



Transforming Compassion Fatigue



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Prior Training in Compassion Fatigue?

- ▶ What did you learn during your training about CF, Vicarious Trauma, Burnout?
 - Social Workers?
 - Nurses?
 - OT's?
 - Police?
 - Attorneys?
 - Probation?
 - Admin Staff?



“An Occupational Hazard”

What I wasn't told during my training...

- My work would profoundly change the way I perceive the world
- I would be asked to deal with client situations that I had no training for, and no experience
- Self awareness – isn't just important for the health of my clients...it is a necessity for my own health and ability to SURVIVE this work



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Tools & resources for helping professionals

Compassion Fatigue Solutions provides skill-based workshops, consulting services and training materials focusing on compassion fatigue, self-care and workplace wellness.



Workplace wellness

Practical workshops and presentations for helping professionals, administrators and volunteers.



Team Building

A cost effective way to offer professional development & team



Self Care

Free articles, book recommendations and links to help you look after yourself no matter how demanding your work is.



Compassion Fatigue

A range of free resources for more information on staying afloat and

A new website! Welcome

OCT 17, 2010

Hi to you all and sorry for the long silence as I was working on the migration of my website and blog to this new platform (and thank you to my web wizard James Beardmore of Pointy Design for all his hard work). Why the change? Well, first of all I

Why I wanted to study Compassion Fatigue

Stories

- New case manager (8 months on the job) spends 2 days sobbing while on a dream vacation in even though she loves her job
- Experienced case manager reveals in supervision that she is exhausted and can't work with a "difficult" client anymore. When asked why she didn't come for help earlier, she starts to cry and says that she expects herself to be able to handle any clinical situation because of her skills and experience
- Receptionist at a mental health agency can't sleep for weeks after a client suicide. She wonders, "Did he try call his worker before he took his life and I was too busy to hear the distress in his voice when I took the call".



Quickie Definitions

Definitions – Compassion Fatigue, Vicarious Trauma, Moral Distress, Burnout



Compassion Fatigue

- ▶ “The Cost of Caring for others in emotional pain”
Charles Figley, Compassion Fatigue
 - ▶ A deep erosion of our compassion, of our ability to tolerate strong emotions/difficult stories in others
 - ▶ Evident in helpers’ professional and personal life
- 



Who does it affect?

- ▶ Anyone who cares – Occupational Hazard
 - ▶ 20% Nurses said Mental Health had made their workload difficult to handle in previous month (Stat Canada 2005)
 - ▶ 8 out of 10 Nurses accessed EAP, twice as high as any other profession (ONA2006)
- 

Vicarious Trauma

- Also called Secondary Trauma
- Repeated exposure to difficult stories that changes our view of the world forever (Saakvitne & Pearlman)
- Can cause nightmares, difficulty getting rid of certain images, an intense preoccupation with a particular story or event we've been exposed to.



Vicarious Trauma in Attorneys

Compared with mental health providers and social services workers, attorney's surveyed:

- ▶ demonstrated significantly higher levels of secondary traumatic stress and burnout.
- ▶ This difference appeared related to the attorneys' higher caseloads and lack of supervision around trauma and its effects.
- ▶ Vicarious Trauma in Attorneys, 24 Pace L. Rev. 245 (2003)



Vicarious Trauma in Judges

- Majority of judges (63%) reported one or more symptoms that they identified as work related vicarious trauma experiences.
- Female judges were more likely to report internalizing difficulties, while judges with more experience reported higher levels of externalizing/hostility symptoms.

Vicarious Trauma in Judges: The Personal Challenge of Dispensing Justice by Peter Jaffe, Claire Crooks et al. 2003

Cumulative exposure

- ▶ It has been estimated that in the first year of police service, the average police officer is exposed to around 12 critical incidents; by mid-career, 150 and by post-retirement, an average of 250 duty related critical incidents during their careers.

