

Self-compassion: Basic ideas



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Self-Compassion

- Extending compassion to the self for one's failings, inadequacies and experiences of suffering

Self-Compassion

- A type of open-heartedness related to compassion for others
 - Must notice that suffering is occurring
 - Recognize that suffering is part of the shared human experience
 - Respond with feelings of care and concern



What counts as suffering?

- *Any* experience in which we experience emotional pain
- Being stuck in unpleasant emotions, whether the cause is big or small
- Includes self-criticism, feelings of unworthiness, annoyance, frustration, stress, sadness, and “unjustified” negative reactions

1. Kindness 2. Common humanity 3. Mindfulness

Self-Compassion

- Three components of self-compassion:

➤ **Kindness** – Treating self with understanding rather than with harsh self-judgment

- *Actively* being supportive and caring towards ourselves



1. Kindness 2. Common humanity 3. Mindfulness

Self-Compassion

- Three components of self-compassion:
 - **Common humanity** – Seeing own experience as part of larger human experience rather than isolating
 - Remembering that as humans, we are not perfect, life is not perfect



Self-Compassion

- Three components of self-compassion:
 - **Mindfulness** – Avoiding extremes of disconnection from or over-identification with painful feelings



Mindfulness

- Present-moment awareness, not lost in thought
- Acceptance and non-judgment of one's experience
- Mindfulness allows us to experience life as it is right now, not just how we think about how it “should” be

Applies to life situations – big and small

Thought: This should not be happening!



Applies to ourselves

Thought: I should not be this way!



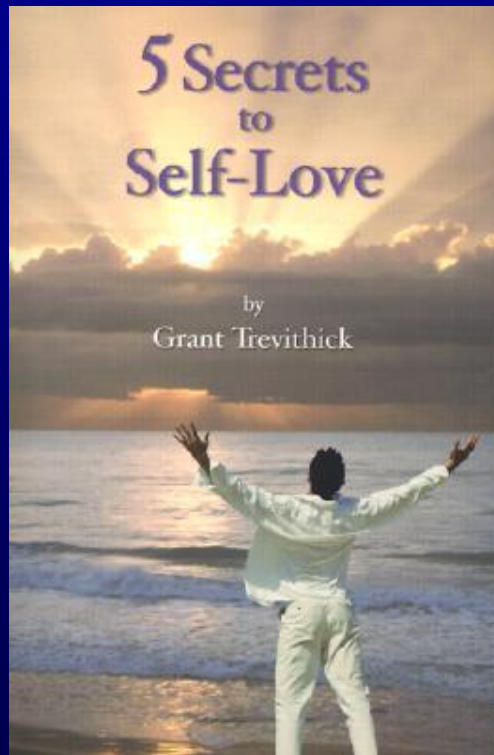
Mindfulness

- Difference between judgment and discriminating wisdom
 - Judgment defines thing as good versus bad
 - Wisdom sees what leads to health and well-being and what leads to harm and suffering
- Our intentions help shape our actions in the future, but *we cannot change the present moment*
- What we can change is the way that we relate to the present moment – with compassion or with judgment

Why isn't self-compassion more prevalent?

- In western culture, self-compassion not encouraged
- Why not?

The “Cringe” Factor



Must be strong and stoic, not soft and fluffy!



Why isn't self-compassion more prevalent?

- Many people confuse self-compassion with self-pity and complaining



Self-compassion is not self-pity

- Self-compassion does NOT involve self-centeredness or exaggeration of suffering
- Research shows self-compassion linked to *less* egocentrism and *more* emotional balance

Self-compassion versus self-indulgence

- Most people confuse self-compassion with self-indulgence
- They think that if they're too self-compassionate, will be lazy and won't try hard enough



Self-criticism as a motivational tool

- Most people believe self-criticism is an effective motivator (spare the whip, spoil the child)
 - Though punitive approach used less often with children these days, still use this approach with ourselves
- Self-criticism is not an effective motivator
 - Actually takes the wind out of our sails, undermines self-efficacy beliefs

Self-compassion and motivation

- Research shows that self-compassion associated with more intrinsic motivation, learning and growth goals, curiosity and exploration, less fear of failure
- *Motivation of self-compassion stems from desire for the self's well-being*
- Provides supportive emotional environment for change
- Provides the safety needed to see oneself clearly, detect maladaptive patterns and make changes

Underpinnings of Self-Compassion

- Paul Gilbert argues that self-compassion taps into mammalian care-giving system
- We are innately endowed with the ability to give and receive care
- Self-compassion is likely tapping into the same physiological system that allows mothers to soothe infants (release of oxytocin, opiates, etc.)



Underpinnings of Self-Compassion

- How self-compassionate we are is largely based on early attachment experiences, internal modeling of parental messages



Importance of self-compassion

- Is a skill that can be taught
- Self-compassion always available
- Fosters connectedness rather than separation or self-centeredness
- Involves relating to yourself and your life with an open mind and open heart
- Transforms suffering into an opportunity for kindness and connectedness