

Loving ☺

Self-Compassion and Self Kindness – Self-compassion is a scientifically proven technique for psychological healing. During our journey, it is important that we meet ourselves with love, gentleness, kindness, patience, humor and respect. A deep level of self-exploration takes enormous courage and self-compassion is an important component for safe processing. Dr. K Neff speaks of our hearts being “hot with suffering.” Clients can speak of feelings so intense that one’s very sanity is questioned. Remember, there is honor and bravery in being a survivor. Throughout the day a prevailing awareness of what we are thinking and feeling toward ourselves is a priceless skill and beautifully helpful. We take time to “**check in**” with the parts of ourselves that might feel frightened, abandoned or confused and meet ourselves with loving kindness. These parts of ourselves embody many of our life stages and experiences, as different patterns often develop over time from growing up in dysfunction and living in patterns and beliefs that do not support us. Many people have lived robotically or dissociated for many years. As we process and heal our trauma, we discover ways to become almost like an internal motivational speaker to ourselves, or as many say... we become the “**loving parent**” to ourselves that many of us never had. Discovering our “inner family” is an astounding and comforting experience, and having an understanding of the skills of self-parenting and self-compassion are essential for our inner parts to trust and feel safe. Over time, we become our “true self.” The writer has the “Cozy Cottage Inner Child” audio from Pgs. 78 & 79 of the ACA Loving Parent Guidebook on her web page: jeannietoper.com.

Hope. It is helpful to think that there is “still a world out there,” and if we trust the process and “do the next right thing” with self-kindness, patience and the willingness to learn we will be able to handle life events with gentleness and courage. Keep **hope** on your mind when you are able to do so.

Mindfulness – Mindfulness is “paying attention.” Yes, it is grand to be able to enjoy the beauty and goodness around us, which is the “being in the present” aspect of mindfulness, but there are other components of mindfulness also. Primarily, we learn to pay attention to our thoughts – and especially to what we think about ourselves. Kind self-talk or affirmations are helpful to reframe these unhelpful cognitions. Our thoughts and feeling are our teachers for the deep work, but when engaging in daily life we remind ourselves that our thoughts lead to emotions and emotions lead to actions, so our affirmations can keep us from spiraling downward. Discover your own helpful thoughts and “**kindness phrases**” to visit throughout the day. Suggestions for kindness phrases to practice thinking might be: “Everything is ok,” “I will believe in myself no matter what,” “This too shall pass,” “I am perfect the way I am,” “Challenging days are a part of life,” etc. Discover and create your own kind thoughts. Another powerful aspect of mindfulness is paying attention to our bodies. Remember to remind yourself all day long: “Lower your shoulders, relax your jaw, relax your arms, breathe and think a few positive and kind thoughts. Learning to “be in the peace and the calm,” and knowing how to relax is a gift. (Thus, the concept of “don’t just do something, sit there. ☺.) Gentle rest. Breathe. Calm.

Additionally, individual discovery regarding spiritual endeavors can be helpful for finding peace throughout our journey. Concepts such as seeking greater consciousness or inner truths, a knowing presence or greater purpose can be helpful. Also, meditation, or quieting oneself and tuning in to greater truths and calm can be powerful approaches to healing our wounds and avoiding dissociation.

Process Unresolved Grief “What we won’t be with won’t let us be.” Our pasts live in us. Unresolved grief leads to depression, health issues, anxiety, failed relationships, and continued sensitivity and emotional pain. (Consider reading the Book: The Body Keeps Score, or see IFS R. Schwartz videos).

Processing the past and being present to our unresolved grief is the primary component for healing trauma. Once felt, the old memories soften and freedom ensues. It is a powerful challenge, and it can be extremely difficult and exhausting, but we will find the support we need. The fellowship, meetings, the literature, therapy, (EMDR, and IFS), workshops, study groups...we do this together. As our healing proceeds our grief will soften. Overtime we discover that we are less activated by challenging life events. There is a peace, confidence and softness around people who have “done the work.”

Our unresolved grief is related to our past experiences and they subsequently create the **underlying beliefs** that we have about ourselves and about life. Beliefs such as feeling unloved, unworthy, unsafe, abandoned, unimportant, etc. are common. ACA literature for inner child work is a powerful psychodynamic tool for self-exploration and self-compassion. The writer suggests the Loving Parent Guidebook.(Amazon.) Looking within takes courage, but it is important for becoming our “true selves.” Discovering our inner beliefs is the groundwork for therapy. (Consider viewing the Youtube of Dr. Aaron Beck. It is the one that is 1:44 minutes. He is considered the father of Cognitive Behavior Therapy.) Also explore for sleep: “Self Love Meditation Reprogram Your Mind” Jessica Heslop(sleep), and consider the works of :Dr.Kristen Neff, and Dr. R.Schwartz. AdultChildren.org (name change in process.)

The Gift of Tears – Life can be very difficult. Crying is an excellent release for anxiety and depression. When a person feels sad, shaky or sickish – often getting under a blanket and “having a cry” will release the anxiety and assist in healing the psychological wounds. Even just a short cry can improve mood and decrease anxiety even 100% at times. Teddy bears can be a comfort as well. ☺

Communication – Unfortunately most people have never had healthy communication taught to them or modeled for them. It is essential that we learn to communicate in order to get our needs met...to be able to set boundaries, be heard and understood, ask for behavior changes, etc. Unexpressed thoughts and experiences lead to rumination (worry) and resentments, and resentments subsequently lead to other harmful behaviors such as isolation, depression, drug use, damaged relationships, a continuation of unhelpful patterns, mental illness etc. Consider looking into the work of Howard Rosenberg which is called Non-Violent Communication. He studied under Dr. Carl Rogers. **NVC** is powerful and life changing knowledge and skill. There are many workshops online. (Judging others is also a way to avoid our feelings.)

Friendships / Relationships: Claudia Black once said that she limits her time with people whose ways are not conducive to her feeling “valued and safe.” It is wise to develop friendships with people who understand authenticity, understanding and kindness. Over-attachment, monitoring relationships and “trying too hard” comes from our never having our needs met. It comes from a part of us that needs love and attention and we learn to give that to ourselves when situations arrive. Action is helpful for safe friendships, but also a helpful affirmation here could be: “Life will give me the people and experiences that I need.” But,compassion from others can be beautiful and healing. There is no greater gift than when someone listens to us without judgement. When calling someone we do not need to necessarily need to know what to say... Just saying “I’m just reaching out” is attractive and endearing. It is helpful to remember also that people love differently and personality differences are a factor.