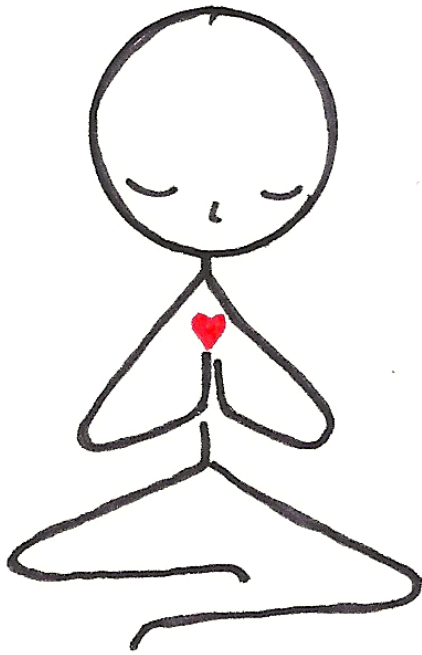




A W A K E N
p s y c h o l o g y

healing
through
growth



WE ALL NEED SOME SELF-COMPASSION

This month's newsletter is all about being kinder to yourself. We thought it would be timely to focus on self-compassion – especially during these uncertain and difficult times. We hear a lot about 'self-care' these days, but did you know that self-compassion is more important? We look at 'what' self-compassion is and what it isn't, 'why' research demonstrates that it's important, and 'how' to practice more self-compassion. And there's also links to articles, books, and talks that you might find interesting.

And don't forget, our last article was about dealing with uncertainty. Click [here](#) to learn more, and to access all our previous articles.

BE KINDER TO YOU!

By Amanda Pulford

Director and Clinical Psychologist

BPpsych (Hons) MPsych (Clin) MAPS FCCLP MACPA TIRF

Self-compassion : extending kindness and care to oneself in difficult times, as you would to a friend going through a similar situation. Do you practice self-compassion? If not, it might be time to be more intentional about being kinder to yourself – over a thousand research articles demonstrate that self-compassion is good for us. Read on to find out more about what self-compassion is, why it's important, and how you can do more of it.

If you're interested in our
previous articles, please click
[here](#)

AWAKEN PSYCHOLOGY

Healing Through Growth
21 Bath Street
Glenelg South SA 5045

e : admin@awakenpsychology.com.au
w : www.awakenpsychology.com.au
fb : www.facebook.com/awakenpsychology

p : 0488 954 195
f : 08 8294 3100

What Is Self-Compassion?

Dr Kristin Neff, one of the most recognised world leaders on self-compassion and self-compassion research, states that 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 to tell yourself 'this is really difficult right now', how can I comfort and care for myself in this moment? Instead of mercilessly judging and criticising yourself for various inadequacies or shortcomings, self-compassion means you are kind and understanding when confronted with personal failings – after all, who ever said you were supposed to be perfect?”.

Kristin has also identified 3 areas that, when practiced together, lead to self-compassion – self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness.

1. **Self-Kindness vs Self-Judgment**

Being warm and understanding toward ourselves when we suffer, fail, or feel inadequate – rather than ignoring our pain or beating ourselves up with self-criticism.

2. **Common Humanity vs Isolation**

Recognising that suffering and personal inadequacy is something that we all go through – rather than something that happens only to 'me' alone.

3. **Mindfulness vs Over Identification**

Being present moment aware, non-judgmental and observing our thoughts and feelings – rather than being caught up and swept away by our thoughts and feelings.

What Self-Compassion Isn't?

Funnily enough, a lot of people think that self-compassion is self-care. Self-care can be a great thing to do – go get a massage, treat yourself to a nice meal, have a relaxing bath, buy yourself a nice candle – however, you can do all the self-care you want, but if you're being harsh on yourself and not treating yourself with compassion, self-care will be a bit like putting a bandaid on a gaping wound – it will help a little, but it won't soothe, heal, or have a long-term effect on the wound.

Further, self-compassion isn't self-pity, self-indulgence or self-esteem. Self-pity is when people become immersed in their own problems, they ignore others, and they get caught up in their own emotional drama. Self-indulgence can often involve letting oneself off the hook, and doing things that are often harmful or make us feel worse in the long-term (such as sitting on the couch all day and bingeing on Netflix while eating a tub of icecream). And finally, self-esteem is about our perceived value, our self-worth, or how much we like ourselves.

What Does The Research Say?

