Boosting Self-Compassion: Why is it so hard to be nice to myself?

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We acknowledge the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes the Blackfoot Confederacy (the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations), the Tsuut’ina First Nation, the Stoney Nakoda (the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations), and Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III.

The University of Calgary is situated on land adjacent to where the Bow River meets the Elbow River. The traditional Blackfoot name of this place is “Moh’kins’tsis.”
Objectives

- Defining self-compassion
- Look at the difference between self-esteem and self-compassion
- Develop skills for practicing a self-compassion break
...being *open to and moved* by one’s own suffering, experiencing feelings of *caring* and *kindness* toward oneself, taking an *understanding*, *nonjudgmental attitude* toward one’s inadequacies and failure, and recognizing that one’s own experience is part of the *common human experience*.

(Neff, 2003, p. 224)
3 Components of Self-Compassion

Mindfulness vs Over-identification

Self-kindness vs Self-judgment

Common humanity vs Isolation

“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgementally.”

-Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn

http://actforpsychosis.com/pdfs/A10_Three_minute_breathing_space.pdf
Why Self-Compassion?

Positively correlated with:

- Resilience
- Healthy perspective-taking
- Confidence
- Life satisfaction
- Social connectedness
- Adaptive coping strategies
- More accurate self-concepts

Inversely related to:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Stress
- Procrastination
- Narcissism
- Reactive anger
What Self-Compassion Is Not

- **Self-pity:** becoming immersed in your own problem and forget others have similar problems

- **Self-indulgence:** letting one’s self “get away with everything”

- **Avoidance or apathy**
What is the difference between self-esteem and self-compassion?
“Self-esteem refers to our sense of self-worth, perceived value, or how much we like ourselves.” (Neff, K. 2017)

What are examples that things that would raise or maintain your self-esteem?

Defining Self-Esteem

“Self-esteem refers to our sense of self-worth, perceived value, or how much we like ourselves.” (Neff, K. 2017)

What kind of thoughts, feelings, or behaviours do you think needing to raise or maintain our self-esteem might result in?

- Perfectionism & Procrastination
- Approval-seeking
- Narcissism
- Self-serving bias
- Reactive anger
- Hide or refute shortcomings
- Social comparison

Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging.

Guilt: I DID something bad.
Shame: I AM bad.
Obstacles to Self Compassion

- Academic Culture
- Financial pressures
- Harsh inner critic
- Fear of failure
- Seeking perfection
- Personal Expectations
- Loss of control
Components of Self-Compassion

Common humanity vs Isolation

Good news!
Think of a situation in your life that is difficult, that is causing you stress. Call the situation to mind, and see if you can actually feel the stress and emotional discomfort in your body.

Now, say to yourself:

1. This is a moment of suffering
2. Suffering is a part of life
3. May I be kind to myself

How to be a friend to yourself
1. Commit to practicing self-compassion

   Mindfulness  Self-kindness  Common humanity

2. Practice self-compassion breaks

3. Think about the ways that you use self-criticism as a motivator.
   - How does this make you feel?
   - What do you really want?
   - What compassionate message can I give myself?

4. Look outward – What can you do to protect yourself from harm?

5. Create a self-compassion mantra
Practicing Self-Compassion

SKILL: Develop your own self-compassion mantra

- Reality check the messages and expectations that fuel “never good enough”
“It becomes understood that happiness is not dependent on circumstances being exactly as we want them to be, or on ourselves being exactly as we’d like to be. Rather, happiness stems from loving ourselves and our lives exactly as they are, knowing that joy and pain, strength and weakness, glory and failure are all essential to the full human experience.”

(Neff, 2011)
Video References

• How to be a friend to yourself: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFUxljp-Nk
• Listening to shame | Brené Brown https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=psN1DORYYV0

Image References:

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