**Self Compassion and Resilience Tools**

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**Self Compassion Break**

Think of a difficult situation you were in recently. Something that troubled you or in which you experienced stress/distress.

Dear My Awesome self...

Mindfulness: Recall feelings that surfaced. (i.e. anger, confusion, sorrow, fear, tightness in the throat, shallow breath)

Common Humanity: “I am not alone” Acknowledge others who have experienced similar emotions or situations.

Self-Kindness: Be a friend to yourself.

Signed, Hang in there,
Me

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**Reflect**

- What was helpful about this exercise?
- What was hard?
- What part was more difficult/beneficial than the others?

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**What is Self-Compassion?**

- Definition: “giving ourselves the same kindness and care we’d give to a good friend” – Kristin Neff
- Components of Compassion: acknowledgement of suffering, being moved by suffering, acceptance of suffering as part of the human experience. Turning this toward ourselves is “self-compassion.”
- How does this contribute to Resilience?
  - Soothing the inner critic/negative bias
  - Sustains self care practices

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**Resilience**

“the capacity to prepare for, recover from and adapt in the face of stress, challenge or adversity”

-HeartMath Institute

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**Self Compassion Assessment**

*take a look*

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Mindfulness
When something painful happens I try to take a balanced view of the situation. (2)
When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance. (7)

Over-identification
When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy (1)
When I’m feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that’s wrong. (20)

Common Humanity
I try to see my failings as part of the human condition (3)
When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people. (20)

Isolation
When I’m feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am. (4)
When I fail at something that’s important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure. (6)

Self Kindness
I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don’t like. (2)
When I’m going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need. (6)

Self Judgment
I’m disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies. (11)
I’m intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don’t like. (24)

Benefits of Self-Compassion
Increase in Self-Compassion has been linked to:
• Decrease in burnout and exhaustion
• Decrease in anxiousness and depression
• Increase in expression of compassion to others
• Increase in the ability to forgive

Kristin Neff, PhD.
25 question assessment, research and practices—online
www.self-compassion.org
http://self-compassion.org/test-how-self-compassionate-you-are/

The Oncology Context
• Exposure to Secondary Trauma
• Grief
• Balance of workload: both emotional and logistical
• High Acuity
• Working in a place with no cures or easy answers
• Long term relationships

“We burn out not because we don’t care but because we don’t grieve.”
Rachel Naomi Remen, MD Kitchen Table Wisdom
Grief.
The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water and without getting wet. This sort of denial is no small matter. The way we deal with loss shapes our capacity to be present to life more than anything else. The way we protect ourselves from loss may be the way in which we distance ourselves from life. We burn out not because we don’t care but because we don’t grieve. We burn out because we’ve allowed our hearts to become so filled with loss that we have no room left to care.

Rachel Naomi Remen
Kitchen Table Wisdom, 1997

Unrecognized Grief

Social stigma
- “This shouldn’t be affecting me. I’m strong. I’ve been a nurse for X years.”
- “If I show anyone I’m suffering they’ll think I can’t handle the job.”

Absence of time for rituals
- to acknowledge and express loss

Delayed or misplaced feelings of grief/loss
- Stifling of emotions at present may lead to exaggerated feelings of sadness later (commercials, movies)

Secondary Trauma Indicators
- Feeling Helpless and Hopeless
- A Sense that one Can Never Do Enough
- Hypervigilance
- Inability to Embrace Complexity
- Minimizing
- Chronic Exhaustion/Physical Ailments
- Inability to Listen/Deliberate Avoidance

Secondary Trauma Indicators
- Dissociative Moments
- Sense of Persecution
- Guilt
- Fear
- Anger and Cynicism
- Inability to Empathize/Numbing
- Additions
- Grandiosity: An Inflated Sense of Importance Related to One’s Work

What are your Trauma/Grief Indicators?

Resiliency Skill: Awareness

Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others, Laura van Dernoot Lipsky with Connie Burk, Chapter 4 (2009)

What happens when we feel hopelessness?

