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Self-Compassion

Why it's so important:

1. We actually need permission to give ourselves self-compassion since it is not part of our culture.
2. The more love and compassion we can give to our self, the more we can give to others. We literally create more room within our self to manage our emotions and be more available to others and to the flow of life and its ups and downs.
3. Self-compassion leads to less anxiety, stress, depression and greater coping skills.
4. If we motivate with harsh self-criticism research shows we start becoming afraid of failure, develop performance anxiety and then fail more often, lose confidence and then give up.
5. With self-compassion, we are more able to support and accept ourself in spite of failure – because we realize it is a part of being human. We are more likely to pick ourselves up and try again and more likely to keep trying.

**How would we talk to a child or your best friends?
What is the most loving thing you can say to yourself?**

Self-compassion is treating yourself with the same kindness, care, support, and understanding that you would show to a really good friend or child. We usually exclude ourselves from this extension of kindness and care. This is how we create safety within.

We know we can learn self-compassion because we developed it and use it for others.

Self-Criticism vs Care-Giving:

- Criticism turns on fight or flight/fear response in the reptilian brain. The mind/body responds as if preparing for danger. This response is based on old survival mechanisms.
- With self-criticism, we may not be physically threatened, but our self-concept is threatened. We see threat as the imperfect self. Please don't get down on yourselves for being self-critical. The response is trying to keep us safe. Often there is a problem that needs to be addressed or improvements to be made. Criticism makes us feel stressed, anxious and depressed.
- Another way to keep us safe is the mammalian care-giving system. Mothers and fathers need to care for a child until he or she is ready to be on their own. An infant is programmed to be comforted - soothing voice, touch, - we release opiates to activate parasympathetic nervous system because we feel safe.

- Involves feeling and accepting experience. We can't heal what we don't feel.

Self-compassion turns on the care-giving/attachment system, which makes us feel safe, emotionally balanced and loved. This is the best footing to reach our goals.

Quick Self-Compassion Break

Tender Self-Compassion:

Think of a recent difficult situation.

Put your hands on your heart and breathe deeply in and out, releasing the tension from the painful situation.

Brief practice to use -

1. Bring mindfulness to the fact you are suffering. Say to yourself, this is really hard right now, I am struggling. Validate how you are feeling.
2. Remind yourself pain is part of being human; say to yourself, "this is part of life, this is what suffering feels like to everyone, I'm not alone". Don't believe the story of why do I have it so hard or it's just me who does this. See the big picture and realize we all live imperfect lives.
3. Bring words of kindness to yourself - with gesture or not - hand on heart, hug. Say: I'm so sorry this is hard for you, I care, what can I do to help, use warm tone and words. Allow self to feel able to cope. "I am here for myself." "I accept myself as I am in this moment."
4. Try the following mantra: I have always done the best I can with the knowledge I had at the time. I am doing the best I can now. I am enough. I deserve to feel love, joy and peace.
5. Transform any moment of suffering by allowing it, not fighting against it.

Fierce Self-Compassion:

When you tune into yourself and are feeling angry or upset, you may need to protect, provide for or motivate yourself or others.

Protection: Needing to draw a boundary or stand up to someone who has crossed a line in their behavior.

1. Let the feelings of anger arise and allow the activating energy flow through your body. Thank it for its presence as a signal for protection.
2. Mindfulness – Take some calming breaths. Ground your body by feeling your feet on the floor. Intend to see the situation with **clarity**. Maybe you conclude, "this is not okay."
3. Common humanity – draw strength and **empowerment** from other's who have stood up for themselves – "by standing up for myself I'm standing up for others or setting a good role model." I can protect myself or others. I am brave and I can do this.
4. Kindness – give yourself kindness from the Tender Self-compassion exercise to give yourself support and **courage** to take difficult action.

To Provide: This is related to meeting your own needs or adequate self-care. This is about creating **balance** and restoring your energy.

1. Mindfulness: Bring awareness and **authenticity** to an area of your life that needs your attention – maybe its your health, finances, home. Become aware of what is

important to you and your deepest needs: “my needs matter, “I can prioritize myself.”

2. Common humanity – acknowledge there is a give and take to life. You can’t pour from an empty cup and you are inherently worthy of true self-care.
3. Kindness – acknowledge it is hard to change but commit to **fulfilling your needs**.

To Motivate: This is about tapping into the energy of caring about yourself enough to change your habits or make some kind of a move in your work life or relationships; overcoming inertia. Let go of the need for anything to be perfect.

1. Mindfulness – Get in touch with a **vision** that motivates you and “lights you up”. “This is possible for me”. Get in touch with what you really desire.
2. Common humanity – Tap into your own **wisdom** and acknowledge that most people find change difficult. Reframe it as a learning opportunity and its normal to fear the unknown.
3. **Kindness** – support yourself with daily intention setting and keeping your vision close to your heart. “I want the best for myself, I want to help myself reach my goals.”

More Resources at: <http://self-compassion.org>

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