Self-Compassion: Core Concepts

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Self-Esteem
• Self-esteem is a global evaluation of self-worth
• For years self-esteem was seen as the ultimate marker of wellbeing
• Potential problems with high self-esteem - Not if you have it, but how you get it
  ➢ The need to be special and above average
  ➢ Social Comparison
  ➢ Narcissism
  ➢ Bullying and Prejudice
  ➢ Contingency of Self-Worth
  ➢ Inevitable Feelings of Inadequacy

Self-Compassion
• The three components of self-compassion (Neff, 2003)
  • Self-Kindness vs. Self-Judgment:
    ➢ Treating self with care and understanding rather than harsh judgment
    ➢ Actively soothing and comforting oneself
  • Common humanity vs. Isolation
    ➢ Seeing own experience as part of larger human experience not isolating or abnormal
    ➢ Recognizing that life is imperfect (us too!)
  • Mindfulness vs. Over-identification
    ➢ Allows us to “be” with painful feelings as they are
    ➢ Avoids extremes of suppressing or running away with painful feelings

• Physiological underpinnings of self-criticism
  ➢ Threat defense system
  ➢ Cortisol and adrenaline

• Physiological underpinnings of self-compassion
  ➢ Mammalian care-giving system
  ➢ Oxytocin and opiates

Common confusions
• Belief that self-compassion is weak, complacent and passive
  ➢ Compassion can be a strong, powerful force for change
• Confusion with Self-Indulgence
  ➢ Compassion wants long term health not short term pleasure
• Confusion with making excuses
  ➢ Self-compassion provides the safety needed to admit mistakes
• Belief that self-compassion will undermine motivation
Most people believe self-criticism is an effective motivator
- Motivation with self-criticism comes from fear of being worthless
- Motivation with self-compassion comes from the desire for health and well-being
- Self-compassion provides the emotionally supportive environment needed for change

Research on self-compassion
- Explosion of research into self-compassion over the past decade Most research conducted with the Self-Compassion Scale (Neff, 2003)
- Reductions in: Anxiety, depression, stress, rumination, perfectionism, negative body image
- Increases in: Life satisfaction, happiness, connectedness, self-confidence, optimism, gratitude, emotional intelligence, wisdom

Self-compassion vs. self-esteem
- Offers same benefits without pitfalls
  - Fewer social comparisons
  - Less contingent self-worth
  - No association with narcissism

Linked to flexibility and creativity
- More creative problem solving
- Greater perspective taking
- More cognitive flexibility
- Less dogmatism

Linked to motivation
- Greater desire to learn and grow
- Personal standards just as high, not as upset when don’t meet them
- Less fear of failure, more likely to try again when fail
- Linked to health behaviors
  - Diet, exercise, quitting smoking, less alcohol use, more doctors visits

Linked to better physical health
- Enhanced immune response
- Fewer physical symptoms

Linked to personal accountability
- More conscientiousness
- Taking greater responsibility for past mistakes
- Disposition to apologize

Linked to Coping and Resilience
- More effective coping with divorce, combat trauma, chronic pain
Linked to Other-Focused Concern
- Linked to better romantic relationships
  - More caring and supportive relationship behavior (as rated by partners)
  - Less controlling and verbally aggressive
- More forgiveness
- Greater compassion and empathy for others

Self-compassion for caregivers
- Less burnout and “compassion” fatigue
- More satisfaction with care-giving role
- Increased wellbeing and coping for parents of autistic children

Family Influences on Self-Compassion
- Attachment security
- Parental criticism
- Conflict in home
- History of abuse

Can Self-Compassion be Taught?

