Mindfulness and Self-Compassion

ALEXANDRA THURSTON, PSY.D.
STAFF PSYCHOLOGIST
UCSF STUDENT HEALTH & COUNSELING SERVICES
Agenda

- Overview of Mindfulness
- What is Self-Compassion?
- Self-Compassion Break
- Challenging the Inner Critic
- Loving Kindness Meditation
- Resources
Taking a Mindful Moment
Mindfulness is...

“Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.”

- John Kabat-Zinn

Mind Full, or Mindful?
What is Self-Compassion?

- A new way of relating to ourselves
- Honoring and accepting your humanness
- In challenging times, treating yourself as you would treat a good friend (Neff, 2003)

“If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete.”

-Jack Kornfield
Video

Kristin Neff

“The Space Between Self-Esteem and Self-Compassion”
Three Elements of Self-Compassion

- **Self-kindness vs. Self-judgment**
  - Being warm and understanding towards ourselves rather than ignoring pain or being self-critical

- **Common Humanity vs. Isolation**
  - Recognizing that suffering is part of the human experience

- **Mindfulness vs. Over-identification**
  - Taking a balanced approach to negative or difficult emotions

Source: self.compassion.org
Self-Compassion Break

- Think of a situation in your life that is difficult or causing you stress.
- Notice how the stress feels in your body.
- Say to yourself:
  - This is a moment of suffering. This is stress. This hurts. (*Mindfulness*)
  - Suffering is a part of life. I’m not alone. Others feel this way. (*Common humanity*).
- Put your hands over your heart and say to yourself:
  - May I be kind to myself. May I learn to accept myself as I am. (*Self-kindness*)
Won’t I lose my motivation?

- **Those with greater self-compassion:**
  - Procrastinate less (Sirosis, 2013)
  - Are more proactive (Akin, 2014) and more motivated to improve personal weaknesses, moral transgressions, and test performance (Breines & Chen, 2012)

- **And experience:**
  - Increased physiological well-being and happiness (Zessin, Dickhauser, & Garbade, 2015)
  - Decreased rates of depression (e.g., Neff, Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2007).

As cited in: https://cls.unc.edu/files/2016/05/Self-Compassion-SLIDES.pdf
People sometimes think self-compassion is self-indulgent or selfish. It’s not. Because the more we are able to keep our hearts open to ourselves, the more we have available to give to others.”

-Kristin Neff

Those with greater self-compassion:
- Have greater perspective, empathic concern, altruism, compassion for humanity, readiness to forgive (Neff & Pommier, 2012)
- Are more caring and supportive in romantic relationships (Neff & Beretvas, 2013)

As cited in: https://cls.unc.edu/files/2016/05/Self-Compassion-SLIDES.pdf
Partner Exercise: How Would You Treat A Friend?

- Think about a time when you felt badly about yourself or were struggling. How do you typically respond to yourself in these situations?

- Think about a time when a friend was struggling. How did you respond?

- Did you notice a difference? Discuss with your partner.
Loving Kindness Meditation
Final Reflections

*Share with a partner one of the following...*

- Describe your experience with the Loving Kindness Meditation.
- What are three takeaways from this presentation that you learned?
- Name one way you will commit to being more self-compassionate this week.
Resources

- Kristin Neff:
  - Self-compassion.org
  - Test your level of self-compassion

- The Center for Mindful Self-Compassion:
  - www.CenterforMSC.org

- Mindful Awareness Research Center at UCLA:
  - marc.ucla.edu

- Tara Brach: www.tarabrach.com

- Brene Brown: www.brenebrown.com

- Apps:
  - Calm
  - Headspace
“A moment of self-compassion can change your entire day. A string of such moments can change the course of your life.”

– Christopher Germer
Student Health & Counseling Services

- Website: studenthealth.ucsf.edu
- For more information or to schedule an appointment:
  - Call 415-476-1281
  - Drop in to:
    - Parnassus - Millberry Union West, level P8, room 005
    - Mission Bay - Rutter Center, 1675 Owens Street, 3rd floor, Rm 330
Thank You!

For questions or comments: Alexandra.Thurston@ucsf.edu