e.g., meditation, watch a funny movie, read an inspiring book)?

Is there a new strategy you'd like to try to let your thoughts come and go more easily?

EMOTIONALLY – soothe and comfort yourself

How do you care for yourself emotionally (pet the dog, journal, cook)?

Is there something new you'd like to try?

RELATIONALLY – connect with others

How or when do you relate to others that brings you genuine happiness (e.g., meet with friends, send a birthday card, play a game)?

Is there any way that you'd like to enrich these connections?

SPIRITUALLY – commit to your values

What do you do to care for yourself spiritually (pray, walk in the woods, help others)?

If you've been neglecting your spiritual side, is there anything you'd like to remember to do?

GIVING AND RECEIVING COMPASSION

- Please sit comfortably, closing your eyes, and taking a few deep, relaxing breaths. Allowing yourself to feel the sensation of breathing in and out. Noticing how your breath nourishes your body as you inhale and soothes your body as you exhale.
 - Now, letting your breathing find its own natural rhythm. Continue feeling the sensation of breathing in and breathing out. If you like, putting your hands over your heart as a reminder to bring not just awareness, but *loving* awareness, to your experience.
 - Now, focusing your attention on your *in-breath*, letting yourself enjoy the sensation of breathing in, one breath after another.
 - If you like, you can also carry a word on each in-breath, such as “love,” compassion,” “ease,” or “peace.” Or you can imagine inhaling warmth or light—giving yourself whatever you need in this moment. Continue inhaling something good for yourself and then simply exhaling.
 - Now, calling to mind someone to whom you would like to send goodwill, either *someone you love* or *someone who is struggling and needs compassion*. Visualize that person clearly in your mind.
 - Shifting your focus to your *out-breath*, feeling your body breathe out, sending something good with each exhalation to this person.
 - Now feeling your body breathe *both in and out*—breathing in something good for yourself and breathing out something good for another. “One for me, one for you.” “One for me, one for you.”
 - Allowing your breathing to flow in and out, like the gentle movement of the sea, flowing in and flowing out. Letting yourself be a *part* of this limitless, boundless flow, breathing in and breathing out.
 - If you wish, you can focus a little more on yourself or on the other person—whatever you need.
 - And as you breathe out, feel free to send love and compassion to other persons, to *groups* of people, or to the *world in general*.
- (long pause)
- And now, gently opening your eyes.

MANAGING COMPASSION FATIGUE

- Please bring to mind someone you are caring for who can exhaust you or frustrate you, or someone who suffers with whom you feel sympathy. For this introductory exercise, please choose someone who is not your child, as this can be a more complicated dynamic. See the person clearly in your mind and feel the struggle in your own body.
- Now please listen carefully to these words, letting them gently roll through your mind:

*Everyone is on his or her own life journey.
I am not the cause of this person's suffering,
nor is it entirely within my power to make it go away,
even if I wish I could
Moments like this are difficult to bear,
yet I may still try to help if I can.*

- Now, aware of the stress you are carrying in your body, inhaling fully and deeply, drawing compassion inside your body and filling every cell in your body with compassion. Letting yourself be soothed by inhaling deeply, and by giving yourself the compassion you need when you experience discomfort.
- As you exhale, sending out compassion to the other person who is associated with your discomfort, or exhaling compassion to living beings in general.
- Continue breathing compassion in and out, letting your body gradually find a natural, relaxed breathing rhythm. Breathing in for yourself and out for the other. *One for me, one for you.*
- Occasionally scanning your inner landscape for any distress and respond by inhaling compassion for yourself and exhaling compassion for the person who needs it. If you find that you, or the other person, needs *extra* compassion, feel free to focus your breath more in that direction.
- Noticing the gentle rocking motion of your body as you breathe, like the tides flowing in and out on an ocean of compassion. A limitless ocean that embraces all suffering.
- And listening to these words once again:

*Everyone is on his or her own life journey.
I am not the cause of this person's suffering,
nor is it entirely within my power to make it go away,
even if I wish I could
Moments like this are difficult to bear,
yet I may still try to help if I can.*