

## Grief

- Grief is the pain of loss – ANY meaningful loss.
- Grief is normal. If we care about someone or something and we lose it/them or our relationship with it/them changes we grieve.
- The experience of grief is unique to the individual and the situation. Often we have common ground with other grievers or our own past losses but each loss and its impact is unique. If the pain is more than you can manage or process on your own or with existing resources and supports, please utilize counseling and emergency supports as necessary.
- Events of change result in loss – each of us has a unique cognitive, emotional and behavioural reaction(s) to respective losses and changes.
- Basic emotions of Grief/Loss/Change are:
  - Sadness (disconnection)
  - Fear (danger)
  - Guilt (I've done something wrong)
  - Anger (unfairness/injustice)
  - Happiness (gratitude/wellbeing)
- Sadness is the core emotion of grief.
- Our thoughts, emotions, and behaviours surrounding grief/loss/change may be conflicting and range in intensity.
- There are many ways to cope with the pain of loss and change. Sometimes we do things to cope, heal and/or grow. Sometimes we do things to avoid.
- We have common sayings or memes we tell ourselves and others with the intent of decreasing or avoiding the pain of loss. These are often common sayings that are shared with the intent of helping but may invalidate the pain and drive disconnection.
- Emotional identification and emotional honesty are important in validating others, as well as our own, pain from loss.
- Our opportunity to support and connect with others is founded in listening without judgment.

## Resilience

- Resilience – Latin root ‘resilio’ which means to ‘bounce back’ or retaliate.
- Resilience Theory – It’s not the nature of adversity that’s most important, but how we deal with it. (Dr. Catherine Moore)
- “...is a stable trajectory of healthy functioning after a highly adverse event.” (Dr. George Bonanno)
- “...is the capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully.” (Dr. Ann Masten)
- Being resilient does not mean that people don’t experience stress, emotional upheaval, and suffering...demonstrating resilience includes working through emotional pain and suffering. Resilience isn’t a fixed trait, it’s a process. (Katie Hurley, 2020)
- Tips to improve your resilience:
  - Get connected
  - Make every day meaningful
  - Learn from experience
  - Remain hopeful
  - Take care of yourself
  - Be proactive

(Mayo Clinic, 2022)

- **Physical**

- Breathe!
  - Grounding breathing
  - Singing
  - Laughing
- Move
  - Healthy mind – healthy body!
  - Brain Derived Neurotropic Factor (BDNF)
- Eat
- Sleep

- **Emotional**

- Emotional honesty and identification
- Emotional validation
- Verbalizing emotions
- Emotions related to loss:
  - Range in intensity
  - Often conflict
  - Are non-permanent

- **Mental**
  - Flexibility
  - Creativity
  - Learning new things – neuropathways
  - Self-talk
  - Knowing our strengths
  
- **Spiritual**
  - Connection and awe! (Stephen Porges)
  - Religious gatherings
  - Cultural gatherings
  - Ceremony
  - Nature
  - Art
  - Architecture
  - Animals

### **Resources**

- Everyday Health (Resilience Resource Centre)  
<https://www.everydayhealth.com/wellness/resilience/resilience-resource-center/>
  
- Resilience Research Centre  
<https://resilienceresearch.org>
  
- Positive Psychology (Resilience Theory)  
<https://positivepsychology.com/resilience-theory/>
  
- Al Siebert Resiliency Centre (Resilience Self Quiz)  
<https://www.resiliencyquiz.com/index.shtml>
  
- Resilience: Build skills to endure hardship  
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/resilience-training/in-depth/resilience/art-20046311>

## Self Compassion Introduction

- Latin origins:
  - Com = With    Passion = Suffer    Compassion = suffer with
- Forgiving and nurturing yourself can set the stage for better health, relationships, and general well-being. Self-compassion yields a number of benefits, including lower levels of anxiety and depression. Self-compassionate people recognize when they are suffering and are kind to themselves at these times, which reduces their anxiety and related depression. While some people come by self-compassion naturally, others have to learn it. Luckily, it is a learnable skill. (Harvard University Health, 2020)
- In comparison with Self Esteem, Self Compassion is associated with greater emotional resilience, more accurate self-concepts, more caring relationship behaviour, as well as less narcissism and reactive anger. (Harvard University Health, 2020)
- The Self-Compassion Scale (SCS; Neff, 2003) was the first tool of its kind and specifically developed as a method by which individual differences in self-compassion could be assessed.
- In its early form, the SCS was hypothesized to be a three-factor scale that included self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. However, throughout its development it became apparent that the scale should have six factors – the three core components mentioned above and their “negative” opposite constructs of self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification – which represents compassionate versus uncompassionate behavior and a self-compassionate frame of mind (Neff, 2003).
- The self-report 26-item SCS explicitly represents the thoughts, emotions, and behaviours associated with the three components of self-compassion and includes items that measure how often people respond to feelings of inadequacy or suffering with each of six components:
  - Self-Kindness vs Self-Judgement
  - Common Humanity vs Isolation
  - Mindfulness vs Over Identification
- As a rough guide, average scores for the Self-Compassion Scale are around 3.0 on the 1-5 Likert scale, a score of 1-2.5 indicates low self-compassion, 2.5-3.5 indicates moderate, and 3.5-5.0 is an indication of high self-compassion (Neff, 2003).

