

I was once afraid of  
people saying 'Who  
does she think she is?'  
Now I have the courage  
to stand and say "This is  
who I am."

OPRAH WINFREY



[midliferambler.com](http://midliferambler.com)

# Self Compassion

*The privilege of a  
lifetime of being  
who you are*

I remember that  
I am enough

Dotun Ogunyemi, MD

# Objectives

- 1: Describe components of self compassion
- 2: Become aware of how self compassion can improve our wellbeing, learning & growth
- 3: Use reframing to improve self compassion in self, learners & peers



Unlike self-criticism, which asks if you're good enough, self-compassion asks, what's good for you?

Kristin Neff

LaWhimsy//Monday Mantra

# Self Compassion Survey

Self kindness

Common  
humanity

Mindfulness

Self Judgement

Isolation

Overidentification

# Compassion

- Intimate **awareness** of **suffering**, by oneself & others, with the wish to **alleviate** it
- **Emotion** evoked in us by suffering of others. Being with someone who's suffering, hoping that suffering will diminish or end, doing something to alleviate suffering
- **Dukkha** is suffering, pain, unpleasantness, or unsatisfactoriness - the **struggle** we all face in life. Compassion entails the **courage** to face dukkha, the **wisdom** to gaze into it deeply, the **resolve** to respond to it in a way that brings **relief**
- Has 2 primary dimensions: psychology of engagement, & alleviation.
- **Engagement:** sensitivity and awareness to suffering. It notices, turns toward, and engages with suffering. It practices acceptance rather than avoidance.
- **Alleviation:** motivation, commitment, wisdom, skill, & capacity to take **effective action** in the presence of suffering.
- May direct steps to **reduce suffering** and its causes, or just being in the presence of tough emotions with **compassionate acceptance**.
- “There but for fortune go I.”

# Self Compassion

- Self-compassion is simply **compassion directed inward**
- When having a difficult time, fail, or notice something you don't like about yourself. Instead of just ignoring your pain with a “stiff upper lip” mentality, you stop to tell yourself “**this is really difficult right now,**” **how can I comfort and care for myself in this moment?**
- Instead of mercilessly judging & criticizing yourself for various inadequacies or shortcomings, self-compassion means you are **kind & understanding when confronted with personal failings** – after all, who ever said you were supposed to be perfect?
- You make changes because you **care about self**, not because you are worthless or unacceptable as you are.
- Having compassion for yourself means that you **honor & accept your humanness**. Things will not always go the way you want them to.
- You will encounter frustrations, losses will occur, you will make mistakes, bump up against your limitations, **fall short** of your ideals.

# 3 Elements of Self Compassion

*Self Kindness vs.*  
**Self Judgement**

- Warm & understanding toward self
- vs. Saying harsh or mean words to self

*Common Humanity*  
**vs: Isolation**

- Everyone feels this way sometimes
- vs. This only ever happens to me

*Mindfulness vs:*  
**Overidentification**

- Taking things in perspective
- vs focusing on 'what is wrong with me?'



# WHAT IS SELF-COMPASSION?

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## Mindfulness

Self-compassion involves recognising when we're stressed or struggling without being judgmental or over-reacting.



## Self-Kindness

Being supportive and understanding towards ourselves when we're having a hard time, rather than being harshly self-critical.



## Connectedness

Remembering that everyone makes mistakes and experiences difficulties at times. We are not alone!

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# Self Compassion

- With self-kindness, we soothe and **nurture self** when confronting our pain rather than getting angry when life falls short of our ideals
- **Acceptance** & **sympathy** when our problems stem from forces beyond our control, such as losing our job or getting in a car accident,
- Our **inner conversation** is **gentle & encouraging** rather than harsh & belittling. Clearly acknowledge problems and shortcomings, without judgment, so we can do what's necessary to help self.
- Remember that **every human suffers**, failure and imperfection are normal. We can't always get what we want.
- Mindfulness involves **turning toward our painful thoughts & emotions** and seeing them as they are—without suppression or avoidance nor overly identify with negative thoughts or feelings
- **Mental space** provided by a mindful approach to our difficult feelings, allows for greater clarity, perspective, and equanimity
- Being mindful of our suffering, when things go awry **before problem solving**



# What self compassion is not:

**Self-compassion:** recognizes the *related experiences* of self and others, provides “mental space” to recognize the broader human context of one’s experience and to put things in greater *perspective*

**Self-pity:** egocentric feelings of *separation* from others; *exaggerated personal suffering*; wrapped up in own *emotional drama*. *Does not step back* from situation to adopt balanced or objective perspective.

