HealthySteps
TO WELLNESS

COMPASSION TOOLKIT



A Toolkit for Cultivating Compassion.

This toolkit was created to enhance your existing compassion practices and inspire new ways of expressing compassion, individually or as a team. It offers new ways to optimize our relationships, health and well-being both inside and outside of work.

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Welcome

Introduction to the Compassion Toolkit

A Call to Compassion gives us an opportunity for care, reflection, and practice. This toolkit will help you practice compassion in moments where you need it the most; individually or collectively.

Why do we need to practice compassion?

Most of us haven't been taught about what compassion is, other than being "nice" or "kind." We may be guessing what we think it means to practice compassion instead of effectively and scientifically practicing compassion.

Suppose we truly want to bring our best selves to the workplace. In that case, it is essential that we understand how to practice compassion to support the purpose of our organization, ourselves, our colleagues and the patients we serve. Evidence-based studies indicate that practicing compassion improves mood, increases happiness, strengthens relationships, helps us better cope adversity, and results in better retention and employee engagement at work.

What is the definition of compassion?

An article published by Cornell University defines compassion as *an interpersonal process involving the noticing, feeling, sense-making, and acting that alleviates the suffering of another person.*

What is the definition of suffering?

A simple way to define suffering is the absence of compassion. Succinctly, it can be further defined as experiencing something unpleasant, pain, enduring distress, or sustaining loss.

Why do we talk about suffering in conjunction with compassion?

Compassion can help alleviate suffering. Suffering can be an uncomfortable word to experience in writing or to hear out loud. If the word "suffering" doesn't work for you, you can substitute it with challenge, hardship, difficulty, or another word of your choice.

What exactly is Self-Compassion?

Self-compassion can be defined as offering the same warmth and kindness (both in *tone* and *language*) to ourselves as we extend toward others, just as we would treat a friend, loved one, client, or patient.

We know we are practicing self-compassion when we…

- are aware of our painful experiences without ignoring, avoiding, minimizing, or exaggerating them. This is **mindfulness**.
- can recognize that others, even if we don't know them, have gone through something similar; all people experience hardships, failures, and imperfection. This is **common humanity**.
- can shift our internal monologue and self-care actions toward warmth and unconditional acceptance. This is **self-kindness**.

We know self-compassion is low when we…

- notice catastrophic thinking or projections about future state when imperfections, hardships, and painful experiences arise. This is **over-identification**.
- assume and fear that no one understands or shares the painful experiences occurring in our own personal lives. This is **isolation**.
- harshly judge ourselves, fostering self-doubt or an internal monologue that is attacking or berating. This is **self-judgment**.

Compassion Activity:

What's your level of Self-compassion? Find out now. ***Take a Self-Compassion Quiz***

Additional Resource:

Learn the Six Habits of Highly Compassionate People

References:

Definition and Three Elements of Self-compassion | Kristin Neff. (n.d.-a). Retrieved October 2, 2019, from Self-Compassion website: ***https://self-compassion.org/the-three-elements-of-self-compassion-2/***

Dutton, J. E., Workman, K. M., & Hardin, A. E. (2014). Compassion at Work [Electronic version]. Retrieved 10/01/19, from Cornell University, SHA School site: ***http://scholarship.sha.cornell.edu/articles/74***

Neff, K., & Germer, C. K. (2018). *The Mindful Self-compassion Workbook*: *A Proven Way to Accept Yourself, Build Inner Strength, and Thrive.* <> Guilford Press.

Warren, R., Smeets, E. & Neff, K. D. (2016). Self-criticism and self-compassion: Risk and resilience for psychopathology. Current Psychiatry, 15(12), 18-32.

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A Call to Compassion Experts

The Power of Compassion to Change Lives - James R. Doty, M.D.

Gratitude as a Wellspring of Compassion – Robert A. Emmons, Ph.D.

Compassion and Emotional Intelligence – Emma Seppala, Ph.D.

The Science and Practice of Compassion at Work – Monica C. Worline, Ph.D.

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Overcoming Self-Judgment with Self-Compassion – Al' ai Alvarez, M.D.

The Power of Compassion to Change Lives – James R. Doty, M.D.

James R. Doty, M.D., is the Founder and Director of the Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education (CCARE) at Stanford University. CCARE has collaborated with several prominent neuroscientists, behavioral scientists, geneticists, and biomedical researchers to closely examine the physiological and psychological correlations of compassion and altruism. Through CCARE, Dr. Doty has overseen the development of a variety of techniques, apps, and programs to address issues of stress, anxiety, and burnout. CCARE was established in 2008 with help from a large donation from the Dalai Lama.

Scientific studies have now demonstrated that being compassionate has profound effects on not only the other but on oneself. When one is self-compassionate, it changes how one views the world but more importantly, it has a huge positive effect on a variety of physiologic parameters including cardiac and peripheral vascular functions, the production of inflammatory proteins and the immune system. It also changes how one views the world and its possibilities. It has a rippling effect such that when one views another expressing compassion, it motivates them to be compassionate.

