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Stress & Resilience

**Presented by: Mandi Dornfeld and
Tenley Koehler**

2019 WAHCE State Conference



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Let's Talk Stress

- Positive Stress
- Tolerable Stress
- Toxic Stress



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Yes, we've all experienced stress in some form. But let's spend a moment talking about stress what stress is and what stress isn't.

First of all, Not all stress is bad. In fact stress can be a great **motivator**. For instance, stress can motivate us to move on, ask for help, or try something new.

We can experience, **Positive stress** like a new job, birth of a child or grandchild, or joining a new exercise group. These stressors may elicit our brains and bodies to respond. Our brains might send us stress hormones that flood our body and prepare us for action. That's the feeling like there is a lump in your throat or a weight on your chest. What signs does your body give you to tell you there is stress in your life?

Another kind of stress is called **Tolerable stress**. These stressors tend to be more serious- *loss of a job, divorce, financial difficulty*- but in the presence of a supportive relationship can be tolerated and overcome.

Then there is **toxic stress** which if left unaddressed can be detrimental to our health and wellbeing. In the presence of stress, resilience is our lifesaver.


<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/toxic-stress/>

"RESILIENCE IS NOT AN INNATE
CHARACTERISTIC, IT IS A SKILL TO BE
TAUGHT, LEARNED, AND
PRACTICED."

-Jack Shonkoff, MD Harvard
University



Please take just a moment to ponder this quote.....GIVE them 30 seconds....I want you to jot down your thoughts on how this might be different than what you have been told about resilience....it's incredibly hopeful to understand that resilience can be learned and grown. That no matter how difficult circumstances might become we can do something to weather the storm.



“Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress”



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The American Psychiatric Association defines resilience as: “Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress” As we think about this definition some things stand out. There is a shift away from surviving a stressor to thriving with adversity. This is a strengths-based approach to thinking about resilience. It provides each of us with a map to increased resilience and well-being.

Most important to note, is this list of character traits is not complete. Resilient people show a lot of different qualities. There are definitely some that are more common; the belief in hope is important. Knowing that you will make it through your adversity is really critical.

Characteristics of Resilient People

- Healthy, supportive, caring relationships
- The capacity to make realistic plans and take steps to carry them out.
- A positive view of yourself and confidence in your strengths and abilities.
- Skills in communication and problem solving.
- The capacity to manage strong feelings and impulses.



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Healthy, supportive relationships are key, in a bit my colleagues are going to dig deeper into the research of relationships and give you some resources and tools. Let's talk about Planning, when life gets really hard, it's so important to go back to basic life skills. Supporting each other in making lists, utilizing reminders, and creating space for mistakes is fundamental when a major life stressor is present. Reminding ourselves that our brains have a limited capacity to process and focus when under duress is so important. We need to have some support mechanisms in place for those times of stress.

Communication and Problem Solving becomes even more important when someone is needing to grow more resilient. WE will dicuss that further in a few minutes.

Feelings and managing impulses are a part of growing socially and emotionally competent. These skills are also ones that you can learn and teach. We give you some concrete examples and ideas in the resources section.

- Resilience is much more than "Bouncing Back"
- In describing findings from the ACEs study, Felitti (2002b) acknowledged:

*"...One does not just 'get over' some things,
not even fifty years later."*



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Here is another perspective that comes out of the ACE research with Dr Felitti. We need to pay attention to the fact that the experiences in childhood make a lifelong impact on people. Our ability to create safe and compassionate interactions will build trust within people. That trust is a starting point to a safe and healthy way of responding to challenges. If we give people the opportunity to talk about their history we begin to support change and positive experiences. We can support people as they assess their strengths and identify areas of potential growth.

Let's move on to some skills we can begin to teach to increase resilience.

Building resilience is helping people to:

- *Successfully adapt despite current or past trauma and*
- *Achieve personal growth and positive change*

Intentional, and sometimes intensive, interventions are needed to help people learn to develop resilience



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Source: Mary Sciaraffa, Ph.D. CFLE, Eastern Kentucky University

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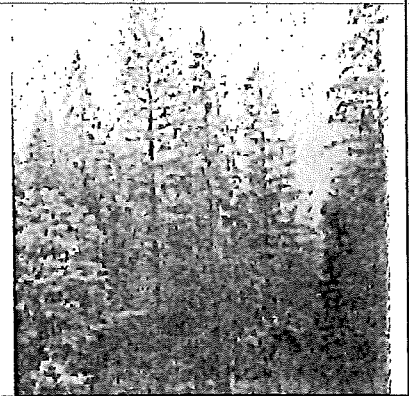
Let's move on to some skills we can begin to teach to increase resilience.

Motivational Speaker Jim Rohn said:

"You are the average of
the five people you spend
the most time with."



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Dr. Brene Brown says we are born "wired for connection" and claims that connection is a basic human need for survival. The resilience research backs this up.

"Good relationships with close family members, friends, or others are important. Accepting help and support from those who care about you and will listen to you strengthens resilience. Some people find that being active in civic groups, faith based organizations, or other local groups provides social support and can help with reclaiming hope. Assisting others in their time of need also can benefit the helper."

Have participants take a moment to answer the questions on the "Choosing Friends" handout then briefly reflect in large group.

*Excerpt from: "The Road to Resilience" American Psychological Association
apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience.aspx*

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Choosing Friends

What kind of influence are we in others' lives?

Who do you find yourself spending the most time with?

Think carefully about the friends you are closest to and with whom you spend the most time in your social life, at work, and within your family. Identify them in your mind. Do you respect and admire each of these people? Do you want to be more like them? If not, it's time to stop giving up parts of yourself to their influence.

What kind of person do you want to be? Who do you know who possesses the qualities you want to nurture?

Motivational speaker Jim Rohn said, "You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with."

Think about the five people closest to you. Think about their strengths and weaknesses, their positive and negative points, good and bad personality traits. Are they five people you would be happy to be the average of?

