

CHAMPLAIN HOSPICE
PALLIATIVE CARE PROGRAM

SELF- COMPASSION GUIDEBOOK:

AN EXPERIENTIAL APPROACH



About Us



The Self-Compassion Guidebook was developed by the Champlain Hospice Palliative Care Program and its' Bereavement Leadership Team.

The Self-Compassion Guidebook originated to help hospice palliative care clinicians and staff increase resilience around their own feelings of grief and loss. The Self-Compassion Guidebook can be used by those working in many settings.

The guidebook is based heavily on the work of Neff (2011), Desmond (2017), Brahm (2014), Trelevan (2019), Brown (2010), and others. The graphic designing was created using Canva, Visme, and Vyond Studio. It was written and designed by Carl Schmidt.

Program Overview



1) GOALS

To further your skill at practicing self-compassion.

To increase well-being, connection, and the ability to treat ourselves with a bit more kindness when we are struggling.

2) EXPERIENTIAL APPROACH

The program teaches through practical exercises.



3) STRUCTURE

We recommend holding a twenty to thirty minute group session for each module: introduction, noticing, self-kindness, and common humanity.



4) TIME SUGGESTED

To benefit most from the program, you are encouraged to practice for 3-5 minutes, several times a day.





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INTRODUCTION

Objectives:

Explore how self-compassion is a skill that can be learned over time with practice.

Provide a brief overview of how the brain can change with compassion training.

Discuss the importance of weaving the exercises, in small chunks, within your daily life.

Practice a brief exercise in gratitude.

Self-compassion is a skill that can be learned.

"If you want to learn how to speak a new language or play a musical instrument, everyone knows that practice is necessary. It's the same with developing self-compassion."

--Tim Desmond



People often think self-compassion is a trait that you either have or don't have. But really, self-compassion is a skill that you can learn through practice.



In this course, we will lead you through the three skills of self-compassion:

1. Noticing

- Noticing when you are struggling.

2. Self-kindness

- "Being gentle and understanding with ourselves," particularly when we have problems.

3. Common humanity

- Recognizing that everyone has problems and that you are not alone.

(Neff, 2011)

NOTICING

SELF-KINDNESS

COMMON
HUMANITY

(Neff, 2011)

The brain can change with compassion training

"A revolution in science has recently revealed that the adult brain remains open to change throughout the lifespan. How we focus our attention . . . can directly alter the brain's activity and structure."

--Daniel Siegal



Compassion training can result in several brain changes, including:

1. Decreased amygdala activation

- The amygdala is the part of the brain "involved in fear and anxiety."

2. Stronger pathways in the care circuit of the brain

- This circuit "creates the experience of compassion, warmth, and love"

3. Increased markers for happiness

- "Scientists have documented that Buddhist monks with intensive training in compassion have the strongest markers for happiness in their brains that have ever been recorded"

(Weng, Lapate, Stodola, Rodgers, & Davidson, 2018, p. 1; Desmond, p. 15).



WHEN MIGHT YOU PRACTICE THESE SELF-COMPASSION EXERCISES



Right before you start work.

Before you go into a particular room, like your office or a patient's room.



During coffee break.

Whenever you notice that you are struggling.



(Canva, 2019)

"It's very important for us, as care providers, to find a place of rest in the middle of things, when life is busy" --Frank Ostaseski

We want to
acknowledge the tough
work you all do.

