Self-Compassion: Strategies to Prevent Burnout

Presented by Kathy Moore, Ph.D., NCSP
When have you heard?

“I am stressed out”
- Today
- Yesterday
- This week
- This month
- This school year

“I’m overwhelmed”
- From a co-worker
- From a student
- From your spouse/partner
- From your administrator
- From your child
When have you said?

“I am stressed out”
- Today
- Yesterday
- This week
- This month
- This school year

“I’m overwhelmed”
- Said this to a co-worker
- Said it to your spouse/partner
- Said it to your administrator
- Said it to your child
Topics/Activities Covered

1. Educator/Caregiver Stressors
2. Self-Esteem
3. Self-Compassion
4. Self-Compassion Exercises 1 and 2
5. Break
6. Self-Compassion Research Findings
7. Self-Compassion Exercises 3 and 4
8. Additional Resources
Educator/Caregiver Stressors

I'm all caught up! Said no teacher ever.

Here's to another nine months of hoping your child's homework isn't too difficult to figure out.
Stressors Leading to Educator Burnout

Email, Grading, Tedium, Assessment, Isolated, Demanding Students, IEP Meetings, Data Collection, New Academic Standards, Lack of Resources, Classroom Management, New Technology, Committees, Scheduling.
Educator/Caregiver Stress

Secondary Trauma and Compassion Fatigue - stress from caring for those who have experienced trauma

- Physical, emotional, or social/interpersonal effects
  - Trouble sleeping, anxious, depressed, isolation, increased agitation
  - May look similar to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Risk factors
  - People with strong empathetic skills are susceptible
  - History of trauma or mental health issues
Self-Esteem

- **Self-Esteem** - how individuals evaluate themselves in a particular attribute or skill when comparing themselves to others
  - Potential problems with increased self-esteem
    - Inflated self-esteem, narcissism
    - Social comparison
    - Bullying/Relational Aggression
  - Pitfall of having self worth based on:
    - Income
    - Perceived attractiveness
    - Social approval and our perceived social approval
Self-Compassion: Key Researchers

**Dr. Kristin Neff**, University of Texas at Austin in Educational Psychology Department

**Dr. Christopher Germer**, clinical psychologist, works with Harvard Medical School. Expert of compassion-based psychotherapy.
Self-Compassion

Self-Compassion is giving care and comfort to ourselves without the need to compare yourself to others.

What’s your inner dialogue? What messages do you say to yourself?

- When we listen to our inner critic, we may find we would say the meanest, cruelest messages to ourselves that we would never say to others.
3 Parts to Self-Compassion

1. **Self-Kindness** - giving yourself supportive, nurturing care
2. **Common Humanity** - everyone hurts, we are connected in our suffering, not isolated
3. **Mindfulness** - allowing yourself to feel all unpleasant emotions and not get stuck on a thought/emotion

Self-compassion practices teach you to give yourself permission to meet your own needs and to “give yourself a break.”
Self-Compassion - Exercise #1

You just received this text from a good friend:

I feel awful. I’ve yelled at my daughter this morning to get ready for school. She’s so slow! When is it too early to give her coffee?
What would you text back to your friend?

Ugh. Mornings are the worst.

Been there. You are having an off week. You are a good parent.

Daylight savings time is $#@!
Self-Compassion - Exercise #2

Now, you are the parent/adult. And your inner critic says this to yourself:

I just lost my cool and argued with a 7 year-old about his math assignment. I am the adult, I should know better than to get in a power struggle.
Self-Compassion - Exercise #2

What could you tell yourself?

It’s easy to get sucked into a power struggle. Conflict/disagreements are a part of all relationships. This interaction was difficult. (Take a deep breath, close your eyes). This was a moment of suffering (pain/intense feelings).

