

Concepts of self-compassion and techniques for practicing self-compassion

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Abstract: *The capacity to focus on acceptance, understanding, and love within oneself is known as self-compassion. While many people can be compassionate towards others, they frequently find it difficult to be compassionate towards themselves. This study focuses on the components of self-compassion, practicing self-compassion, and elements of self-components. This paper looks into providing tips and techniques for practicing self-compassion.*

Key Words: *Keywords: Self-compassion, Self-kindness, Mindfulness, Self-love, Self-Acceptance, Self-judgement.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Self-compassion is simply the ability to embrace and channel these same feelings towards oneself, particularly in the face of failure. The ability to show empathy, affection and concern for others who are struggling is known as compassion. Many people who are generally kind find it difficult to be kind to themselves, often out of fear of indulging in self-indulgence or self-pity. However, achieving emotional well-being might be challenging if one is unable to accept their own flaws. According to studies, American women often have less sympathy for themselves than American males. Women are frequently assigned the position of carer by society, and gender norms place a strong emphasis on acts of selflessness and caring. Despite what some people may think, self-compassion is not an act of self-indulgence, selfishness, or self-pity. In actuality, cultivating self-compassion can help with a variety of mental health problems, such as anxiety or insecurity. Many mental health professionals help people develop self-compassion. When circumstances are less than ideal, being able to relate to yourself in a way that is forgiving, accepting, and loving is a sign of self-compassion. We are aware that it is different from self-esteem and that it is akin to (though less lasting than) self-love. We can be kind to ourselves by having self-compassion, and it is a construct that can be experimentally measured.

2. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To study the components of self-compassion
- To study practicing self-compassion
- To provide tips and techniques for practicing self-compassion.

3. COMPONENTS OF SELF-COMPASSION:

It is made up of three distinct categories that Associate Professor Dr. Kristin Neff operationalized and contributed to the literature on positive psychology: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness (Neff, 2003a; 2003b). Self-compassion has three components, according to Kristin Neff, a self-compassion researcher who was the first to define the concept in an academic context.

Self-Kindness: Self-kindness entails being understanding and nice to oneself when we make mistakes or experience pain (Neff, 2003a). When we already experience suffering, we may identify the harmful effects of self-judgment and treat ourselves with kindness and compassion rather than being harsh or judgmental of ourselves (Gilbert & Irons, 2005). In essence, practicing self-kindness is treating our value as unwavering even when we don't live up to our own standards, whether through our actions or even just our thoughts (Barnard & Curry, 2011). Adapted from the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS), some instances are as follows (Neff, 2003b: 231):

- Trying to understand and be patient with your own apparent personality defects.
- Being tolerant of your own shortcomings;

- Giving yourself kindness
- Care you need while you're going through a difficult moment.

Common Humanity: Positive psychology literature frequently uses the phrase "becoming part of something bigger," and it has long been maintained that people naturally seek for relationships (Maslow, 1943). To consider our own unique experiences as part of the larger human experience, as opposed to perceiving ourselves as isolated or distinct from others, is to have common humanity (Neff, 2003a). We are not flawless, but we demonstrate self-compassion when we are lenient with ourselves for having limitations. Accepting and forgiving ourselves for our imperfections is part of this (Brown, 2010). Realizing that we're not alone in being flawed or experiencing pain is another aspect of shared humanity; rather than retreating or isolating oneself, we acknowledge that other people experience these things occasionally (Gilbert & Irons, 2005). According to the SCS, more exact activities would consist of (Neff, 2003b: 231) the following:

- Seeing your shortcomings as "part of life that everyone passes through,"
- seeing your weaknesses as "natural components of the human condition,"
- Remind yourself that other people also occasionally feel inadequate when you do.

