

Welcome to Webinar

Sarah Lefebure:

Excellent. Hello everyone and welcome to our webinar today. Practicing and Promoting Self-Compassion. My name is Sarah Lefebure and I'm a counselor at Okanagan College. And with me, I have my colleague Samantha Johnson. Sam, do you want to introduce yourself as well?

Samantha Johnson:

Sure. Hi everyone. Like Sarah said, my name's Samantha Johnson. I am a counselor at Okanagan College in Salmon Arm. I do want to just take a minute to just acknowledge that I'm video calling in from the traditional and unceded territory of the Secwepemec people. Very happy to be here today to facilitate with Sarah on a topic that really resonates with me.

Sarah Lefebure:

Great. Thank you. And thanks for doing your territorial acknowledgement, Sam. And I'd like to acknowledge that I'm calling in from the traditional unceded territory of the Silk people, and also express my gratitude for this beautiful land. So I think we've got the territorial acknowledgement up here. Feel free to add the territory that you're calling in from in the chat. That would be great to see. It's wonderful to have people from all across the province. We'll move on to the next slide, please.

Webinar Agenda and Self-Compassion Poll

Sarah Lefebure:

So here's our agenda for the next hour. While we're in the midst of the welcome. And we're going to do a quick breathing and grounding exercise to help ourselves settle in. And you can see actually right in the middle of the screen as I was reading the agenda, here's the poll. So feel free to complete the poll to give us an idea of how familiar you are with self-compassion. Great. I see the responses coming in. I might just take a moment to see that.

Sarah Lefebure:

Okay. I'm going to go back to the agenda actually. So we'll do a check in exercise with a white board. And then Sam will lead us through a discussion of self-compassion. What it is and why it matters. And then also why it's especially important right now during COVID-19. To lead us in an exercise, and then I'll take a closer look with you at the three parts of self-compassion and we'll do an exercise to practice self-compassion together. There'll be some time for some questions, and then we'll check out to just talk about what we're going to take away from this workshop. Great.

Sarah Lefebure:

So hopefully that sounds good to you. Looks like we've got most of the results. I think I'm going to share the results now so you can see. Looks like the majority or 51% are somewhat familiar with the practice of self-compassion. And then we've got 14% not at all familiar. Welcome, that's so awesome that you took the leap to join us and I hope you'll walk away feeling like you know a little bit more. And then we've got some folks, 22% who said I'm well on my way and 14% very familiar. So hopefully this workshop will have something for all of you wherever you're at in your journey of self-compassion. And

we do welcome your questions or comments, so feel free to share them in the checkout. Can we move on to the next slide please? Great, thank you.

Flourish Wellness Project and Grounding Exercise

Sarah Lefebure:

So this workshop is one that Sam and I put together for the Flourish Wellness Project, which is a project that has existed on the Penticton Campus of Okanagan College since 2017. And we had to do a very quick pivot in March when we all shifted to working from home online. And for the month of May, we've been running some online workshops. And this is one that will be offered to our college community and it's really cool to now be offering it to the rest of the province.

Sarah Lefebure:

And we're going to take a moment now to do a little grounding exercise. Like I said, I want to introduce the butterfly hug to you. So take a moment to just kind of feel yourself in whatever seat you're in. Notice your feet on the ground. And then if you can cross your arms across your chest, one hand on each shoulder. Like you're giving yourself a hug.

Sarah Lefebure:

And before we get started, you'll just sort of be alternating tapping. But maybe take a moment to just notice your breath. So you might want to breathe in through your nose, and then out through your nose. You might've been rushing from one place to another, literally or figuratively from one role to another. So just take a moment to arrive. And then when you're ready, just alternate tapping. Left to right, left to right. You can choose the pace and how hard you tap. This is just a way to kind of signal to your body and it's okay to calm down, to come into resting. This is something simple you can do at any time if you're having difficulty falling asleep or if you're feeling nervous before a presentation, or an exam.

Sarah Lefebure:

So that's the butterfly hug. If you're in a situation where it doesn't feel doable to do the hug, you can also tap on your knees left and right, left and right. I know that helped me to feel a little bit calmer. I hope it did for you as well.

Sarah Lefebure:

Another thing I'd like to say before we get started is that this self-compassion webinar we'll invite you to be checking in with what you're noticing in terms of sensations and emotions. And if ever anything comes up that feels uncomfortable or distressing, please do what you need to, to take care of yourself. This webinar will be recorded so you can always revisit it online at a later date. And I guess if you do notice some challenging emotions coming up, then certainly feel free to reach out to people in your life who are positive supports for you.