Learn more about Dr. James Doty's work:

The Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education

Books by Dr. James R. Doty:

Doty, J. R. (2017). *Into the Magic Shop: A Neurosurgeon's Quest to Discover the Mysteries of the Brain and the Secrets of the Heart*. Avery, an imprint of Penguin Random House.

Gratitude as a Wellspring of Compassion – Robert A. Emmons, Ph.D.

Robert Emmons, Ph.D., shares that gratitude is the affirmation and recognition of benefits received. We affirm the good and credit others with bringing it about.

Practicing gratitude involves acknowledgment we have received a benefit or a gift. We also recognize that this was freely bestowed out of another's act of kindness, generosity, or compassion.

Two decades of research have verified that gratitude generates a positive ripple effect through every area of our lives. Most importantly, gratitude for kindnesses received motivates and inspires even greater acts of kindness, compassion, and generosity.

Thoughts from Robert A. Emmons, Ph.D.:

- Gratitude is the deepest touchpoint of human existence.
- Gratitude is the key to health, wholeness, wellness, and fullness.
- Inherent in the nature of gratitude is the desire to give back the good received through acts of kindness, generosity, and compassion.

Gratitude is the emotional putty of relationships – it seals up the cracks. Dr. Robert A. Emmons

Compassion Activity:

Send a gratitude note, text or email to someone you appreciate – typically, a person who has made a difference in your life and to whom you feel grateful. Experience the firsthand benefits of being grateful!

Emmons, R. A. (2016). *The Little Book of Gratitude: Create a life of happiness and wellbeing by giving thanks*. (pp.14, 15, 77). Gaia Books Ltd.

Learn more about Dr. Robert A. Emmon's work:

Dr. Robert A. Emmons: How Can We Practice Gratitude?

Books by Dr. Robert Emmons:

Emmons, R. A. (2007). *Thanks!: How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier.* Houghton Mifflin Co.

Emmons, R. A. (2013). *Gratitude works!: A Twenty-One-Day Program for Creating Emotional Prosperity.* Jossey-Bass.

Emmons, R. A. (2016). *The Little Book of Gratitude: Create a life of happiness and wellbeing by giving thanks*. Gaia Books Ltd.

Compassion and Emotional Intelligence – Emma Seppala, Ph.D.

Dr. Emma Seppala's research in positive leadership, emotional intelligence, positive psychology, and social connection, has appeared in top academic journals. She has also been asked to speak and consult internationally for Fortune 500 companies.

Emma Seppala, Ph.D. defines emotional intelligence as the ability to have self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy and compassion. Emotional intelligence is a key factor to success both in our personal and professional life.

There is an important connection between compassion and emotional intelligence. In Dr. Seppala's book, *The Happiness Track*, her six keys to happiness and success include self-compassion and compassion for others.

In her book Seppala also states, "As the science director of Stanford's Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education, I know all too well that a word which includes *compassion* can at first impression, sound "soft" or idealistic. But self-compassion is anything but soft – it's smart. It allows you to be successful without sabotaging yourself" (Seppala, 2017, p.133).

With greater emotional intelligence, we can learn to connect with one another in optimal ways that will lead to the greatest good for all.

Compassion Activity:

Alternate Nostril Breathing

In Dr. Seppala's Book, *The Happiness Track*, she emphasizes the importance of focused breathing. She highlights alternate nostril breathing for its calming and balancing effects. She suggests practicing this breathing technique with your eyes closed for about 5 minutes.

1. Place the index and middle finger of the right hand between the eyebrows, the thumb on the right nostril and the ring finger and pinky near the left nostril. The left-hand rests on your lap, palm up.
2. Take a deep breath in and closing the right nostril with your thumb, breath out through the left nostril.
3. Then take a deep breath in through the left nostril, close the left nostril with your ring finger and pinky, and exhale through the right nostril.
4. Take a deep breath in through the right nostril and, closing the right nostril with the thumb, exhale on the left side. Then start over (Seppala, 2017, p.63).

References:

Sepala, E. (2017). *The Happiness Track: How to Apply the Science of Happiness to Accelerate Your Success*. Piatkus.

Learn more about Dr. Emma Seppala's work:

Dr. Emma Seppala's Interview on Compassion's Curative Power

Conversations on Compassion with Emma Seppala, Ph.D.

Books by Emma Seppala, Ph.D.

Seppala, E. (2017). *The Happiness Track: How to Apply the Science of Happiness to Accelerate Your Success*. Piatkus.

The Science and Practice of Compassion at Work (and Beyond)! – Monica C. Worline Ph.D.

As the Faculty Director for Engaged Learning and Innovation at the Center for Positive Organizations, University of Michigan, and a collaborating research scientist at Stanford's Center for Compassion and Altruism Research, Monica Worline Ph.D. has been a highly respected voice regarding compassion into the workplace. Her work is dedicated to partnerships with thought leaders in the field to help organizations tap into courageous thinking, compassionate leadership, and the curiosity to bring their best work to life.

