



FINDING SELF-
COMPASSION
ALONG YOUR
GRIEF
JOURNEY

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TODAYS
ROADMAP

Your Grief Journey

Self-Compassion

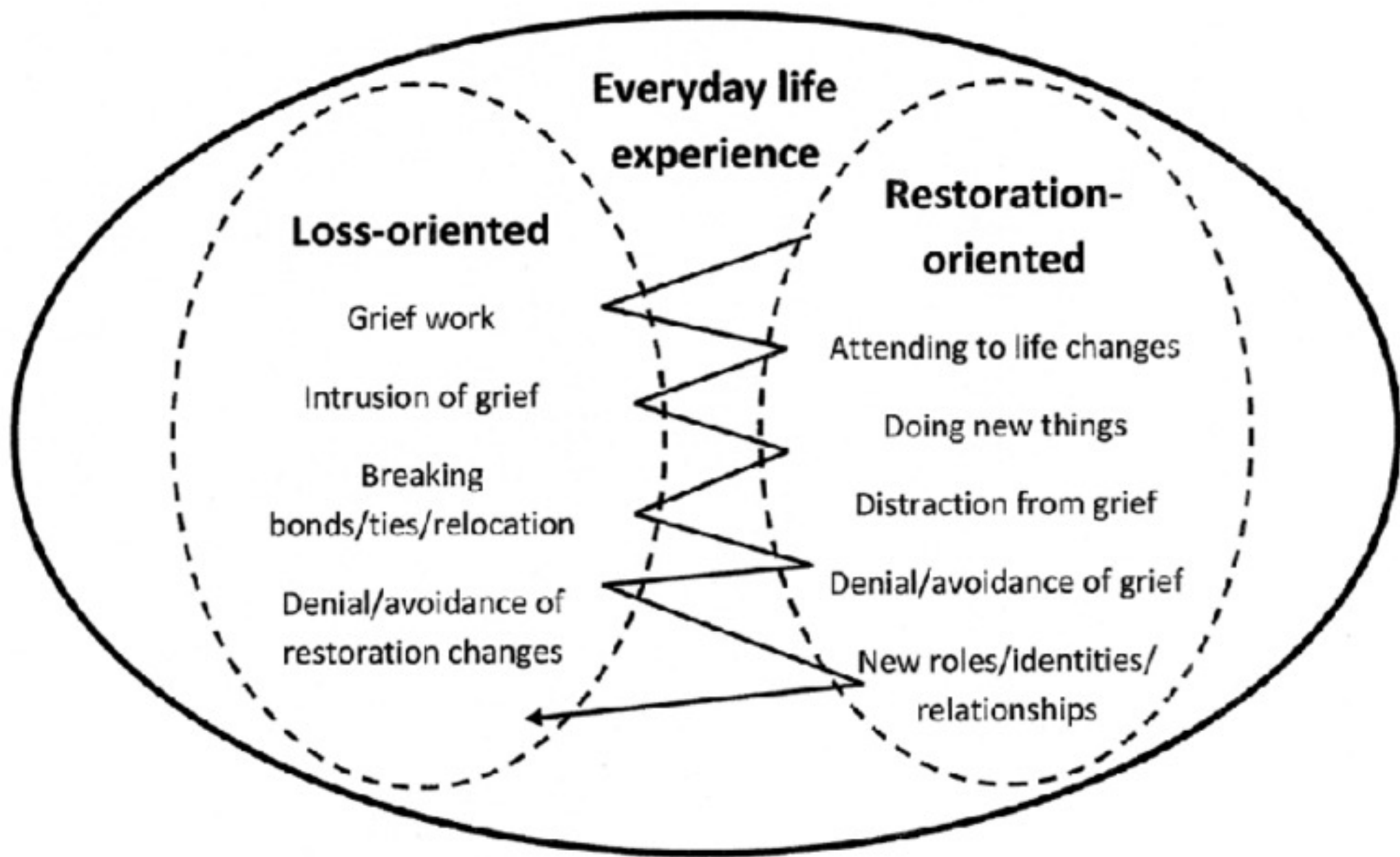
3 Components of Self-Compassion:
Self Kindness, Common Humanity,
and Mindfulness

Cultivating Self-Compassion While
Grieving

A person wearing a dark, hooded jacket is sitting on a wooden bench, viewed from behind. They are looking out over a body of water under a cloudy sky. The bench is made of dark wood and is situated on a grassy area. The overall mood is somber and reflective.