Whiteboard Activity One: Checking In

Sarah Lefebure:

Self-compassion feels really important at this time because we're going to, actually, I'll ask for the next slide please. Great. Thank you. There's our checking in kitty. Self-compassion feels really important at this particular point of the CIVUD pandemic when there's a certain ongoing-ness that I'm sure a lot of you are noticing. This is definitely a marathon and not a sprint, and that has its challenges in terms of keeping up our morale and managing the various emotions that come up.

Sarah Lefebure:

And then we're also in phase two now with opening up, starting to reopen BC's economy and society. And that has its own challenges for people. So we want to take a few moments to just check in around what you're noticing about what's been challenging for you maybe in the last week or so.

Sarah Lefebure:

And you can actually write on this slide. If you go up to view options at the very top of the screen, click on there and then go to annotate. That's the third option in the dropdown menu. And then if you go to the T on the left, then you can type in a word or a phrase to capture something that's been challenging for you in this phase of COVID.

Sarah Lefebure:

And whatever you write up will be anonymous. So you don't need to worry about it being disclosed that it's come from you. Will just help us to see what's going on for folks.

Sarah Lefebure:

Great. So I see balance, maintaining balance. Financial uncertainty. Differing expectations. Yeah, absolutely. There's some more uncertainty planning with so much uncertainty. Multitasking, maintaining focus. Stress. I see a couple of mentions of stress. Feeling loss about direction and purpose. Confused what next. Working from home. Too many people in the house. Feeling off balance. A lot about the unknown and being unconfused what's next. Time management is challenging. Too much Zoom. Yes. It was funny to type that while we're on Zoom, but I hear ya. I'm trying to plan for fall teaching. Yes. Irritation. Yeah. Not enough exercise. So much has changed for us. It changed very rapidly, and now we're in a settling in phase where we're realizing that it's not just a short term thing. There are longterm impacts. I see someone just wrote devastating. No direction. Wow. Work and child at the same time. Okay. Well I think that gives us a good picture of the variety of challenges coming up. Mixed feelings.

Samantha Johnson:

I see anxiety up there, Sarah.

Sarah Lefebure:

Yeah, absolutely. I think it's so normal to be feeling anxious in this time. Is there anything else you see Sam?

Samantha Johnson:

Mixed feelings stands out for me.

Sarah Lefebure:

Sorry, go ahead.

Samantha Johnson:

I just was going to say, I think that's so true. There's such a mix of feelings right now, given a lot of the things that are going on.

Whiteboard Activity Two: How have you been kind to yourself?

Sarah Lefebure:

Absolutely. I see difficulty sleeping, boundaries between work and life. Worry about funding cutbacks, exhaustion. Yeah. Thank you for taking the time to share these. And yeah, that does help us to get a sense of the landscape of challenges out there. I'd like to clear this white board so that we can move on to looking at one thing that you've been doing to be kind for yourself during this time. So is it possible? Perfect. Thank you. So again, you can just click on the text button and then type up one thing you've been doing to be kind for yourself.

Sarah Lefebure:

Daily workouts, good stuff. Bubble baths, walks. Walking or biking every day. Good. We've got walk circled there. It's been a big one for me too. Whoa. All right. Look at this. Kitty cuddles, writing, sleeping in big letters. I don't know what a hela is. Hela, using the hela. Back deck, breathing, gratitude. More kitty cuddles. FaceTime. Staying away from email on certain days. Phone calls, home cooking. Healthy Minds app.

Sarah Lefebure:

So I love this because I can see what an array of resources you already have that you're drawing from. And there may even be some ideas on here that you see that you want to try for yourselves. Minimizing checking news just got a check. Yes, that's a really good one for sure. I wish I could, Paula I don't know if I'm able to move messages that get piled on top of each other, but know that in spirit we're reading all of them.

Samantha Johnson:

Right. I think people have to move them. If they're on top, they can move over.

Sarah Lefebure:

You can use the arrow mouse to move it over. But I think what we're seeing is that kindness to self can have lots of different flavors. So yeah, sometimes it's seeing your shrink or sitting with your heating pad. Sometimes it's getting out and being really active, and making sure that you can connect with others in a safe way. There's no right or wrong to being kind to yourself. It's really about figuring out what works for you. That's great. Thank you for sharing. I feel really inspired. And now we're going to pass, we'll clear the white board and we'll move over to Sam who will tell us a little bit more about self-compassion and what it is.

