

WELL-BEING & SUPPORT

UW SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Empathy, Compassion, and Pursuing Kindness to Ourselves

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Session Two

- **Objectives:** Explore how compassion for others and for ourselves can support our well-being through an exploration of research and practices.
- **Content:** Revisit our neurobiological response to threats and stress through the lens of self-compassion as a way of disrupting our fight, flight, and freeze response with self-kindness, common humanity, and mindful awareness. Explore the differences between empathy and compassion and how the pro-social emotion of compassion is generative towards our well-being. Look at how mirror neurons operate and amplify emotions around us with a focus on how calm is just as contagious as fear and anxiety.
- **Take Away:** Getting stuck in the experience of empathy while engaging in critical work of providing care for people and their families experiencing health challenges can lead to burnout. Supporting the growth of self-compassion will promote folks' ability to stay engaged with patients, families, and the broader community during challenging exchanges.



Welcome to our 4-part series

- 1) Resilience and Emotional Intelligence
- 2) Compassion, Empathy, and Pursuing Kindness to Ourselves
- 3) Exploring Gratitude: Positive Emotions and Expansive Thinking
- 4) Coping with Uncertainty and the Effects of Chronic and Acute Stress on our Well-Being



Three Centers Check

Take a moment to stop what you are doing, take three breathes, observe what you are you feeling in you body, where are your thoughts, what emotions you are having...

3 centers: Body... Head... Heart...

We are going to practice with Slido to leverage some technology for interaction...



**What is a word to describe
each of your three centers?
Body... Head... Heart...**

The Keys to Resilience

- Cultivating Healthy Attachments and Connections
- Cultivating Positive Emotions
- Cultivating a Sense of Purpose



Behavioral Practices for Resilience

R – Relationships

E – Exercise

F – Fun; Recreation & Enjoyable Activities

R – Relaxation & Stress Management

E – Eat Well – Nutrition & Diet

S – Sufficient Sleep

H – Helping others

E – Earth – Time in Nature

R – Reason – Sense of Purpose (Religiosity & Spirituality)

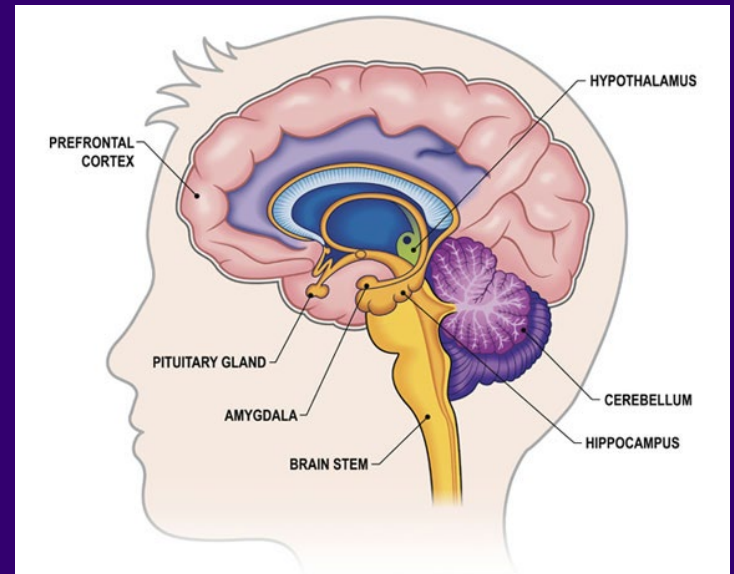


Amygdala Hijacking!

Fight: Self-Critique

Flight: Isolate

Freeze: Rumination



Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.

-Viktor Frankl

Self-Compassion

Three Main Components (Neff, 2004):

- Self- Kindness
- Common Humanity
- Mindful Awareness
 - Awareness of rather than over identifying with painful thoughts and feelings

Why Self-Compassion?

- Correlates with an increase in accuracy of self-assessment
- Mastery orientation vs. Performance orientation
- Increase in enlistment of Emotion-focused vs. avoidance-orientated coping strategies
- Decreases fear of failure and increases persistence
- Unlike self-esteem, doesn't promote narcissism, judgements, comparisons, need peer approval

Wait a sec, Self-compassion?

Misconceptions

Isn't it self-indulgence, self-pity, laziness?

- In-moment indulgence vs. reflective wisdom and commitment to well-being (guilt vs. wellness)
- Increase ability to handle short term pain for long term gains

But I use my self-critic as motivation!