Therapeutic approaches:
- Less depressive relapse (Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy)
- Less depression, anxiety, shame (Compassion Focused Therapy)

Short-term interventions
- Self-compassionate letter writing
  - Participants wrote SC letter for seven days
  - SC letter (N = 63) vs. early memory control (N = 70)
  - Significantly less depression (3 mo. later) and greater happiness (6 mo. later)
- Self-compassion meditation
  - Women with body image concerns did guided self-compassion meditation for 3 wks (3 to 4 times per wk)
  - SC condition (N = 98) vs. waitlist control (N = 130)
  - More SC and body appreciation, less body dissatisfaction, self-worth contingent on appearance
  - Gains maintained three months later
- “Becoming your own mental coach”
  - Intervention providing concepts, experiential exercises, and home practice
  - Three sessions (two 1.5 hrs plus one 45 min. follow-up)
  - SC (N = 27) vs. time management control (N = 25)
  - Increased SC, mindfulness, optimism, and self-efficacy, decreased rumination

Mindful Self-Compassion Program (MSC)
- 8-week workshop designed to explicitly teach skills of self-compassion
- Uses meditation, informal practice, group discussion and homework exercises
- Randomized clinical trial of MSC with intervention group vs. wait-list control group
• MSC led to significantly greater gains in self-compassion, mindfulness, compassion, life satisfaction, as well as greater reductions in depression, anxiety, stress, emotional avoidance
• All well-being gains maintained for one year
• Degree of formal and informal self-compassion practice both related to gains in self-compassion

Self-compassion calculator, videos, research articles, guided meditations and exercises available at: www.self-compassion.org

Information on the MSC program available at: www.CenterforMSC.org

Suggested Reading:

6 Session Audio Training
MEDITATIONS

AFFECTIONATE BREATHING

- Please find a quiet, comfortable place to sit. Position yourself in a way that your bones are supporting the muscles and you don't need any effort to remain in one position for the whole exercise. To do this, try keeping your back straight and gently supported, with your shoulder blades slightly dropped and your chin gently tucked toward your chest.

- Take 3 slow easy deep breaths to relax and let go of whatever burdens you’re carrying. Then let your eyelids gently close, or partially close, which ever makes you more comfortable. If you wish, put your hand over your heart, or wherever it is comforting for you, to remind yourself that you are bringing not only attention, but kind attention, to your experience and to yourself.

- Now finding your breath, wherever you can feel it most easily. Perhaps at the tip of the nose, the belly, or perhaps as a gentle movement of your whole body? Letting yourself notice the simple sensation of breathing. Just feeling your breath for a while.

- Your mind will naturally wander away from the sensation of the breath every few seconds. Don’t worry about how often your mind wanders. Gently returning to the feeling of your breathing when you notice that your mind has wandered, like escorting a puppy or a child gone astray.

- See if you can incline toward your breathing as you might incline toward a child or a beloved pet, with curiosity and tenderness.

- Letting your body breathe you. There is nothing you need to do.

- Noticing how your breath nourishes your body even when you’re not paying any attention to it.

- Now feeling your whole body breathe, gently moving with the rising and falling of the breath, like the movement of the sea.

- Or, if you like, allowing your body to be rocked by your breath, back and forth, like a baby being soothed and caressed.

- Giving yourself over to your breath, letting yourself become your breath, gently rocked and soothed, back and forth.

- Now, take a moment and savor the stillness of your body.

- And slowly and gently open your eyes.
LOVING-KINDNESS WITH SELF-COMPASSION

- Please find a comfortable position, sitting or lying down. Letting your eyes close, fully or partially. Taking a few deep breaths to settle into your body and into the present moment. You might like to put your hand over your heart, or wherever it is comforting and soothing, as a reminder to bring not only awareness, but loving awareness, to your experience and to yourself.

- Locating your breathing where you can feel it most easily. Feeling your breath move through your body, and when your attention wanders, feeling the gentle movement of your breath once again. Letting your body breathe you.

- After a few minutes, starting to notice any physical sensations of stress that you may be holding in your body, perhaps in your neck, jaw, belly, or forehead.

- Also noticing if you're holding some difficult emotions, such as worry about the future or uneasiness about the past. Understand that every human body bears stress and worry throughout the day.

- See if you can incline toward the uneasiness in your body as you might incline toward a child or a beloved pet, with curiosity and tenderness.

