



INTRODUCTION

In the compass model, the four sectors – Mind, Spirit, Strength, and Heart – not only contribute to your overall wellness, but also provide guidance on strategies to help build your compassion resilience. Heart is one of the sectors. This section will take a deeper look at our emotions and our relationships – both with ourselves and with others. We will be invited to focus on our self-compassion as we seek to be compassionate in our relationships with clients, their families, and our colleagues.



INFORMATION

Distribute this document to all participants to explore prior to the following application activities.



APPLICATIONS

Staff & Leadership Combined Activities

Colleague Conversations – Use this Visual and Display in Staff Break Areas

A Self-Compassion Exercise (10 minutes)

Self-Compassion Self-Scoring Scale (Dr. Neff)

Circle Agenda

Staff Support Circle Agenda

Additional Resources for Leadership

Fostering Relationship Building Among Staff

Department of Public Instruction's Emotional Regulation Plan



LINKS

Additional Resources

This article explains the importance of communication: 7 things to avoid, 11 things to keep in mind.

This article offers a brief introduction and tips for developing better communication skills through structured dialog and communicating your trust distinctions.

For more excellent resources on self-compassion go to Dr. Kristin Neff's website.

Wellness and Resilience Strategies: Heart

Section 11



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In the compass model, the four sectors – Mind, Spirit, Strength, and Heart – not only contribute to your overall wellness, but also provide guidance on strategies to help build your compassion resilience. Heart is one of the sectors. This section will take a deeper look at our emotions, and our relationships, both with ourselves and with others. We will be invited to focus on our self-compassion as we seek to be compassionate in our relationships with students, families and colleagues.



INFORMATION

Humans were made for [connections and relationships](#) to others. Research has shown both the positive outcomes for our overall health when we feel connected to others and the decline in connectedness in America in the past 30 years. Brené Brown, a researcher who studies courage, vulnerability, shame and empathy, says this about human connection: *“A deep sense of love and belonging is an irresistible need of all people. We are biologically, cognitively, physically, and spiritually wired to love, to be loved, and to belong. When those needs are not met, we don’t function as we were meant to. We break. We fall apart. We numb. We ache. We hurt others. We get sick.”*

As we saw in the Positive Staff Culture section, relationships and how we interact with others is important to a healthy workplace environment. Good communication skills contribute to developing healthy relationships at work. Among the key skills necessary to [good communication](#) are listening well, being aware of body language, and showing empathy and respect.

Strong emotional health supports strong relationships and is very important to our overall well-being. Being able to stay present and centered even in the midst of difficult circumstances allows us to be thoughtfully responsive rather than impulsively reactive. We seek to have our emotions serve our well-being rather than for our emotions to overwhelm us. When we practice mindfulness, we are better able to respond with compassion in challenging situations.

Being mindfully aware of our emotions is not only valuable to our connection to those around us, but to ourselves as well. A healthy relationship with oneself is demonstrated by being [self-compassionate](#). Self-compassion involves supporting and soothing ourselves when we are struggling, just as we would for a dear friend in a similar situation. Dr. Kristin Neff researches self-compassion and has found [three elements of self-compassion](#): 1) be kind to yourself versus judging yourself, 2) recognize your common humanity, versus isolating yourself, and 3) be mindful about your emotions versus over identifying with them.

Developed in partnership with:



compassionresiliencetoolkit.org



We can learn skills to increase our self-compassion. Consider these words from a parent and physician on her use of mindful self-compassion to allow her to show empathy and compassion to her child in tough situations:

I am the mother of a 24 year old daughter who is completely blind and lives with autism. Frankly, her autism throws a wrench, okay sometimes a crowbar, into her behavior. It's tough. She gets stuck on things that happen to her that most "neurotypical" people would brush off. A cup of water spills, an outing with a friend is cancelled, a flight time changes – these all result in anger, catastrophizing, and a ruined day. A night's sleep will usually reset her mood. It's tough on her, but it's also tough on me. Yes, I now actually take my feelings into account during my daughter's rough spots. Mindful self-compassion is a new tool in my parental toolbox, and it has helped me to shift my perspective, from a 90% focus on my daughter's needs to split my focus 50/50 between hers and mine.

Kristin Neff describes the 3 components of Mindful Self-Compassion. First, notice and accept how we feel, react, etc. to a given situation in a non-judgmental way. Recognize that we are in emotional pain, that there is some degree of suffering (Mindfulness). Next, remember that suffering is part of life for humans, that we all suffer (Common Humanity). Finally, ask ourselves, how can I be kind to myself in this moment, what do I need?