Mindfulness: According to self-compassion theory, mindfulness is the reverse of avoidance or over-identification since it involves naming and noticing our own thoughts rather than reacting to them (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Neff, 2010). Self-compassion allows us to recognize our own negative emotions and thoughts without exaggerating their importance by ruminating. Instead, we strike a healthy balance between fully avoiding unpleasant feelings and events at one extreme and this over-identification at the other (Neff, 2003a). The following behaviors are examples of how SCS elements for mindfulness transfer into action (Neff, 2003b: 232):

- When something distressing occurs, attempt to maintain emotional equilibrium;
- Keep things in perspective when we encounter failure; and when we experience sadness adopt our emotions with curiosity and openness.
- As a result, while the SCS measures self-compassion as a trait, it can also be thought of as a "middle ground" or "balanced" manner of responding emotionally (Neff, 2015).

Practicing Self-compassion:

We could change from self-compassion to self-judgment, from sharing humanity to being alone. and from avoidance to over-identification if mindfulness isn't there to act as a checkpoint. Additionally, we notice the emergence of some important concepts that you may already be extremely familiar with, such as sympathy, goodness, forgiveness, tenderness, and various synonyms for acceptance and non-judgment. But because so much of our mental activity is ingrained or instinctual, beginning to practice self-compassion may need some conscious effort at first.

Dr. Kristin Neff herself observes that beginning might frequently need a significant shift in perspective due to our ingrained responses to pain and bad emotions (Neff, 2019). Additionally, it requires work because we're truly attempting to adopt new strategies rather than elicit happy feelings: Self-compassion is a form of benevolence, not positive emotions... We embrace ourselves with tenderness and care in response, knowing that imperfection is a part of the shared human experience, and deliberately accept that the moment is unpleasant. (Neff, 2019)

In light of this, some methods and advice for putting this goodness into action before providing some tools, affirmations, and strategies to support you on your journey. Self-kindness, or the absence of critical self-talk. acknowledging one's own humanity, or the truth that all humans are flawed and suffer pain. The practice of mindfulness is remaining objectively aware of all events, including painful ones, as opposed to ignoring or exaggerating their impact. The act of cultivating self-compassion is simply turning kindness inward. We are kind and sympathetic towards ourselves instead of being severely critical of ourselves when we fail, make mistakes, or feel inadequate. When challenges and issues arise in our lives, we encourage and support ourselves rather than react harshly and icily.

Self-Kindness Vs Self-judgement:

In contrast to ignoring our suffering or torturing ourselves with self-criticism, self-compassion means being kind and sympathetic towards ourselves when we struggle, falter, or feel inadequate. Self-compassionate persons prefer to be kind to themselves when presented with painful experiences rather than getting furious when life falls short of predetermined standards because they understand that being flawed, failing, and suffering life difficulties is unavoidable. People do not always have the ability to achieve their goals. When this truth is rejected or resisted, suffering in the form of stress, annoyance, and self-criticism rises. Greater emotional calmness is felt when this reality is embraced with compassion and goodwill.

Common humanity Vs Isolation:

An unreasonable but pervasive sense of isolation as the only one experiencing difficulties or making mistakes—often goes hand in hand with frustration at not getting all we want. But everyone has pain. Being "human" implies that one is mortal, susceptible, and flawed by nature. Therefore, self-compassion is seeing that suffering and personal inadequacy are aspects of the shared human experience, not just something that one personally experiences.

Mindfulness Vs Over-identification:

In order to avoid either exaggerating or repressing our unpleasant emotions, self-compassion also necessitates adopting a balanced stance towards them. This balanced position results from the process of linking one's own experiences to those of others who are going through a similar ordeal, putting one's own circumstance into a bigger context. It also comes from our wish to openly and clearly hold our unpleasant ideas and feelings in attentive awareness. When one is mindful, they are capable of accepting their ideas and feelings without trying to deny or suppress them. We cannot dismiss our suffering while also having sympathy for it.