*Police Officers and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder by J. Angeles
(Toronto: Occupational Disease Policy & Research Branch, August
2010)*

Moral Distress

“[...] happens when there are inconsistencies between a [helper's] beliefs and his or her actions in practice” (Baylis 2000)

➤ “when policies or routines conflict with [...] beliefs about [...] patient care”
(Mitchell 2000)

Burnout

- “Physical & emotional exhaustion as a result of prolonged stress and frustration” (Stamm)
- Depleted ability to cope with work demands
- Feel powerless to achieve goals
- Can happen in any occupation
- World view not necessarily changed, can be cured instantly by quitting or changing your job

What Are CF Warning Signs?



Physical Signs of Compassion Fatigue

- Exhaustion
- Insomnia
- Headaches
- Increased susceptibility to illness
- Somatization and hypochondria

Behavioural Signs and Symptoms

Increased use of alcohol and drugs	Anger and Irritability	Avoidance of clients
Absenteeism	Impaired ability to make decisions	Problems in personal relationships
Attrition	Compromised care for clients	Forgetfulness



Forgetfulness

- Impact on memory result from the cortisol on the brain cells (neurons)
- Brain function slows down and the most affected part is the hippocampus where short-term memory is stored.
- As a result people start to work more slowly and less efficiently – output is diminished

Is work Killing You? – Dr. David Posen



Psychological signs and symptoms

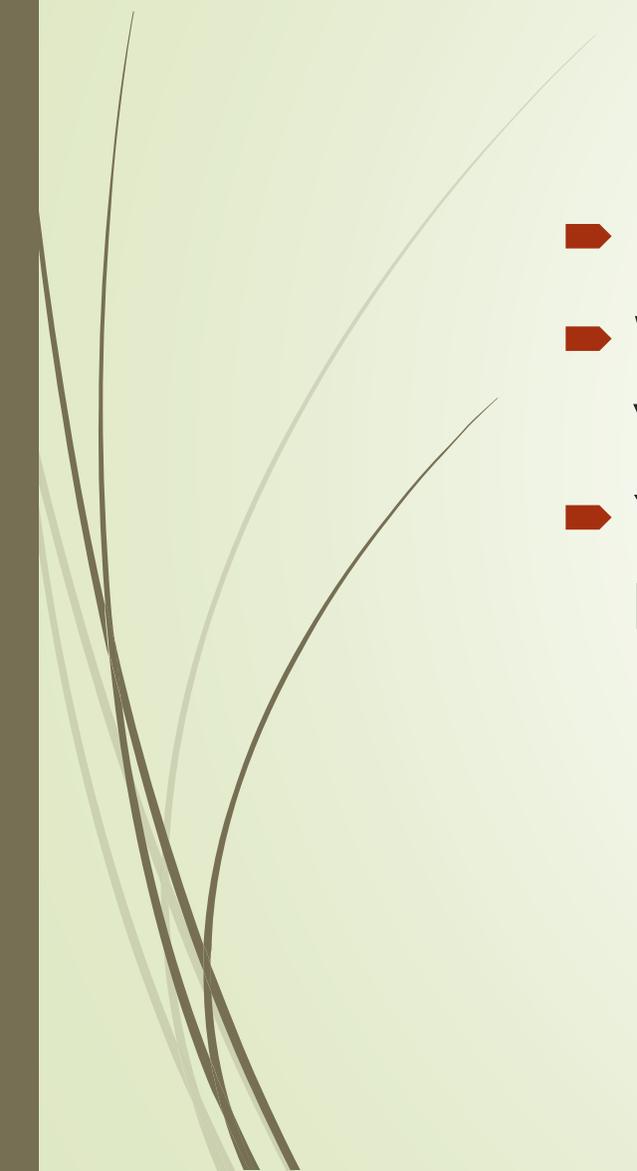
- Distancing
- Negative self image
- Depression
- Reduced ability to feel sympathy and empathy
- Cynicism
- Resentment
- Dread of working with certain clients
- Feeling professional helplessness
- Depersonalization
- Disruption of world view



Psychological signs and symptoms

- Hypersensitivity to emotionally charged stimuli
 - Insensitivity to emotional material
 - Increased sense of personal vulnerability
 - Loss of hope
 - Difficulty separating personal and professional lives
- Sources: Saakvitne (1996), Figley (1995), Gentry, Baranowsky & Dunning (1997), Van Dernoot Lipsky, 2008.