- The very definition of being “human” means that one is mortal, vulnerable and imperfect. Therefore, self-compassion involves recognizing that suffering and personal inadequacy is part of the shared human experience – something that we all go through rather than being something that happens to “me” alone. (Neff, 2020)
- People cannot always be or get exactly what they want. When this reality is denied or fought against suffering increases in the form of stress, frustration and self-criticism. When this reality is accepted with sympathy and kindness, greater emotional equanimity is experienced. (Neff, 2020)
- Self Compassion myths:
  - You have to be tough on yourself to keep your edge
  - Perfectionism = Excellence
  - Self Compassion = Self Pity
  - Self Compassion = Self Indulgence
  - Multitasking help us be more productive
  - Nice guys finish last
  - If you ain’t first.....you’re last
  - Use the buddy system

### **Resources**

- Kristin Neff (Self Compassion)  
<https://self-compassion.org>
- Christopher Germer (Mindful Self Compassion)  
<https://chrisgermer.com>
- Online Self Assessment
  - Self-Compassion quiz (Kristin Neff)  
<https://self-compassion.org/test-how-self-compassionate-you-are/>
  - Personality Strengths Quiz (VIA Institute on Character)  
<https://www.viacharacter.org/survey/account/register>

## Mindfulness and Grounding

- Mindfulness is a non-judgmental, receptive mind state in which one observes thoughts and feelings as they are, without trying to suppress or deny them. We cannot ignore our pain and feel compassion for it at the same time. Mindfulness requires that we not be “over-identified” with thoughts and feelings, so that we are caught up and swept away by negative reactivity. (Neff, 2020)
- Grounding is within the field of mindfulness. It is the act of returning to the present moment through the act of focused, purposeful activity with sustained attention. (Nortje, 2021)
- Benefits of Mindfulness are many (Ackerman, 2021). 5 examples are:
  - Decreased stress
  - Enhanced ability to deal with illness
  - Facilitation of recovery
  - Decreased depressive symptoms
  - Improved general health
- There are many options and combinations of approaches that help improve our mindfulness, balance and overall quality of life. Examples include:
  - Mindful breathing
  - Cultural and spiritual practices
  - Body scan
  - Gratitudes
  - Music or auditory narrative – bell chimes
  - What’s new?
  - Karma stones, aromatherapy
  - Emotional Identification and processing
  - Acts of kindness
  - Connection with others (people, animals, nature)
  - Meditation retreats (getting away, in home)
- Options for grounding exercises include:
  - 5-4-3-2-1 or 1-2-3-4-5
  - Name a colour/shape
  - 4-2-6 breathing
  - Connecting to body sensations
  - Writing or colouring – non dominant hand
  - Own palms touching with pressure
  - Group activities:
    - Group counting with eyes closed
    - Name a cereal, ice cream flavour, musical group etc.
    - Dad jokes, riddles

## Resources

- Noah Rasheta (Secular Buddhism/Mindfulness)  
<https://secularbuddhism.com>
- Jack Kornfield (Buddhist Practitioner)  
<https://jackkornfield.com>
- Stephen Porges (Polyvagal Theory/Trauma)  
<https://www.stephenporges.com>
- Courtney Ackerman: Positive Psychology (Benefits of Mindfulness)  
<https://positivepsychology.com/benefits-of-mindfulness/>
- Alicia Nortje: Positive Psychology (Grounding Techniques)  
<https://positivepsychology.com/grounding-techniques/>
- Mindfulness.com
  - 8 Mindfulness Exercises for Dealing with COVID-19  
<https://mindfulnessexercises.com/dealing-with-covid-19/>
  - How to Create Home Meditation Retreats  
<https://mindfulnessexercises.com/how-to-create-home-meditation-retreats/>
  - A Mindful Guide for Coronavirus Anxiety  
<https://mindfulnessexercises.com/mindful-guide-for-coronavirus-anxiety/>

