

THE BENEFITS OF SELF-COMPASSION

Self-compassion is the act of feeling compassion and being compassionate towards oneself. Compassion derives from the Latin word "compassio" which means feeling someone's suffering, or being in someone else's shoes.

Self-compassion is the process of acting towards ourselves in the same way we would do to others that we love and care about.

Using a kind and warm attitude towards ourselves can help us in making better decisions, and can also improve the quality of our lives and relationships.

The way we communicate with ourselves, our self-talk, can have a great impact on our emotional health and wellbeing. Having a caring and understanding voice towards ourselves can help us move from a negative inner critical voice to a gentle and more supportive one.

Negative self-talk creates an unproductive state of mind, and causes us to react to circumstances. Instead, a self-compassionate approach relieves anxiety and opens up to possibilities, higher optimism, greater happiness, more motivation, and increased curiosity and learning.

Dr. Kristin Neff, a pioneer researcher on self-compassion, identifies three components of the concept: sense of kindness, care and understanding for yourself versus judgement; sense of common humanity versus isolation; and sense of mindfulness versus over-identification.

Our common humanity is the understanding that unpleasant feelings and suffering are universal, and part of the human experience. Recognizing our common humanity leads to self-compassion and helps us move forward and consider that we are all human beings, living similar experiences.

Over-identification is the act of engaging excessively with thoughts and feelings, rather than acknowledging them and moving on.

Being compassionate means that we want to act in a way to end or eliminate pain in others and ourselves. It involves being in a state of mind where we look to the world, others, and ourselves with thoughts of concern, kindness, and courage.

When dealing with traumatic experiences we tend to adopt a threat-focused mindset, which is activated when we detect and need to respond quickly to threats or avoid them. The compassionate mindset, on the other hand, is based on understanding and caring, and it is more likely to activate the soothing system – which helps to regulate our nervous system.

Applying the compassionate mindset increases our well-being. When we are kinder and understanding towards ourselves, we can tone down the fight-or-flight response and bring ourselves back to a sense of safety and regulation. Because the compassionate mind is not a critical mind, and does not apply right-and-wrong judgement, it creates an opportunity for self-reflection and self-growth through wisdom and strength.

Here is a compilation of phrases you can use to improve your self-compassion:

- I am not my thoughts.
- I am worthy of love, care, and support.
- I accept myself as I am: I embrace both my strengths and weaknesses.
- I might not be good at this right now, but I am growing, and I am improving.

Whenever your mind starts to enter into a self-blaming or shaming mode, remember that you have your resource of self-compassion and self-love. Reframing your thoughts can relieve pain and feelings of inadequacy, and experiencing a sense of common humanity helps us to feel less isolated and alone.

Livia Bastos Souza, MBA, BSc, CW/SSW, Counsellor



AS SOON AS IT GETS DARKER

As soon as it starts getting darker in Autumn, I feel the need to curl up and process. If I don't do some radical self-care, then I find the time is especially gloomy. Then the leaves start to change and I gain enjoyment from the colours and the raking of the leaves which I have always enjoyed! Each person reacts to this time period differently, so each person may need a different remedy. Some depart to warmer climates. Other turn on the lights quicker and try to watch/listen to encouraging things. Some need to check in with their doctors,



counsellor, religious/spiritual leaders, or all of the above.

Take the time to come up with a plan that works for you. What brings meaning to you as each season changes? How do you take care of your own needs? Or are you expecting others to meet your needs? We are all dependent and independent in some ways. No one is an island nor are we co-dependent unless... Learn about yourself and your needs and start working towards meeting them. Some will help you on this journey, others will be a hindrance. Focus on your safety and well-being as a priority while remembering others have those same rights.