Emotional Numbing

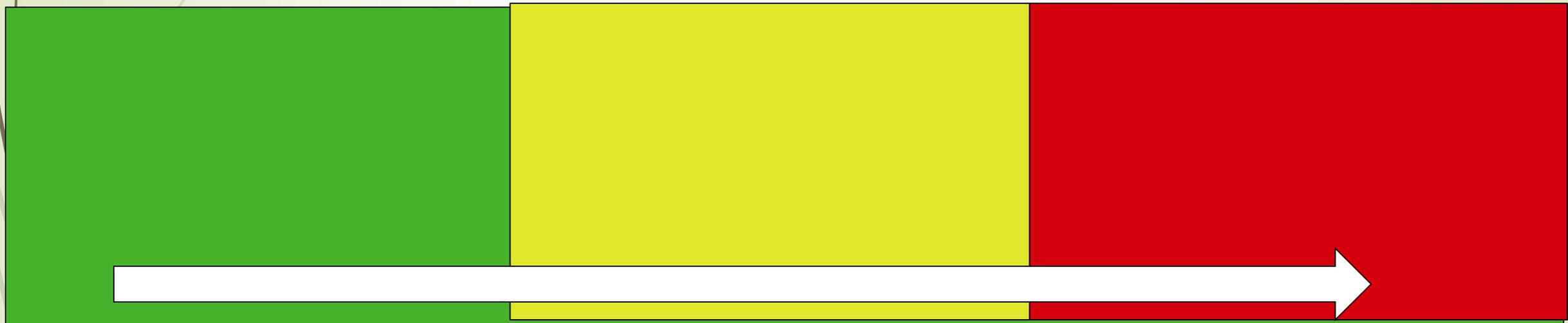


- ▶ “There is no such thing as selective emotional numbing”
- ▶ When you numb yourself to bad emotions you also dull your experience of good feelings too
- ▶ Yet this is a primary defence for many fatigued professionals and caregivers

Gifts of Imperfection Brene Brown



The Warning Signs Continuum





Why do we have to learn about addressing Compassion Fatigue?

- Mental Health Professionals, experts in self care – we teach it to our clients!!
- Many of us have access to an EAP program that we can go when we need help due to these issues stemming from our work



Invulnerability Culture

- ▶ We've seen it all and it doesn't affect us anymore.
 - ▶ The new (younger) workers are soft; you should have seen the way it used to be around here!
- 



Reframing the Burned Out Staff

- What would happen that instead of condemning our cynical, negative colleague we recognize them as being a deeply fatigued caring individual?



Reframing the Burned Out Staff

“In order to burn out, a person needs to have been on fire at one time”.