**Self-compassion:** provides a powerful motivating force for *growth & change*, while also providing the safety needed to see *the self clearly without fear of self-condemnation*.

**Self indulgence:** excessive or *unrestrained gratification* of one's own appetites, desires, or whims. giving yourself too much pleasure or *self-flagellation*. can't face difficult truths about yourself because you are so *afraid of hating self* if you do

**Self-compassion:** associated with more emotional *resilience*, *accurate self-concepts*, *caring* relationship behavior, as well as *less narcissism* and reactive anger than self esteem

**Self-esteem:** our sense of self-worth, perceived value, or how much we like ourselves based on *self-evaluations*.

# Benefits of Self Compassion:



**Greater intrinsic motivation (desire to learn & grow)**

**Less depression, anxiety, & stress**



**Positive emotions generated by embracing negative ones**

**More emotionally connected, accepting, & autonomy-supporting**



**Accepting responsibility**

**More empathy, altruism, perspective-taking, & forgiveness of others**

# Key Features of Self Compassion

- I can be *kind to myself*
- I am part of a common humanity *everyone feels this way sometimes*
- I can be *mindful* of my response to *disappointment* or *negative feedback* and mindful in how I move forward:
  - **Words** spoken in the moment
  - Leaning into but *not overwhelmed* by emotions
  - **Springboard** for resilient action



To accept ourselves  
as we are means to  
value our  
imperfections as  
much as our  
perfections.

# Responses to disappointment or failure

- Self pity response
- Self critical response
- Other critical response
- Self Compassion response

- *A Self compassionate response will most likely **lead to a positive outcome and growth***
- Self compassion allows **vulnerability**, and contributes to **resilience, hope & perseverance**

# Responses to disappointment or failure

- **Self pity:**
- I always get the most amount of criticism from the examiner, it is just not fair
- **Self criticism:**
- I am too distractable to deal with all the details. No wonder I make all these mistakes and my paper is rejected
- **Other critical:**
- The examiners are just too full of themselves. They think they know everything
- **Self compassion:**
- I am overwhelmed by the comments by the examiners, I think I can address them one by one and start with the simplest one first
- Likely to lead to positive outcome and personal growth
- So what, now what, what next, help them look for the next opportunity, find a growth opportunity, maybe this was not meant to be



# What Self Criticism does to you

- Judging yourself *harshly beating*, your self up
- Puts *focus on you*, not the action
- Leads to *over-identification* with the behavior
- Causes *shame* instead of corrective action
- Leads to feelings of *isolation*
- Contributes to *burnout, stress & depression*

# Practicing Coaching Self Compassion

## React

**React:** Mindfully noting your reaction: self pity, self critical, other critical (all three) or self compassion response.