Self-Compassion: What is it?

Samantha Johnson:

Great. Thanks so much, Sarah. Yes. I'm going to start us off just defining self-compassion a little bit and looking at some of the theory behind it. And then Sarah is going to take us into more of a practice of it. So the first slide we start with, what is self-compassion?

Samantha Johnson:

So having self-compassion is really no different than having compassion for others. It's really turning our love inward. It's showing warmth, and care, and concern to ourselves in a way that we would to others. Self-compassion really requires us to honor and accept our humanness. Because we all have flaws. We all struggle and we all have challenges and difficulties.

Samantha Johnson:

Self-compassion is the exact opposite of self-criticism because it allows us to show ourselves warmth and understanding when we suffer, or fail, or feel inadequate. Myself included.

Samantha Johnson:

Self-compassion is not about being perfect. It's about being kind and understanding to ourselves, especially when things go wrong. And self-compassion doesn't avoid pain, but it really embraces it with kindness, which in turn can create a much more balanced perspective of ourselves. Which is really important. And we'll go to the next slide please.

Why Self-Compassion?

Samantha Johnson:

So why self-compassion and why now? Well, at the heart of many problems is a lack of self-acceptance. I'm not good enough. I will be good enough if only I can do this. But the difficulty is that there's not some objective standard for human beings to be measured against. But we all get caught in this. We can talk to ourselves in ways that we'd never speak to someone else. And it's really important as human beings that we carve out time for ourselves to counteract self-criticism. Self-compassion is a way to understand and to calm that inner critic.

Samantha Johnson:

Another reason for self-compassion is that it's always available, especially when we struggle. It's something that we can do for ourselves at any time or any place. And it's a tool that we can carry with us. And that is a very valuable thing. And self-compassion is also a construct that's been researched within the mental health community. And there's been some really solid findings. I've put up a few on this slide to talk about. So one was that research has shown that people with self-compassion are less likely to be critical of themselves and less likely to be anxious or depressed, which leads to greater life satisfaction.

Samantha Johnson:

There's research on the physiology of self-compassion, and it has shown that when someone engages in self-criticism, that fight flight response of the nervous system is triggered. But in comparison, when

they've engaged in self-compassion, it showed a decrease in cortisol levels and in heart rates. So I think this is a really important study because it shows that self-compassion is not just an experience of the mind, but it's also an experience of the body.

Samantha Johnson:

And then lastly, research has also shown the impact of self-compassion on student populations. Including more intrinsic motivation, less likely to focus on avoidance, and improvement in student resilience and wellbeing.

Samantha Johnson:

So those are just a few studies. But if self-compassionate is something you're interested in, there's a lot of research showing that being compassionate to yourself really promotes positive mental wellbeing. I know Kristin Neff, she's one of the lead researchers in this topic and is someone that Sarah and I have really used quite a lot in this. And I believe that Robin is going to post some of the links in the chat right now in case you're interested, looking a little bit more into this. So the next slide please.

Self-Compassion during COVID-19

Samantha Johnson:

So I just want to spend a minute just talking about self-compassion during COVID. So as we know, the pandemic has obviously really shaken our role as we've known it and it has required us to make really significant changes and also face each day with a lot of uncertainty.

Samantha Johnson:

So now more than ever, it's a really important time to bring more self-compassion into our lives. There was a recent article written by the Mental Health Commission of Canada suggesting that if you want to learn a new skill during the pandemic, self-compassion is a very useful one. And it really highlighted the importance of showing ourselves empathy first before we can turn that outwards and show that to others. I'm not sure if any of you have said things to yourself lately like, "Well, who am I to complain? I'm not a frontline worker." Or, "Who am I to complain? I have all my basic needs met." And I just want to say that being aware and acknowledging other circumstances, that's a very kind, human, compassionate thing to do. But it really doesn't negate the fact that you yourself may have your own challenging feelings such as loneliness or sadness. And this is a really important point about self-compassion, is that it really directs us not to rank our suffering, but to simply acknowledge it and to allow it to bring us together.

Samantha Johnson:

Research has also shown that engaging in 90 seconds of compassionate feeling towards yourself is enough to actually create a rebalance so that you're able to then continue to give and respond to others.