Questions from: Your Friends Are A Statement Of Who You Are Choosing To Become By Deborah Shelby, October 30th 2014

<https://thoughtcatalog.com/deborah-shelby/2014/10/your-friends-are-a-statement-of-who-you-are-choosing-to-become/>

Problems- We've Got Problems



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The ability to solve problems increases resilience. When we feel empowered to tackle our problems, we feel more prepared to meet life's challenges. Problem solving is not a skill that we are born with and many of us have not had the opportunity to learn a specific strategy to identify and solve problems. Using the handout, let's work through this process and see if you can come to a best solution.

One challenge to spending time with family is that we have too many roles to fulfill or "hats to wear:" mother, employee, sister, church member, coach, leader, friend, etc. Sometimes all of these hats can cause us to have role strain. When we have too many hats we have role overload. This is called "too many hats syndrome." Our hats can also clash with one another, cause role conflict. For example, you want to attend your daughter's softball game but your boss needs you to work that evening. Your role as parent is conflicting with your role as an employee. Below you can assess your "hat situation."

List all of the hats (roles) you wear:

Do you have too many hats, too few, or just the right amount?

Write down any hats you would like to change:

Add these hats:

Eliminate these hats:

Make a plan for how you can change these hats:

What resources do you have that might help, you adjust your "hat situation"?

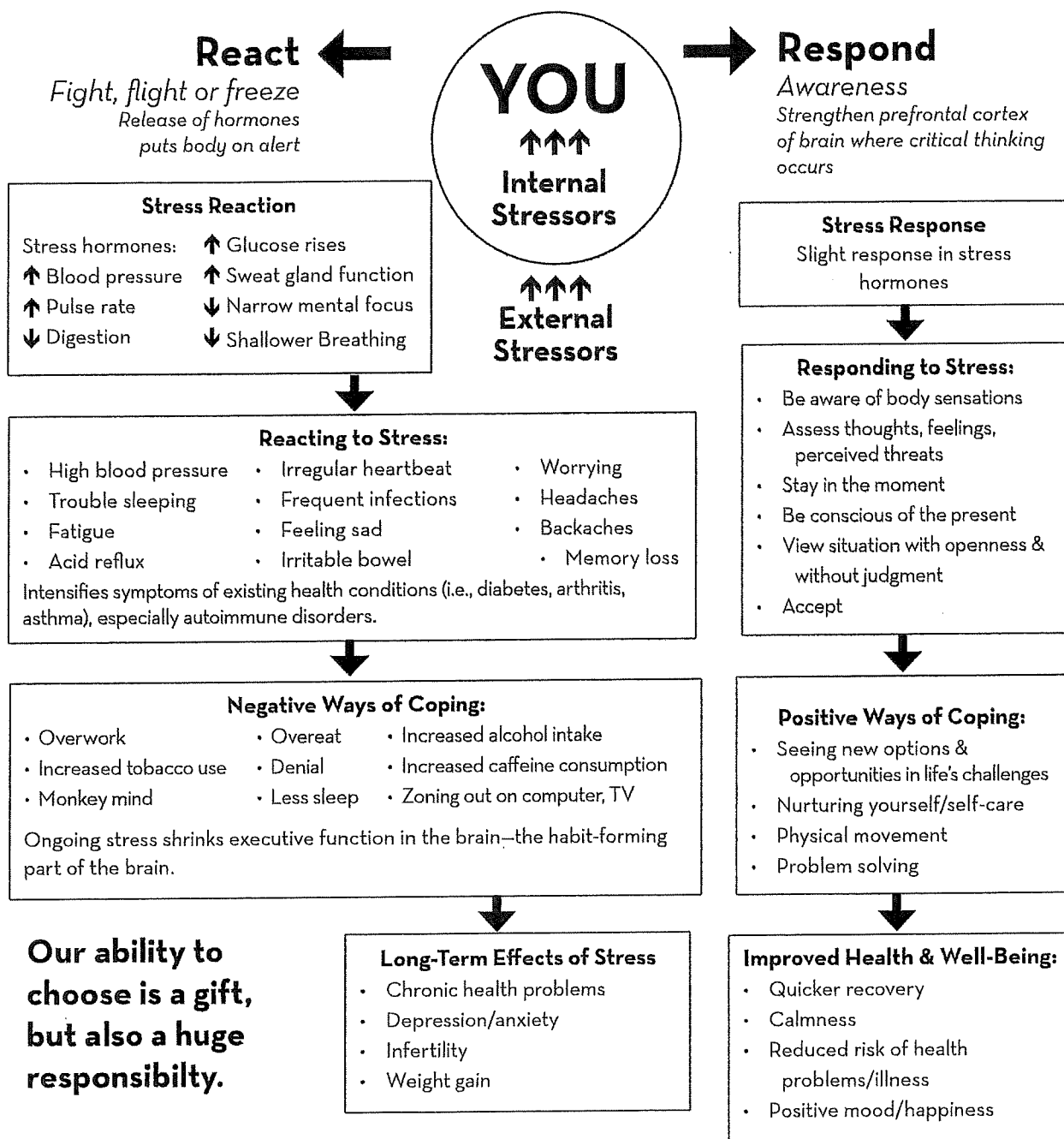
Write down a target date to have this completed: _____



Responding Versus Reacting

Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.
—Viktor E. Frankl

The brain is set to either ramp up stress and, with it, extremes, or to process experience and return to joy.



Adapted from: Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain and illness*. New York: Dell Publishing.

Recasting

- Find your feelings:
 - Sadness, fear, anger, joy
- Find meaning in our feelings
- Recognize opportunities



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Recasting: Dealing with things in life you can't change

Sometimes life throws you issues that you can't change. Remember this strategy as one way to help you work through the situation and use the situation to your advantage. First, take time to really feel your feelings. Try to identify them.

Remember the four basic feelings: sadness, fear, anger and joy. When you are ready, search for meaning in your feelings and ask yourself the following questions.

Find Meaning

1. What are the causes of the problem?
 - What was out of my control, and what was in my control?
2. What could I have done differently?
3. What are my feelings or instincts telling me?
4. What can I learn from this?



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Review the four questions. Finally, look for opportunities as a result of the situation, based on what you've learned.

Goals that are S.M.A.R.T

S-pecific

M-easurable

A-ttainable

R-elevant

T-ime-Bound



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Goals that have no plan attached to them end up being wishes or dreams. It's important to set and evaluate a goal so that you can feel prepared to meet them. It's empowering to look at your goals and realize what is possible and what you might need to work on more.

