



ACTIVITY: Practicing Self-Compassion

Facilitator's Notes

Purpose

- The purpose of this activity is to introduce the concept of self-compassion. It will allow participants to assess how they currently practice self-compassion and to begin thinking of ways they could become more self-compassionate.

ESTIMATED TIME

5-10 minutes

MATERIALS

Required:

Paper or journal

Pen or pencil

Background

Self-compassion is defined as being kind and understanding to one's self in times of suffering, failure, or when we feel inadequate. Self-compassion contributes to increased resiliency. People who practice self-compassion can take responsibility for negative experiences but don't get overwhelmed by bad feelings.

Self-compassion researcher Kristen Neff identifies three components of self-compassion:

- 1) Self-kindness: being kind and understanding to one's self in times of suffering, failure, or when we feel inadequate.
- 2) Shared humanity: Suffering and being imperfect are part of the shared human experience. Everyone suffers and everyone feels inadequate sometimes.
- 3) Mindfulness: Observing our negative thoughts and emotions openly and without judgment, but realizing they are just thoughts and emotions. They are not facts.



Activity

This activity can be done in a group setting. Another option, depending on how much time you have, is to have a general group discussion on self-compassion and have participants take the activity with them to complete later.

Ask the participants to write down their responses to the following questions. Give adequate time for the group to process the question and write.

- 1) Think about a time when a friend or family member was going through a hard time or felt bad about themselves. What did you do in that situation (how did you act, what did you say, what tone did you use)?
- 2) Now think about a time when you were struggling or feeling bad. What did you do in that situation (how did you act, what did you say to yourself about the situation, were you self-critical or kind)?
- 3) Is there a difference between how you treat a friend who is suffering and how you treat yourself? If so, why?
- 4) How could you treat yourself more like you would treat a loved one the next time you are suffering or feel "not good enough"?

Discussion Questions/ Key Points

- Ask the group what they think self-compassion is. After they respond, share the definition and 3 components from page 1.
- Ask the group for their thoughts and feedback on the exercise.
- Does anyone feel they are already very good at self-compassion? Does anyone feel this is something they need to work on?
- Why do we tend to be so critical of ourselves?
- What are some other ways we could practice self-compassion?
- Talk about a time you felt inadequate or made a mistake and how you dealt with it. Then ask if any team members would like to share. Sharing experiences of human imperfection and struggle help us see our common humanity and become more compassionate towards ourselves and each other.

Follow-up

If the group does the writing activity as a take home exercise, use the discussion questions above next time you meet.

For more information on self-compassion, visit Dr. Kristen Heff's website:

<http://self-compassion.org>

The writing activity above was adapted from "How Would You Treat a Friend?" at:

<http://self-compassion.org/category/exercises/#exercises>