

Self-compassion & Self-care: Buffers Against the Stress of the Pandemic

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(she/her/hers)

BHA/Medchi Behavioral Health Webinar Series

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CME Disclosures

Presenters and Planners: Aliya Jones, MD and Steve Whitefield, MD have reported no relevant financial relationships to disclose. Monica Neel, PsyD and the moderator have reported no relevant financial relationships to disclose.

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Learning Objectives

- Practice “Self-compassion for Caregivers” meditation for personal self-care
- Identify 3 components of self-compassion
- List the six core processes of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy that facilitate psychological flexibility.
- Apply concepts of values and committed action into personal self-care



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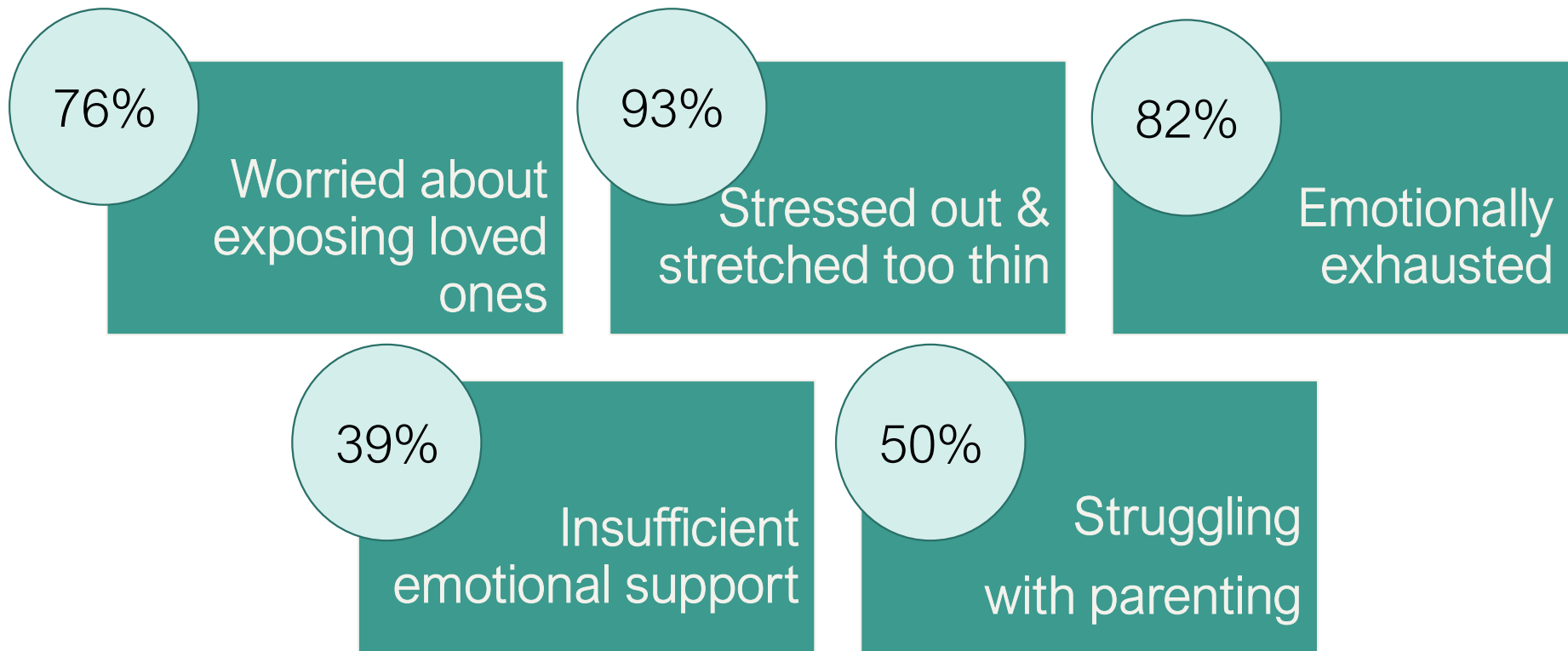
This is a moment of suffering. Suffering is a part of life. Let me be kind to myself in this moment. Let me give myself the compassion I need.

Kristen Neff

”

Mental Health of Healthcare Workers

June – September 2020



<https://mhanational.org/mental-health-healthcare-workers-covid-19>

The Problem with Self-Esteem

self-esteem

/ˈself əˈstēm/

noun.

Subjective evaluation of one's worth, typically anchored in abilities

- The Paradox
 - Anchored in need to be exceptional
 - we tend to punish/shame ourselves with self-criticism when we don't meet our self-imposed high standards
 - As feelings of superiority/exceptionality slip, our sense of worth takes a nose-dive
 - Rollercoaster between overly inflated and overly deflated sense of self
 - Leads to insecurity, anxiety, depression



The alternative? Self-compassion

“whether we’re on top of the world or the bottom of the heap, we can embrace ourselves with a sense of kindness, connectedness, and emotional balance”

Kristen Neff

Self compassion



SELF-KINDNESS



COMMON HUMANITY



MINDFULNESS

Common humanity vs. Isolation

Self-compassionate people recognize that suffering and personal inadequacy are part of the shared human experience – something we all go through rather than something that happens to “me” alone

When I suffer, fail, or feel inadequate to what degree do I...