- Now inclining toward yourself, offering yourself goodwill simply because of the stress and difficult emotions that you're holding in your body right now, as everyone holds in their bodies. Offering words of kindness and compassion to yourself, slowly and affectionately. For example:

  May I be safe
  May I be peaceful
  May I be kind to myself
  May I accept myself as I am

  (pause)

- Whenever you notice that your mind has wandered, returning to the sensations in your body and to the loving-kindness phrases.

- If you are ever swept up in emotion, you can always return to your breathing. Then, when you're comfortable again, returning to the phrases.

- Finally, taking a few breaths and just resting quietly in your own body, knowing that you can return to the phrases anytime you wish.

- Gently open your eyes.
GIVING AND RECEIVING COMPASSION

- Please sit comfortably, closing your eyes, and taking a few deep, relaxing breaths. Allowing yourself to feel the sensation of breathing in and out. Noticing how your breath nourishes your body as you inhale and soothes your body as you exhale.

- Now, letting your breathing find its own natural rhythm. Continue feeling the sensation of breathing in and breathing out. If you like, putting your hands over your heart as a reminder to bring not just awareness, but loving awareness, to your experience.

- Now, focusing your attention on your in-breath, letting yourself enjoy the sensation of breathing in, one breath after another.

- If you like, you can also carry a word on each in-breath, such as “love,” compassion,” “ease,” or “peace.” Or you can imagine inhaling warmth or light—giving yourself whatever you need in this moment. Continue inhaling something good for yourself and then simply exhaling.

- Now, calling to mind someone to whom you would like to send goodwill, either someone you love or someone who is struggling and needs compassion. Visualize that person clearly in your mind.

- Shifting your focus to your out-breath, feeling your body breathe out, sending something good with each exhalation to this person.

- Now feeling your body breathe both in and out—breathing in something good for yourself and breathing out something good for another. “One for me, one for you.” “One for me, one for you.”

- Allowing your breathing to flow in and out, like the gentle movement of the sea, flowing in and flowing out. Letting yourself be a part of this limitless, boundless flow, breathing in and breathing out.

- If you wish, you can focus a little more on yourself or on the other person—whatever you need.

- And as you breathe out, feel free to send love and compassion to other persons, to groups of people, or to the world in general.

  (long pause)

- And now, gently opening your eyes.
LOVING-KINDNESS FOR BEGINNERS

- Allow yourself to settle into a comfortable position, either sitting or lying down. If you like, putting a hand over your heart or another location that is soothing as a reminder to bring not only awareness, but loving awareness, or our experience and to ourselves.

- Now bringing to mind a person or other living being who naturally makes you smile. This could be a child, your grandmother, your cat or dog—whomever naturally brings happiness to your heart. Perhaps it’s a bird outside your window. Letting yourself feel what it’s like to be in that being’s presence. Allowing yourself to enjoy the good company.

- Now, recognizing how this being wishes to be happy and free from suffering, just like you and every other living being. Repeating softly and gently, feeling the importance of your words:

  May you be safe.
  May you be peaceful.
  May you be healthy.
  May you live with ease.

- When you notice that your mind has wandered, returning to the words and the image of the loved one you have in mind. Savoring any warm feelings that may arise. Taking your time.

- Now, adding yourself to your circle of good will. Putting your hand over your heart and feeling the warmth and gentle pressure of your hand (for just a moment or for the rest of the meditation)

  May you and I (we) be safe.
  May you and I (we) be peaceful.
  May you and I (we) be healthy.
  May you and I (we) live with ease.

- Now, letting go of the image of the other, and letting the full focus of your attention rest directly on yourself. Visualizing your whole body in your mind’s eye, noticing any stress or uneasiness that may be lingering within you, and offering yourself the phrases.

  May I be safe.
  May I be peaceful.
  May I be healthy.
  May I live with ease.

- Perhaps there are different words that speak to you more directly than the ones we already used. See if you can you offer yourself some words that you might like to hear from others, or you would say to others.

