

EVERYDAY SELF-CARE: EXPLORING BEYOND THE BASICS

Neuroscience-backed practices for Calm,
Connection, and Self-Compassion

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OBJECTIVES

1. Understand Burnout, Empathy, and Compassion
2. Experience Tonglen, Intentional Breathwork, Soothing & Supportive Touch, and a Mindful Self-Compassion Break
3. Apply Evidence-Based Practices in Daily Life
4. Cultivate Resilience and Strength Through Intentional Self-Care

BURNOUT



- A state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion
- Caused by prolonged or excessive stress
- Often linked to caregiving and work
- Feelings of detachment, cynicism, and reduced efficacy

BURNOUT CONTINUED



- 63% more likely to take a sick day
- 23% more likely to visit the ER
- 2.6 times as likely to actively seek another job and leave their current employer
- 13% less confident in their performance
- 50% less likely to discuss how to approach performance goals with their manager

Source: The World Health Organization (WHO)

COMPONENTS OF EMPATHY



- Ability to take an active interest in other people
- Tuning in to feelings, perspectives, and motives
- Being present and mindful
- Manage your emotions and perspectives in the wake of other's
- Mirror neurons
- Can be cultivated with practice

Source: Sarah McLean, MMI Mindful

E.M.P.A.T.H.Y.



- ‘E’ Eye contact
- ‘M’ Muscles of facial expression
- ‘P’ Posture
- ‘A’ Affect
- ‘T’ Tone
- ‘H’ Hearing the whole person
- ‘Y’ Your response, likely leads to compassionate action

Source: Dr. Helen Riess, Harvard Medical School

WHAT IS COMPASSION?

- A quiver of the heart – a tiny break – when we witness another's suffering that motivates in us a desire to help
- Seeing + Feeling (Empathy) + Desire + Action = Compassion
- Compassion is a verb
- Adaptively evolved trait ensuring human survival



WHAT IS TONGLEN?



- A meditation practice that reverses our usual habit of avoiding pain
- Cultivates compassion
- Breathing in suffering of others and breathing out relief
- “Sending and receiving”
- Awakens Bodhicitta – the compassionate heart
- Connect deeply with others by embracing pain
- Increases empathy

TONGLEN PRACTICE



- Center Yourself
- Start with Yourself
- Extend to Others
- Work with Expanding Circles
- Return to Breath

WHAT IS INTENTIONAL BREATHWORK?

- **Circular breathing:**
No pauses between inhale and exhale
- Activates the nervous system and emotions
- Used to release stuck energy and access deeper awareness



HOW INTENTIONAL BREATHWORK CULTIVATES COMPASSION

- Creates Inner Safety (Regulates Nervous System)₁
- Helps You Face Emotional Pain (Emotional Processing)₂
- Activates the Heart (Neurobiology of Compassion)₃



1 Zaccaro et al., 2018, Frontiers in Human Neuroscience: Slow, deep breathing enhances parasympathetic activity and reduces stress.

2 Rhinewine & Williams, 2007, Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine: Participants report emotional release and increased psychological insight from breathwork.

3 Lutz et al., 2008, Psychoneuroendocrinology: Compassion training activates empathy-related brain circuits and increases positive affect.

INTENTIONAL BREATHWORK PRACTICE



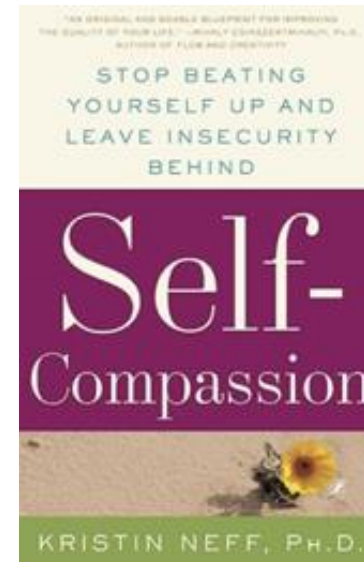
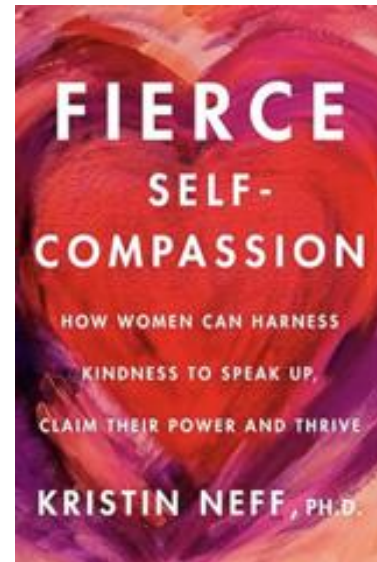
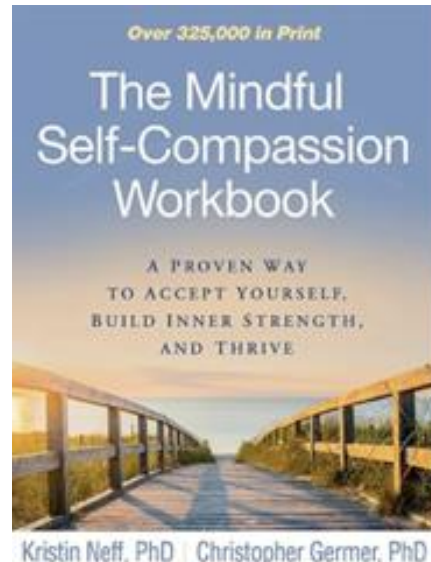
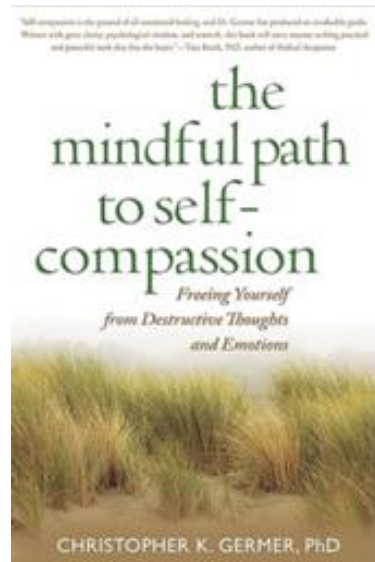
MINDFUL SELF- COMPASSION