4. DISCUSSIONS:

According to research, self-compassion is one of the most effective coping and resilience tools we have at our disposal, dramatically enhancing both our mental and physical health. Not because we're insufficient, but rather because we care and want to be happy, it inspires us to make adjustments and accomplish our goals. There isn't really a difference between having compassion for oneself and having compassion for others. Consider the sensation that kindness brings. To begin with, in order to have compassion for others, you must be aware of their pain. You cannot feel sympathy for how difficult that homeless person's life may be if you ignore them. Second, compassion entails being affected by the suffering of others to the point where your heart feels their sorrow (the word compassion literally translates as "suffer with"). When this happens, you experience warmth, compassion, and a strong desire to provide relief for the individual who is in need.

5. Tips and Techniques for Practicing Self-Compassion:

When someone fails or makes a mistake, compassion also entails showing them warmth and understanding rather than passing judgment on them severely. In addition, compassion (as opposed to pity) is the understanding that failure, sorrow, and imperfection are all a part of the shared human experience. When you experience difficulty, fail, or become aware of anything you don't like about yourself, self-compassion entails responding in the same encouraging and forgiving manner you would with a good friend.

- **Comfort your body**

Take care of physical health. Be kind. Consume a nutritious meal. Repose on the ground. yourself a neck, foot, or hand massage. Exercise regularly. Anything you can do to enhance your physical well-being will help you feel more compassionate toward yourself.

- **Write a letter**

A letter to oneself is appropriate. Consider a circumstance that left you in pain (a breakup with a lover, a job loss, a poorly received presentation). Describe the situation in a letter to yourself without blaming anyone, not even yourself. Utilize this activity to support your emotions. It helps to expel negative emotions.

- **Encouragement**

Self-encouragement is important. Consider what you would say to a trusted friend who was going through a challenging or stressful situation. Then, when you find yourself in a scenario of this nature, turn these sympathetic reactions inward.

- **Practice mindfulness**

Even a brief activity, like a few minutes of meditation, can be a wonderful method to care for and accept ourselves even while we're in pain. According to Harvard Health beat (2019), engaging in mindfulness exercises might help us to ground ourselves in the present. Not only is mindfulness one of the fundamental elements of self-compassion, but many practices like yoga and deep breathing can be done anywhere, at any time. Additionally, Kirstin Neff advises doing body scans and taking a brief "Self-Compassion Break" as part of guided nurturing meditations.

- **Treat Yourself as You'd Treat a Friend**

As a result, even while we can't always make someone else's pain go away, we can acknowledge its existence and provide support so that they may go through it and grow. With regard to: Allow yourself to make errors. Both self-kindness and universal humanity are based on two separate but related ideas: "We're human. But if everyone else is, it's okay since we can absolve ourselves when we could do the same for others by not adopting our views, feelings, and behaviors to be who we are. One way to accept your shortcomings and remind yourself that you're not alone in being imperfect is to occasionally give yourself permission to be human (Abrams, 2017). Treating oneself well is a good rule of thumb. This piece of advice, which is closely related to the previous one, speaks to the importance of having empathy

and understanding toward oneself. If you detect that a buddy is feeling depressed, hurt, or upset, you might physically pat them on the back or grasp their hand. According to Neff, these are techniques for activating our natural "caregiving system" and releasing oxytocin, which has advantageous cardiovascular consequences (Hamilton, 2010). These gestures, along with soft, forgiving words (such as calling oneself "darling" or "sweetheart"), can help us perceive self-kindness, even if we are first resistant.

- **Becoming More Self-Aware**

Increasing our level of self-awareness and engaging our inner conversation are other strategies. Instead of "beating ourselves up for beating ourselves up," changing our self-talk might begin with becoming aware of our internal narratives. Make use of "Releasing Statements." Perhaps you've never been a big believer in affirmations. You might feel uncomfortable with them or think your Inner Critic isn't quite 'reachable' by them on a subconscious level (Wood et al., 2009). If so, you might want to try what is known as "releasing assertions" informally. These draw on the idea of detached non-judgment found in mindfulness and are closely linked to, if not the same as, mini-exercises in self-forgiveness.