Ayala Pines



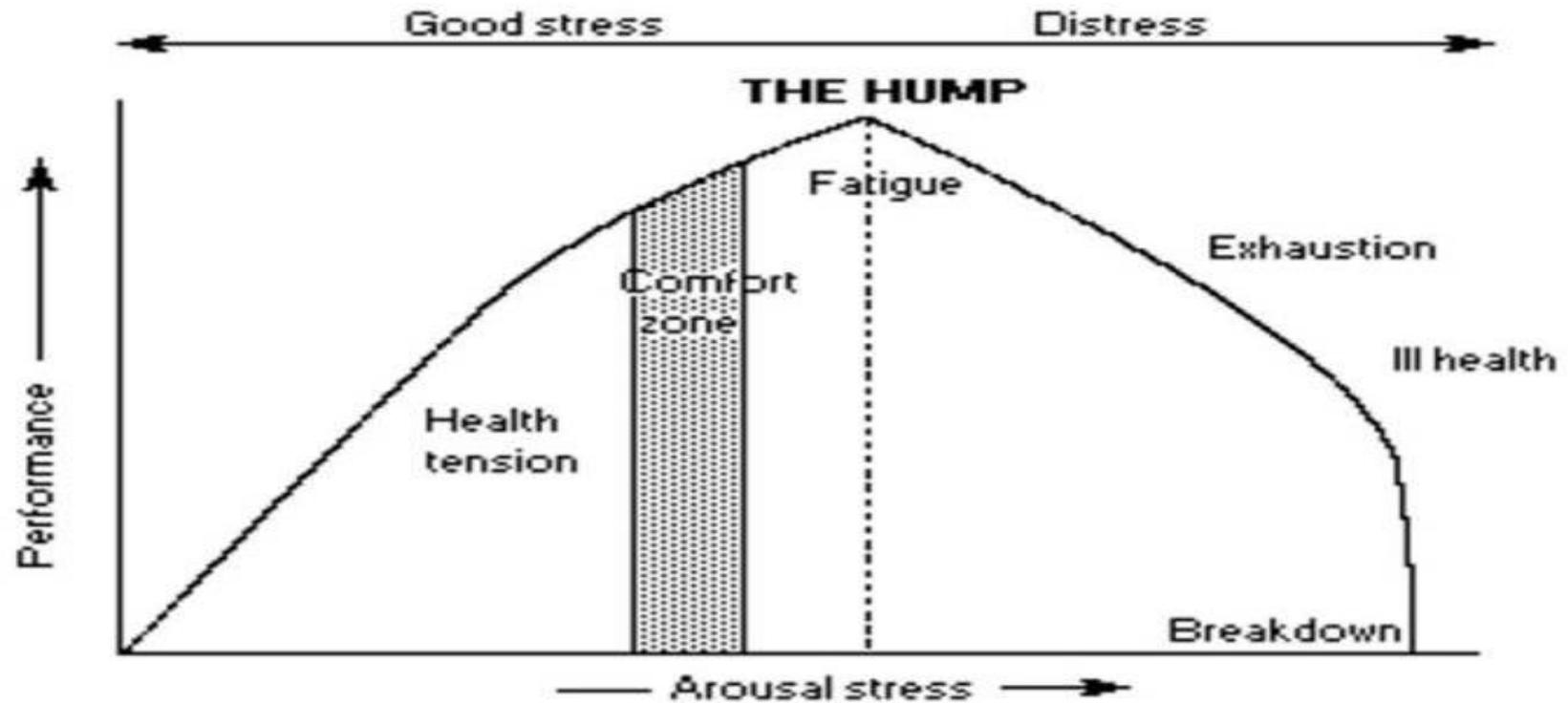


Overworking – Hallmark of CF

- “Many of us might believe, secretly or not so secretly that our commitment to our work may be measured by our willingness to martyr ourselves.”

Laura van Dernoot Lipsky – Trauma Stewardship

THE HUMAN FUNCTION CURVE



NO ONE BEATS THE CURVE!

The Human Function Curve (*Nixon, P: Practitioner 1979)



Dr. Posen's 5 Lessons of the Human Function Curve

1. Be Aware
2. Don't cross the line too often.
3. Don't get out too far.
4. Don't stay out there too long.
5. When you are out past the hump working longer and/or harder is *counterproductive*.

From "Is your work killing you?"



Loss of Insight

- “When we keep ourselves numbed out on adrenaline or overworking or cynicism, we don’t have an accurate internal gauge of ourselves and our needs.”