- Self-compassion is highly correlated with self-improvement motivation (Breines & Chen 2012)
- Power of an inner-ally versus inner-critic

Language of 'Self-Valuation' in USA research

Expressing Compassion

When someone you care about shares a failure or set back, how do you talk to your friend?

What are the words your use, the tone, body language?

- Now, how do you talk to yourself when you experience a failure or setback?
- In Slido, what did you notice?

slido



Did you notice a difference in your words, tone, or body language when talking with a friend compared to how you talk to yourself?

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Expressing Compassion

When someone you care about shares a failure or set back, how do you talk to your friend?

What are the words your use, the tone, body language?

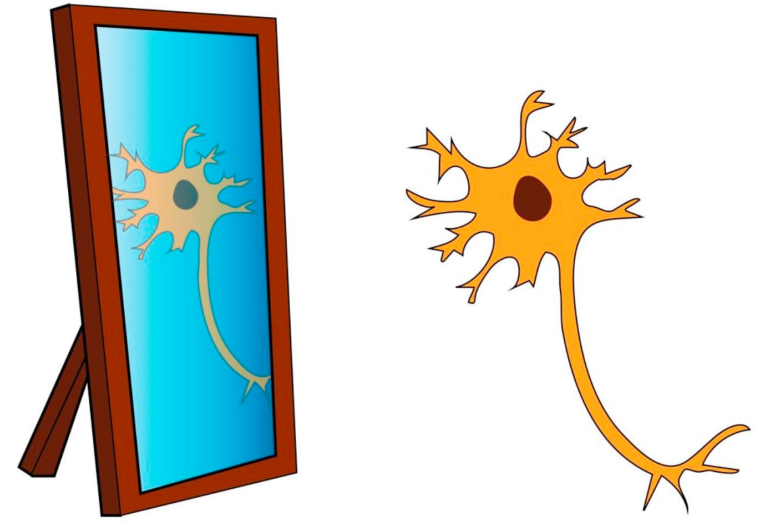
- Now, how do you talk to yourself when you experience a failure or setback?
- In Slido, what did you notice?
- About 78% of folks are kinder to others than they are to themselves, about 16% are neutral, and only 6% treat themselves with more kindness

Mirror neurons are pretty cool

How is our emotional state read by the folks with whom we are interacting?

MIRROR NEURONS

The Neuroscience of Leadership



Empathetic Resonance - Cooperation

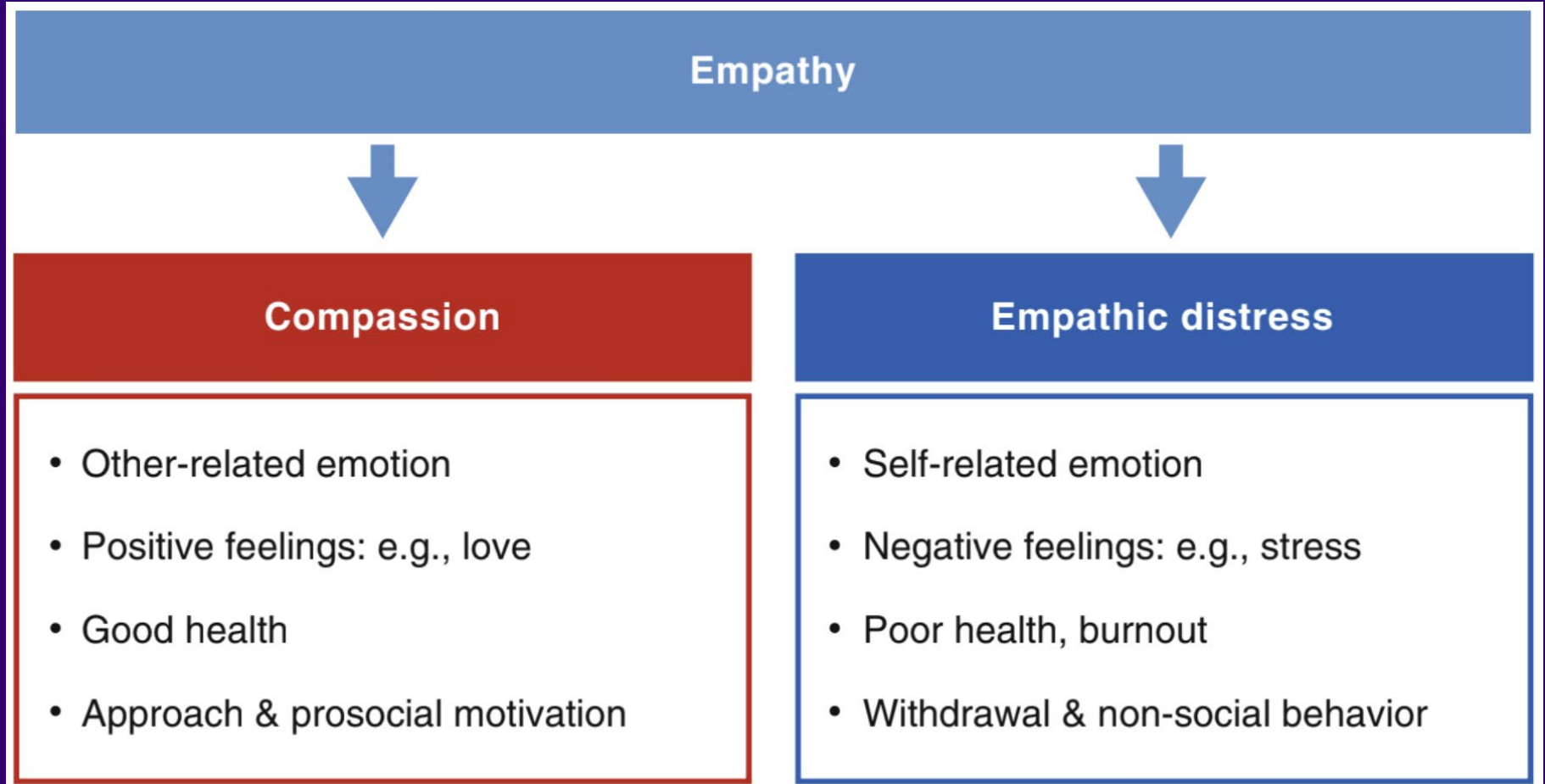
Calm is as contagious as fear and anxiety