- Finally, taking a few breaths and just resting quietly in your own body, savoring the good will and compassion that flows naturally from your own heart. Knowing that you can return to the phrases anytime you wish.
COMPASSIONATE BODY SCAN

- To begin, it’s best to lie down on a bed or the floor unless you will fall asleep. Lie flat on your back and gently rest your arms about six inches away from your sides and hold your legs around shoulder-width apart. Place a hand on your heart as a reminder to be kind to yourself. Feel the warmth of your hand and take 3 deep, relaxing breaths. Then place your arm by your side again.

- Starting with your feet. Notice what your feet feel like. Are they warm or cool, dry or moist? Then noticing if there’s any discomfort there. If so, mentally softening the area as if you were placing a warm towel on it. If you wish, bringing some compassion into the area with words like “there’s a little pain there, it’s okay.”

- Just feeling the sensations of your body—pleasure, pain, or nothing at all—and letting every sensation be just as it is.

- Now bringing a measure of gratitude to your feet. Your feet have such a small surface area yet they hold up your entire body all day long. They work hard for us although we rarely pay any attention to them. If your feet feel good today, you can also extend gratitude for the discomfort that you don’t have.

- Carefully move your loving attention from one toe to the next, or from one part of each foot to another, first one foot and then the next. Making sure that your awareness is saturated with tenderness, gratitude, and respect for each area of your body.

- When you notice your mind has wandered, as it will after a few seconds, just returning to the sensations in your body. If you are flooded with judgment or associations to a particular body part, putting your hand on your heart again and breathing gently, and then returning to the simple body sensations. If an area of your body is very difficult to stay with, then move gently to another body part for now. Letting this exercise be gentle and peaceful.

- After you have given compassionate awareness to the sensations in your feet, moving slowly to other parts of your body, right up to the crown of your head:
  - Feet
  - Ankles
  - Calves and shins
  - etc

- As you move from one part of your body to another, returning your awareness again and again to whatever sensations are present at the moment, making sure to bring gratitude, kindness, and respect to each body part. For example, reminding yourself how hard your stomach works to digest your food, the effort of your neck holding up your head, and the way your eyes and ears guide, inform, and delight you all day long.

- When you have paid loving attention to each individual body part, putting your hand on your heart again and giving your entire body a final shower of affection.

- Then gently opening your eyes.
COMPASSIONATE FRIEND MEDITATION

- Please sit in a comfortable position, reasonably upright and relaxed. Gently close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths to settle into your body. Put one or two hands over your heart for a moment to remind yourself to give yourself loving attention.

- Now imagine yourself in a place that is safe and comfortable—it might be a cozy room with the fireplace burning, or a peaceful beach with warm sun and a cool breeze, or a forest glade. It could also be an imaginary place, like floating on clouds...anywhere you might feel peaceful and safe. Let yourself enjoy the feeling of comfort in this place. (Pause).

- Soon you'll receive a visitor, a warm and compassionate presence who embodies the qualities of wisdom, strength, and unconditional love. You may have felt a warm and compassionate presence at some point in your life. If so, see if you can remember that feeling.

- This being may be a known to you as a figure like Christ or Buddha, it can be a compassionate person from your past like a grandparent, or it may not have any particular form. This being loves you and would like you to be happy, and would like to visit you for a little while. Really imagine this being in as much detail as possible, especially how it feels to be in his or her presence. (Pause)

- You can go out and meet this visitor, or you can receive him or her into your safe space. Please greet and be with your visitor wherever you are most comfortable.

- Place yourself at just the right distance from your compassionate friend—whatever feels right. If it’s someone you feel close to, this may even include resting your head on this being’s shoulder. If it’s the Dalai Lama, perhaps you want a little respectful distance. Hold your friend in your heart and mind and enjoy his or her good company. There is nothing special you need to do except savor the moment. (Pause).

- Now allow yourself to recall any difficulties that you may have in your life right now. Your compassionate friend has come to tell you something, something that is just what you need to hear right now in your life. Listen carefully to what your compassionate friend has come to say. If no words come, that’s okay, too—just share his or her good company. That’s a blessing in itself. Just be with your friend, listening if there is anything you should hear. (Pause).