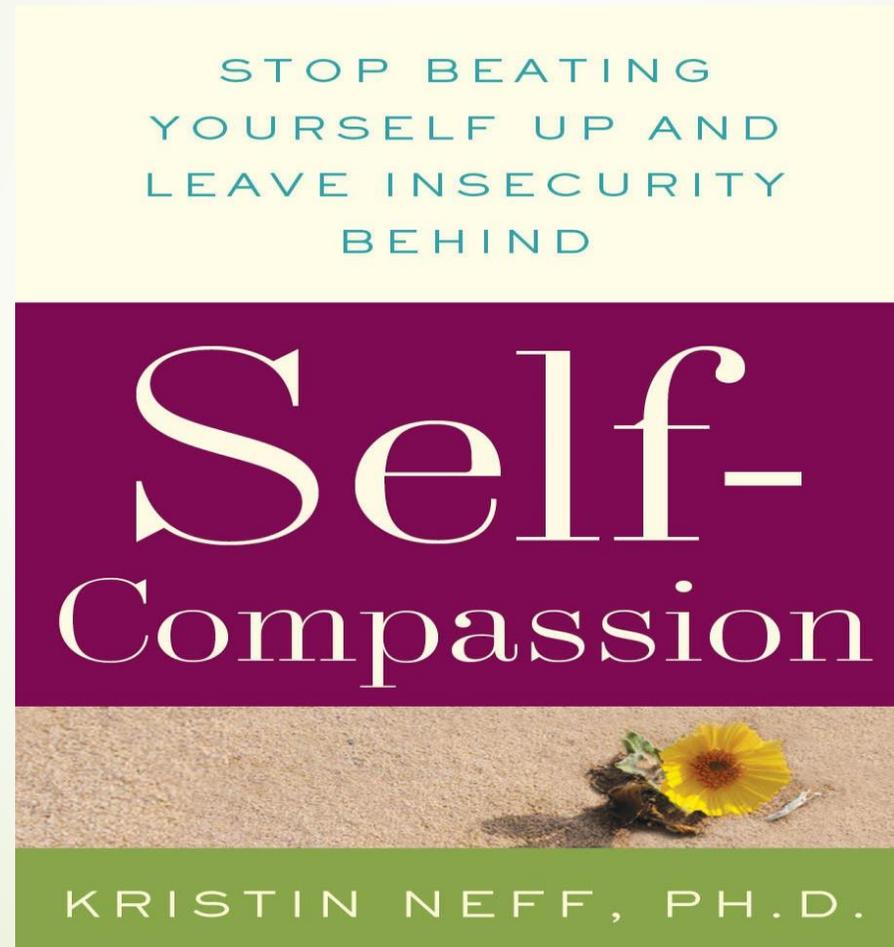
Laura van Dernoot Lipsky
Trauma Stewardship





Self Compassion by Kristin Neff

www.self-compassion.org





Self Compassion

- All suffering is worthy of compassion
 - What do we say to ourselves when we have made a mistake? When we are disappointed with ourselves?
 - Would you speak to your best friend this way?
- 



Self-Compassion- 3 Components (Neff 2003)

Self-Kindness vs. Self Judgement

- Treating self with care and understanding vs. harsh judgement
- Actively soothing and comforting self
- “We can soothe and comfort our own pain. We don’t have to wait until we are perfect, until life goes exactly as we want it to. We don’t need to others to respond with care and compassion in order to feel worthy of love”. (Neff 2011).



Self-Compassion Components

Common Humanity Vs. Isolation

- Seeing own experience as part of larger human experience not isolated (this could only happen to me) or abnormal
- Recognizing that life is imperfect (and so are we)
- “When our sense of self-worth and belonging is grounded in simply being human, we can’t be rejected or cast out by others. Our humanity can never be taken away from us no matter how far we fall”. Neff 2011



Self-Compassion Components

Mindfulness vs. Over-identification

- Allows us to “be” with our painful feelings as they are
 - Avoids extremes of suppressing or running away with painful feelings
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Self-Compassion Myths

- Self-Compassion is weak, complacent, passive
 - Self-Compassion is self-indulgent
 - Self Compassion is making excuses for oneself
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Self-Compassion Myths

Self Compassion undermines motivation

- Most people believe that self-criticism is an effective motivator
- Motivation by self-criticism comes from fear of being worthless
- Motivation with self-compassion comes from the desire for health and wellness
- Self compassion provides the emotionally supportive environment needed for change



Physiological Underpinnings

Self-Criticism Underpinnings

- Threat Defence System
- Cortisol and Adrenaline (Flight and Fight)
- When you self critical, your brain (amygdala) can't differentiate between an inside (self-judgement) attack and an outside (others) attack