Goleman, D., & Boyatzis, R. (2008). Social intelligence and the biology of leadership. Harvard Business Review, 86(9), 74-81

Ringleb, A.H., Rock D., & Ancona, C. (2015). Neuroleadership in 2014. Neuroleadership Journal, 5, 1-27

Rizzolatti and Gallese (1996 & 2004)

Empathy and Compassion



Singer & Klimecki *Current Biology* (2014)

slido



What are signs of burnout?

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Self-Compassion & Care

- If we are frustrated, stressed, shut down – our patients and families feel it
- Giving ourselves and the people in our care compassion when feeling empathetic pain helps us come back to being a loving connected presence
- Breathing:
 - One for you, one for me
 - In for you, out for me

Empathy versus Sympathy

- [Brené Brown on Empathy vs Sympathy - Bing video](#)



Emotional Contagion – Resonating with suffering can be hard... stress, burnout, limits of vicarious suffering

Mirroring Compassion versus Empathy

The power of loving kindness...

- Empathy and Compassion activate different parts of the brain
 - Empathy – pain centers
 - Compassion – pro social centers and pain centers
- Empathy: I feel you
- Compassion: I hold you



Resilience & Compassion

How can you foster resilience and self-compassion in your team culture?

- 5 positives to 1 negative
- Own your failures and setbacks to normalize, defuse, and move forward
- Awareness of how you talk to self & others

Looking Forward

What do you take away?

- What stands out to you?
- How does this shift how you move through your work?
- What do you hope to share with others?



What do you want to take away from today's session?

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More Self-Compassion?

Resources

Self-Compassion Website by
Dr. Kristin Neff

- Self-compassion.org

THANK YOU

Exploring Gratitude: Positive Emotions and Expansive Thinking

Wednesday, January 3, 2024 from 2-3pm PST by Zoom

Objectives: Explore pro-social emotions and their role in our well-being and our ability to think creatively, innovatively, and to stay open to different perspectives.

Content: Practicing gratitude is one of the keys to experiencing resilience and to mitigating risks of burnout. We will discuss multiple ways to practice gratitude as individuals and as a community to develop a culture of well-being. We will also examine the role of psychological safety in establishing trust and a thriving community culture that embraces exploration and risk taking. Explore intentionality of thought and focusing on anticipatory joy.

Take Away: Practices that can be leveraged at the individual and community level to improve a sense of belonging and well-being. Understanding the ways in which we can impact the culture of well-being and how we can shift our thinking and perspective when we are getting stuck ruminating on challenges and setbacks.

Feedback Please!