While compassion is an innate human capacity that becomes visible early in life, it is also a skilled practice that needs to be honed and developed across our entire lives and careers. Our workplaces can make our efforts to practice compassion easier or harder, through their structures and cultures. The global pandemic has drawn attention to the need for workplaces to change their approaches to compassion and well-being and to remove the obstacles that get in our way of addressing our own suffering as well as that of our patients, clients, students, and colleagues.

As an honored keynote speaker, Monica suggests new ways to think about organizational change through the lens of compassion and to remove what gets in the way of our being our best together. Her book, *Awakening Compassion at Work: The Quiet Power that Elevates People and Organizations* is a valuable tool to learn new ideas that spark greater compassion in our work environment.

Compassion Activity:

Obstacles out of our control can get in the way of practicing compassion a work. These can include inefficient processes and procedures, lack of staffing, and cultural norms. Take a few moments to reflect on what IS in your control. Then create a plan for yourself to introduce more team compassion and self-compassion into your workday, starting with small and actionable things you can begin to do tomorrow! Examples include actively listening to a co-worker, giving a shout out of appreciation to a co-worker at a team meeting or asking for help when you need it.

References:

Dutton, J. E. (2017). *Awakening Compassion at Work: The Quiet Power that Elevates People and Organizations*. BK Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc a BK Business Book.

Learn more about Dr. Monica Worline's work:

Dr. Monica Worline's Stanford Interview on Discussing Suffering in the Workplace

Books by Monica C. Worline, Ph.D.

Dutton, J. E. (2017). *Awakening Compassion at Work: The Quiet Power that Elevates People and Organizations*. BK Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc a BK Business Book.

Creating Fresh Possibilities Out of Impossibly Fragile conversations – Meag-gan O'Reilly, Ph.D.

Esteemed keynote speaker Dr. Meag-gan O'Reilly is a Staff Psychologist at Stanford University's Counseling and Psychological Services and Adjunct Faculty at Stanford School of Medicine. She also serves as Program Coordinator for Outreach, Equity and Inclusion. Outside of Stanford Dr. O'Reilly is the Co-Founder and CEO of Inherent Value Psychology Inc., and provides consulting, workshops, and speaker events.

Have you ever entered a difficult conversation with the best of intentions, only to experience a disappointing outcome and then wish you could click the delete button? If so, you're not alone. Dr. O'Reilly offers clear solutions for embarking on difficult conversations which result in authentic connection through active listening skills.

According to Dr. O'Reilly, active listening involves vulnerability, humility, and empathy skills in order for one person to be entirely listening and for another to be completely heard.

Dr. O'Reilly shares that mutual respect, curiosity and connection heals us from the inside out and is the prerequisite for the equitable world we are building together.

Learn more about Dr. O' Reilly's work:

Inherent Value Psychology, Inc.

Dr. O'Reilly's Blog

Overcoming Self-Judgment with Self-Compassion – Al' ai Alvarez, M.D.

As clinical assistant professor of Emergency Medicine (EM) and the Director of Well-Being at Stanford Emergency Medicine Al'ai Alvarez, M.D., has a deep knowledge and understanding about the vicarious trauma that can be experienced by physicians and care teams working in a hospital environment. Dr. Alvarez also co-leads the Human Potential Team and serves as Fellowship Director of Stanford EM Physician Wellness.

Vicarious trauma can in turn into feelings guilt, shame and/or impostor syndrome. Self-compassion allows for the creation of connections that help overcome these feelings as well as feelings of isolation. Self-compassion can also promote a sense of belonging.

In his keynote presentation, Dr. Alvarez helps us to identify and understand the role of the impostor syndrome, recognize a common thread in burnout within medicine and demonstrates how to overcome self-judgment by practicing self-compassion.

The work of Dr. Alvarez focuses on humanizing physician roles as individuals and teams through the harnessing of our individual human potential in the context of high-performance teams. This includes optimizing the interdependence between Process Improvement (Quality and Clinical Operations), Recruitment (Diversity), and Well-being (Inclusion).

Learn more about self-compassion for caregivers

Why Caregivers Need Self-Compassion by Dr. Kristen Neff

Self-Compassion for Caregivers by Dr. Kristin Neff

References:

Miller, V. C., & Izzo, E. (2010). *Second-Hand Shock: Surviving and Overcoming Vicarious Trauma*. High Conflict Institute Press.

Bynum, W. E., Adams, A. V., Edelman, C. E., Uijtdehaage, S., Artino, A. R., & Fox, J. W. (2019). Addressing the elephant in the room. *Academic Medicine*, 94(8), 1132–1136. *https://doi.org/10.1097/acm.0000000000002646*

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Wong A. (2020). Beyond burnout: looking deeply into physician distress. *Canadian journal of ophthalmology. Journal canadien d'ophtalmologie*, 55(3 Suppl 1), 7–16. *https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcjo.2020.01.014*