Explore your emotions. Are you angrier, more irritable, sad, sweeter, or happier during certain seasons? Pay attention to your thoughts and feelings and try to work through the issues that plague you. Try to get a better understanding of yourself and others you have to deal with. Focus on strengthening and encouraging yourself to be the best person you can be. We make mistakes and have to correct them as everybody does but we have to pick ourselves up and go on. Heal, renew, and restore. This is our choice.

Jacynth Fennell, PhD, Counsellor

STOP PUSHING AWAY YOUR FEELINGS

We all tend to avoid uncomfortable feelings and thoughts. We do this in many ways. Some people like to keep themselves busy with their work and school or engage in different activities. In counseling this is called coping or distraction, which is our body's normal way to get over stress. Have you ever thought about what “distraction” does? Distraction helps us to push away our difficult thoughts and feelings.

It is true that distraction is an emotional regulation strategy and helps you to feel better. However, it does not take away the feelings and thoughts completely. They return after some time and you are back again at the same place, feeling overwhelmed. Avoiding your feelings and emotions makes you more trapped in them. No matter how hard you try to escape from yourself, your thoughts, and your feelings you are struck with “YOU”. This creates an internal “battlefield”, and you declare war upon yourself. Here there are no winners, only losers. So, what can you do to distract yourself in a more adaptive way?

Accept and acknowledge your feelings and thoughts. Observe what is “showing up” for you and put them in words like “I’m noticing” fear, or “I ‘m noticing” anger. Also, allow the feelings and thoughts to come and stay with you and leave as they wish. When you engage in a fight with your thoughts and feelings, your focus gets shifted away from things that are important to you. After acknowledging your feelings and thoughts, connect with your physical body by stretching your arms, taking a few breaths, or straightening your back, and then finally engage in what you are doing or refocus on the things that are important to you. Apply an open and accepting attitude to all internal and external experiences, and then we free ourselves, not from the pain but from the suffering.



Saji Jose, MSW, RSW, Counsellor

Our counselling program is funded by The Province of Ontario, The City of Toronto, United Way of Greater Toronto, Red Cross Canada, and other generous foundations and individuals. Thank you!

SUPPORTING WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES TO REBUILD THEIR LIVES FREE FROM VIOLENCE

Did you know that

- 24% percent of women live with a disability and that this number is expected to increase as the population ages (1)
- Every year approximately 276,000 women in Canada will experience traumatic brain injury due to intimate partner violence (2)
- Women with disabilities are 2x more likely than women without disabilities to experience gender-based violence (2)
- There are a number of myths surrounding women with disabilities that impact their ability to experience healthy relationships



However, despite these realities, there are few violence prevention programs that are able to respond to the unique needs of women with disabilities. Women with disabilities continue to experience societal assumptions and multiple barriers to accessing information that increase their risk of experiencing abuse. These barriers and myths about disability also make it harder for women with disabilities to access the support needed to leave unhealthy relationships and to rebuild their lives, free from violence.

With funding from the Canadian Women's Foundation, we have worked to address gender-based violence and support women with disabilities in rebuilding their lives, by:

- Organizing a series of webinars for women with disabilities that increased their capacity to identify: the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships, types of violence, strategies to nurture healthy relationships, effective communication styles, ways to boost self-esteem, and practice setting boundaries
- Facilitating training opportunities for service providers that increased their capacity to support women with disabilities who may be experiencing abuse

Women with disabilities who participated in the webinars shared the following:

- *"I learned how to communicate more effectively"*
- *"I learned more about the different love languages and strategies to build intimacy with others in my life"*
- *"I shared and practiced what I learned with my partner"*
- *"I made the decision not to return to an unhealthy relationship"*
- *"I now have practical tools to help me identify relationship red flags, signs of abuse, and to practice setting boundaries"*

Service providers who participated in the project shared that the training sessions:

- Increased their awareness of the unique ways women with disabilities may experience violence
- Increased their awareness of what constitutes a disability
- Strengthened their capacity to communicate effectively with women with disabilities who may be experiencing gender-based violence

If you are interested learning more about how to support and promote the inclusion of women with within your organization, please contact Melissa Simas to schedule a training session:

program@scarboroughwomenscentre.ca

Thank you to the Canadian Women's Foundation for supporting the inclusion and empowerment of women with disabilities!