That did not go well. I want him to do well on his work. His work is hard for him. It is hard for me to watch him struggle. Struggling is a part of learning. (Take a deep breath, close your eyes). This was a moment of suffering (pain/intense feelings).
Self-Compassion Exercise #2

- It’s important that you don’t try to “fix” what went wrong
- We want to fix things right away and/or we criticize/blame ourselves or those around us to fight off the negative emotion
- It’s OK to feel the negative emotion

3 Basic Principles: Being Kind, Connection, Mindful
Break
Self-Compassion Research Findings

Concern: Promotes Pity

- Self-Compassion linked to coping and resilience
- Less likely to ruminate on failures and not exaggerate personal failures

Concern: Makes You Weak

- Builds your inner strength and resilience and enables you to handle changes in your life
Self-Compassion Research Findings

Concern: Selfish

● When caring and supportive of yourself, better able to encourage others
● Does not require extra time/resources like Self-Care (exercise, visiting friends, spa day, vacation)

Concern: Indulgent

● Focuses on your long term health, not immediate gratification
Self-Compassion Research Findings

Concern: Makes Excuses

- Self-criticism triggers are flight/fight/freeze responses with saying “I’m no good” or “I was horrible with that person”
  - Your self-concept feels threatened
- Self-criticism can lead to a person’s depression/dysregulation when you are not able to meet your goal or cannot keep your self-concept of “I’m a good caregiver” or “I am competent professional”
  - Calling out our mistakes and inadequacies does not give us an excuse to make them
Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT)

- Page 32, Chapter Title: The Physiology of Self-Criticism and Self-Compassion from Workbook

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<th>Stress Response Turned Inward</th>
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Self-Compassion Exercise #3

When you notice you are being self-critical, you have the power to soothe yourself.

Ways to tap into your own caring system physically

● Hand over heart, soothing and loving touch
● Hands on stomach
● Crossing arms to give a hug
Self-Compassion Exercise #3

- Instead of soothing touch
  - Pet an animal
  - Tapping
  - Hand rubbing soft pillow
- Soothing touch releases chemicals to decrease stress
  - oxytocin
  - endorphins
Self-Compassion Exercise #4

- Think of someone causing you stress
Self-Compassion Exercise #4

- **Mindfulness**
  - This is painful right now. This is causing me stress. “This is a moment of suffering”

- **Common Humanity**
  - “I’m only human after all”, “Everyone hurts”, “Suffering is a part of life”

- **Self-Kindness**
  - “May I be kind to myself”, “May I be...strong/patient/loving”, “May I forgive myself”
Wrapping It Up

- We are under tremendous stress as caregivers, educators, and parents
- Our students, co-workers, children feel our stress
- We can’t always control others or events around us, but we can control our reactions
- We can strive to do and be better professionals and caregivers without harming ourselves
- Give yourself permission to practice self-compassion
- Notice when you are “being hard on yourself” and try these exercises
On-line Materials

- **2013 Summer Presentation to Educators from Dr. Neff**
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Z1rCrScTSI&t=16s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Z1rCrScTSI&t=16s)
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z1k2zro9wb8&t=2s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z1k2zro9wb8&t=2s)
- **Center for Mindful Self-Compassion**
  - [https://centerformsc.org/learn-msc/](https://centerformsc.org/learn-msc/)
- **Self-Compassion Test**
  - Gives you a 1 to 5 scale on Self-Kindness, Self-Judgment, Common Humanity, Isolation, and Mindfulness, Over-Identification, and Overall Score
Self-Compassion Print Materials

- **Self-Compassion Step by Step**
  - By Kristin Neff, PhD
  - The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself

- **Self-Compassion**
  - By Kristin Neff, PhD

- **The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook**
  - By Kristin Neff, PhD and Christopher Germer, PhD
  - A Proven Way to Accept Yourself, Build Inner Strength, and Thrive
References

● Center, Greater Good Science. “Kristin Neff on Self-Compassion for Educators, Part 1.” YouTube, YouTube, 22 July 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Z1rCrScTSI.

● Center, Greater Good Science. “Kristin Neff on Self-Compassion for Educators, Part 2.” YouTube, YouTube, 22 July 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Z1rCrScTSI.


References

References

Questions?
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