YOUR GRIEF JOURNEY

- Dual Process Theory
- Tonkin's Model of Grief
- William Worden's 4 Tasks of Mourning



Expectation

Reality

Before loss



Loss



Eventuality



WHAT SHAPES YOUR GRIEF EXPERIENCE

The circumstances surrounding the person's death.

Who the person is and who the griever is.

The griever's relationship with the person who died.

The griever's loss history.

Society and culture of the griever.

Secondary losses occurring at the time of death.

Griever's access to and use of support.

(Dr. Alan Wolfelt, PhD When Grief is Complicated)



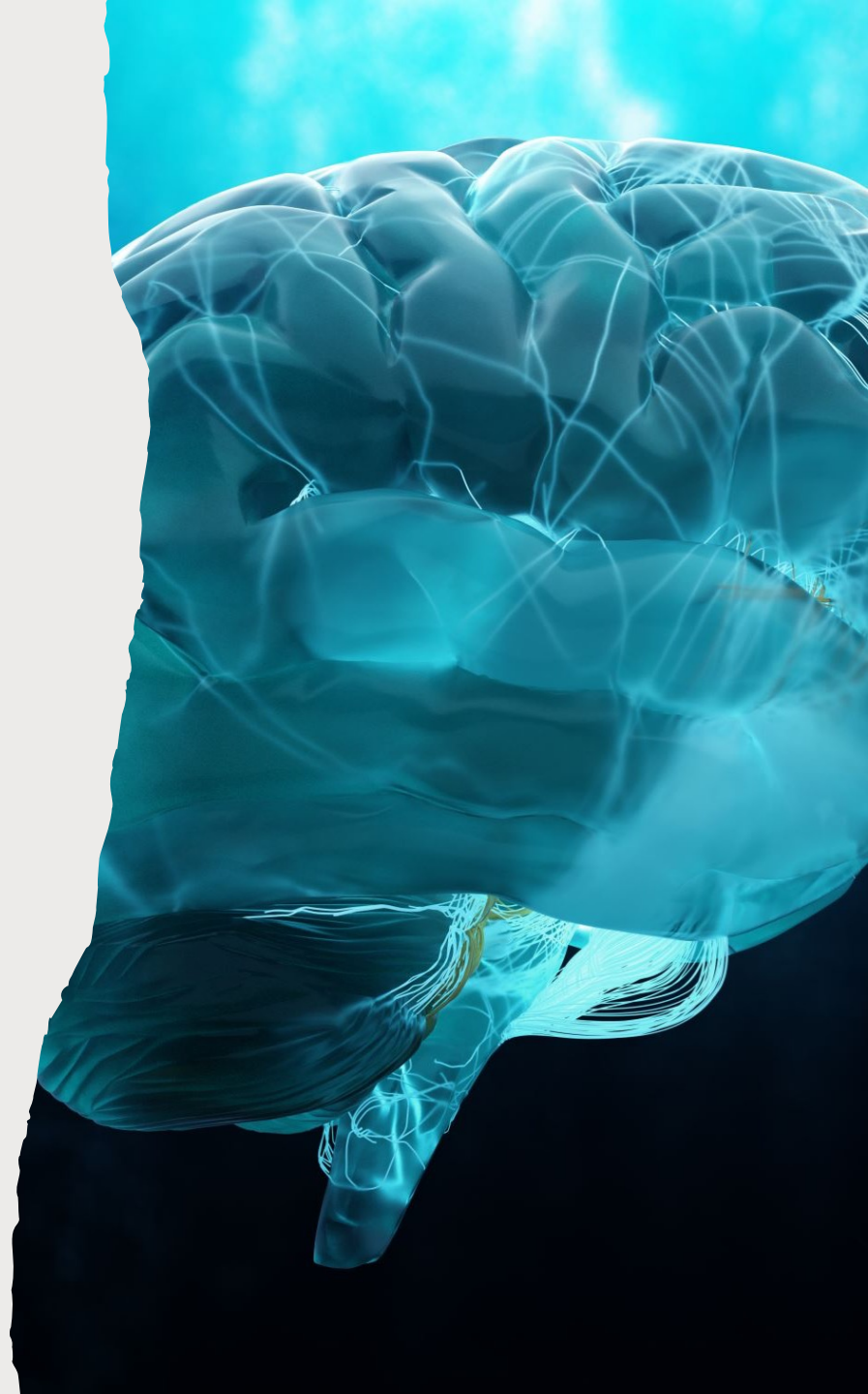
WHAT IS SELF COMPASSION

(KRISTIN NEFF, P.H.D.)

