

Begin by considering these words:

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

~Jack Kornfield

Reflect on the ways you extend compassion to yourself or perhaps how you learned to develop compassion toward yourself.

Consider the students you will be teaching. Many will come to you with physical pain, trauma or personal challenges. You may be working in a clinical situation with persons who are overcoming anxiety or depression. What are your questions about the place for self-compassion in their learning and recovery?

Understanding Self-Compassion and Mindfulness

Mindfulness has been described as a loving awareness of *experience*.

Self-compassion is a loving awareness of the *experiencer*. Self-compassion is unconditional self-acceptance even in moments of failure.

Research is demonstrating that self-compassion can help to mitigate the effects of trauma in childhood. Components of the stress response to trauma include self-criticism, self-isolation and self-absorption. Intervention with self-compassion approaches may help individuals to have improved coping to upsetting events. (Germer and Neff, 2014)

To address questions that might arise as to what self-compassion is and is not, view this video with Kristen Neff to understand self-compassion:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFhcNPjIMjc>

Notes:

This table summarizes what self-compassion is and is not.

Self-Compassion IS NOT...	Self-Compassion IS..
...selfish or self-centered	...emotional resources to care for others
...a form of self-pity	...opening to see the interconnected experiences of self and others without exaggeration
...weak	...potentially self-protective and self-supporting; a source of strength and resilience in challenging situations
...self-indulgent	...aimed at the alleviation of suffering, choosing long-term well-being over short-term pleasure
...harsh, belittling self-judgment	...constructive criticism and discernment
...fear and shame that undermine motivation	...enhances motivation with care, support and encouragement

Adapted from Germer and Neff, p. 30

How might you use these distinctions in your teaching?

Research Findings

Self-compassion is linked to:

- Reduced negative states such as depression, anxiety, and shame
- Increased positive states like happiness and life satisfaction
- Fewer problems related to striving for self-esteem
- Healthier body image and less disordered eating behaviors
- Reduced risk of caregiver burnout
- Better physical health and immune function
- Improvements in coping for persons who experienced trauma
- For persons with clinical disorders who tend to have less self-compassion, increased self-compassion appears to be an important mechanism of change in therapy (Germer and Neff, p.56)

Becoming a Teacher of Self-Compassion

A teacher models self-compassion through “loving, connected presence”.

What is your vision or understanding of a “loving, connected presence”?

Your self-compassion is embodied by

- what you say,
- how you relate to others and
- the climate or atmosphere you create in your class.

Cultural Awareness

A critical aspect to your embodiment of self-compassion is found in your cultural awareness and sensitivity.

Develop your capacity to embrace diversity and seek for expanded understanding of cultural identities and their accompanying feelings.

“Expanding our sensitivity to the impact of culture in our lives, especially the impact on those who are subject to daily injury within a particular culture, is an important gateway to living and teaching more compassionately.” ~ Germer and Neff (p118)

Thoughts?

Self-Love Meditation

Refer to the appendix of this course with the meditation scripts to locate the Loving Kindness of Self Meditation script. Use this script in your own practice.

If you are seeking a Certificate of Completion, you will need to teach this meditation on three occasions and provide evidence using the self-assessment tool.

Journal your experience with self-compassion meditation.

Reflection Questions

How does self-compassion strengthen us to explore our capacities?

How might you demonstrate mindful compassion as a teacher?

Take a few minutes to journal your thoughts and feelings about your cultural experience and identity for 20 days. Read and reflect on what you are uncovering and where you may focus your attention to increase your cultural sensitivity.

Recommended Curriculum and Reading

Germer and Neff, *Teaching the Mindful Self-Compassion Program*. 2019. The Guilford Press.