Creating S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Realistic
Timely

Specific - A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. To set a specific goal you must answer the six "W" questions:

- *Who: Who is involved?
- *What: What do I want to accomplish?
- *Where: Identify a location.
- *When: Establish a time frame.
- *Which: Identify requirements and constraints.
- *Why: Specific reasons, purpose or benefits of accomplishing the goal.

EXAMPLE: A general goal would be, "Get in shape." But a specific goal would say, "Join a health club and workout 3 days a week."

Measurable - Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of each goal you set. When you measure your progress, you stay on track, reach your target dates, and experience the exhilaration of achievement that spurs you on to continued effort required to reach your goal.

To determine if your goal is measurable, ask questions such as.....How much? How many? How will I know when it is accomplished?

Attainable - When you identify goals that are most important to you, you begin to figure out ways you can make them come true. You develop the attitudes, abilities, skills, and financial capacity to reach them. You begin seeing previously overlooked opportunities to bring yourself closer to the achievement of your goals. You can attain most any goal you set when you plan your steps wisely and establish a time frame that allows you to carry out those steps. Goals that may have seemed far away and out of reach eventually move closer and become attainable, not because your goals shrink, but because you grow and expand to match them. When you list your goals, you build your self-image. You see yourself as worthy of these goals and develop the traits and personality that allow you to possess them.

Realistic - To be realistic, a goal must represent an objective to which you are both willing and able to work toward. A goal can be both high and realistic; you are the only one who can decide just how high your goal should be. But be sure that every goal represents substantial progress. A high goal is frequently easier to reach than a low one because a low goal exerts low motivational force. Some of the hardest jobs you ever accomplished actually seem easy simply because they were a labor of love. Your goal is probably realistic if you truly believe that it can be accomplished. Additional ways to know if your goal is realistic is to determine if you have accomplished anything similar in the past or ask yourself what conditions would have to exist to accomplish this goal.

Timely - A goal should be grounded within a time frame. With no time frame tied to it there's no sense of urgency. If you want to lose 10 lbs, when do you want to lose it by? "Someday" won't work. But if you anchor it within a timeframe, "by May 1st", then you've set your unconscious mind into motion to begin working on the goal.

T can also stand for **Tangible** - A goal is tangible when you can experience it with one of the senses, that is, taste, touch, smell, sight, or hearing. When your goal is tangible you have a better chance of making it specific and measurable and thus, attainable.

Goal Setting - Powerful Written Goals In 7 Easy Steps!
by Top Achievement founder Gene Donohue.

MY GOAL IS

Write Goal Below:

S—Specific
(Who, What, When, Where and Why)

M—Measurable
(How much? How many?)

A—Attainable
(Figure out a way to make come true)

R—Realistic
(Willing and able to work toward)

T—Timely
(Set a time frame)

My S.M.A.R.T Goal is:



FACE your challenges

F-ind your target

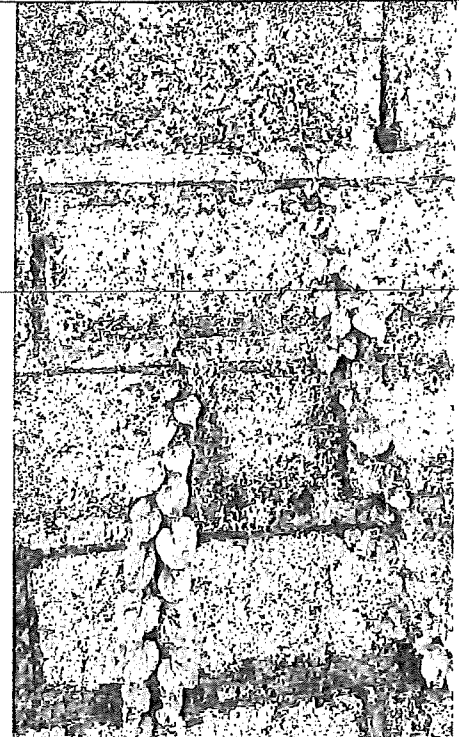
A-ction steps needed

C-oping list

E-value how it went



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Still, challenges can oftentimes seem too overwhelming or maybe too delicate to face. In light of these challenges, some of us tend to ruminate, avoid, or wear masks of perfection instead of handling the situation.

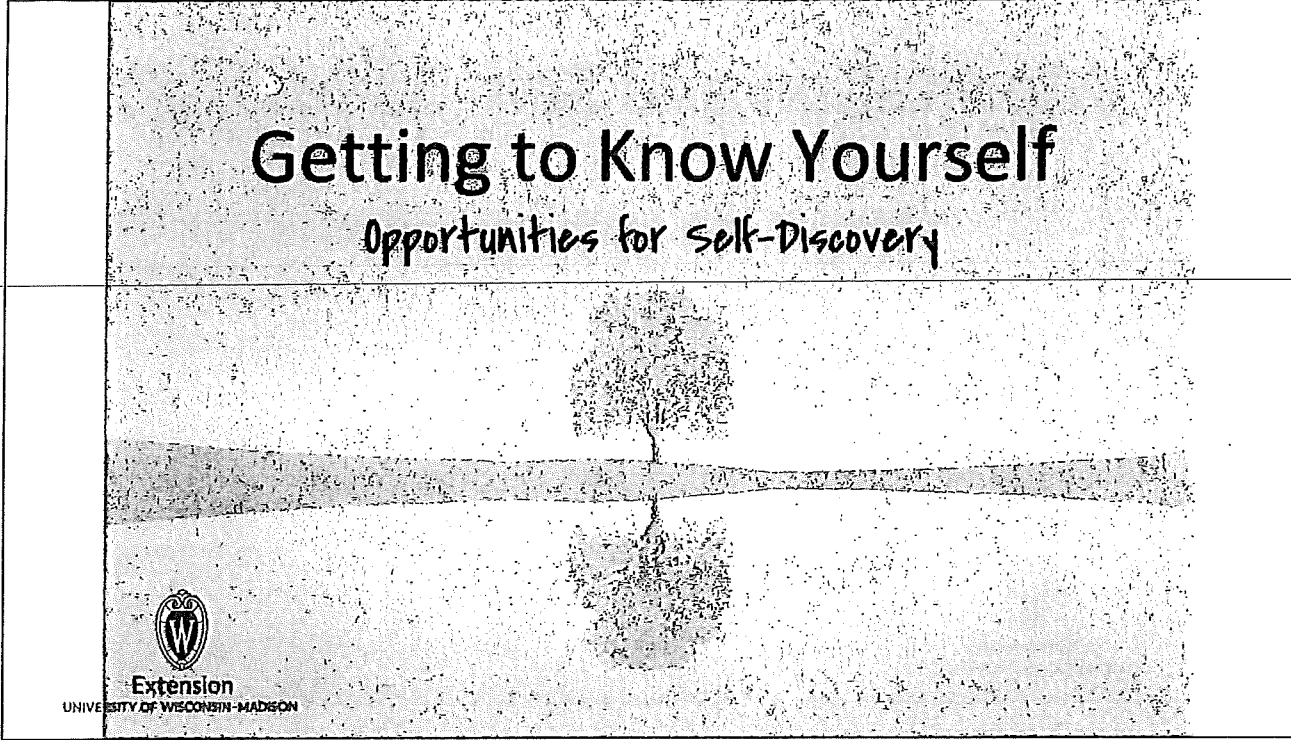
Some other masks might look like:

- Acting like everything is fine when it isn't.
- Saying you don't care about something when you really do.
- Pretending to be super nice when you're really angry inside.
- Acting angry when what you really feel is hurt.

These thoughts and these masks can get in the way of facing challenges head on and taking decisive action. Rather than detaching or hiding, focus on your target, write down some actionable steps, be prepared to cope, and then evaluate how it went. This creates a learning environment instead of a worry environment.

You can also try the following:

- Stop- I will stop myself from...
- Think- I will tell myself...
- Do- What I'll do instead



Learning about what your hopes, dreams and motivations are is a powerful way to build resilience. When we know what makes our spirits sing.
Utilizing the handouts, My Joy List, Values to spend some time thinking about your life



My Joy List

Adapted from: Foster, R., Hicks, G., & Seda, J. (2008). *Happiness & Health: 9 choices to unlock the powering connection between the two things we want most*. New York: Penguin Group.



What I Value in My Life...

Life is too short to...

Life is too short not to...



I Am Grateful for...

Meditation and Self-Compassion

"May I be filled with loving-kindness

May I be happy

May I be healthy

May I be peaceful and at ease"



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In light of stress and challenge, one thing that many people neglect is care and compassion for themselves. The cliché exists for a reason "we cannot pour from an empty cup" nor should we pressure ourselves to do so. In order to give to others, we must first and foremost give kindness to ourselves. One way to help us do this is by practicing loving-kindness meditation.

See handout. Do together and reflect as a group.

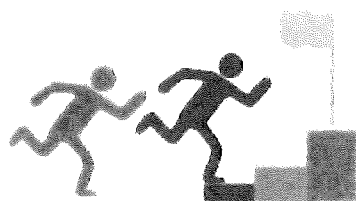
Scientists have found that practicing loving-kindness, like we just did together, wires our brains for empathy and altruism. People who practice this meditation are more likely to experience positive feelings in response to a goal and are better equipped to regulate their emotions.

http://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/compassion_meditation

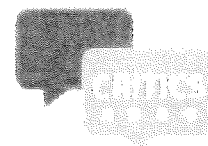
THE SCIENTIFIC BENEFITS OF SELF-COMPASSION

Society has taught us to be perfect, achieve more, win, work harder, and be the best. Of course there's nothing wrong with having an objective in life. However, some people do not know when to stop and are continuously self-critical. In that case, instead of helping you to improve yourself, your objectives will actually stand in your way. New research suggests self-compassion may be a far superior alternative.

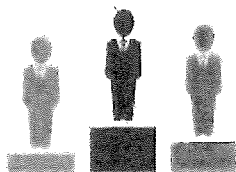
SELF-CRITICISM: A SELF-DEFEATING TENDENCY



When our self-worth depends on out-competing others, we become more insecure, anxious and self-critical, which adds to our misery.



When facing criticism, we become defensive and feel crushed.



Competition, instead of strengthening relationships, tends to lead to isolation.



In competition, people will see others as obstacles to overcome and this view separates them from others.



Self-criticism and competition get in the way of our primary goal to be successful, to belong, and to be loved.

SELF-COMPASSION: A HEALTHY ALTERNATIVE THAT REAPS RESULTS



When we fail, feel insecure or inadequate, many people fall into the trap of self-criticism, which is actually a self-defeating tendency.



Self-compassion is the source of empowerment, learning, and inner strength.

SELF-COMPASSION: A HEALTHY ALTERNATIVE THAT REAPS RESULTS



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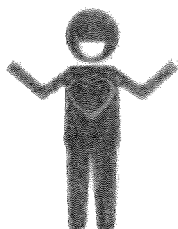


Self-compassion is the source of empowerment, learning, and inner strength.

SELF-COMPASSION LEADS TO RESILIENCE

Self-Compassion involves facing failure, insecurity or mistakes in a completely different way. Unlike self-criticism, self-compassion builds greater resilience, strength and happiness. Self-compassion involves 3 things:

1) SELF-KINDNESS



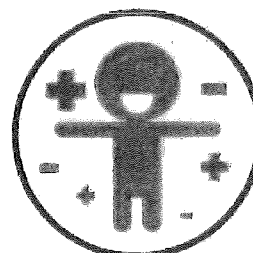
Being kind and understanding with oneself as one would be with a friend. Understanding that we are intrinsically deserving of care and concern just like everybody else.

2) COMMON HUMANITY

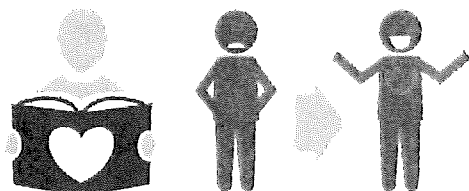


Understanding that we're not alone in our mistakes, weakness and failures, that making mistakes is intrinsically human, and that they are a normal part of everyone's life.