- Treating yourself in the same way you would treat a friend you love when you are going through a difficult time.
- Self-compassion for grief is the practice of making skillful choices that will reduce suffering and improve the quality of your life.
- Self-compassion is about both awareness and action. Awareness that you are suffering and action to alleviate your own suffering.

OBSTACLES TO SELF COMPASSION

- Being self-compassionate is hard for most of us for various reasons:
- The threat system - Our brain is hardwired to shift into threat mode easily to protect ourselves. Seeing the negative is our default attention bias, so turning our attention to more self-compassionate endeavors might not be something that comes naturally to us.
- Early life experiences – We might not have been taught or shown when growing up how to be compassionate to ourselves, and it might have never occurred to us that treating ourselves kindly was an option!
- Negative beliefs about self-compassion – Because it is not something we are taught about or talk about a lot, the idea of self-compassion can carry some negative connotations. Some people may think being self-compassionate is weak and will lead to laziness, self-indulgence, or self-pity.



WHAT DOES THE
RESEARCH SAY?

Less negative mind states

Less depression

Less anxiety

Less negative self-image/body image

Higher immune function

Less afraid of failure

Increased motivation

- *You know quite well, deep within you, that there is only a single magic, a single power, a single salvation... and that is called loving. Well, then, love your suffering. Do not resist it, do not flee from it. It is your aversion that hurts, nothing else. – Herman Hesse*



COMPONENTS OF SELF-COMPASSION

Self Kindness is being understanding, accepting, and compassionate to oneself rather than harsh or critical while sitting with the pain and suffering of grief.

“It isn’t what happens to us that causes us to suffer: its what we say to ourselves about what happens”
– Pema Chodron



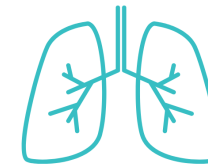
PRACTICE

- **Comfort your body.** Eat something healthy. Lie down and rest. Massage your own neck, feet, or hands. Take a walk. Breathe. Anything you can do to improve how you feel physically gives you a dose of self-compassion.
- **Write a letter to yourself.** Think of a situation that caused you to feel pain (death of a loved one, a job loss). Write a letter to yourself describing the situation, but without blaming anyone — including yourself. Use this exercise to nurture your feelings.
- **Give yourself encouragement.** Think of what you would say to a good friend if he or she was facing a difficult or stressful situation. Then, when you find yourself in this kind of situation, direct these compassionate responses toward yourself.

SQUARE BREATHING

inhale 2... 3... 4

breathe



exhale 2... 3... 4

rest 2... 3... 4

hold 2... 3... 4



COMPONENTS OF SELF- COMPASSION

Common Humanity is the understanding and recognizing how we are more alike than we are different. All humans are flawed works in progress. Everyone makes mistakes, and experiences suffering.

PRACTICE

- *A meditation for compassion:* Begin in a comfortable seated position. Take a few deep breaths to settle into your body and into the present moment. Place one hand on your heart and the other on your belly. Begin to scan your body for tension and notice any particularly strong emotions you are experiencing. Repeat to yourself, “It is OK for me to feel this way,” and meet yourself in this moment with loving compassion and acceptance. Continue for around 5 minutes or until you feel a sense of peace and expansion.



COMPONENTS OF SELF-COMPASSION

- *Mindfulness* is being present and riding the waves of emotion as they come as you practice letting go of expectations that things be any different than they are right now.
- If you can't be present to your own grief then how can you offer yourself kindness and understanding?