Trying to
balance work
and life

Navigating
the system

ohmygosh

send help



Paperwork

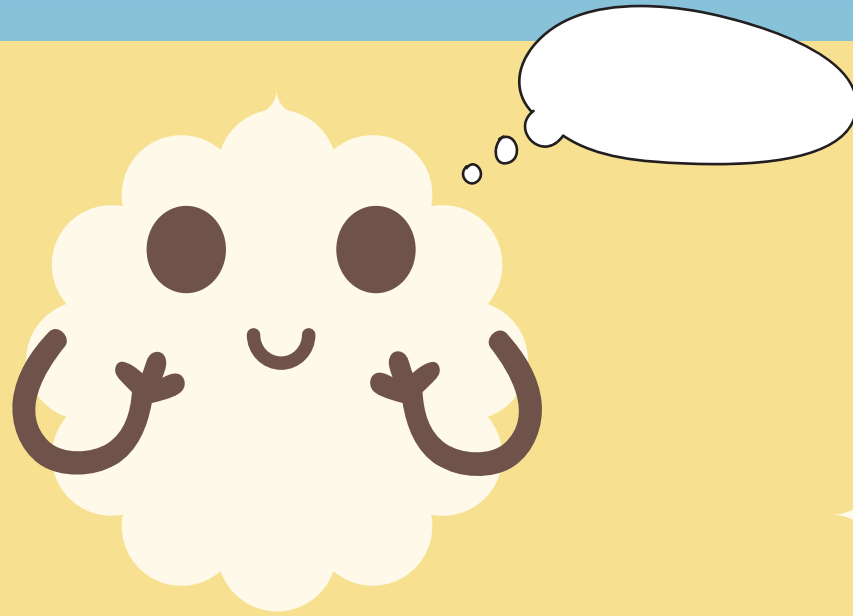
Urrggg

LOSS

Not wanting
to fail at
something

Being
criticized

Reflect on a moment when someone really appreciated the work that you do. This might be a patient, a family member, or a colleague.



REFLECTION:



A large, empty light blue rectangular area intended for writing a reflection.

**This course might
really work for
you and it might
not.**

**Let's stay open
and see what
happens.**

(Chaban, 2019)



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UNIT 1

Noticing

A key skill of self-compassion is quickly noticing when you're struggling. If you don't know the signs that you are struggling, it is impossible to respond. The more quickly you can notice that you're going through a hard time, the quicker you can respond. Self-compassion always begins with noticing (Neff, 2011).

Objectives:

Check-in with how you are currently doing with self-compassion.

Practice noticing the early signs that you are struggling.

Write a six word self-compassion story.

SOME EARLY SIGNS THAT YOU MIGHT BE STRUGGLING.

(Canva,2019)

JUST WANTING THE DAY TO BE OVER ALREADY



DESPERATELY NEEDING A NAP



EATING ONE TOO MANY CUPCAKES



HAVING A FEW TOO MANY BEERS OR GLASSES OF WINE AFTER WORK



NOT GOING OUT WITH FRIENDS



WATCHING NETFLIX FOR 8 HOURS STRAIGHT



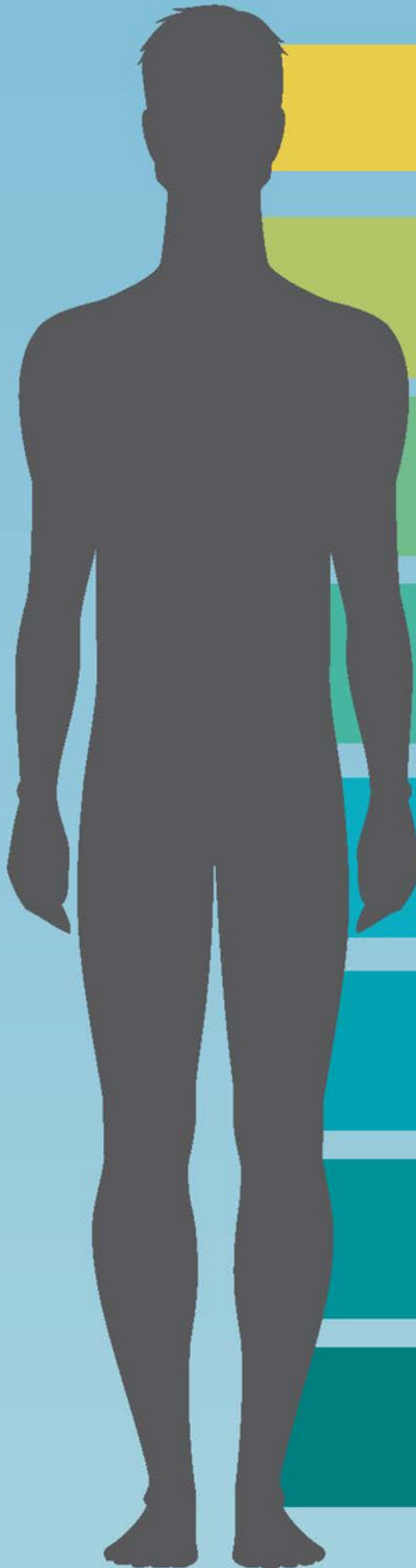
LIST THREE EARLY SIGNS YOU MIGHT NOTICE WHEN YOU'RE STRUGGLING.