...see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through?



...tend to feel most other people are probably happier than I am?

Mindfulness vs. Over-identification

Self-compassionate people take a balanced approach to negative emotions so that feelings are neither suppressed nor exaggerated, but taken into a larger perspective.

When I suffer, fail, or feel inadequate to what degree do I...



...try to approach your feelings with curiosity and openness?



...tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong?

Self-kindness vs. Self-judgement

Self-compassionate people recognize imperfection, failure, and experiencing life difficulties are inevitable. As such, they tend to be gentle with self when confronted with pain rather than getting angry when life falls short.

When I suffer, fail, or feel inadequate to what degree do I...



...take a stance of
warmth and
understanding?



...ignore pain or berate
myself with self-
criticism?

Self compassion is NOT...

SELF-INDULGENCE

"I'm stressed out today so I'm going to watch TV all day and eat a quart of ice-cream."

LETTING SELF OFF THE HOOK

"It's not my fault"
Blaming others

SELF- PITY

"Nobody body can relate"
"I can't believe this is happening to me"

SELF COMPASSION:

Provides motivating force for growth & change with safety to see self clearly

•

Commitment to values

SELF COMPASSION:

Allows oneself to own errors/flaws without self-condemnation

•

Understanding and accepting rather than punitive or defensive

SELF COMPASSION:

Allows "mental space" to recognize impact of situation: perspective and context

•

Decreases isolation and disconnection, shame

Letting go of “Tough Self-Love”

“Pull yourself up by your bootstraps”

“Keep a stiff upper lip”

MOTIVATIONAL POWER:

- self-criticism comes from fear
- self-compassion comes from love

APPROACH vs AVOIDANCE:


- Experiences/emotions

WHY WOULD WE POSSIBLY DO THIS TO OURSELVES?

- Fear that if we're too soft on self, we will let self get away with anything
- Fallacy that internal judge plays crucial role in “keeping self in line” and on track.