For me, taking a Self-Compassion Break decreases my parental anxiety, guilt, and shame (the emotions behind my anger), which significantly reduces my daughter's anger. I help myself first, which helps my daughter. The proverbial "put your own oxygen mask on first." And this is a very portable tool. Deploy it right in the middle of a tantrum!

Here's an example: My daughter was looking forward to going out with her friend for lunch. Thirty minutes before the appointed time, her friend called to say she had been in a car accident, is ok, but has to cancel the outing. My daughter's reaction? Devastation! Anger! Tears! Slamming doors! "I have such bad luck, now I'm having more bad luck! Why do I always have such bad luck?" She's holed up in her room, and eventually I have to go in there with some empathy. And I'm not feeling so empathetic at the moment. I am frustrated, and feel badly for my daughter. I am angry that she is thinking only of herself, not that her friend was in an accident. Some guilt and shame and self-judgement roll in: "Why am I not a better parent? More empathetic? Why didn't I go comfort my daughter right away, instead of waiting 30 minutes?"

I gingerly knock on her door and go in. I remember my Mindful Self-Compassion tools. First, recognition of my emotional pain- I say to myself, "This hurts, Ouch! I feel bad, this is a moment of suffering." Just acknowledging this fact gives me a bit of separation from what's going on. It keeps me from getting carried away with my emotions. I can step back a bit from the situation and help myself. Next, I remind myself "All parents feel this way at times." Then I ask myself "What do I need right now? How can I be kind to myself?" And I'm thinking all these thoughts in rapid succession, while I've got my daughter in a bear hug. I decide that what I need right now is some loving-kindness. Directed at me. So I start to focus and breathe. Breathing in I say to myself "Love for me" breathing out "Love for her," and so on. I'm giving myself what I need, and after about 8 cycles of breathing like this, things get better for me. My anxiety level goes down, I'm no longer angry, and my empathy has returned for real. Other things I might have needed in that moment? A soothing touch, speaking to myself in a warm tone- "You're not a bad parent, this is a tough emotional situation, and you are doing your best." Or a cup of chamomile tea. My daughter is still stuck for the day, but I'm not stuck with her. I can just love her and move on.

Mindful Self-Compassion and the Self-Compassion Break. Try it for yourself!

* The compass model is adapted from the work of [The Samaritan Family Wellness Foundation](#).



Compassionate Connections to Parents

Activity: A Self-Compassion Exercise

Adapted from *The Reality Slap*, by Russ Harris



A Compassionate Hand

I invite you now to find a comfortable position in which you are centered and alert. For example, if you're seated in a chair, you could lean slightly forwards, straighten your back, drop your shoulders and press your feet gently onto the floor.

Now bring to mind a current, significant challenge. This might be something that's happening that you don't feel you have the skills to handle. Maybe it's on-going self-criticism. Maybe you are struggling to communicate your thoughts or feelings. Or, you find yourself frequently impatient.

Take a few moments to reflect on the nature of this challenge: to remember what happened, to consider how it is affecting you, and to think about how it might impact your future. And notice what difficult thoughts and feelings arise.

Now pick one of your hands and imagine it's the hand of someone very kind and caring.

Place this hand, slowly and gently, on whichever part of your body experiences the most pain. Perhaps you feel the pain more in your chest, or perhaps in your head, neck or stomach. Wherever it is most intense, lay your hand there. And if you're numb, lay your hand on the part that feels the numbest. (If you're feeling neither pain nor numbness, then simply rest your hand on the center of your chest.)

Allow your hand to rest on you, lightly and gently; feel it against your skin or against your clothes. And feel the warmth flowing from your palm into your body. Now imagine your body softening around this pain: loosening up, softening up and making space. If you're numb, then soften and loosen around that numbness. (And if you're neither hurting nor numb, then imagine in any way you like, that in some magical sense your heart is opening.)

Hold your pain or numbness very gently. Hold it as if it is a crying baby, or a whimpering puppy, or a priceless work of art. Infuse this gentle action with caring and warmth – as if you are reaching out to someone you care about. Let the kindness flow from your fingers into your body.

Now use both of your hands in one kind gesture. Place one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach. Let them gently rest there, and hold yourself kindly. Take as long as you wish to sit in this manner, connecting with yourself, caring for yourself, contributing comfort and support.

After reading this script, continue this for as little or as long as you wish: five seconds or five minutes, it doesn't matter. It's the spirit of kindness that counts when you make this gesture, not the duration of it.