1.

2.

3.

What it can feel like in your body when your stress response activates: Noticing the signs



BRAIN

The emotional part of your brain activates. The rational part of your brain shuts down.



BREATHING

Taking quick, shallow breaths.



HEART

Your heart may start racing uncontrollably.



STOMACH

You might feel a tight or sinking sensation in your stomach.



MUSCLES

Your muscles might feel tense.



SHAKING

Your body might start to shake or quiver.



SWEAT

You might start to sweat.



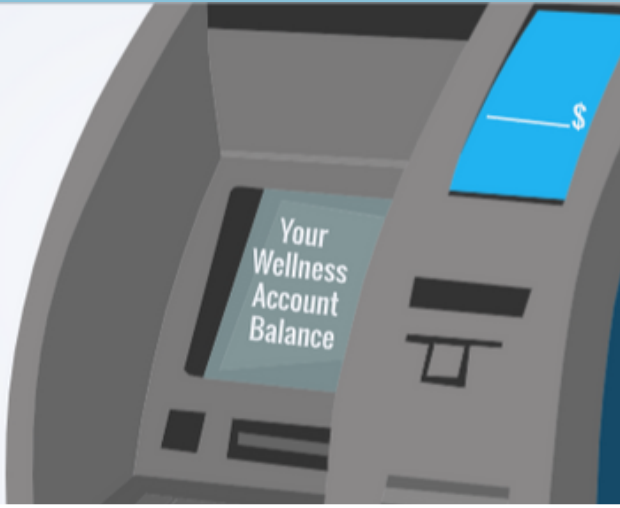
HAIR

Your hair may stand on end or you may develop goosebumps.



WHAT IS YOUR WELLNESS ACCOUNT BALANCE?

We all have an wellness account balance.



Certain things may take away from our balance, like paperwork, not sleeping well, and being stuck in traffic.



Certain things may add to our balance, like exercising, laughing with others, and spending time in nature.



It's important to check where your balance is so you can adjust accordingly.



LIST THREE THINGS THAT
ADD TO YOUR WELLNESS
ACCOUNT

1.

2.

3.

LIST THREE THINGS THAT
TAKE AWAY FROM YOUR
WELLNESS ACCOUNT

1.

2.

3.

NOTICING HOW I TYPICALLY ACT TOWARDS MYSELF WHEN I'M STRUGGLING

(Raes, Pommier, Neff, & Van Gucht, 2011).

Fill in the blank for each of the following statements. Marks to the left indicate "almost never." Marks to the right indicate "almost always."

1 = Almost Never
5 = Almost Always

1. I'm disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5

2. When I'm down and out, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like me.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5

3. When I'm going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5

4. I am good at noticing when I am struggling and in need of help.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5

5. When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5

This activity may give you a bit more awareness about how you typically act towards yourself when you are suffering. If you scored low on question 4, you may want to focus on unit 1 (Noticing). If you scored low on questions 1 and 3, you may want to focus on unit 2 (Self-Kindness). If you scored low on questions 2 and 5, you may want to focus on unit 3 (Common Humanity).



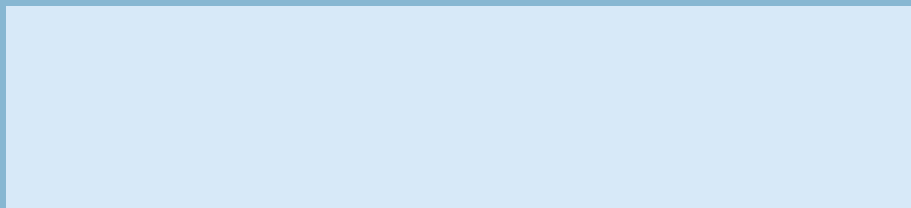
(Canva, 2019)

SIX WORD STORY

ACTIVITY

- 1** Write a six word story about a kind thing you can do for yourself when you're struggling. Examples include, "Sit by the fire, drink tea," "Spend more time with my family", or "I am enough, more than enough."
- 2** Try to incorporate the qualities of warmth, care and concern towards yourself in your six-word story.
- 3** Write your six-word story on the field below or a piece of paper.
- 4** Remember to practice the story when you're struggling or having a bad day.

MY SIX WORD STORY:



CALM BREATHING



Daily Practice

(Hahn, 2008, p. 6)

"BREATHING IN, I CALM
MY BODY.