- And perhaps you would like to say something to your compassionate friend. Your friend listens deeply, and completely understands you. Is there anything you’d like to share? (Pause).
• Soon your friend will be leaving again, but before that happens, your friend would like to give you something—a material object. As you place your hands together, your friend reaches out and puts an object in your hands, or an object simply appears in your hands—something that has special meaning for you. Wait and see what comes. What is it? Look it over carefully. (Pause).

• Now, thank your friend, enjoy your friend's good company for a few last moments, and then bid your friend farewell.

• You are now alone in your safe place again. Let yourself savor what just happened, enjoying the words and the object that was given to you. (Pause).

• Now, remember that your compassionate friend is part of you. Therefore, you can invite your friend back anytime you wish. Your visitor is available with words of wisdom and compassion whenever you need it the most.

• And when you’re ready, slowly open your eyes.

adapted from Gilbert, 2009
SOFTEN –SOOTHE-ALLOW

The following meditation is a combination of the following three practices. You can practice them all together, or separately.

- Labeling emotions
- Mindfulness of emotion in the body
- Soften Soothe Allow

Please find a comfortable position, close your eyes, and take three relaxing breaths.

Place your hand on your heart for a few moments to remind yourself that you are in the room, and to bring kindness to yourself.

- Now let yourself recall a mild-moderately difficult situation that you are in right now, perhaps a health problem, stress in a relationship, or a loved one in pain. Do not choose a very difficult problem, or a trivial problem—choose a problem that can generate a little stress in your body when you think of it. Now clearly visualize the situation. Who was there? What was said? What happened?

- Now that you’re thinking about this situation, see if you can’t name the different emotions that arise within you—anger? sadness? grief? confusion? fear? longing? despair? Shame?

- Now see if you can name the strongest emotion—a difficult emotion—associated with that situation: Repeat the name of the emotion to yourself in a gentle, understanding voice, as if you were validating for a friend what he or she is feeling: “That’s longing.” “That’s grief.” Use the same warmhearted tone of voice that you would use if you were validation how a friend feels.

- Now expand your awareness to your body as a whole.

- Recall the difficult situation again and scan your body for where you feel it the most. In your mind’s eye, sweep your body from head to toe, stopping where you can sense a little tension or discomfort.

- Now choose a single location in your body where the feeling expresses itself most strongly, perhaps as a point of muscle tension or an achy feeling.

- In your mind, incline gently toward that spot.

- Then soften into that location in your body. Let the muscles be soft without a requirement that they become soft, like simply applying heat to sore muscles. You can say, “soft…soft…soft…” quietly to yourself, to enhance the process. Remember that you are not trying to make the sensation go away—you are just being with them with loving awareness.
• If you wish, let yourself just soften around the edges, like around the edges of a pancake. No need to go all the way in.

• **Soothe** yourself for struggling in this way. Put your hand over your heart and feel your body breathe. Perhaps kind words arise in our mind, such as, “Oh my dear, this is such a painful experience. May I grow in ease and well-being.”

• If you wish, you can also direct kindness to the part of your body that is under stress by placing your hand in that place. It may help to think of your body as if it were the body of a beloved child. You can say kind words to yourself, or just repeat, “soothe…soothe…soothe.”

• **Allow** the discomfort to be there. Abandon the wish for the feeling to disappear. Let the discomfort come and go as it pleases, like a guest in your own home. You can repeat, “allow…allow…allow.”

• “Soften, soothe, allow.” “Soften, soothe, allow.” You can use these three words like a mantra, reminding yourself to incline with tenderness toward your suffering.

• If you experience too much discomfort with an emotion, stay with your breath until you feel better.

• Slowly open your eyes when you’re ready.
INFORMAL PRACTICES

SOOTHING TOUCH

One easy way to soothe and comfort yourself when you’re feeling badly is to give yourself a gentle hug or caress, or simply put your hand on your heart and feel the warmth of your hand. It may feel awkward or embarrassing at first, but your body doesn’t know that. It just responds to the physical gesture of warmth and care, just as a baby responds to being cuddled in its mother’s arms. Our skin is an incredibly sensitive organ. Research indicates that touch releases oxytocin, provides a sense of security, soothes distressing emotions, and calms cardiovascular stress. So why not try it?

