Practicing Self-Compassion

Kelly Davis
Presenter

Kelly Davis
Overview

- The science behind why we are so hard on ourselves
- The research behind self-compassion; and
- Self-compassion tools to practice and share with those you support
During COVID-19 Pandemic

• Life is hard and scary right now especially
• Life has changed significantly for almost everyone
• Can support ourselves and others
Ongoing Uncertainty and Change

• May expect same level of outcome, outputs, identity and social roles
• Self-talk and blame
• Concerns about basic needs

Neil Webb @neilmwebb · Mar 31
You are not working from home; you are at your home during a crisis trying to work.

I've heard this twice today. I think it's an important distinction worth emphasising.

983 102.5K 369.8K

Mental Health America B4Stage4
The Brain’s Negativity Bias

Our brain’s main goal: stay alive

Priority is avoiding danger and searching for threat

Negative mind chatter to help

Depression, anxiety, trauma can **intensify**
Exclusion and Connection

Not just us—messages we get from the world

Marginalized identities

We’re wired to want to belong
Impact

- When we adopt labels and negative self talk it contributes to our own social exclusion and loneliness
- When we adopt the negative view that is projected on us by others, we open ourselves up to feeling shame
- Feelings of shame are relevant predictors of depression
- As shame increases so does self-criticism
- As self-criticism increases, self-compassion decreases
A lack of self-compassion can contribute to feelings of shame resulting in self-destructive behavior which can then result in ongoing cycles of shame.

**Impact**

- **Shame**
  - “Shaming” Negative Sterotyping
  - Adopting the negative image projected on ourselves
  - Self-Destructive behavior & ill health
  - Lack of self-compassion & Feelings of shame
Rewiring your brain

In addition to changing the culture
The brain can change
Repetition and neural pathways
Train our automatic responses that stop progress
Noticing and kindness in the moment improves present and future
This work is a process

Many opportunities to support ourselves  

Doesn’t always go as we hoped  

Mistakes can feel like all is lost, we are bad
Self-Compassion

“Self-compassion involves acting the same way towards yourself when you are having a difficult time, fail, or notice something you don’t like about yourself. Instead of just ignoring your pain with a ‘stiff upper lip’ mentality, you stop and tell yourself ‘this is really difficult right now,’ how can I comfort and care for myself in this moment?”

Kristin Neff
Self-compassion

1. Treating yourself with kindness
2. Sharing a common humanity
3. Building mindfulness
Treating yourself with kindness

- Responding to yourself the way you would a friend
- Allowing yourself to be imperfect and make mistakes
- Actively comforting ourselves
- Knowing and being responsive to your own needs
Building a common humanity

- All humans are imperfect
- Normal to feel pain and distress
- Not alone but attached to a broader community
- Loving-Kindness Meditation
  - May you be happy. May you be well. May you be safe. May you live with ease.
Building mindfulness

**IAA Theory:** intentionally attending with openness and non-judgment leads to specific shift in perspective

**Intention:** Why you’re doing what you’re doing, the compass of your heart

**Attention:** What you are directing your attention to

**Attitude:** How you are paying attention—acceptance, openness, curiosity
Mindfulness and MH

• Noticing thoughts, automatic, intrusive
• Understanding no inherent value
• Observe without reacting
• Notice/name feelings
Mindfulness & rewiring your brain

- Going against years of evolution
- Building a skill not permanent transcendence
- Judgment still valuable—discernment

Mindfulness & rewiring your brain
"This is a moment of suffering. Suffering is a part of life. May I be kind to myself in this moment. May I give myself the compassion I need."

Kristin Neff
Distinctions

• Not self-pity
• Not positive suppression/replacement
• Not good vs. bad
• Not less successful, achieving
• Linked to less depression & anxiety
  • *Mock job interview*

Kristin Neff’s Self-Compassion Exercises

• How would you treat a friend
• Supportive touch
• Writing:
  • Which imperfections bother you, write a letter from unconditionally loving friend, feel the compassion
• Self compassion break:
  • This is a moment of suffering. Suffering is a part of life. May I be kind to myself in this moment. May I give myself the compassion that I need.
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THANKS FOR COMING

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