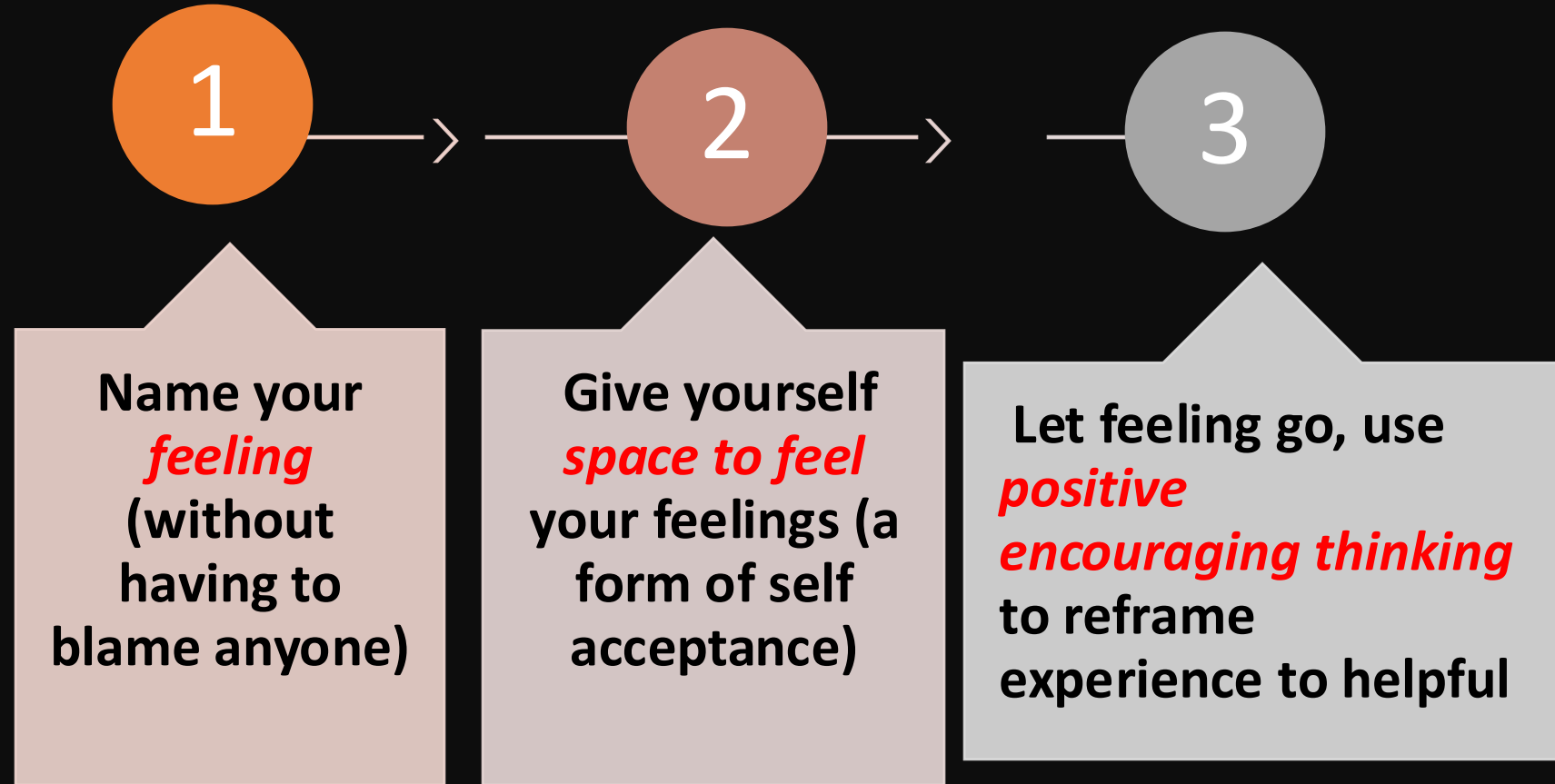
## Reframe

**Reframe without Blame:** Reframe without blame toward self compassion (also has three steps next slide).

## Resilience

**Resilient Action:** May need to call on your creativity to take action, if that is required

# *Reframing* Without Blame”



# FEELINGS & EMOTIONS

## DISCOMFORT

Anxious  
Troubled  
Uncomfortable  
Stunned  
Mixed up  
Unsure  
Stuck  
Hurt  
Frozen  
Desperate



## ANGER

Agitated  
Annoyed  
Raging  
Furious  
Livid  
Bitter  
Fed up  
Irritated  
Mad  
Critical  
Resentful



## FATIGUE

Indifferent  
Bored  
Drained  
Exhausted  
Dull  
Weary  
Powerless  
Dejected  
Listless  
Burned out  
Fatigued

## STRENGTH GRATIFICATION

Dynamic  
Tenacious  
Hardy  
Sure  
Certain  
Unique  
Secure  
Empowered  
Ambitious  
Powerful  
Confident



Cherished  
Befriended  
Appreciated  
Understood  
Commended  
Empowered  
Accepted  
Blessed  
Healed  
Loved  
Saved

# Example scenario: Jane loss

- **Jane applied for the position of executive chief resident**
- She was interviewed by the program director and the interview went very well.
- The program coordinator “leaked” that she was going to be selected
- Jane was excited, she informally informed other residents and worked on a strategic plan
- However, 3 days later another less known resident was announced as the executive chief resident.
- Her program director stated; “You’re a great person, but I decided to go with another resident, sorry”

# Self pity response

- Jane thinks:
- Why do I always have bad luck? This only happens to me. I never get selected for a leadership position. I never get a break. I wanted to help the department instead I have been rejected and discarded like an old rag! I am giving up. I will never bother again to try to help the department. I wish the ground will open up and swallow me. I should just die! My life is so unfair! Why me!



# Self critical response

- Jane thinks:
- Of course, the Program Director does not like me. He must have been secretly making fun of me and mocking me during the interview. Why was I so stupid to believe and listen to the coordinator. I have made a fool of myself in front of all the other residents and faculty. They must all be laughing at me behind my back. How can I face them and hold my head up. Being a resident in this department is a great mistake. I am apparently not good enough to be the executive chief resident. I suck. I hate me now. I am a failure. I am so so stupid. I cant believe that I allowed myself to be played this way.