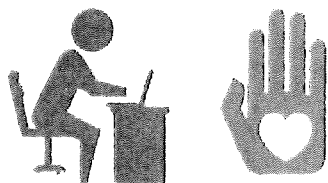
3) MINDFULNESS



Being mindful of one's emotions and feelings without over-identifying with them i.e. validating our emotion without adding fuel to the fire.



Self-compassion is learnable. The first step is to recognize how you respond to failure and choose the 3 elements of self-compassion instead of self-criticism.



Self-compassion is not being lazy or having no objective in life. In times of over-indulgence and laziness, self-compassion involves toughening up and taking responsibility.



Compassionate people aren't always self-compassionate. Self-critical over-achievers are not the only ones that lack self-compassion. Some of the kindest people do as well. People can be very compassionate towards others but forget to extend that kindness to themselves.

SELF-COMPASSION IS ABOUT A CHANGE IN ATTITUDE AND IS LINKED WITH GREATER WELL-BEING AS WELL AS SUPERIOR PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES:

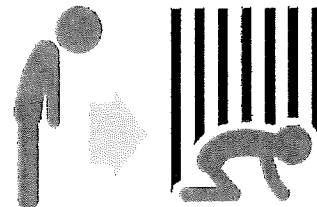
SELF-COMPASSION LEADS TO INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY

SELF-CRITICISM

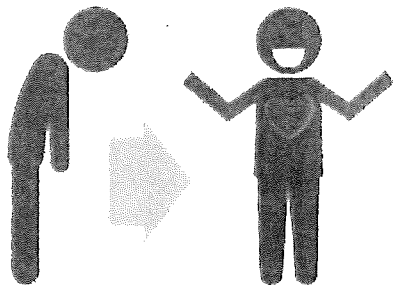


When you are motivated by self-compassion, failure is not an indicator of defeat, but a learning opportunity.

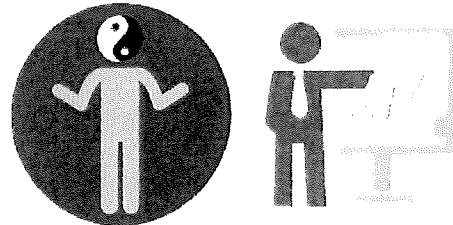
FAILURE



Self-criticism will turn failure into despair.



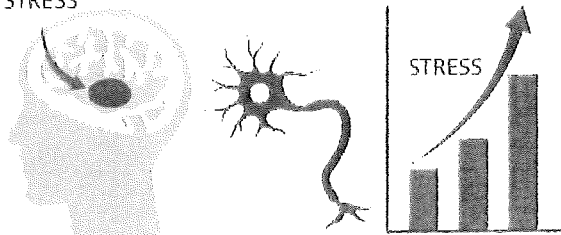
Self-compassion is likely to improve one's performance after failure.



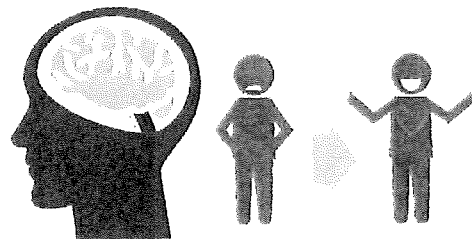
Self-compassion will maintain peace of mind. When you remain calm in the face of failure, rejection and criticism, you experience higher well-being and are more productive and successful.

SELF-COMPASSION LEADS TO DECREASED STRESS

STRESS



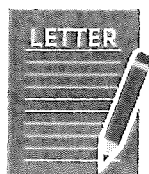
Harsh self-criticism activates our sympathetic nervous system and elevates stress hormones. The sting of self-criticism can be so intense that it stops us from learning and being resilient in the face of failure.



Self-compassion, on the other hand, may activate our biological nurturance and soothing system which leads to greater feelings of well-being.

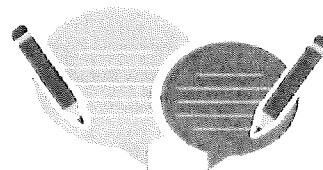
PRACTICES FOR BOOSTING SELF-COMPASSION

Write yourself a letter



Imagine that you are writing to your friend what a compassionate friend would say to you. Write it down, and read it later.

Write down your self-talk



Write down self-critical words that come to your mind, and ask if you would say these words to a friend.

Develop a self-compassion mantra



EASY
TO BE
REMEMBER

Develop easy-to-remember self-compassion phrases to help you get a hold of yourself.

Meditation



Meditation is a process by which, through contemplation and relaxation, we can begin to loosen the grip of self-critical thoughts and emotions.

Emma Seppala, Ph.D.

THE SCIENCE OF HAPPINESS HEALTH & SOCIAL CONNECTION

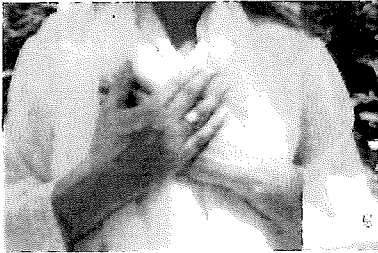
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COMPASSION MEDITATION

Difficulty: MODERATE | Frequency: 1X/DAY | Duration: 30 MINS



WHY YOU SHOULD TRY IT

Having compassion means that you want others to be free from suffering and you have the urge to help end their suffering. It is not only vital to a kind and just society but also, research suggests, a path to better health and stronger relationships.

Yet cultivating compassion for others—and yourself—can sometimes feel like an emotionally taxing and demanding task. This exercise walks you through a meditation grounded in simple techniques—paying attention to your breath and guided imagery—to help you nurture compassion toward a loved one, yourself, a neutral person, and even an enemy.

TIME REQUIRED

30 minutes a day for two weeks.

HOW TO DO IT

This exercise draws on a guided meditation created by researcher Helen Weng and her colleagues at the Center for Healthy Minds (CHM) at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Dr. Weng called this meditation a “compassion meditation,” though a similar kind of meditation is also referred to as a “loving-kindness meditation.”

We recommend listening to audio of this guided meditation in the player below; you can also download it from the CHM's website. We have included a script of this meditation to help you follow it yourself or teach it to others. In brackets are the lengths of the pauses in the original guided meditation, to give you a sense of how much time to allot to each step.