Samantha Johnson:

Self-compassion is not self-pity. When someone feels self-pity, they become immersed in their own problems and they really forget that other people may have similar problems. Self-pity doesn't acknowledge our interconnectedness. And this is where self-compassion is really different. Because it really allows someone to acknowledge their own experience as well as the experience of others. Self-

compassion is also very different than self-indulgence. So self-indulgence might give someone a free pass to engage in any activity under maybe the facade of kindness to themselves. Self-compassion is very different because being compassionate to yourself also means that you want to be happy ... I'm sorry, I'm seeing the chat they're saying I'm speaking too quietly. So self-compassion is very different because being compassionate to yourself also means that you want to be healthy and happy in the longterm.

Samantha Johnson:

So as an example, I know that there's a lot of people who are really struggling right now with COVID. Really trying to find some motivation perhaps. And with that lack of routine, it can be really hard sometimes to maybe eat well or to feel productive, or to even get up and get dressed sometimes.

Samantha Johnson:

So the big difference here between a self-compassionate approach and a self-indulgent approach would be the love, and the care, and the warmth that you show to yourself during this time. To help you to create change or to make a positive step towards something different.

Samantha Johnson:

So if the pandemic has been really hard for you, giving yourself an emotional break, or engaging in positive self-talk, or giving yourself an encouraging word. Maybe even practicing some forgiveness to yourself, those are all very compassionate things to do to yourself during a struggle. And in the end, self-compassion does allow for a more broader and balanced perspective. And that's a really important thing in times like these. So now I'd like to move into a little bit of an exercise. So if I could ask for the next slide please. Perfect.

Exercise One: How would you treat a friend?

Samantha Johnson:

So I want to just have you take a minute and I want you to really think about someone in your life right now who has been struggling. Maybe a family member or friend, someone that you know who's been struggling lately. And I want you to think about what are some of the compassionate things that you might have said or done for this person. And if you're comfortable, we'll use this as a whiteboard in front of us and to get you to just write up on the white board. What are some of those things that you've been doing?

Samantha Johnson:

Okay, so I see checking in. Are you okay? Call me I'm here. Asking what I can do to help. Going for a walk. Calling them just to talk. Asking, "Hey, what's new with you?" Reminding them it's okay to be less productive. Yes. Giving them permission to rest or do you want a hug? Making them soup, calling, sending a card, letting you know you're there for them and if they want to talk. Delivering homemade baking. That's awesome. Talking with my mom most days, video chatting, sharing resources, going over to watch Netflix, sending funny animal pictures.

Samantha Johnson:

Bringing them music, calling, all very compassionate things. Sharing memes on Facebook. Yes, humor. Replicating an event online with Zoom. Sharing resources that you found is helpful.

Samantha Johnson:

Sending funny animal pics, giving permission to rest. I love that. Yes. Giving permission is such a piece of compassion. A lot of stars between a lot of things there. We'll give you a few more minutes. Pep talk I see up there. I see. Lending out your dog, talking about positive things. And there's a piece in purple I'm having a hard time seeing, but, something around thinking that they're not the only one, I think. Great. Oh, how lovely. Some very compassionate words and some very compassionate actions that you're giving to people in your life. That's lovely.

Samantha Johnson:

Okay. So given that and looking at those things, I want you to take a minute to just reflect. And I want you to reflect on if the ways that you, and remembering that self-compassion is about giving to yourself the same support and love and care and concern that you would to others that you care about. I want you to reflect on if that's some of the same, maybe encouraging words that you've been giving to yourself. Or the same permission or the same actions, compassionate actions. I want you to reflect on that.

Samantha Johnson:

And we're going to put up a poll right now. If I can ask to have a poll put up. And if you're comfortable to just reflect, have you been showing compassion to yourself in the same way you have been to those that you love and care about?

Samantha Johnson:

Okay. Okay. So we're seeing some none of the time, some rarely, occasionally and some less than the consistently. Okay. And I bring up this poll in no way to make any feel badly about where they're at within the continuum of self-compassion. There's no right or wrong here. The poll if anything can really normalize the fact that a lot of people struggle with bringing self-compassion into their lives.

Samantha Johnson:

The poll also really creates an opportunity for me to point out that self-compassion is really a skill that requires practice. And I kind of equate it to the same as learning an instrument. When you're first learning to play an instrument, you have to be really intentional about reading the sheet music. Where do you place your fingers on the piano or the guitar? And the more that you kind of practice the music, the more you start to play that instrument with ease and it just comes more naturally.

Samantha Johnson:

Well the same is very true about the practice of self-compassion. So at first you might have to be quite intentional about it, and you might really need to find opportunities to bring it in. But the more you practice it, the more it will naturally become a way of thinking and being with yourself. And that's a really powerful thing.