Activity: Self-Compassion Scale

Used in this toolkit with permission from Dr. Kristin Neff

Please read each statement carefully before answering. To the left of each item, indicate how often you behave in the stated manner. You can also [take this self-scale online](#) with automatic scoring.

Almost never				Almost always
1	2	3	4	5
1.				
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26.				

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Calculating Your Level of Self-Compassion

Please record the score you gave for each item in the scale, and then calculate your Grand Compassion Average as given below:

Self-Kindness (SK) Items:	
#5	_____
#12	_____
#19	_____
#23	_____
#26	_____
SK Subtotal of items: _____	
SK Average (divide subtotal by 5): _____	

Self-Judgment (SJ) Items:	
#1	_____
#8	_____
#11	_____
#16	_____
#21	_____
SJ Subtotal of items: _____	
SJ Average (divide subtotal by 5): _____	

Common Humanity (CH) Items:	
#3	_____
#7	_____
#10	_____
#15	_____
CH Subtotal of items: _____	
CH Average (divide subtotal by 4): _____	

Isolation (I) Items:	
#4	_____
#13	_____
#18	_____
#25	_____
I Subtotal of items: _____	
I Average (divide subtotal by 4): _____	

Mindfulness (M) Items:	
#9	_____
#14	_____
#17	_____
#22	_____
M Subtotal of items: _____	
M Average (divide subtotal by 4): _____	

Over-identification (OI) Items:	
#2	_____
#6	_____
#20	_____
#24	_____
OI Subtotal of items: _____	
OI Average (divide subtotal by 4): _____	

Total Self-Compassion Score:

- Reverse-code (rc) the negatively worded subscales (SJ, I, and OI) by subtracting each average from 6.
 $6 - \text{SJ average} = \underline{\quad}$ $6 - \text{I average} = \underline{\quad}$ $6 - \text{OI average} = \underline{\quad}$
- Add the six averages: $\text{SK} \underline{\quad} + \text{SJ (rc)} \underline{\quad} + \text{CH} \underline{\quad} + \text{I (rc)} \underline{\quad} + \text{M} \underline{\quad} + \text{OI (rc)} \underline{\quad} = \underline{\quad}$
- Calculate Grand Self-Compassion Average (total average divided by 6) = $\underline{\quad}$

What Your Score Means:

Average scores tend to be around 3.0 on the 1–5 scale, so you can interpret your total self-compassion score accordingly. As a rough guide, a score of 1–2.5 indicates you are low in self-compassion, 2.5–3.5 indicates you are moderate, and 3.5–5.0 means you are high. Remember that higher averages for the SJ, I, and OI subscales indicate less self-compassion before reverse-coding and more after reverse-coding.

References

Neff, K. D. (2003). Development and validation of a scale to measure self-compassion. *Self and Identity, 2*, 223-250.

Neff, K. D. (2003). Self-compassion: An alternative conceptualization of a healthy attitude toward oneself. *Self and Identity, 2*, 85-102.

For more excellent resources on self-compassion go to [Dr. Kristin Neff's website](#).



Staff Support



Circle Agenda

Circle Topic	CR Section 11: Wellness and Resilience Strategies: Heart
<p>Planning</p>	<p>Send the introduction document from Section 11 in the online toolkit at least 4 days prior to the circle to all participants.</p> <p>Remind leadership of the following points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This section begins the wellness practices portion of the toolkit. Your participation in the conversations as a peer-learner for personal well-being will provide opportunity for you to make authentic and personal connections with the group. 2. The wellness sessions should give <i>you</i> insight into potential well-being supports that you can offer to all staff. <p>For the full leadership preparation document, please visit this page.</p>
<p>Purpose of Circle/ Learning Objectives</p>	<p>We are learning how to build more compassionate relationships with those we serve, colleagues, and ourselves.</p>
<p>Materials/ Preparation/Time</p>	<p>Time: 45-50 minutes</p> <p>Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Circle kit <input type="checkbox"/> Values and shared agreements created in first session <input type="checkbox"/> Index cards <input type="checkbox"/> Write on flipchart paper or create handouts of the description of Self-Compassion from the introduction document for this section <input type="checkbox"/> Make copies of the Self-Compassion Scale (if it was not completed as a bonus activity in Session Two) and if doing the bonus activity, copies of Colleague Conversations visual <p>Set-up: Up to 15 chairs arranged in a circle without furniture in the middle.</p> <p>To consider: Understanding Your Social Location as a Facilitator – Active Bystander Intervention: Training and Facilitation Guide.</p>