Settling

Please settle into a comfortable position and allow yourself to relax.

Take a deep breath and release. [2 seconds] For a few moments, just focus on your breath and clear your mind of worries. Notice when you are breathing in ... and breathing out. Let yourself experience and be aware of the sensations of breathing. [10 seconds]

Loving-kindness & Compassion for a Loved One

Picture someone who is close to you, someone toward whom you feel a great amount of love. Notice how this love feels in your heart.

Notice the sensations around your heart. Perhaps you feel a sensation of warmth, openness, and tenderness. [10 seconds]

Continue breathing, and focus on these feelings as you visualize your loved one. As you breathe out, imagine that you are extending a golden light that holds your warm feelings from the center of your heart. Imagine that the golden light reaches out to your loved one, bringing him or her peace and happiness. At the same time, silently recite these phrases.

May you have happiness.

May you be free from suffering.

May you experience joy and ease.

May you have happiness.

May you be free from suffering.

May you experience joy and ease.

[1 minute]

As you silently repeat these phrases, remember to extend the golden light to your loved one from your heart. Feel with all your heart that you wish your loved one happiness and freedom from suffering.

Compassion for a Loved One

Now think of a time when this person was suffering. Maybe they experienced an illness, an injury, or a difficult time in a relationship. [15 seconds]

Notice how you feel when you think of his or her suffering. How does your heart feel? Do the sensations change? Do you continue to feel warmth, openness and tenderness? Are there other sensations, perhaps an aching sensation? [10 seconds]

Continue to visualize your loved one as you breathe. Imagine that you are extending the golden light from your heart to your loved one, and that the golden light is easing his or her suffering. Extend this light out to them during your exhalation, with the strong heartfelt wish that they be free from his or her suffering. Recite silently to him or her:

May you be free from this suffering.

May you have joy and happiness.

May you be free from this suffering.

May you have joy and happiness.

[1 minute]

Notice how this feels in your heart. What happened to your heart? Did the sensations change? Did you continue to feel

warmth, openness and tenderness? Were there other sensations, an aching sensation perhaps? Did you have a wish to take away the other's suffering? [30 seconds]

Compassion for Self

Contemplate a time when you have suffered yourself. Perhaps you experienced a conflict with someone you care about, or did not succeed in something you wanted, or were physically ill. [15 seconds]

Notice how you feel when you think of your suffering. How does your heart feel? Do you continue to feel warmth, openness, and tenderness? Are there other sensations, perhaps an aching sensation? [10 seconds]

Just as we wish for our loved one's suffering to end, we wish that our own suffering would end. We may also envision our own pain and suffering leaving us so that we may experience happiness.

Continue to visualize yourself as you breathe. Imagine that the golden light emanating from your heart is easing your suffering. With each exhalation, feel the light emanating within you, with the strong heartfelt wish that you be free from your suffering. Silently recite to yourself:

May I be free from this suffering.

May I have joy and happiness.

May I be free from this suffering.

May I have joy and happiness.

[2 minutes]

Again, notice how this feels in your heart. What kind of sensations did you feel? Did they change from when you were envisioning your own suffering? How is this feeling different from when you wished your loved one's suffering to be relieved? Did you feel warmth, openness and tenderness? Were there other sensations such as pressure? Did you have a wish to take away your own suffering? [30 seconds]

Compassion for a Neutral Person

Now visualize someone you neither like nor dislike—someone you may see in your everyday life, such as a classmate with whom you are not familiar, a bus driver, or a stranger you pass on the street. [5 seconds]

Although you are not familiar with this person, think of how this person may suffer in his or her own life. This person may also have conflicts with loved ones, or struggled with an addiction, or may have suffered illness. Imagine a situation in which this person may have suffered. [30 seconds]

Notice your heart center. Does it feel different? Do you feel more warmth, openness and tenderness? Are there other sensations, perhaps an aching sensation? How does your heart feel different from when you were envisioning your own or a loved one's suffering? [10 seconds]

Continue to visualize this person as you breathe. Imagine that you are extending the golden light from your heart to them, and that the golden light is easing his or her suffering. Extend this light out to them during your exhalation, with the strong heartfelt wish that he or she be free from suffering. See if this wish can be as strong as the wish for your own or a loved one's

suffering to be relieved. Silently recite to him or her:

May you be free from this suffering.

May you have joy and happiness.

May you be free from this suffering.

May you have joy and happiness.

[2 minutes]

Again, notice how this feels in your heart. Did the sensations change from when you were envisioning this person's suffering? Did you continue to feel warmth, openness and tenderness? Were there other sensations? Did you have a wish to take away this person's suffering? How were these feelings different from when you were wishing to take away your own or a loved one's suffering? [30 seconds]

Compassion for an Enemy

Now visualize someone with whom you have difficulty in your life. This may be a parent or child with whom you disagree, an ex-girlfriend or boyfriend, a roommate with whom you had an argument, or a co-worker with whom you do not get along. [5 seconds]

Although you may have negative feelings towards this person, think of how this person has suffered in his or her own life. This person has also had conflicts with loved ones, or has dealt with failures, or may have suffered illness. Think of a situation in which this person may have suffered. [30 seconds]

Notice your heart center. Does it feel different? Do you feel more warmth, openness and tenderness? Are there other sensations, perhaps an aching sensation? How does your heart feel different from when you were envisioning your own or a loved one's suffering? [10 seconds]

Continue to visualize this person as you breathe. Imagine that you are extending the golden light from your heart to him or her, and that the golden light is easing his or her suffering. Extend this light out to him or her during your exhalation, with the strong heartfelt wish that he or she be free from suffering. See if this wish can be as strong as the wish for your own or a loved one's suffering to be relieved. Silently recite to him or her:

May you be free from this suffering.

May you have joy and happiness

May you be free from this suffering.

May you have joy and happiness.

[1 minute]

If you have difficulty in wishing for this person's suffering to be relieved, you may think of a positive interaction you have had with this person that can help you in wishing them joy and happiness. Perhaps there were times when you got along, laughed

together, or worked well together on an assignment. Continue to silently recite:

May you be free from this suffering.

May you have joy and happiness.