BREATHING OUT, I CALM
MY MIND."



- 1** Find a comfortable posture.
- 2** Notice the sensations of your breath on your inhalation and exhalation.
- 3** Think, "Breathing in, I calm my body. Breathing out, I calm my mind. "
- 4** Whenever you become distracted, gently return to the present moment.

Why: The calm breathing activity may help to experience a sense of calm and to treat ourselves with a bit more kindness. The activity can be used anytime during your daily life when you are struggling.



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UNIT 2

Self-Kindness

Objectives:

Practice the Dear Friend and Hands On Heart activities.

Explore why it can be easier to show a friend compassion than to show yourself compassion.

DEAR FRIEND ACTIVITY



If your close friend was having a really hard day, and you could only say 1 sentence to him/her, what would you say? Write that 1 sentence on the card below.

A light blue rectangular card template. At the top center, there is a red pushpin. Below the pushpin, the word "Dear" is written in a bold, black serif font. To the right of "Dear" is a small, empty rectangular box with a black border. Below this box is a large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for writing a sentence.

When you have finished writing the sentence, scratch out "friend" and write your name.

Silently read it to yourself at least 3 times.

If you'd like, you can cutout the card and read it to yourself on a hard day.

“

Self-compassion is simply giving the same compassion to ourselves that we would give to other people.

Kristen Neff

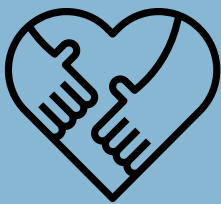
”

If you're in a group, talk to the person next to you about whether you find it easier to give compassion to their friends than to themselves. Why or why not?

Feeling worthy of treating yourself with compassion

(Brown, 2010, p. 23-25)

"Worthiness is the feeling that we are enough just as we are and that we are worthy of love and belonging."



"The greatest challenge for most of us is believing that we are worthy right now, in this minute."

"So many of us carry around a long list of worthiness prerequisites:"

"I'll be worthy when I lose twenty pounds."

"I'll be worthy when I get promoted."

"I'll be worthy if everyone thinks I'm a good parent."

"I'll be worthy when I can do it all and still look like I'm not trying."

QUESTION:

What might be some of your worthiness prerequisites?

HANDS ON HEART

Daily Practice

(Neff, 2011; Neff & Germer, 2018)



- 1** When you're having a difficult time, gently put one or both of your hands on your heart.
- 2** Take three deep breathes.
- 3** If you have a mantra you can say it to yourself, such as 'may I be at peace, may I be calm,' or "it's okay to not be okay."

Why: This brief activity can be used anytime during our daily life when we are struggling. The activity may help us to be a bit kinder and gentler with ourselves.

SAYING GOODBYE

Group or Individual Practice

(Hanson & Mendius, 2007, n.p.)



- 1** "Make a list of some of the things that you'd like to say goodbye to. For instance, things like tension in your back or worrying too much or having one glass of wine too many."
- 2** "Imagine that some powerful force, like a cosmic vacuum cleaner, makes that item go away."
- 3** "Now, if you like, you can tear up your list."
- 4** "As best you can, try to experience a genuine release or casting off. You could say goodbye in your mind as you toss your pieces into the trash."

Why: This activity may help us to say goodbye to some things that have been draining us. In our busy world, we can quickly become bogged down by our worries, our pasts, and our to-do lists. This activity may help us to let go.



UNIT 3

Common Humanity

Objectives:

Discuss how problems and imperfections are universal.

Practice the Common Humanity exercises.

Write down four simple ways that you can bring self-compassion into your daily life moving forward.