Research indicates that people who are more compassionate towards themselves experience greater psychological health than those who lack self-compassion. For example, people who practice self-compassion experience increases in :

- life satisfaction
- wisdom
- happiness
- optimism
- curiosity
- learning goals
- social connectedness
- personal responsibility, and
- emotional resilience

AWAKEN PSYCHOLOGY

Healing Through Growth
21 Bath Street
Glenelg South SA 5045

e : admin@awakenpsychology.com.au
w : www.awakenpsychology.com.au
fb : www.facebook.com/awakenpsychology

p : 0488 954 195
f : 08 8294 3100

On the flip side, people who practice self-compassion also experience decreases in :

- self-criticism
- depression
- anxiety
- rumination
- thought suppression
- perfectionism, and
- disordered eating attitudes

Further, research indicates that in comparison to self-esteem, self-compassion is associated with :

- greater emotional resilience
- more accurate self-concepts
- more caring relationship behaviour
- less narcissism, and
- less reactive anger

How Can I Be More Compassionate Towards Myself?

Practice, practice, practice. We need to make being kind to ourselves an intentional practice. And I suggest that you do this daily, until it becomes more of a habit. The great news is that Kristin has done a lot of the hard work for us, creating Self Compassion Exercises and Self Compassion Meditations. These are all available for free on her website (www.self-compassion.org), and below is a summary of them.

Self-Compassion Exercises :

1. How Would You Treat A Friend
Learn how to respond to yourself in the same way you respond to a close friend when they are suffering.
2. Self-Compassion Break
This exercise can be used any time of day or night and will help you remember the three aspects of self-compassion.
3. Exploring Self-Compassion Through Writing
Everybody has something about themselves that they don't like. Write a letter to yourself about this issue from a place of acceptance and compassion.

4. The Criticiser, The Criticised, and The Compassionate Observer
In this exercise, you will get in touch with different, often conflicting parts of yourself, experiencing how each aspect feels in the present moment.
5. Changing Your Critical Self-Talk
Acknowledge your self-critical voice and reframe it in a more friendly way, eventually forming the blueprint for changing how you relate to yourself long-term.
6. Self-Compassion Journal
Make self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness part of your daily life by journaling to process the difficult events of your day through a lens of self-compassion.
7. Identifying What We Really Want
Remember that if you really want to motivate yourself, love is more powerful than fear. Reframe your inner dialogue so that it is more encouraging and supportive.
8. Take Care of the Caregiver
This exercise will allow you to keep your heart open and help you care for and nurture yourself at the same time you're caring for and nurturing others.

Meditations :

1. Affectionate Breathing
2. Compassionate Body Scan
3. Loving-Kindness Meditation
4. Self-Compassion/Loving-Kindness Meditation
5. Noting Your Emotions
6. Soften, Soothe, Allow : Working With Emotions In The Body
7. Self-Compassion Break

The Take Away

Self-compassion is something that we should all practice daily – to be kinder to ourselves, to realise we all suffer, and to observe our thoughts and feelings. If we can practice self-compassion daily, we will feel more positive in many aspects of our lives and relationships. And hopefully we will have a 'ripple effect' on those around us.

Articles

If you want to learn more about self-compassion, you might find the following articles of interest.

Let Go of Self-Criticism and Discover Self-Compassion

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-power-self-compassion/201103/let-go-self-criticism-and-discover-self-compassion>

How many of us offer compassion to ourselves?

5 Strategies for Self-Compassion

<https://psychcentral.com/blog/5-strategies-for-self-compassion/>

Because beating ourselves up is so entrenched in our society, you still might be suspicious of self-compassion. How to practice self-compassion.

Talks

Two great videos (of many) about self-compassion.

Self Compassion : Kristin Neff

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUMF5R7DoOA>

Kristin shows how we can be happier - and better placed to help others - by learning to be kind and compassionate to ourselves.

The Space Between Self-Esteem and Self Compassion: Kristin Neff

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvZBU5pIr4>

Watch this talk by Kristin to hear how self-esteem may just desert us at those times we need it most, whereas self-compassion can make us stronger, more motivated and happier.

Books

Following are two books that explore self-compassion, and both are full of great information, and exercises to practice self-compassion.



Self-Compassion by Dr Kristin Neff

This book shows readers how to let go of their constant, debilitating self-judgment and finally learn to be kind to themselves. Using solid research, personal stories, humour, and dozens of practical exercises, Kristin shows readers how to heal the wounds of the past so that they can be healthier, happier and more effective.



The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook

by Dr Kristin Neff and Dr Christopher Germer

More than a thousand research studies show the benefits of being a supportive friend to yourself, especially in times of need. This science-based workbook offers a step-by-step approach to breaking free of harsh self-judgments and impossible standards in order to cultivate emotional well-being.

As always, if you would like some help, please feel free to contact us on 0488 954 195,
admin@awakenpsychology.com.au or [click here](#)

AWAKEN PSYCHOLOGY

Healing Through Growth
21 Bath Street
Glenelg South SA 5045

e : admin@awakenpsychology.com.au
w : www.awakenpsychology.com.au
fb : www.facebook.com/awakenpsychology

p : 0488 954 195
f : 08 8294 3100