[2 minutes]

Again, notice how this feels in your heart. Did the sensations change? Did you feel warmth, openness and tenderness? How were these feelings different from when you were wishing for your own or a loved one's suffering to end? Were there other sensations, perhaps a tightness in the chest? Did you have a wish to take away this person's suffering? [30 seconds]

Compassion for All Beings

Now that we are almost at the end of this meditation, let's end with wish for all other beings' suffering to be relieved. Just as I wish to have peace, happiness, and to be free from suffering, so do all beings. [10 seconds]

Now bask in the joy of this open-hearted wish to ease the suffering of all people and how this attempt brings joy, happiness, and compassion in your heart at this very moment.

You have now finished this compassion meditation session.

EVIDENCE IT THAT WORKS

Weng, H. Y., Fox, A. S., Shackman, A. J., Stodola, D. E., Caldwell, J. Z., Olson, M. C., Rogers, G. M., and Davidson, R. J. (2013). Compassion training alters altruism and neural responses to suffering *Psychological Science*, 24(7), 1171-1180.

Study participants received either this compassion meditation training or a training aimed at mitigating negative emotion by helping people think differently about a negative event. Participants who completed two weeks of the compassion training demonstrated more altruism—they gave more money to a victim of unfair treatment. This altruistic behavior is a strong marker of compassion.

What's more, the people who received the compassion training showed different brain activity in response to pictures of suffering: Their brains showed greater activity in regions known to be involved in understanding the suffering of others, regulating emotions, and experiencing positive feelings in response to a reward or goal. In this case, suggest the researchers, that goal was alleviating the suffering of someone in need.

WHY IT WORKS

This meditation fosters feelings of compassion and concern for others by training people to notice suffering and strive to alleviate it, while at the same time giving people the emotional resources to not feel overwhelmed by the distress caused by that suffering. The researchers who used this compassion meditation in their work argue that the care for others emphasized by the compassion training may have caused participants to see suffering not as a threat to their own well-being but as an opportunity to reap the psychological rewards from achieving an important goal—namely, connecting with someone else and making that person feel better.


By first extending compassion to a loved one and to the self, it becomes easier to extend that same compassion to others, even those you may not like. Extending compassion to people you dislike can help to reduce feelings of hostility and resentment and may lead to improvements in a strained relationship. With practice, this meditation can help bring more peace, joy, and connection to one's own life and to the lives of others.

SOURCES

Helen Weng, Ph.D., University of California, San Francisco
Center for Healthy Minds, University of Wisconsin, Madison

The Greater Good Science Center's Greater Good in Action is a free online course of the best research-based method for increasing happiness, resilience, kindness, and connection, created by the Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley and HopeLab.



<p>Feeling overwhelmed?</p> <p>Remember "RAIN"</p> <p>R-recognize what's going on</p>	
<p>A-allow the experience to just be there, as it is</p> <p>I- investigate with kindness</p> <p>N-natural awareness by not identifying with the experience</p>	

Our thoughts can work for us and unfortunately, they can sometimes work against us too. It can be good practice to ask ourselves if what we are thinking is really true. Watch for traps like "everybody" "always" and "never."

In the book Uncovering Happiness by Elisha Goldstein, Ph.D we learn that when we put space between ourselves and our reactions it can change our relationship with our thoughts and self-beliefs.

First ask yourself, "Is this thought true?"

Then ask yourself, "Okay, but is it really true?"

Next, notice how it makes you feel and name the feeling.

Lastly, imagine what it would be like if you didn't hold this belief.

Another way to fact-check our thoughts is by remembering RAIN.

Go over RAIN handouts together.

Handout from Taking Care of You "Find Shades of Grey"



Feeling Overwhelmed? Remember "RAIN"

Four steps to stop being so hard on ourselves.

R

Recognize
what's
going on

A

Allow the
experience
to be there,
just as it is

I

Investigate
with
kindness

N

Natural
awareness,
which comes
from not
identifying
with the
experience

THOUGHTS are *NOT* FACTS PRACTICE

When you put some space between you and your reaction, it changes your relationship to your thoughts—you can watch them come and go instead of treating them as facts.

If you're stuck on a negative thought, ask yourself:

1

Is it true?

Often the answer is, "Well, yes." This is the brain initially reacting—the autopilot you live with and believe is you.

2

Is it *absolutely* true?

Is this thought 100% accurate? Can you see the thought in a different way?

3

How does this thought make me feel?

Notice any storylines you're holding onto, and name your feelings: *sad, angry, jealous, hurt.*

4

What would things be like if I didn't hold this belief?

Imagine possible benefits to your relationships, energy levels, and motivation.

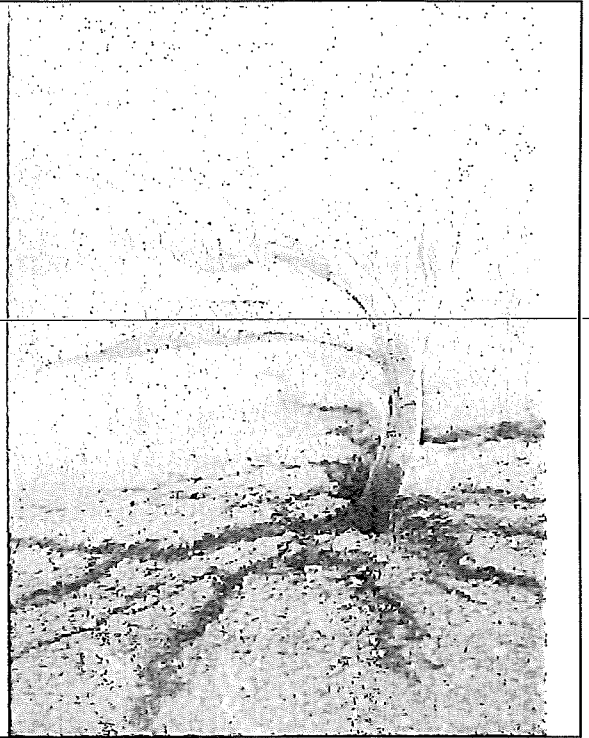
Hopefulness

"Hope is the thing with feathers
that perches in the soul - and
sings the tunes without the words
- and never stops at all."