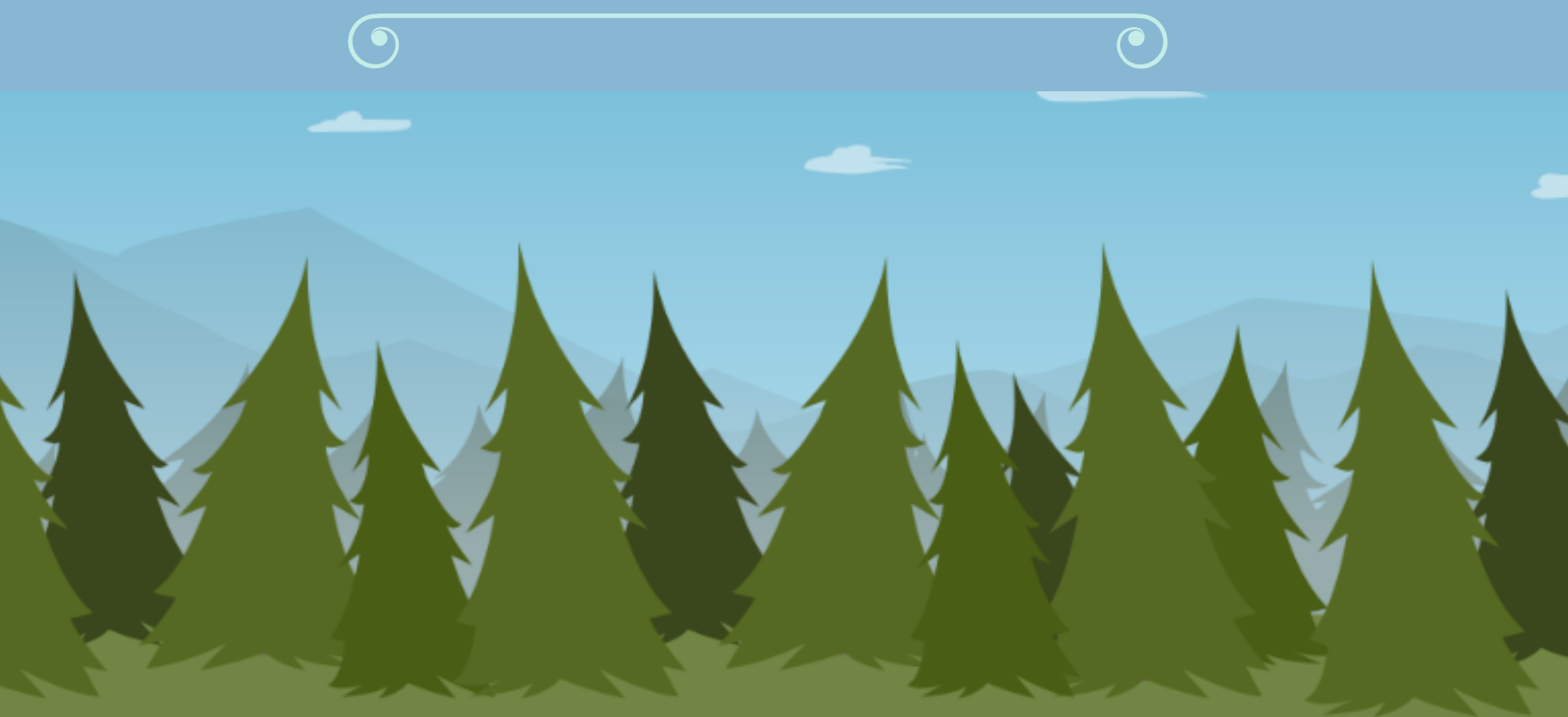
The Crooked Trees

(Brahm, 2014)

"Please go out and find a tree which isn't crooked. A tree with all the branches in the right place. With only smooth, undamaged bark. If you can find a tree like that, it must be in a government plantation. It's fake. It's controlled. It's not natural.

If you go to any forest here in Canada, you'll find all the trees are bent and crooked. They've got scars on the bark. They've got nobs and holes everywhere, and that is why they're beautiful. I like the crooked trees, the bent ones, the nulled ones: the ones that are damaged.

You belong with one of the trees in the beautiful forests of Canada."



Common Humanity

"When people notice something about themselves they don't like or something goes wrong, they often irrationally feel as if they're the only ones having this problem. We think, 'I'm supposed to be perfect. Things are supposed to be going well. What's wrong?'"

--Kristen Neff

Common humanity involves the recognition that we are all like gnarled, crooked trees. Nobody is perfect.

(Brahm, 2014)

We all have losses.