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Circle Topic	CR Section 11: Wellness and Resilience Strategies: Heart
<p>Welcome/Check-In (5 minutes)</p>	<p><i>“A deep sense of love and belonging is an irresistible need of all people. We are biologically, cognitively, physically, and spiritually wired to love, to be loved, and to belong. When those needs are not met, we don’t function as we were meant to. We break. We fall apart. We numb. We hurt others. We get sick.” – Brené Brown</i></p> <p>(Go-around) Share an example of when feeling a sense of belonging led to a helpful behavior.</p>
<p>Grounding/Wellness Practice (5 minutes)</p>	<p>Share: Practicing being grateful, among many other benefits, increases your energy. It turns out that our minds are wired to focus on the negative as a survival strategy. The three good things practice helps rewire your brain to notice the good in your life. Research shows writing them down has a longer positive effect on your wellbeing. (Individual reflection) Write on your index card three things for which you are grateful and what role you had in them?</p> <p>If you would like to consider a different grounding practice, please review the mindfulness appendix for additional suggestions.</p>
<p>Review (5 minutes)</p>	<p>Share: In our last session we talked about our perspective shift around what we find nourishing or depleting. We can carry this idea about perspective shift into this session’s focus on our own relationship with our emotions and other people. Remember, curiosity is the key to perspective shift.</p>
<p>Self-Care for CR, Part One and Guiding Questions (15 minutes)</p>	<p>If this wasn’t distributed as part of the bonus activity in Section Two, hand out Self-Compassion Scale to complete, score and discuss. If you do this, skip the pair share question in this section.</p> <p>Share: The heart sector of the Wellness Compass focuses on our relationship to ourselves and to others. Self-compassion supports both. In our second session we began to explore the idea of self-compassion. We looked at the three components of self-compassion: treating yourself with kindness (vs. self-judgement), seeing your failures and successes in the context of being human (vs. unique from others) and being mindful of our emotions (vs. over-identifying with them).</p> <p>(Pair share) What impact might practicing more self-kindness, a sense of common humanity, or mindful experience of emotions have on your relationship with yourself?</p> <p>(Open mic) How does self-compassion relate to the quality of your relationships with others, specifically with those you serve and colleagues?</p>

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Circle Topic	CR Section 11: Wellness and Resilience Strategies: Heart
Self-Care for CR, Part Two and Putting it into Practice (10 minutes)	<p>Share: In Section 7 we developed our behavior agreements. In these last four sessions we've been looking at self-care. We've looked at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• mindful self-awareness• building a sense of competence in our work• balancing rest, play and work• daily connections to mission• using perspective shift to minimize feelings of depletion• building stress resilience• increasing self-compassion <p>Our behavior agreements are a roadmap for our relationships with our colleagues.</p> <p>(Go-around) Share one example of how one or more of these areas of self-care impacts our ability to adhere to these agreements.</p>
Closing (5 minutes)	<p>It has become clear through our conversation today that there is a strong connection between self-care, how we show up with each other and our ability to meet our mission. To symbolize this connection, let's end with a group high five.</p> <p>Bonus Activity: Distribute the Colleague Conversations visual and suggest participants experiment with having a conversation with a colleague using these questions.</p>



Colleague Conversations

Relationships with your colleagues are essential to a healthy, positive work culture. One way to foster work relationships is to have intentional conversations.

These questions relate to the content in the Compassion Resilience Toolkit.

1. **What got you into this line of work?**
2. **What keeps you going and able to bring compassion to yourself, colleagues, and students?**
3. **What wisdom do you have about how to balance care for yourself while being compassionate to others?**
4. **What is something you have done differently over the past year or two that has helped you to show up in the way that you desire for yourself, your colleagues, and your students?**

Activity: Department of Public Instruction's Emotional Regulation Plan

On the DPI website there are [three emotional regulation plans](#) for different age groups of students. These plans are to be completed with students about their emotional regulation strategies. These are helpful tools to share with your staff to use with each student in the school. All adults can benefit from completing such plans for themselves and sharing them with those they would like to offer them support when they are moving towards dysregulation. Suggest that staff practice using the emotional regulation plans by completing their own!



Leadership Activity: Fostering Relationship Building Among Staff

As discussed in the information above, as well as in the section on Positive Staff Culture, we understand how vital healthy relationships are to the workplace environment. [This blog](#) offers a good place to start for leadership to help build relationships among their staff.

One way to encourage your staff to communicate with one another and build relationships would be to have a question of the day (or week). Selecting one “get to know you” question that staff can easily answer when passing in the hallways, in the teacher lounge or even in the space before and after a meeting. [This link](#) provides 76 ice breaker questions to pull from.