How do we move through Empathic Distress to Compassionate Response?
Moving from Empathic Distress/CF to Compassion Satisfaction

1. **Awareness** and recognition of suffering
2. **Feeling** of concern for, and connection to, the one who is suffering
3. **Desire** to relieve that suffering
4. **Belief** that you can make a difference
5. **Willingness** to respond or take action
6. **Warm glow/sense of Satisfaction**

Kelly McGonigal, CCARE, Stanford Medicine

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Helplessness and Self-Compassion in Medicine

“Why Are We Doing This?: Clinician Helplessness in the Face of Suffering,” Back et al, Journal of Palliative Medicine, Vol 18:1, 2015

- Uses helplessness as a barometer for actions.
- Reflects on two common responses of hyper and hypo responses when feeling helpless with patients.
- Prompts self-nurture and return to constructive compassionate patient engagement after identifying one’s vulnerability and feelings of helplessness.

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Practicing Self-Compassion

https://youtu.be/aAhA7Kfb1gg

“We are always practicing something.”

—Victoria Castle, Trance of Scarcity

What are we practicing?

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Making a Plan

What are we practicing?

**Ongoing Practice**

All areas, What brings you joy/life/renewal? Exercise, Nutrition, Spirituality, Centering, Debrief/Remembrance, Exercise, Growth, Vacation schedule...Boundaries

**In the Moment Practice**

Breathing/Grounding, how do you do a turnaround, reframe, practice self-awareness

**Role-transition Practice**

Transitioning to and from work

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RAIN

- **R**: Recognize
- **A**: Allow
- **I**: Investigate
- **N**: Nurture
Take aways....

Resources

Helpful Apps & Gadgets

Insight Timer: Meditation timer bell. Wide Variety of crowd sourced guided meditations. Android/iPhone and online access insighttimer.com/ Free

Lotus Bud Mindfulness Bell: Sends gentle bell reminders randomly throughout the day. Take the opportunity to breath, reset or activate any practice.

10% Happier-Meditation for Fidgety Skeptics (Podcast, App and website) Dan Harris and Joseph Goldstein 10percenthappier.com
Books and related Websites

Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others
Laura Van Dernoot Lipsky with Connie Burk (2009) www.traumastewardship.com

Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself
Kristen Neff (2011) www.self-compassion.org

Articles of note

“Self-care of Physicians Caring for patients at the End of Life: Being Connected… A Key to My Survival.” Kearney et al, JAMA, March 18, 2009—Vol 301, No. 11 Themes include: compassion fatigue, exquisite empathy, self care. Proves that Meditative Mindfulness (awareness) and Reflective Writing are two effective interventions for CI.

“Why Are We Doing This?: Clinician Helplessness in the Face of Suffering,” Back et al, Journal of Palliative Medicine, Vol 18:1, 2015 Uses helplessness as a barometer for actions. Reflects on two common responses of hyper and hypo responses when feeling helpless with patients. Transforms classic grief steps into the RENEW acronym for a method of recovery (self care) and return to constructive compassionate patient engagement after identifying ones’ vulnerability and feelings of helpless. Practical article for the whole team.

“A moment of self-compassion can change your entire day.
A string of such moments can change the course of your life."  
Chris Germer

References

2. Secondary Traumatic Stress/Compassion Fatigue Trauma Stewardship by Laura van Dernoot Lipsky with Connie Burk (2009), www.traumastewardship.com
4. Parasympathetic Nervous System- HeartMath www.heartmath.org has evidenced based research, the tested QUICK COHERENCE practice and a biofeedback hardware and apps that measure Heart Rate Value (HRV) and train people to access their PNS.
5. Accelerated Recovery Program for Compassion Fatigue - Baranowsky, Gentry & Ouning
6. Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) John Kabat-Zinn, Full Catastrophe Living and many other volumes on mindfulness. Look for courses in your area.