

Mindful Self-Compassion for Imagine

8 Week Course

By Ela Compton and Jon Walker

Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) is an empirically-supported, 8-week training program designed to cultivate the skill of self-compassion. Based on the groundbreaking research of Kristin Neff and the clinical expertise of Christopher Germer, MSC teaches core principles and practices that enable participants to respond to difficult moments in their lives with kindness, care and understanding.

The three key components of self-compassion are self-kindness, a sense of common humanity, and balanced, mindful awareness. Kindness opens our hearts to suffering, so we can give ourselves what we need. Common humanity opens us to our essential interrelatedness, so that we know we aren't alone. Mindfulness opens us to the present moment, so we can accept our experience with greater ease. Together they comprise a state of warm-hearted, connected presence.

Self-compassion can be learned by anyone, even those who didn't receive enough affection in childhood or who feel uncomfortable when they are good to themselves. It's a courageous attitude that stands up to harm, including the harm that we unwittingly inflict on ourselves through self-criticism, self-isolation, or self-absorption. Self-compassion provides emotional strength and resilience, allowing us to admit our shortcomings, motivate ourselves with kindness, forgive ourselves when needed, relate wholeheartedly to others, and be more authentically ourselves. Rapidly expanding research demonstrates that self-compassion is strongly associated with emotional wellbeing, less anxiety, depression and stress, maintenance of healthy habits such as diet and exercise, and satisfying personal relationships. And it's easier than you think.

After participating in this course, you'll be able to:

- Practice self-compassion in daily life
- Understand the empirically-supported benefits of self-compassion
- Motivate yourself with kindness rather than criticism
- Handle difficult emotions with greater ease
- Transform challenging relationships, old and new
- Manage caregiver fatigue
- Practice the art of savoring and self-appreciation

What To Expect

Program activities include meditation, short talks, experiential exercises, group discussion, and home practices. MSC is a workshop rather than a retreat. The goal is for participants to directly experience self-compassion and learn practices that evoke self-compassion in daily life.

MSC is primarily a compassion training program rather than mindfulness training, although mindfulness is the foundation of self-compassion. MSC is also not psychotherapy insofar as the emphasis of MSC is on building emotional resources rather than addressing old wounds. Beneficial change occurs naturally as we develop the capacity to be with ourselves in a kinder, more compassionate way.

Compassion is a positive, energizing emotion. However, it is said that “love reveals everything unlike itself.” While learning self-compassion, some difficult emotions may arise. MSC teachers are committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for this process to unfold, and to making the journey enjoyable for everyone.

MSC includes 8 weekly sessions of 2.5 hours each, in addition to a 4-hour retreat and a 2h long introductory session. Prior to registering, participants should plan to attend every session and practice mindfulness and self-compassion at least 30 minutes per day throughout the program.

Prerequisites

Everyone is welcome, including people of all backgrounds and identities. No previous experience with mindfulness or meditation is required to attend MSC. Participants will be asked to provide some personal information when they register for this course to help teachers determine their safety and readiness for this kind of emotional work.

Recommended reading

The following book is recommended as a companion to the MSC course: *The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook*, by Kristin Neff and Christopher Germer (2018).