Melissa Simas, MSW, RSW, *Program Manager*

HAVE YOU SIGNED UP FOR/ RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP WITH SWC?

Your involvement is important - it makes the Centre an effective, member-driven agency. Members have a vote at the Annual General Meeting to elect new Board members, approve the strategic directions of the agency, and support the mission of the Centre. We've streamlined the process so you can apply for/renew your membership and pay your fees in the same place by clicking [here](#).

You can now also purchase a one-, two- or three-year membership. As always, active volunteers and service users can have their membership fee waived. We value your support and welcome you to [apply for or renew your membership](#) today!

BUILDING HEALTHY FRIENDSHIPS WITH YWO



Hey SWC community,

We're thrilled to share some exciting updates from our 'Building Strong Futures: Young Women's Outreach Program.' One of the topics we're diving into these days is the world of friendships and their impact on the growth and emotional development of our incredible youth! Friendships aren't just about sharing laughs and creating memories; they're vital for building confidence, resilience, supporting the development of compassion, and a strong sense of identity!

This is why we love presenting our 'Building Healthy Friendships' workshop,

that's tailored for young women who are navigating the complexities of adolescence and friendships. In these interactive workshops, we educate young women on recognizing the nuances of healthy, unhealthy, and even toxic friendships. We explore effective communication and conflict resolution techniques. Also, we create safe spaces for young women to anonymously discuss and share tips/advice on issues they may experience, such as how to make new friends, respectful ending of friendships and navigating the challenges of online interactions and bullying within friend groups. We cannot emphasize enough the importance for young women to understand the impact friendships will have in their lives, both short term and long term.

We've had the pleasure of bringing these workshops both online and in person to the wonderful youth at our TDSB and TCDSB partners, where we've witnessed the positive impact they've had on the lives of young women! Big shout-out to our wonderful funders, Mackenzie Together Charitable Foundation and The Johansen Larsen Foundation, thank you for your ongoing support in building brighter futures!

To schools and organizations looking to empower their students with the knowledge of healthy friendships or other topics, we invite you to reach out for more information! Let's work together to create a generation of strong, resilient, and supportive young women!

Priscilla Arias, AWCCA & Rachel Brideau-Montoro, SSW
Building Strong Futures: Young Women's Outreach Program

THE NORTH SCARBOROUGH CLUSTER

In response to COVID-19, the City of Toronto and United Way came together to create a Community Coordination Plan to respond to the urgent needs of people who are most vulnerable during the pandemic. As a result of this initiative, 13 clusters were created throughout Toronto, one of which was the North Scarborough Cluster.

Scarborough Women's Centre has been a member of the North and South Scarborough Clusters since the summer of 2020, and has worked alongside other agencies to respond to emerging needs of and continue to provide support services to vulnerable people. As more community agencies began to join the Cluster, the need for information sharing grew, and the position of Communications Lead was created.

As the Communications Lead for North Scarborough, my role is to keep NS Cluster partners (The City of Toronto, United Way Greater Toronto, and non-profit organizations) informed with the timely distribution of essential information and immediate resources and supports needed by partners. A Communications Lead contributes to the synergy, information flow and accuracy across the cluster. Some of the responsibilities include:

- Sending out weekly Resource Share emails to North and South Scarborough partners, agencies and representatives
- Attending monthly Cluster meetings to provide service and resource updates, and taking meeting minutes to ensure that offers are documented
- Updating the online resource library so that organizations have access to opportunities that may benefit their networks
- Sharing knowledge of agency initiatives and events with the Scarborough community

Through this role, I've had the opportunity to be present during significant interagency conversations. It has been truly inspiring to witness organizations coming together to work in harmony towards a shared goal – to continue to deliver essential services to vulnerable communities. My work with the Cluster has made me aware of the gaps and various needs of the population we serve, but it has also highlighted the accomplishments of SWC as we continue our efforts to provide support as a pillar in Scarborough.