MINDFUL SELF-COMPASSION BACKGROUND

Kristin Neff, Ph.D. & Christopher K. Germer, PhD

- 5,000 research articles since 2003
- MSC Program, created in 2010, taught to 250,000 people worldwide



WHAT IS SELF-COMPASSION?

Exercise:

How Would I Treat a Friend?



3 COMPONENTS OF SELF-COMPASSION



Mindfulness



Common humanity



Self-kindness

MISCONCEPTIONS VS. SCIENCE

PART 1

Self-Pitying?

- Mindfulness prevents overdramatizing, over-identifying or exaggerated suffering
- Never “Woe is Me”

Weak?

- Research shows self-compassion builds resilience and better coping skills

Selfish?

- Common humanity fosters greater connection
- Research shows self-compassionate people make better partners



MISCONCEPTIONS VS. SCIENCE

PART 2

Self-indulgent?

- Self-compassion wants long-term health, not short-term gratification
- Research proves self-compassionate people take better care of themselves

Undermines Motivation?

- Research proves self-criticism leads to fear of failure, and increased performance anxiety
- Research proves it leads to greater self-confidence



PHYSIOLOGY OF SELF-COMPASSION

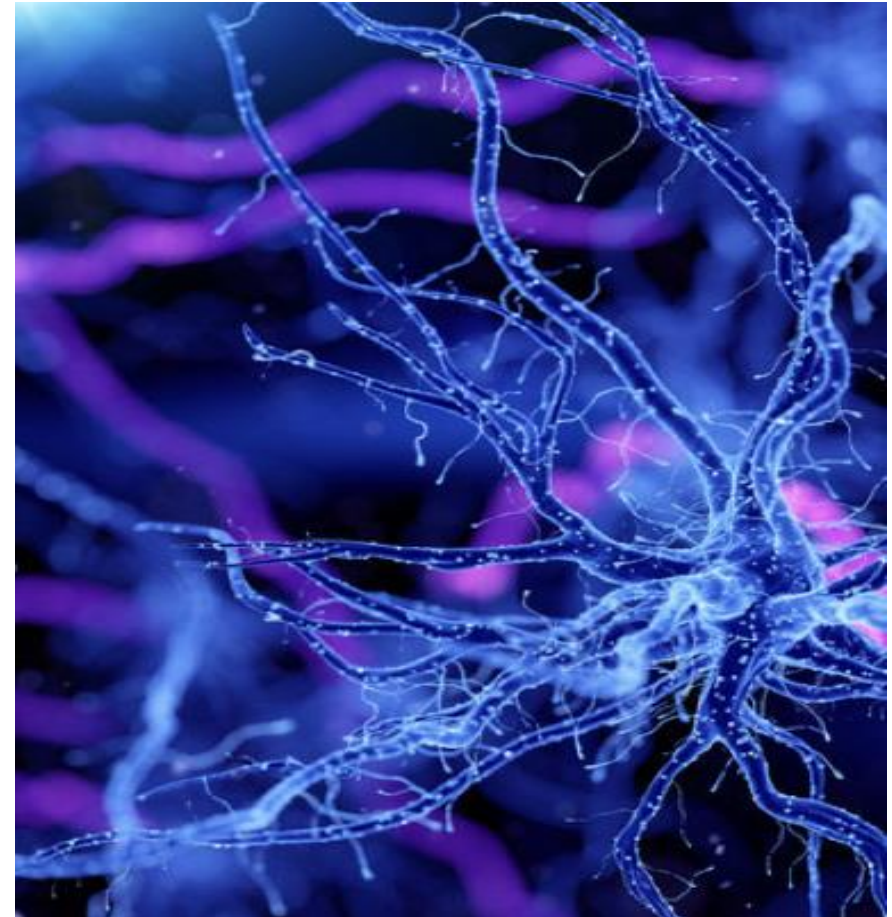
Paul Gilbert, PhD, Creator Compassion-Focused Therapy

Stress Response

- Amygdala – Reptilian Brain
- Self-Criticism Activates Fight, Flight, or Freeze
- Cortisol & Adrenaline

Mammalian Care-Giving System

- Longer Developmental Period – Attachment Theory
- Soothing Touch – Oxytocin
- Gentle Vocalizations



**SOOTHING &
SUPPORTIVE TOUCH
PRACTICE AND A
MINDFUL SELF –
COMPASSION BREAK**



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 **iPossible**
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 **OKLAHOMA
Human Services**
Developmental Disabilities Services

Headshot Station



**RESERVE
YOUR SPOT**

No spots left? Stop by!
We'll fit you in for a walk-up.