Samantha Johnson:

So thank you very much for engaging in that exercise with me, and for listening to me drone on for quite some time. I'm going to pass it over to Sarah now, and she's going to actually walk us through the three parts of self-compassion and a bit of an exercise around that

Three Parts of Self-Compassion

Sarah Lefebure:

Need to unmute myself. Thank you Sam. That was really, I was really moved by how much care and compassion you all seem to be showing to other people in your lives and heartened to see that some of you are, a lot of you seem to be practicing self-compassion and that same kind of kindness to yourself occasionally. And if you are wanting to bring self-compassion into your life more, then this next section might help you to figure out how to do it. So we're going to look at the three different parts of self-compassion separately. And I'll give you an example from my own life, recent COVID related example. So you can sort of see how I put it into action. And then after that, we'll do a little mindfulness exercise. So you can experiment with the three different parts as well. Next slide please.

Step One: Mindfulness

Sarah Lefebure:

So the first step of self-compassion is mindfulness. And by mindfulness, we mean awareness of what we are experiencing here and now. Not getting caught up in what's coming next, not ruminating over something that happened earlier today or last week. But just being right here with what's true right now. Sounds simple, surprisingly challenging. And that's why it's a practice.

Sarah Lefebure:

So being mindful involves turning toward our experience with an attitude of gentleness and curiosity, not judging it. So if this is a new practice for you and you notice that you have a tendency to be critical of yourself, a lot of us do have that tendency. It will take some practice just to do that step of just being able to make a little bit of space for what's true right now without judging. And I guess another way you can look at it is to acknowledge your feelings, to let them be true, to not turn away or try to suppress them.

Sarah Lefebure:

And really often, we do try to push painful feelings away or just try to fix them without even recognizing it can be sort of second nature that if we're feeling something painful or uncomfortable, to just try and get away as quickly as possible.

Sarah Lefebure:

We may also have developed that as a necessity because we need to stay functional, whether it's in our school, or work, or home life. And it can feel a little bit wobbly to start to actually make room for the sensate sensations that are there. So lots of gentleness with yourself if you're starting to practice this.

Sarah Lefebure:

I'll give you an example from my own life. Like I said, last week, we have a 10 year old daughter. And we were really struggling with the question of whether to send her to school in June part-time or not. And there were so many layers of questions upon questions, and didn't quite know what to do. And then a survey came in from the school and I thought, "Maybe this will help to give us some clarity." I opened the survey and the second question was, "Do you want to send your child to school in June? Yes or no?"

Sarah Lefebure:

And I just felt this rising up of confusion and frustration, all sorts of emotions. And I also had this part of me that expected that I reply to the survey in a timely manner. So I could have just kind of tried to stuff those feelings down and figured out how to answer the survey, even though I honestly didn't know how. But instead, and maybe because I was preparing a self-compassion workshop, I remembered, "Hey, this is a moment when I can actually use self-compassion. So I stopped and I just checked in." And when I do a check in to be mindful, I really like to just put my hand on my heart, maybe close my eyes and breathe. You might want to do that now with me. And I just noticed oh yeah, I'm feeling kind of angry that there's no maybe option in this very murky situation where we don't have a lot of information. I'm feeling confused and worried for my child.

Sarah Lefebure:

So I just acknowledged those feelings and I just said, "Yeah, this is a struggle right now. It's hard to be in this not knowing." So that was how I did the mindfulness. And I'd like to go to the next slide please.

Emotional Pulse

Sarah Lefebure:

Great. And I like to think of being mindful of our experiences as taking our emotional pulse. It's really a good practice to do, well whenever you feel like it. It might be a few times a day. So if you are starting to practice these habits, you might want to get in the habit of just taking a few mindful breaths and noticing what's happening for you in the morning, at lunchtime, and at the end of your day. Or it might be as needed, if you get an email that you notice raises your heart rate or has you feeling stressed. Or you have a bit of an argument with someone in your life. There's no right or wrong and there's no upper limit on how many times you can take your emotional pulse.

Sarah Lefebure:

And then basically with gentle curiosity, just assess what is true for you right now. So again, it's just kind of like scanning your inner world. Are there any physical sensations that you notice? Are there emotions or feeling things present? Anything else you notice? There might be an image, or a phrase, or a song that kind of speaks to what's going on for you. Might be a desire for some sort of movement. There's again no judgment. Just curiosity and gentleness. Just like you might do with a child that you really love. Just trying to make space for what's there.