You might like to try putting your hand over your heart during difficult periods several times a day for a period of at least a week.

**Hand-on-Heart**

- When you notice you’re under stress, take 2-3 deep, satisfying breaths.
- Gently place your hand over your heart, feeling the gentle pressure and warmth of your hand. If you wish, place both hands on your chest, noticing the difference between one and two hands.
- Feel the touch of your hand on your chest. If you wish, you could make small circles with your hand on your chest.
- Feel the natural rising and falling of your chest as you breathe in and as you breathe out.
- Linger with the feeling for as long as you like.

Some people feel uneasy putting a hand over the heart. Feel free to explore where on your body a gentle touch is actually soothing. Some other possibilities are:

- One hand on your cheek
- Cradling your face in your hands
- Gently stroking your arms
- Crossing your arms and giving a gentle squeeze
- Gently rubbing your chest, or using circular movements
- Hand on your abdomen
- One hand on your abdomen and one over heart
- Cupping one hand in the other in your lap

Hopefully you’ll start to develop the habit of physically comforting yourself when needed, taking full advantage of this surprisingly simple and straightforward way to be kind to ourselves.
SELF-COMPASSION BREAK

When you notice that you're feeling stress or emotional discomfort, see if you can find the discomfort in your body. Where do you feel it the most? Make contact with the sensations as they arise in your body.

Now, say to yourself, slowly:

1. **This is a moment of suffering**

   That's mindfulness. Other options include:
   
   - *This hurts.*
   - *This is tough.*
   - *Ouch!*

2. **Suffering in a part of living**

   That's common humanity. Other options include:
   
   - *Other people feel this way.*
   - *I'm not alone.*
   - *We all struggle in our lives.*

Now, put your hands over your heart, or wherever it feels soothing, feeling the warmth and gentle touch of your hands.

Say to yourself:

3. **May I be kind to myself**

See if you can find words for what you need in times like this. Other options may be:

   - *May I accept myself as I am*
   - *May I give myself the compassion that I need*
   - *May I learn to accept myself as I am*
   - *May I forgive myself.*
   - *May I be strong.*
   - *May I be safe*

   (pause)

If you're having trouble finding the right language, sometimes it helps to imagine what you might say to a dear friend struggling with that same difficulty. (pause) Can you say something similar to yourself, letting the words roll gently through your mind?
MANAGING COMPASSION FATIGUE

- Please bring to mind someone you are caring for who can exhaust you or frustrate you, or someone who suffers with whom you feel sympathy. For this introductory exercise, please choose someone who is not your child, as this can be a more complicated dynamic. See the person clearly in your mind and feel the struggle in your own body.

- Now please listen carefully to these words, letting them gently roll through your mind:

  Everyone is on his or her own life journey.
  I am not the cause of this person’s suffering,
  nor is it entirely within my power to make it go away, even if I wish I could
  Moments like this are difficult to bear, yet I may still try to help if I can.

- Now, aware of the stress you are carrying in your body, inhaling fully and deeply, drawing compassion inside your body and filling every cell in your body with compassion. Letting yourself be soothed by inhaling deeply, and by giving yourself the compassion you need when you experience discomfort.

- As you exhale, sending out compassion to the other person who is associated with your discomfort, or exhaling compassion to living beings in general.

- Continue breathing compassion in and out, letting your body gradually find a natural, relaxed breathing rhythm. Breathing in for yourself and out for the other. One for me, one for you.

- Occasionally scanning your inner landscape for any distress and respond by inhaling compassion for yourself and exhaling compassion for the person who needs it. If you find that you, or the other person, needs extra compassion, feel free to focus your breath more in that direction.

- Noticing the gentle rocking motion of your body as you breathe, like the tides flowing in and out on an ocean of compassion. A limitless ocean that embraces all suffering.

