

VON Virtual Bereavement Support Series

SELF-COMPASSION AS SELF-CARE


Heather Stang, MA, C-IAYT

Author, *Mindfulness & Grief*

October 28, 2020





A small brown dog is sitting in a white bathtub. The dog's head and chest are covered in thick white soap suds. The dog has a white patch on its muzzle and is looking directly at the camera with a calm expression. The background shows the white tiled wall of the bathroom.

Self-care is more than bubble baths, manicures, and long walks on the beach. Self-care improves your own health and wellbeing in mind, body and spirit while boosting your resilience to stress through regular skillful actions.

Impact of Self-Criticism

- Distorted perspective of other people's behavior
- Distrustful in relationships – personal & professional
- Impairs clear-seeing when looking for a solution
- Prevents you from speaking up against injustice
- Leads to an ego crash that follows a short-lived high
- Focus on our weakness rather than improving our strengths

(Neff, 2011)



A close-up photograph of a person's hands, with fingers interlaced to form a heart shape. The person is wearing a dark, textured sweater. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be a window with light coming through. The overall mood is warm and comforting.

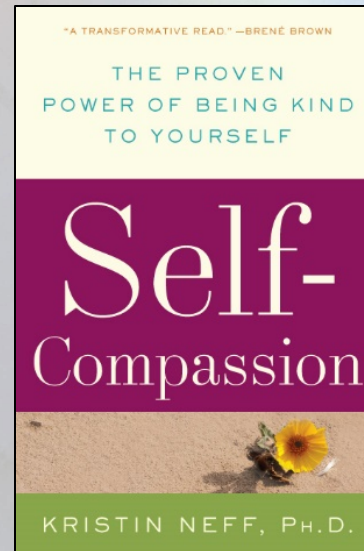
Benefits of Self-Compassion

- Less Anxious & Depressed (Shapira, 2010; Neff, 2009)
- Resilience Against Life Stressors (Wong, 2016; Sbarra, 2012)
- Fewer Negative Emotions (Neff, Rude, Kirkpatrick, 2007)
- Less Resistance to Suffering (Neff, 2003)
- Higher Emotional Intelligence (Leary, Tate, et al., 2003)
- Emotional Coping Skills (Rockliff, Gilbert, et al. 2008)
- Reduces Avoidance Behaviors In PTSD (Thompson, Waltz, 2008)

3 Core Components Of Self-Compassion

“By giving ourselves unconditional kindness and comfort while embracing the human experience, difficult as it is, we avoid destructive patterns of fear, negativity, and isolation.”(Neff, 2011)

- Mindfulness
- Common Humanity
- Self-Kindness



Let's Practice...





Common Humanity Practice

- Imagine being in a room with people struggling just as you are struggling.
- What would you say to them?
- Now offer those words to yourself.

Self-kindness Practice

Write down 1 to 3 sentences that you can memorize and say to yourself to cultivate self-compassion in place of self-criticism.

Keep it in your wallet or purse, or take a picture with your phone, until you know it by heart. Use often!





Mindfulness Practice: R.A.I.N.

- **Recognize** - Acknowledge what you are feeling. What is happening inside me right now?
- **Allowing (Acceptance)** - Be willing to be present to your experience, no matter how unpleasant. Whatever you notice, let it be.
- **Investigate** - Unhook yourself from the object or story, so you can witness the emotion with kindness, and from an unbiased perspective. Mindfulness of body is a great technique here, as is asking yourself “what am I believing to be true?”
- **Nurture** – Offer yourself mercy and care as you would an ideal best friend. Words of kindness, a gentle caress, or an acknowledgement of how hard this is are a few ways to practice.

(RAIN was coined by Michele McDonald)

References & Resources

- Benson, H. & Klipper, M. Z. (1992). *The relaxation response*. Harper Collins, New York.
- Benson, H. & Proctor, W. (2010). *Relaxation revolution: The science and genetics of mind body healing*. Simon and Schuster. New York.
- Brach, T. (2013). *Radical acceptance: Embracing your life with the heart of the Buddha*. Bantam, New York.
- Cacciatore, J., & Flint, M. (2012). ATTEND: Toward a mindfulness-based bereavement care model. *Death studies*, 36(1), 61-82.
- Calhoun, L. G., & Tedeschi, R. G. (Eds.). (2014). *Handbook of posttraumatic growth: Research and practice*. Routledge.
- Hanson, R. (2009). *Buddha's Brain*. New Harbinger, Oakland.
- Hanson, R. (2013). *Hardwiring happiness: The new brain science of contentment, calm, and confidence*. Harmony.
- Helbert, K. (2015). *Yoga for Grief and Loss: Poses, Meditation, Devotion, Self-Reflection, Selfless Acts, Ritual*. Singing Dragon.
- Kornfield, J. (2014). *A lamp in the darkness: Illuminating the path through difficult times*. Sounds True.
- Levine, S. (2005). *Unattended sorrow: Recovering from loss and reviving the heart*. Rodale.
- McGonigal, K. (2016). *The upside of stress: Why stress is good for you, and how to get good at it*. Avery.
- Neff, K. (2011). *Self-Compassion: The proven power of being kind to yourself*. William Morrow: NY, NY.
- Neimeyer, R. A. (Ed.). (2015). *Techniques of grief therapy: Assessment and intervention*. Routledge.
- Sausys, A. (2014). *Yoga for grief relief: Simple practices for transforming your grieving body and mind*. New Harbinger.
- Shapiro, S. L., & Carlson, L. E. (2009). *The art and science of mindfulness: Integrating mindfulness into psychology and the helping professions*. American Psychological Association.
- Stang, H. (2018). *Mindfulness & grief: With guided meditations to calm your mind & restore your spirit*. Mindfulness, Etc.: London.
- Treleaven, D. (2018). *Trauma-sensitive mindfulness*. W.W. Norton & Co.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). Mindfulness-based interventions in context: past, present, and future. *Clinical psychology: Science and practice*, 10(2), 144-156.

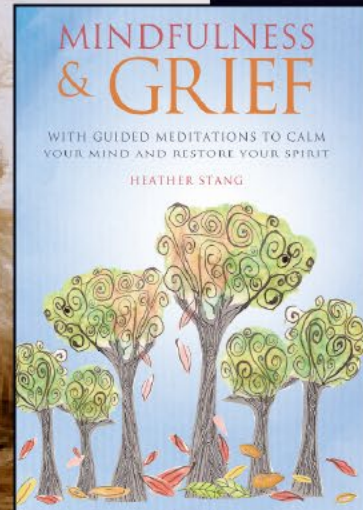


MINDFULNESS
& GRIEF
INSTITUTE



AWAKEN
meditation for grief & online support

<http://bit.ly/von-self-compassion>



Heather Stang, MA, C-IAYT
Author, Mindfulness & Grief
Facilitator, Awaken Grief Group

MindfulnessAndGrief.com
heather@mindfulnessandgrief.com