# Other critical response

- Jane thinks:
- “I cannot believe that my program director will do this to me. He is a creep and a low-life. He has no integrity, and he is unprofessional. He led me along so he can humiliate and embarrass me. And the sneaky program coordinator. She is part of the plot. They are both conspiring to sabotage my academic career and status with my other residents. They should not be running a residency training program. They deserve to be fired. This is a toxic environment!

# Self Compassionate response: Reframe without blame

- Jane thinks...
- “I’m disappointed and sad. I was really hoping to be the executive chief resident because I feel I would be good at it and I have so many great ideas.
- It’s OK to let myself feel sad when something I want doesn’t happen. I don’t need to make these feelings go away.”
- Jane pauses, takes time to feel those feelings. To lean into them.

# Self Compassionate response continued

- (Reframing to more positive thoughts)
- When the sadness begins to lessen, Jane thinks...
- “This didn’t work out, but there’s no way to know if being an executive chief resident would have been wonderful or terrible.
- It’s possible that this is going to open me up for something even better. I wanted to be executive chief resident, but sometimes life has different, maybe even better, plans for us.”

# GROUP ACTIVITY

- **Pair activity #1: Personal application**

- 1. Think of a personal moment of self-judgement, isolation or overidentification following a mistake or failure.
- 2. Share your story with your breakout room partner
- 3. Discuss with each other how to work through the steps of self-compassion and reframing without blame

- **Three-Step process for practicing self-compassion**

- 1. **React:** Mindfully noting your reaction: self-pity, self-critical, other-critical or self-compassion response.
- 2. **Reframe without Blame:** Reframe without blame toward self-compassion.
- 3. **Resilient Action:** May need to call on your creativity to take action, if that is required

- **Process of Reframing without blame**

- 1. Name your feeling (without having to blame anyone)
- 2. Give yourself space to feel your feelings (a form of self-acceptance)
- 3. Use some form of positive and encouraging thinking to reframe the experience to something helpful
- 4. May need to make a plan for resilient action – for example to heal a relationship, face repercussions, or to move on to “what’s next?”