Sarah Lefebure:

And you don't actually even need a name and certainly not an explanation for what you're feeling. A lot of the time we'll resort to story as a way of understanding. And that can certainly be useful at times. But really, just staying with what you're feeling, that's what the mindfulness is about. And make space to acknowledge that you're feeling it.

Sarah Lefebure:

You may want to find a phrase like I did, like this is a struggle. So you could say this is suffering, or this is stress, this is anxiety. Insert whatever word feels true for your experience. So that's step one. We'll move to the next slide please. Just going to remember to take a breath because sometimes I get into talking and I forget to breathe.

Step Two: Common Humanity

Sarah Lefebure:

So step two is common humanity, and Sam spoke to that. That we are all interconnected and I feel like COVID is highlighting that in ways even more than before. And the irony is that many of us tend to feel isolated when we're suffering or facing failure. We can really personalize our struggle and think that it means that there's something wrong with us, or that we're not normal to have made a mistake, or to be having a hard time. When in actual fact, suffering is a part of being human and we are all imperfect. So we can really help ourselves to maintain connection both with other people and with ourselves, by recognizing that the human condition is imperfect, and that we're not alone in our suffering.

Sarah Lefebure:

It happened upon a couple of different authors just in the last week or so who've both highlighted the fact that it's actually in our suffering that we're most connected and interconnected to other people. So just remembering that suffering and struggle doesn't make you wrong or bad. Just makes you human. And making space for that part of your humanity is really important.

Sarah Lefebure:

So when I was in that situation of being mindful of my feelings about the survey from my daughter's school, I reminded myself I'm not alone in this struggle. So many parents around the world are contending with these kinds of questions about how to move forward as we move into the next phase of the pandemic. And in fact, even the teachers and administrators who sent that survey are also grappling with those same questions. We're all having so many feelings about this really unprecedented experience. So that was how I brought in the common humanity piece.

Sarah Lefebure:

And I just want to ask, because I talk about common humanity. Is there someone who comes to mind when you hear this? Because that person might be a bit of a touch stone for you. You know, if you think of a young child who you have a lot of compassion quite easily for. Or a loved one, someone that you really admire, a friend. And just to remind yourself that your suffering is not unlike the suffering of this person. Often this can help to reduce feelings of isolation and self judgment, and maybe ease some of that inner critic voice that says, "I shouldn't be too soft on myself." Great. And we'll move on to the next slide please for step three.

Step Three: Kindness to self

Sarah Lefebure:

So we've had our moment of mindfulness to notice what's happening. We've connected to common humanity, and now it's time for kindness to self. So kindness to self is a stance of warmth and understanding towards ourselves, not just when things are going well folks. But especially when we suffer, fail, or feel inadequate. It's deciding to be there for ourselves regardless of what happens. It's being a friend to ourselves.

Sarah Lefebure:

So it's really about asking yourself, "What can I do for myself in this moment that would be kind or nurturing?" So there I was, noticing the feelings of frustration, recognizing that I was not alone in those feelings. And then realizing I need to be kind to myself in this moment. So I put my phone away. I did not accept myself to answer the survey right away. I know I've got a cup of coffee in the image here, but one of my go tos for kindness to self is to put the kettle on. So I put the kettle on and made myself a nice cup of tea. And just went and sat outside and let myself breathe and kind of regulate until I felt like those feelings had settled a bit. And then I was able to discuss with my family how we would proceed from there. So it's kind of a minor example, but hopefully that helps to give you an idea of how you might practice self-compassion in real time.

Exercise Two: Self-compassion practice

Sarah Lefebure:

So we're going to move on to the next slide. And that is our chance to practice self-compassion together. So this is going to be a little bit of a mindfulness exercise. It should take about five minutes. So please take time to get comfortable. You can see I'm kind of wiggling around in my chair. Wherever you're sitting, just take a moment to feel your feet. They're connected to the ground. Feel yourself supported by your seat. You may want to close your eyes, or keep them open, or lower your gaze. Whatever feels most comfortable to you. And connect with your breath. So breathe in through the nose. And out through the nose or mouth, whatever feels most comfortable. And just take a moment to notice what is true for you in this moment. Take your time here. Just scan your body for any sensation or emotions.