-Emily Dickinson

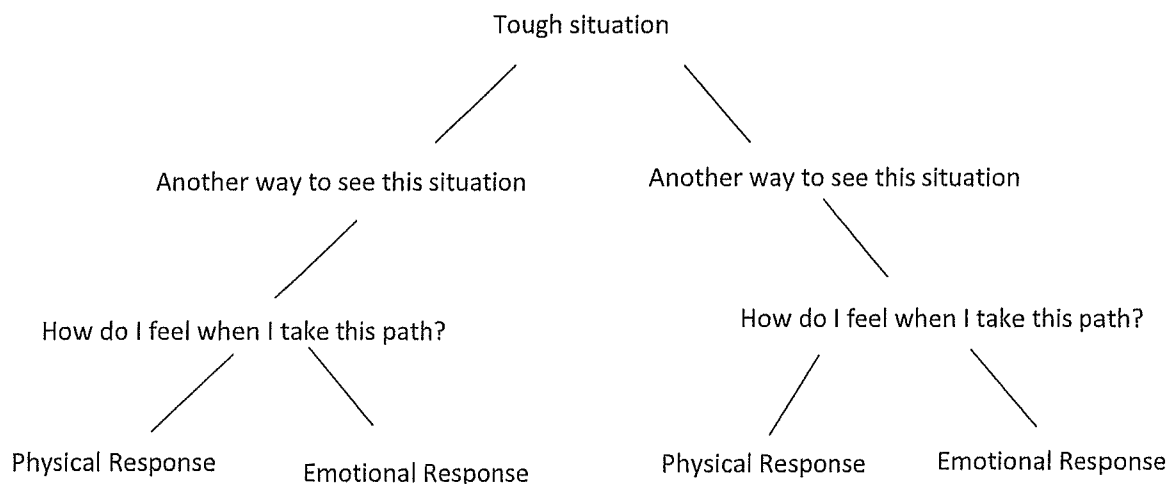


Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



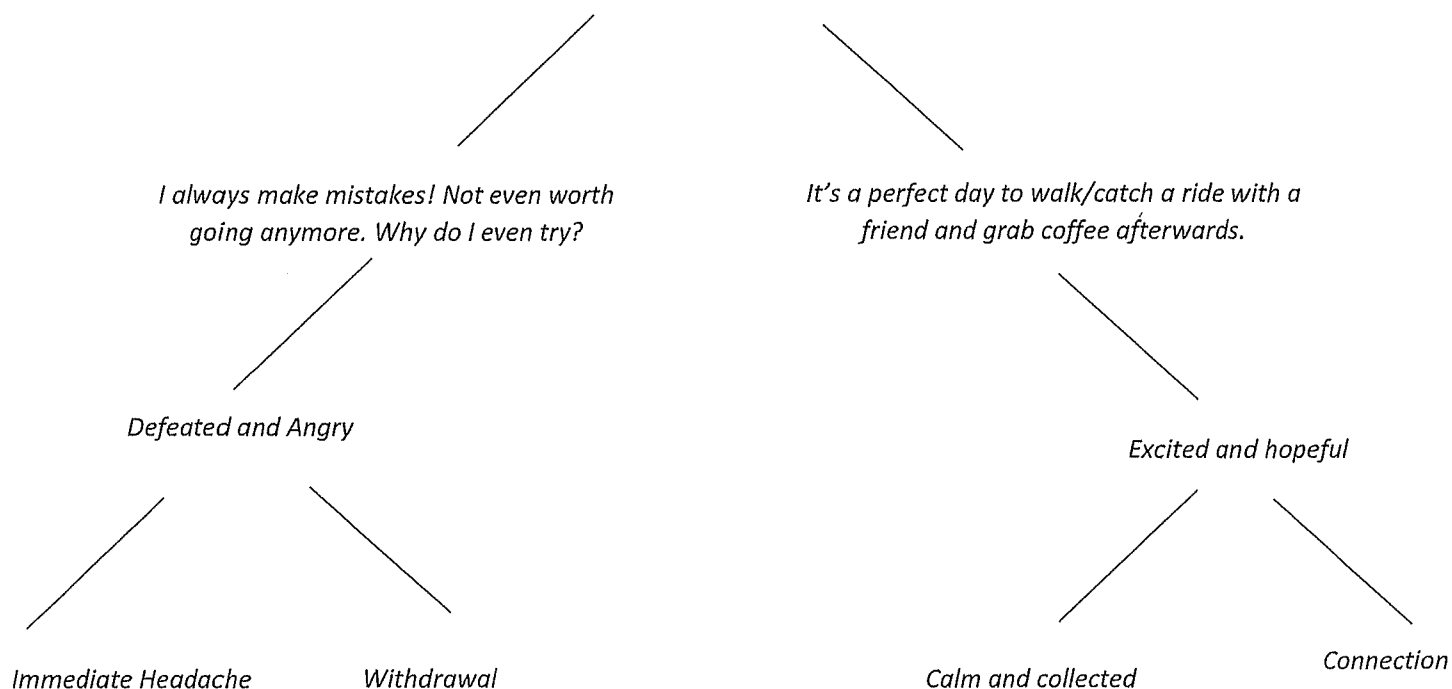
Review Hopeful Options handout.

Finding Hopeful Options



EXAMPLE

Vehicle won't start on the way to my doctor's office



You try!

Tough situation

Another way to see this situation:

Another way to see this situation:

How do I feel when I take this path?

How do I feel when I take this path?

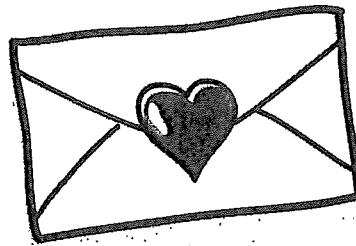
Physical Response:

Emotional Response:

Physical Response:

Emotional Response:

Self-Care



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Let's brainstorm some self care ideas.

Using this list or some of your own ideas, fill out the "At the end of this program" handout.

Have your participants write themselves a letter that you will mail to them in 30-60 days.



At the End of This Program, I...

What is it you want to change about yourself?

What are you hoping to achieve as a result of this program?

What are you hoping to be doing differently at the end of this program?

Why are you here?



What questions do you have?