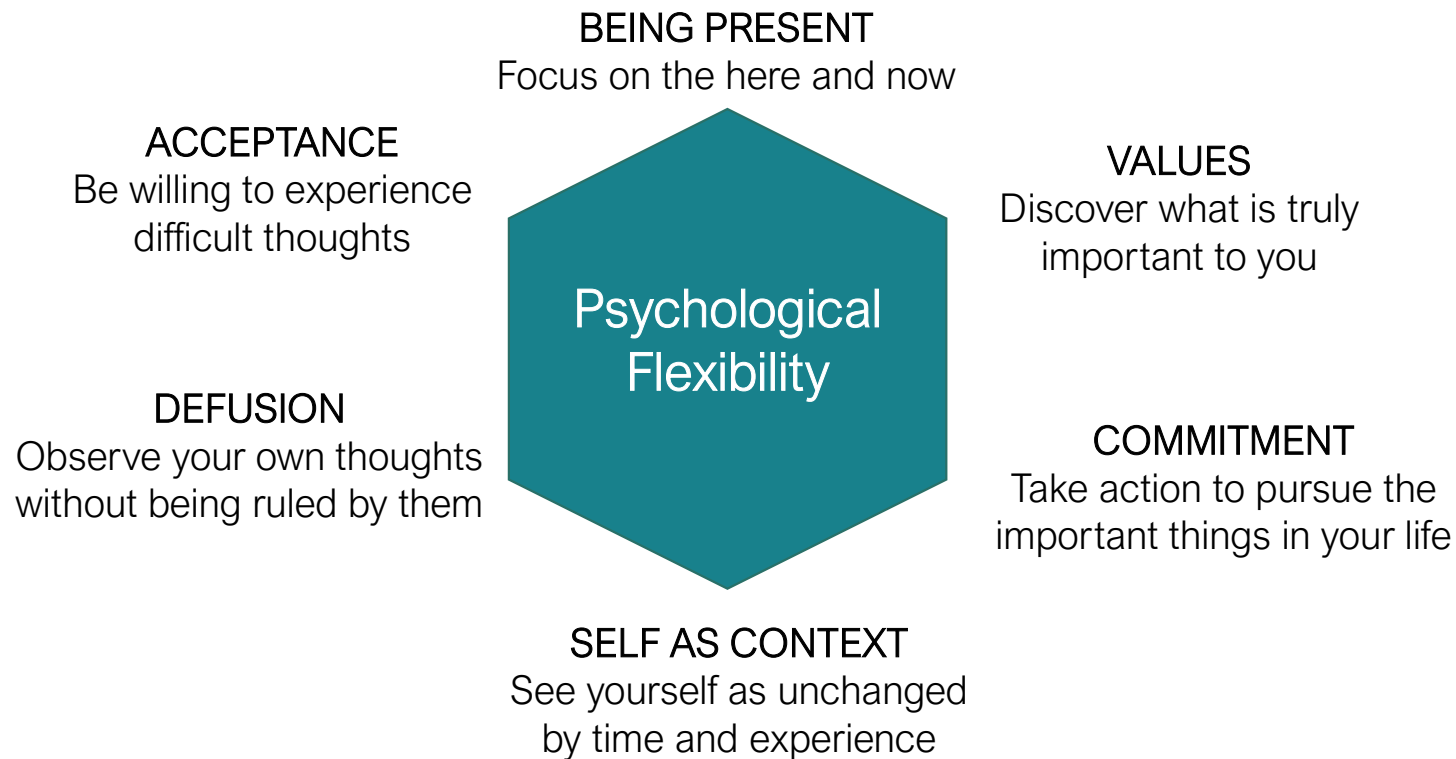
Acceptance & Commitment Therapy



Take tiny steps every day
doing what you believe in,
deep in your heart.

<https://www.shamashalidina.com/blog/12-quotes-acceptance-commitment-therapy>

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy



ACT Values Clarification



Personal
development
and growth

Spirituality

Family
relationships

Social
citizenship &
env. resp.

Health/physical
Wellness

Parenthood

Friends

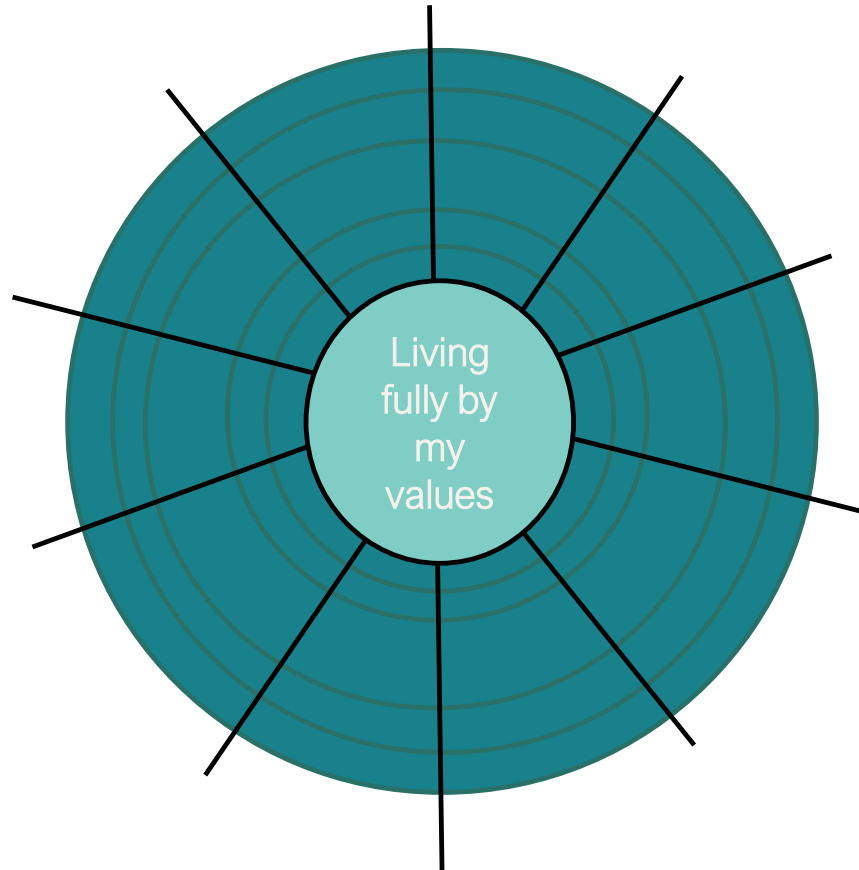
Job/Career

Leisure/fun

Romantic
Relationships

ACT: Committed Action

1. Career
2. Leisure/fun
3. Romantic relationships
4. Personal development & growth
5. Friends



6. Citizenship & Env. Responsibility
7. Spirituality
8. Health/physical wellness
9. Parenthood
10. Family relationships

Adapted from :
<https://www.actmindfully.com.au/upimages/TheCompleteSetofWorksheetsandHandoutsfromGettingUnstuckInACT.pdf>

References

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 - <https://self-compassion.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Self-Criticism.pdf>

Resources

- BHA COVID-19 Response Webpage
 - <https://bha.health.maryland.gov/Pages/bha-covid-19.aspx>
- Maryland's Helpline
 - <https://health.maryland.gov/suicideprevention/Pages/Maryland-Crisis-Hotline.aspx>
- Self-Compassion – Dr. Kristin Neff
 - <https://self-compassion.org/>
 - Self-compassion Scale
 - <https://self-compassion.org/test-how-self-compassionate-you-are/>
- About ACT
 - https://contextualscience.org/about_act

Closing remarks & questions

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