Canistra Mariyathas, AMHW, Communications Lead - North Scarborough Cluster

STAY IN THE LOOP!

Subscribe to our email list [here](#) so that you don't miss any news, including all our webinar and in-person workshop schedules.

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS FUNDERS & DONORS

GOVERNMENT FUNDERS

Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada, Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), The Government of Ontario - Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (Women's social and economic opportunity), City of Toronto-Community Service Partnership Program, City of Toronto-Investing in Neighbourhoods Program

FOUNDATIONS & N.G.O.s

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INDIVIDUALS

Anonymous, Elahveyini Veemharaj Aswaththam, Jonathan Aziza, Yvette Bailey, Alan Bilinski, Carolyn Borovicka, Christopher G. Bradley, Shawn Bremner, Daphne Browne, Ann Buller, Shaheen Burtally, Virginia Caldwell, Tracey Catherall, Aisha Champness, Diana Chan, Venkat Chandra, Yun Yee Chow, James Clark, Samantha Clarke, Jackie Coakes, Patricia Coles, Robert Conte, Reshma Dhrodia, The Estate of Clarissa D'Cunha, Melissa D'Souza, Reagan Elly, Paul Faiazza, Sebastian Fiszman, Roy Fraser, Claudia Fuller, Kai-Lee Kelly Fung, Reem Gedeon, Laureanne Gillett, Laurie Grierson, Wizya Gyssagara, Yusra Hammadi, Shaneela Harpaul, Arthur & Mary Heinmaa, Francine Hickman, Victoria Hong, Michelle Indyarta, Anjum Karimi, Kamrun Khan, Kathy Killinger, Irina Kim, Lynda Kosowan, Bora (Kate) Kwak, Kenneth (Laird) Laundry, Amanda Lazarevski, Venesse Lewis, Carolyn Ling, Punita Lumb, Jen MacBruce, Judit Marincan, Douglas Mark, Bonnie McBride, John McDowell, Darren McKiernan, Heidi Mehta, Annisa Mohammed, Sara Mustafa, Aakash Nandy, Bradley Nash, Janice Nicholson, Rebekkah Nighswander, Rafat Noushad, James Otis, Ann Patterson, Merissa Peña, Kalum Perera, Alicia Persaud, Jean Persaud, Nalini Persaud, David Phillips, Karin Phillipson, Laila Rawjani, Cam Reston, Maria Rocha, Jennifer Rodriguez, Nadia Saad, Avani Sapre, Joanna Seel, Neeti Sharma, Jevinjyot Sidhu, Gretel Silvestre, Koreen Simon, Jagdeep Singh, Thillaichelvan Sivayogapathy, Donna-Marie Soloway, Ozge Soylu, Vanessa Stoby, Penelope Stuart, Adelaide Swanston, Sumrana Taher, Rachel Takacs, Mariane Talbot, Nadia Taylor, Taylor Thompson, Sarah Tron, Dimitra Tsagaris, Wendy Tunney, Maggie Vernon, Tiana Vuckovic, Cameron (Cam) Welch, Taylor Wills, Nishat Zaman

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EXTERNAL EVENTS

BirchCliff Pumpkin Drive, Farah's Bridal Birthday Fundraiser, Kayla's Krispy Kreme Holiday Fundraiser, Lowes Rona Heroes Campaign, TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon, Reshma's Birthday Fundraiser, The Sicoli Family's Young Women's Leadership Program Fundraiser in honour of Bianca Sicoli, Vicky Tsorlinis Fundraising

You can support the mission of Scarborough Women's Centre by making an online donation [here](#).

Or you can mail a cheque to: Scarborough Women's Centre
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