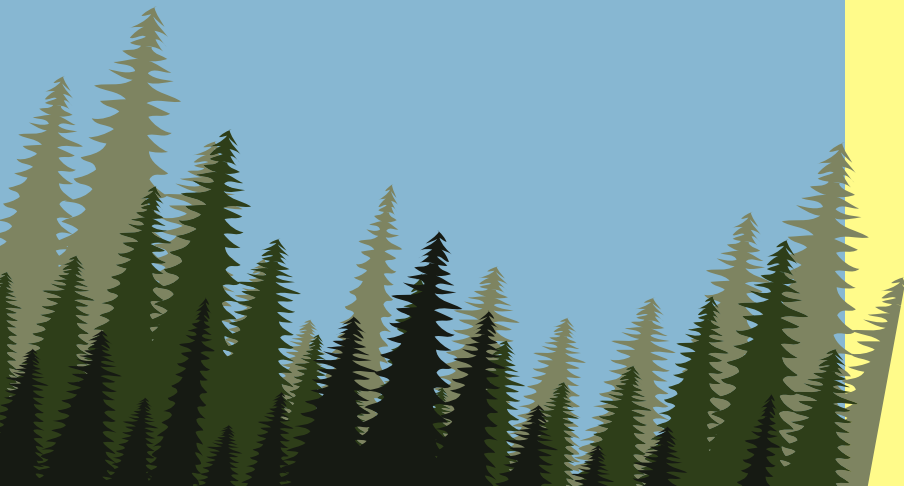
We all have regrets.

We all have imperfections.

(Neff & Germer, 2018)

"Is there anyone here who has never suffered?"

(Chaban, 2019)





An Old Currajong Tree, New South Wales.
Painted by Marianne North (1880-1883).

(The Ateneum, n.d.).

Common Humanity

Here's a reframing experiment you can try this week: whenever you notice a problem arise in your day, think of every other human who is currently experiencing a similar problem.

Let's say you're stuck in traffic. Just think of every other human who is, right now, stuck in traffic in all the 195 countries of the world. Or let's say you forgot your coffee this morning and have a caffeine headache. Think of everyone else in the world right now that also has a headache. Or let's say you're at work and someone has criticized you. Think of everyone else in the world who was also just criticized.

This reframing experiment can be applied to almost any problem, but it is best to start with relatively small problems when first beginning the practice.

The goal of the practice is to help us realize that we are not alone in our problems, and to feel a sense of belonging in our common human experience of problems. Your problems are not special. They make you human.

TRAFFIC

At any one time on Earth, there are about 7.5 million people stuck in traffic.

HEADACHES

About 10 million people have a headache at any one time.



COLDS

About 15 million people have a cold at any one moment on Earth.

INSOMNIA

About 1.5 billion people will experience difficulty sleeping tonight.

REFRAMING

Daily Practice



- 1** Whenever you notice a problem arise when you're going about your day, think of all the other people who are currently having a similar problem.
- 2** Try to feel a sense of connection with everyone who is having a similar problem. You are not alone in this struggle.
- 3** You may practice this continually throughout your day whenever a problem arises.

Why: This brief reframing exercise helps remind us that we are not alone in our problems and to feel a sense of connection, rather than disconnection, during struggles.

CIRCLE OF CARE

Daily Practice

(Bush, 2015, p. 38)



- 1** "Take a circular object and hold it in your hand. You could use a coin, marble, or disk."
- 2** "Hold the object in your hand" and remind yourself that you are a "part of a vast circle of helpers around the globe."
- 3** "As you say this, close your eyes and imagine helpers and healers of all persuasions in your town, state, country, and in countries around the world. Know that you are a part of this vast web of helpers."
- 4** It is recommended that you do this practice right before you begin the workday.

"Why: This brief technique reminds us that we are part of a web of healers and helpers around the world."

Try your best to come up with four simple ways that you can bring self-compassion into your day-to-day life moving forward. These may or may not be from activities in the guidebook. Take your time.

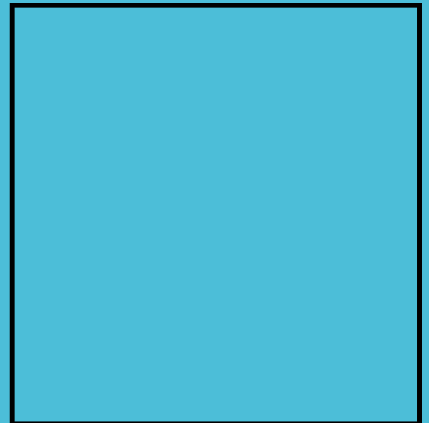
2.



1.



3.



SOME SIMPLE WAYS
THAT YOU CAN
BRING SELF-
COMPASSION INTO
YOUR DAY-TO-DAY
LIFE MOVING
FORWARD

4.



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