# Debrief

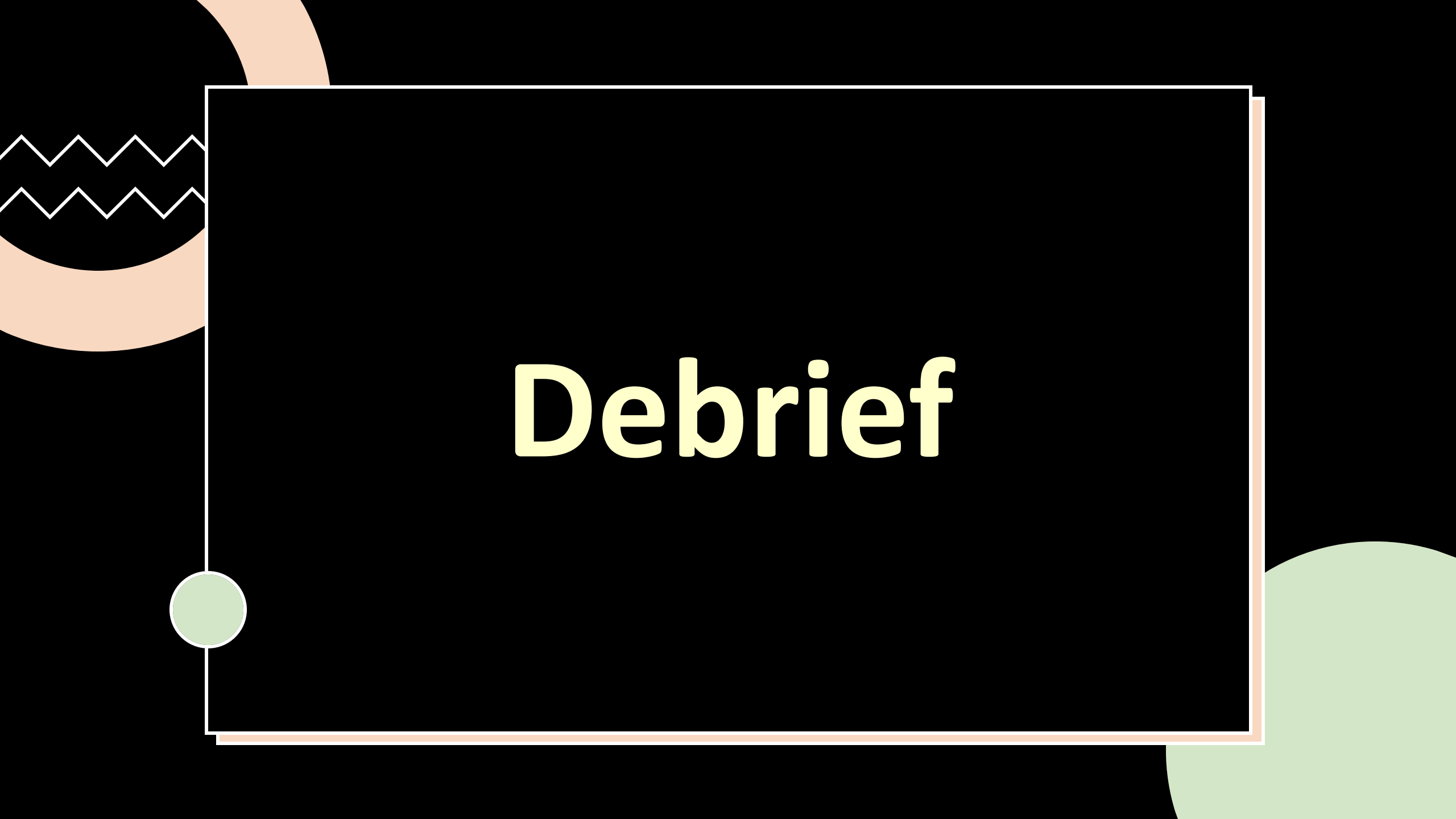


# GROUP ACTIVITY

- **Pair Activity #2:** Coaching learners through the self-compassion process
- Instructions: Read through the following learner scenarios. For each scenario, you are that learner's coach and they reveal to you this story during one of your regular coaching sessions. Work together and discuss what you would say to help this learner move from self-pity, self-criticism and/or others-criticism to self-compassion. Create a statement that illustrates the reframed self-compassion belief that you would like the learner to have after your coaching session with them.
  - 1. Steps to help the learner reframe without blame
    - a. Name the feeling without having to blame anyone – see list below for names of emotions.
    - b. Give them space to feel the feelings (a form of self-acceptance)
    - c. Use some form of positive and encouraging thinking to reframe the experience to something helpful
    - d. List some ideas for resilient action for your learner

# GROUP ACTIVITY

- **Scenario**
- MS3 was doing an abdominal examination on a patient. The patient found it uncomfortable and complained. The resident who was in the room took over, calmed the patient and completed the examination with no further incident.
- The student is distraught; “I can never be good doctor. I have been fired by a patient. Right in front of the resident, how will I ever be able to face her again? I wish I could die and just disappear. I am so lame.” In a review with the resident who was supervising the student, it appears that the student did not watch the patients’ reactions and was focused on deep palpation to try to feel the patient’s liver and kidneys.



# Debrief

You have been criticizing yourself for years and it hasn't worked. Try approving of yourself and see what happens.

LOUISE HAY

*christieinge.com*

“ONE THING IS FOR SURE—YOU WILL MAKE MISTAKES. LEARN TO LEARN FROM THEM. LEARN TO FORGIVE YOURSELF. LEARN TO LAUGH WHEN EVERYTHING FALLS APART BECAUSE, SOMETIMES, IT WILL.”

VIRONIKA TUGALEVA

HAPPIERHUMAN.COM

Having compassion starts and ends with having compassion for all those unwanted parts of ourselves, all those imperfections that we don't even want to look at.

PEMA CHODRON

*christieinge.com*



**Discovering  
mindful self-  
compassion.**

**Short exercise:** person repeats phrases when emotional distress arises in daily life:

**May I be kind to myself**  
(Self-kindness)

**Suffering is a part of life**  
(Common humanity)

**This is a moment of suffering**  
(Mindfulness)

# Finding your compassionate voice

Natural conversation  
with a compassionate  
part of ourselves,  
Distinguish  
*“compassionate self”*  
from the *“inner critic.”*

The compassionate  
self is motivated by  
the intention, *“I  
love you & I don’t  
want you to suffer.”*

New,  
compassionate  
language flows  
from core  
intention.

Supportive language bubble  
into awareness, e.g.  
“You can do it,”  
“Have courage,”  
“May I forgive myself,” or  
“I love you.”

- With self-compassion, you can be kinder to yourself in those moments when you are imperfect.

- This is a connection needed to create a more compassionate environment.

- Share: T

Instead of mercilessly judging and criticizing yourself for various inadequacies or shortcomings, self-compassion means you are kind and understanding when confronted with personal failings.

KRISTIN NEFF

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er to

**“You can search throughout the entire universe  
for someone who is more deserving of your love and affection  
than you are yourself,  
and that person is not to be found anywhere.  
You, yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe,  
deserve your love and affection.”**

*~ Buddha*