Physiological Underpinnings

Self-Compassion Underpinnings

- Mammalian care-giving system
- Oxytocin, DHEA
- Oxytocin-hormone of love increases with connections, breastfeeding, bonding
- DHEA-de-Hydro-epiandrosterone -produced in adrenals-most abundant circulating steroid in body-hormone of joy



Research on Self Compassion

- Using Self Compassion Scale (Neff 2003)
 - Reductions in Anxiety, depression, stress, rumination, perfectionism, shame and negative body image
 - Increases in Life satisfaction, happiness, connectedness, self-confidence, optimism, curiosity and gratitude
 - More effective coping with divorce, combat trauma and chronic pain
- 



Research - Self-Compassion Linked with Motivation

- ▶ Personal standards can be just as high, just not as upset when we don't meet them
 - ▶ More likely to try again when we fail (we are still lovable, we still deserve to live our best life, we don't have to fear our recriminations)
- 



Research - Self Compassion Linked with Personal Accountability

- More conscientiousness
 - Take greater responsibility over past mistakes – we can own that we are fallible humans
 - More likely to apologise, forgive others
 - Greater compassion and empathy for others
- 



Self-Compassion for Helping Professionals

- ▶ When we recognize how difficult it is to be there for people who are struggling, and comfort ourselves in the process, we are able to be stronger, more stable and resilient when supporting others in their suffering
- ▶ Self compassion is a way of emotionally recharging our batteries
- ▶ Self compassionate care givers are more able to help others while guarding against boundary violations and vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue



Self-Compassion for Helping Professionals

- When caregivers have self-compassion they are more likely to engage in concrete acts of self-care
- They'll stop to care for their own emotional needs, recognizing how hard it is to deal with such a high level of suffering on a daily basis
- Hardships of a care giver are just as valid and worthy of compassion as the hardships of being a trauma victim...intensity and level of debilitation notwithstanding...

All pain and suffering deserves to be held in the warm embrace of compassion so that healing can occur



**"If your compassion does not
include yourself, it is incomplete."
— Siddhārtha Gautama**



Ideas to Cultivate Self-Compassion

- ▶ Self Compassion Mantra

This is a moment of suffering (*Mindfulness*)

Suffering is a part of life (*Human condition*)

May I be kind to myself in this moment (*Intention for self compassion*)

May I give myself the compassion I need

Ideas to Cultivate Self-Compassion

- ▶ Practice gentle loving touch





Soothing Touch

- Soothing our own pain – taps into the mammalian caregiving system
- Releases oxytocin
- Increase feelings of trust, calm, safety and connectedness
- Can counteract increase in blood cortisol
- Facilitates warmth and compassion for ourselves

Kristin Neff 2012



Ideas to Cultivate Self-Compassion

- ▶ Mindfulness practice, noting when you are suffering, being self critical, when you are feeling reactive (anger)
 - ▶ Take a moment to close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths. Ask yourself what am I feeling? Give yourself compassionate self talk, “this is hard, I’m feeling really drained, or I’m feeling angry”
- 



Ideas to Cultivate Self-Compassion

- ▶ **Prepare for the “difficult” client or appointment**

- ▶ **Use Metta phrases**

May I be safe

May I be happy

May I be peaceful

May I look after myself with joy

- ▶ **Then alternate these with Metta for your client**

May client be safe

May client be happy

May client be peaceful

May client look after herself with joy



AND EVERY DAY, THE WORLD WILL
DRAG YOU BY THE HAND, YELLING
"THIS IS IMPORTANT! AND THIS IS
IMPORTANT! AND THIS IS IMPORTANT!
YOU NEED TO WORRY ABOUT THIS! AND
THIS! AND THIS!"

AND EACH DAY, IT'S UP TO YOU, TO
YANK YOUR HAND BACK, PUT IT ON
YOUR HEART AND SAY "NO. THIS IS
WHAT'S IMPORTANT."

butterflies and pebbles

Thank You