## Self-Kindness

- Kindness and self-kindness may be simple concepts to understand, however they are often challenging to practice consistently with oneself. It's not always easy to be our own friend, but it is possible! (Neff, 2020)
- There are many options and combinations of approaches that help improve our self-kindness, balance and overall quality of life. Examples include:
  - Practice mindfulness
  - Be aware of judgments – in general
  - Confront the myths
  - Be aware of our self talk
  - Challenge our self talk
  - Boundary setting and management
  - Be our own friend

## Resources

- Tara Swart (Neuroscientist/Neuroplasticity)  
<https://www.taraswart.com>
- Brene Brown (Empathy/Vulnerability/Shame)  
<https://brenebrown.com>
- Rick Hanson (Neuroscience and Happiness)  
<https://www.rickhanson.net>
- Ryan Martin (Anger Researcher)  
<https://smashnotes.com/p/ted-talks-daily/e/why-we-get-mad-and-why-it-s-healthy-ryan-martin>
- Byron Katie  
<https://thework.com>
- Self-Kindness Articles
  - Mindful.org: Practice Self-Kindness by Putting Yourself First (Donald Altman)  
<https://www.mindful.org/practice-self-kindness-by-putting-yourself-first/>
  - Psychology Today: Be Kind to Yourself (Marianna Pogosyan)  
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/between-cultures/201802/be-kind-yourself>

- Psychology Today: Using the Practice of Self-Kindness to Cope with Stress (Beverly Engel)

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-compassion-chronicles/201806/using-the-practice-self-kindness-cope-stress#:~:text=Most%20people%20define%20self-kindness%20as%20providing%20for%20yourself,involves%20being%20tolerant%20of%20our%20flaws%20and%20inadequacies.>

## Common Humanity

- Isolation – feeling disconnected and incapable of belonging.
- Groups – we identify both as a member of a group and our place within the group.
- Connection is often linked to our sense of relevance or purpose.
- “Some of our greatest life experiences come from human connection.” – Kim Gemmell
- Isolation vs connection impacts all areas of our health – can break our will or inspire us to extraordinary efforts and accomplishments.
- Connection increases immunity and healing.
- Gossiping decreases connection as we end up feeling more insecure but we deceive ourselves that it bonds and connects us.
- Imposter Syndrome:
  - Typically experienced by highly driven, high achieving people who feel undeserving of their success.
  - Struggle to feel truly ok and truly worthy.
  - Fueled by a subconscious sense of ‘outsiderness’ and ‘being a fraud’.
  - Often have trouble accepting credit/praise or celebrating success.
  - Self sabotage opportunities for growth.
  - Poor work/life balance.

(Jenai Wu Steinkeller)
- There are many options and combinations of approaches that help improve our levels of connection, common humanity, balance and overall quality of life. Examples include:
  - Integrating Mindfulness more consistently
  - Integrating Self-Kindness more consistently
  - Acknowledge the value in vulnerability
  - Seek out opportunities to connect without an end game or agenda
  - Employ empathy more consistently
  - Take inventory – the quizzes, feedback from others, self reflection
  - Be mindful of our senses – ground and connect with them
  - Choose our contacts mindfully
  - Consider holistic connection and commonalities with others
  - Reflect on your own identity and belonging

- Share your successes
- Make some memories
- Gratitude and acts of kindness

## Resources

- Harriet Lerner (Relationships/Apologies)  
<https://www.harrietlerner.com>
  
- Kim Gemmell (Gratitude/Humility)  
<https://www.kimgemmell.com>
  
- Common Humanity/Connection Articles and Links
  - The Psychology of Connecting: The art of connecting with people from the heart  
<https://exploringyourmind.com/psychology-connection-art-connecting-people-heart/>
  - Why we are Wired to Connect  
<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/why-we-are-wired-to-connect/>
  - 5 Ways to Cultivate Human Connection  
<http://whole9life.com/2015/05/meaningful-human-connection/>
  - Human Connection is More Important Than Ever During Coronavirus  
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/shephyken/2020/05/17/human-connection-is-more-important-than-ever-during-coronavirus/?sh=58e8c8126de2>
  - Social Connection is the Cure  
<https://cmha.bc.ca/news/social-connection-is-the-cure/>
  - Fostering Human Connection in the COVID-19 Virtual Health Care Realm  
<https://catalyst.nejm.org/doi/pdf/10.1056/CAT.20.0166>

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