- And listening to these words once again:

  Everyone is on his or her own life journey.
  I am not the cause of this person’s suffering,
  nor is it entirely within my power to make it go away, even if I wish I could
  Moments like this are difficult to bear, yet I may still try to help if I can.
MEETING UNMET NEEDS

This is an informal practice designed to transform hard feelings, especially anger, in current and past relationships.

- Please close your eyes and think of a relationship in which you were hurt—hurt a small to a moderate degree, not traumatized. Please choose a relationship in which you would like to let go of anger because it’s not serving you any more. Remember what happened.

- Now getting in touch with your anger, really feel it in your body. Try to fully validate your anger, knowing that it’s completely natural for you to feel as you do. Letting your inner compassionate voice express sorrow that you’ve been hurt in this way.

- Now, if you were to strip away the anger and resentment (the hard feelings), what do you have left? *What are the soft feelings behind your anger?* Are you feeling…
  - Scared?
  - Lonely?
  - Sad?

- Now, digging even deeper, ask yourself, “*What is my unmet need?*”

- Seeing if you can release the other person for a moment and dive into your own experience. What is the universal human need that lies behind the soft feeling? The need to be…?
  - Seen?
  - Heard?
  - Validated?
  - Safe?
  - Connected?
  - To be special?
  - Loved?

- If you’d like, putting your hand over your heart and giving yourself some love just because these feelings arise, not to make them go away.

- Now, seeing if you can meet your deepest needs directly.
  - What would you say to a dear friend who expressed these same needs as you have?
  - Can you say the same to yourself?

- Or perhaps…
  - If you feel unloved, can you tell yourself “*I love you.*”
  - If you feel unseen, can you tell yourself “*I see you.*”

- In other words, giving to yourself now what you’ve been hoping to receive from others?

- Gently open your eyes.
FORGIVENESS

FORGIVING OTHERS

- Contact the pain that this person has caused you, perhaps even feeling it in your body as residual stress.

- Offering yourself compassion for how you’ve suffered, perhaps saying: “May I be safe. May I be peaceful. May I be kind to myself. May I accept myself as I am”

- If it feels like you need to stay here, keep giving yourself compassion.

- If it feels right to try to forgive, seeing if you can now try to understand the forces that made this person act badly. Recognizing that it’s only human to make mistakes. Consider if there were any environmental factors impacting what happened. For example, was he or she under a lot of stress at the time? Or consider the factors that may have shaped this person’s personality (e.g., financial stress, difficult childhood, low self-esteem, cultural factors)

- Beginning to offer forgiveness to the other person, perhaps saying the phrase: “May I begin to forgive you for what you have done, wittingly or unwittingly, to have caused me harm.”

- If it feels right, deciding not to be hurt like this again, at least to the best of your ability.

FORGIVING OURSELVES

- Take a few moments to consider how your actions impacted the other person and feel your regret and remorse.

- While opening to the truth of what you did, also recognizing that it’s only human to make mistakes. Maybe you feel some shame. That’s also human.

- Offering yourself compassion for how you’ve suffered, perhaps saying: “May I be free from fear. May I be free from shame. May I be kind to myself. May I accept myself as I am”

- If it feels like you need to stay here, keep giving yourself compassion.

- Now trying to understand some factors leading to your mistake. Taking a moment to consider if there were any environmental factors impacting you at the time. For instance, were you under a lot of stress? Or were certain aspects of your personality triggered in an irrational way, old buttons pushed?

- Now seeing if you can offer forgiveness to yourself, saying the phrase: “May I (begin) to forgive myself for what I have done, wittingly or unwittingly, to have caused [this person] harm.”

- If it feels right, deciding not to make this same mistake, at least to the best of your ability.
Poems

John Austin: Awareness

Mary Oliver: The Journey, Wild Geese

Derek Walcott: Love after Love

Naomi Shahib Nye: Kindness

Film clips

Moments: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNVPalNZD_I

The Fly: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dSsAEWkmBFU

Twin Boys Talking: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_JmA2CIUvUY

How my Son Ruined My Life: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRbL46mWx9w