PRACTICE: SELF COMPASSION BREAK

- Think of a situation in your life that is difficult, and that is causing you stress. Call the situation to mind and see if you can feel the stress and emotional discomfort in your body.
- Now, say to yourself:
 - **1. This is a moment of suffering**
 - That's mindfulness.
 - **2. Suffering is a part of life**
 - That's common humanity
- Now, put your hands over your heart, feel the warmth of your hands and the gentle touch of your hands on your chest. Or adopt the soothing touch you discovered felt right for you.
- Say to yourself:
 - **3. May I be kind to myself**
- You can also ask yourself, "What do I need to hear right now to express kindness to myself?" Is there a phrase that speaks to you in your particular situation, such as:
 - *May I give myself the compassion that I need*
 - *May I learn to accept myself as I am*
 - *May I forgive myself*
 - *May I be strong.*
 - *May I be patient*
- This practice can be used any time of day or night, and will help you remember to evoke the three aspects of self-compassion when you need it most.





BRINGING ALL COMPONENTS TOGETHER

- ***Be present in your grief:*** Mindfulness helps us ride the waves of grief as they come. Acknowledge what exists instead of denying, avoiding, or criticizing to get away from the pain.
- ***Remember that suffering and grief are both an important and inevitable part of being human:*** You are not alone. Your support system can bring connection and even more important validation.
- ***Meet your grief with kindness:*** Be curious about what you are feeling. Sometimes we resist feelings of guilt, frustration, or relief resulting in them becoming stuck. Offer compassionate warmth, love, and unconditional acceptance

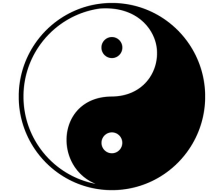
LETTING GO OF RESISTANCE

- What we resist persists
- Suffering= Pain X Resistance
- What we can feel we can heal
- When we struggle we give ourselves compassion not to feel better but **BECAUSE** we feel sad.

(The Mindful Self Compassion Workbook, Neff and Germer)



YIN AND YANG OF SELF COMPASSION



- Yin : Being with ourselves in a compassionate way. Attributes are Comfort, Soothing, and Validating
- Yang : Being able to act in the world in a compassionate way. Attributes are Protecting, Providing, and Motivating

(www.centerformsc.org)

A close-up photograph of a white daisy flower with a bright yellow center, set against a soft-focus background of green grass and a pale sky. The flower is the central focus, with its petals radiating outwards. The background is a lush green field, and the sky is a light, hazy blue, suggesting a peaceful outdoor setting.

CULTIVATING SELF-COMPASSION AS PRACTICE

- Trusting yourself
- Giving yourself permission to grieve fully and deeply
- Slow down/ allow for reflection
- Remember to Breathe
- Allowing yourself to rest
- Giving yourself grace when you struggle with focus, motivation, attention (or anything else, as things that were easy before the loss may be difficult or unavailable to you now.)



CULTIVATING SELF COMPASSION AS PRACTICE

- Letting people know what you need from them (Communication)
- Practice self-forgiveness
- Be kind to yourself
- Physical acts of self-compassion: placing a hand on your heart and feeling the warmth and pressure of your hand, giving yourself a hug, squeezing your hands together.
- Spend time imagining yourself as a small child in need of love and care, send that child the love and care they need.
- Turn your attention toward your suffering, rather than away

RESOURCES

- Self-Compassion as Self Care for Grief: How being kind to yourself reduces suffering after loss, Heather Stang, MA
- [Gift of Self-Compassion Course: How to Tame Your Inner Critic and Increase Your Power to Thrive](#)
- Excellent website by Kristin Neff: www.self-compassion.org
- MSC: Mindful Self-Compassion is an 8 week program designed by Kristin Neff and Chris Germer to help individuals cultivate self-compassion. <http://centerformsc.org>.
- [Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself](#) by Kristin Neff, Ph.D.
- [The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion: Freeing Yourself from Destructive Thoughts and Emotions](#) by Christopher Germer, Ph.D.
- [Self-Compassion Step by Step](#) (audio training by Dr. Neff)
- Mobile Apps (more broadly for mindfulness of emotions):
 - [Calm](#)
 - [Moodnotes](#)
 - [Stop, Breathe, & Think](#)
 - [Insight Timer](#) (search guided meditations for "self-compassion")
- <https://www.hope-wellness.com/blog/how-to-move-through-grief-and-loss-with-kindness-and-self-compassion>