Sarah Lefebure:

For the purposes of this exercise, if there is something that's a source of stress or struggle, that might be useful to settle on. But if there isn't right now, that's okay too. You can always give yourself kindness. Even if things are feeling really smooth. So just notice, and see if you can bring an attitude of curiosity and kindness to whatever you're noticing. No need for a story about it. No need to apologize or fix it, just making some space for whatever is there.

Sarah Lefebure:

You may want to put your hand on your heart. Remember to keep breathing. And you may want to label what you're noticing in some way. Let the words be your own. Perhaps this is suffering. Might be this is stress. Might even say something like, "Oh honey, this is hard." You can speak to yourself like you would to a very dear friend. Take your time. See if there's a phrase or a word that bubbles up that feels right.

Sarah Lefebure:

So you've identified a sensation using your mindfulness sensation or an emotion. And now it's important to bring in common humanity to remind yourself that all humans struggle. Suffering is a normal part of life. No need to be hard on yourself or feel that you're wrong for having a hard time, especially during these strangest of days.

Sarah Lefebure:

Reminding yourself that we all have challenges. We all make mistakes. And thinking about how you respond when someone you really love is struggling. You are just as deserving of the love you give to others. You are just as deserving of understanding, and patience, and second chances.

Sarah Lefebure:

So we're here acknowledging that to suffer is to human, to be imperfect is a part of life. And now it's time to bring in some kindness to yourself. Remembering to stay with your breath. And if you notice your thoughts drifting or anxiety building up because we're going along, just always come back to your breath. It's always here for you. You might want to say to yourself now, "May I be kind to myself? May I be kind to myself?"

Sarah Lefebure:

Maybe even just listen. Listen to what you might need in this moment. Kindness has many flavors. And what you needed yesterday might be different from what you need today. Perhaps again, putting your hand on your heart. Or even giving yourself the butterfly hug we practiced earlier. It might mean making a plan for what you'll do after this webinar to be kind to yourself. There's no right or wrong. Just listen and respond with kindness and care. Just like you do for the people you love. Let yourself be included in your compassion.

Sarah Lefebure:

As we prepare to wrap up, just notice what you're feeling and sensing in your body. Maybe there's something that's shifted, maybe not. It's all good. Take a few more breaths. And then when you're ready, you can open your eyes. We'll come back to the slides. Thank you for sharing that practice with me.

Sarah Lefebure:

So I'll move to the next slide please. I find it amazing how connected I can feel to a group of people across the province, who I can't even see just in doing that mindfulness exercise. So, that'd be great. That was great to share that with you.

Whiteboard Activity Three: What are you noticing?

Sarah Lefebure:

So we're going to pull up the whiteboard now. So again, you can go to view options and annotate. And I'm going to ask you to share what you're noticing. What do you notice? Maybe after having done that exercise or after our almost hour spent together talking about self-compassion or questions, or insights coming up for you. There's no right or wrong answer here, but we'd love to see what's happening for you. And of course, you're also welcome to share your reactions or questions in the chat too. I want to take a nap now. That sounds nice. Feeling kind of chill. I'm feeling calmer than 15 minutes ago, more relaxed. Great. Some tears and relief. Yes, absolutely. Totally normal.

Sarah Lefebure:

"I have noticed that I am tired and sleepy." Yes. Feeling less critical of self. Great one, a cup of tea. Let's see. Feel more physically relaxed, more present. Excellent. Ecstatic. That sounds quite lovely. Some calm alertness. I see some hearts and stars around relaxed and present, and calmer. Ready for the next part of the day. Excellent. Forgive myself for being selfish. Yeah. I honestly don't think there is anything selfish about you being in this webinar and taking part in this meditation that we just shared. Because what we are able to do for ourselves and model, that can show to others what's possible. So I really think that the first part of promoting self-compassion for other people is practicing it ourselves so that we can kind of spread it out like ripples in the world.

Sarah Lefebure:

Allowing myself to feel at ease. Yes. Feeling that I'm not the only one struggling. Oh, you absolutely are not the only ones struggling. If we can undo some aloneness today in our time together, that's wonderful. Sam, do you want to join in here? I don't know if there's anything you want to highlight about.

Samantha Johnson:

I think the only [crosstalk 00:50:27] based on the exercise we did, and then this exercise was about permission. A big part of self-compassion is also giving ourselves permission. Permission to kind of do that for ourselves. So yeah, that's something that kind of stood out to me throughout some of the comments that have been coming up in different sections.

Sarah Lefebure:

Yes, absolutely. Permission to feel what you're feeling and to do what you need to do to take care of yourself. That's great. So Robin, I don't know if there were any questions that you wanted to share. Otherwise, we can do another question on the white board.