- **Self-acceptance**

Self-compassion involves not exaggerating our flaws as a statement about who we are; rather, thoughts and feelings are actions and states (Neff, 2010). This entails accepting both your character strengths and your perceived areas of weakness in yourself (Morgado et al., 2014). Self-acceptance is the capacity to accept both personal virtues and flaws without condemnation.

- **Don't Judge**

Try not to be too hasty to judge oneself. advises against presuming that you will act in a particular manner. It's simple to make assumptions like, "I get really cranky and antisocial on flights," which occasionally rules out the potential that you'll behave differently. This is merely a future-oriented technique to give oneself the benefit of the doubt and is yet another instance of treating yourself as you would treat others.

- **The challenge to smile more**

How often do we enter a room when most of the individuals are just standing around looking dull? The majority of the time, folks are merely indifferent. They could glance down at their phones or look up as you pass by. Make an effort to smile more often. As you pass your neighbour, the mailman delivering a package, and the grocery store clerk scanning your purchases, remember to smile. A modest action like smiling instead of adopting an uninterested expression can have a big influence on someone else.

- **Motivate Others**

Many people typically struggle with the concept of motivation. Positive reinforcement and upbeat remarks from others might help improve someone's spirits.

- **Practice Kindness**

Many of the suggestions on this list can be classified as "acts of kindness". There are numerous other actions that are regarded as acts of compassion in addition to those on this list. Try to perform two distinct acts of kindness each day. Giving clothes to the needy, volunteering to assist serve meals, or even just holding the door open for someone else are examples of this. There are countless options!

- **Appreciate others**

The world of today is consumed by negativity. Nothing ever appears to be good enough, and people's efforts frequently fall short of perfection. Use your voice to point out the good things individuals are doing and to encourage them to keep striving for their objectives rather than focusing on all the things they are doing wrong.

- **Share a hug /a handshake**

The ability to touch has no equal. Hugging or shaking hands can be a potent and straightforward way to express compassion. Try to give hugs and shake hands in a variety of settings to let others know you care.

- **Practice Gratitude**

Good manners are important! We frequently have the propensity to assume that our gratitude for any particular deed is implicit, but the truth is that the majority of the time, it goes unstated. Increase the number of times say "thank you" in everyday situations. Thank the hair salon receptionist for her time, the teacher for their work in the classroom, or the child for their desire to study. One thing that should never go unspoken is gratitude.

- **Helping others**

To-do lists appear to be never-ending, but as the expression says, many hands really do make light work. The key to living a life that is not just happier but also healthier, wealthier, more productive, and more meaningful may just not lie in helping others.

- **Open the door for someone**

Consider the last time you had assistance in opening a door. Was it when your hands were occupied by shopping bags at a store? Was it when you entered or left school? You were probably appreciative of the person who held the door for you wherever it happened because it was one less thing you had to worry about while traveling to your next location. Open the door for the person ahead of you, and even better, remember to smile as they pass.

- **Positive Family Bonding**

Life is too short to constantly be "busy." We all have the propensity to become engrossed in the daily commotion of getting to school, going to work, finishing homework, and attempting to catch up on household tasks. Plan a time when you can completely forget about your to-do list and just spend a few hours catching up with loved ones. You will have plenty of time to complete your to-do list later, so it will be time well spent.

- **Nurture relationships**

Sometimes, just listening is all that is necessary to establish a relationship. Make an effort to simply listen to the conversations going on around you. Participate in the conversation but avoid dominating it. Being the only speaker in a situation is simple, but listening to what others have to say is considerably more challenging.

6. CONCLUSION:

Strong self-compassion can lead to even better health, relationships, and overall well-being. So far, research has shown that practicing self-compassion provides a lot of advantages. Self-acceptance and forgiveness seem to have benefits of their own. People with higher degrees of self-compassion have been found to have lower levels of anxiety and despair. People who have self-compassion are aware of their own suffering and are kind to themselves at these moments, which reduces their own feelings of anxiety and sadness. Consider how you handle yourself after you make a mistake or fail to accomplish a goal. Like most people, you might use a little more self-compassion in your life if you have a tendency to berate yourself when things go wrong.

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