

Counselor's Corner February 15, 2021

The Importance of Self-Compassion

When things go wrong, some of us will be able to support ourselves with warmth and self-compassion. However, many of us tend to do quite the opposite. Self-compassion is a concept that counteracts the adverse beliefs we have about ourselves. As with anything else about the human psyche, the overly criticizing mindset is a multilayered phenomenon. One of the most common causes are the beliefs and values we have developed during our childhood.

The most vicious aspect of self-criticism is that it mostly occurs out of our conscious awareness. We can access the negative beliefs we have about ourselves, but we rarely do it. Even more seldomly do we question these core ideas. This elusive nature of self-criticism is one more reason why we should wholeheartedly practice self-compassion.

Psychologist **Kristin Neff** was the first to measure self-compassion. She explained that having compassion for oneself means offering self-warmth and unconditional acceptance. Neff outlines three components of self-compassion:

- *Self-Kindness*: The ability to be supportive, kind, and forgiving toward ourselves.
- *Common Humanity*: Realizing that part of the nature of human existence is to experience pain, loss, failure, and make mistakes. We are not alone in our struggles; there is always someone else somewhere who has been through the same (or worse).
- *Mindfulness*: Practicing awareness of our experiences without judging them. Self-compassion is about the acceptance of upsetting thoughts without letting them overtake our entire life.

Developing self-compassion takes time and practice. Be a kind and supportive parent to yourself. Teach your inner child (and your self-criticizing adult) to be compassionate to the person you are bound to spend your entire life with – yourself. Passing this wisdom of self-love and self-care on to our children can help them learn early in life the importance of self-acceptance. Learning to live with flaws and faults is part of the imperfection of being human. Yet, we can love and accept ourselves as such, just the way we are.

Source: Happiness.com