Robynne:

Yeah. I don't have any questions at this point. Thank you.

Sarah Lefebure:

Okay, great. So we'll clear this white board. And my next question is, I guess it's not too dissimilar from what I asked in the beginning. But what can you do to treat yourself with self-compassion not, what will you do to treat yourself with self-compassion and kindness, either today or for the rest of the week? So again, feel free to click on view options, annotate, and text to share your thoughts. It's kind of like an accountability exercise.

Sarah Lefebure:

I booked some vacation. Great. Do not take on too many projects. Take time to reach out to family. Carve out time for myself. Dust off my journal. Great. Relax. Go for calm walks. A home workout. Good. Go for walks and clear my head, get up and move more often. Realistic small goals. Some quiet time without phone or stimuli. Continue this practice.

Sarah Lefebure:

Yes. Great idea. And we've linked in the chat and you'll see in an upcoming slide, Kristin Neff's website has lots of great self-compassion resources, including some guided meditations. And you can also find some great self-compassion and related meditations on the Insight Timer app, which is a free download. There's lots of great content on there. Put the kettle on and sit outside. Great. It can wait until tomorrow. Yes. Walk along the beach, get some fresh air on balcony during break. Doing some butterfly exercises. Excellent. Stop feeling guilty. Yeah. I wonder almost if you can sort of recognize I'm feeling guilty. And rather than just trying to push it away, just let there be some room and get curious about how you can shift it. That's the no judgment piece. Acknowledged things I have accomplished instead of focusing on what I haven't yet. Yes. Sam, is there anything you want to chime in about here?

Samantha Johnson:

The only thing I wanted to maybe say about this was I think a part of self-compassion that I really liked was the capacity to hold multiple truths. So maybe something along the lines of I want to work on myself and I'm okay just the way I am. Both of those can be very true. Or COVID or this pandemic has been really challenging for me, and I've also been able to grow because of it. I really like that piece of self-compassion as well. That ability to kind of hold multiple truths at the same time and have that be okay.

Sarah Lefebure:

Absolutely. That's such a great. Thank you for that. Well, thank you for sharing. I've really loved seeing your comments and such a great way to get a sense of community and how everyone's working on taking care of themselves. I feel very touched by that. So thank you for your sharing.

Sarah Lefebure:

So we're going to move on to the next slide now, please. As I mentioned, we do have a few links here and they've been posted in the chat. Resources for learning more. So Dr. Kristin Neff's self-compassion website and her TED Talk, and the last link there is the self-compassion scale. So you can actually complete an assessment to see how self-compassionate you are, which could be interesting. And we'll move to the next slide as well. Our references. And then next slide please.

Sarah Lefebure:

Just a reminder. Like I mentioned in the beginning, if emotions that are challenging or uncomfortable came up for you during this session, it's really understandable and normal. And support is available, perhaps now more than ever in some ways.

Resources and Webinar Wrap Up

Sarah Lefebure:

So for students, if you're a college or university student, I would recommend that you start by contacting your college or university counseling services. My understanding is that all institutions across BC are offering remote counseling, either by phone or video sessions. There's also a great new service called Here 2 Talk for post-secondary students in BC, which offers 24/7 mental health support via app, phone, and web. If you're an employee of a post-secondary institution, you can look into your employee and family assistance program. And then for all Canadians, the Wellness Together Canada portal is a really great tool for mental health and substance use support. You can go on and complete an assessment, and it'll tell you sort of how you're doing based on your answers in terms of mood and functioning. And you can fill that out repeatedly. So you can kind of get a sense of how you're doing over time. And they also have access to a range of self-help, mindfulness tools. As well as some coaching and I believe even some counseling that's free of charge too. So it's worth looking at. And we'll move to the next slide please, which is our thank you. Thank you very much.

Robynne:

And thank you Sarah and Samantha for a very thoughtful presentation. It's amazing at BCcampus, we have a phenomenal executive director that offers meditation once a week for us online, and we all get together and in BlueJeans. And we were chatting in the back how lovely both of you are in the session and how it reminds us of our meditation we do within BCcampus. So thank you so much for a wonderful

session. I know I definitely feel a lot more relaxed than I did earlier, so yeah. Thank you so much. And thanks to everybody who came again. We look forward to seeing you again at another session.

Sarah Lefebure:

Yes. Thanks to everyone.

Samantha Johnson:

Thank you everyone.