



Mindful Self-Compassion

Chinese character for mindfulness combines the two symbols of presence and heart – heartfulness...

Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) is an empirically supported 8-session training program designed to cultivate the skill of self-compassion. Based on the groundbreaking research of Kristin Neff and the clinical expertise of Christopher Germer, MSC teaches core principles and practices that enable participants to respond to difficult moments in their lives with support, care and understanding. Attending the MSC program can assist in transforming your relationship with yourself through the notion of 'attending and befriending'. This is quite a different approach than the usual one taken in our busy lives of the 'subtle aggression of self-improvement' (Bob Sharples). The formal and informal practices taught in MSC are intended as a way of developing a mindful, warm and kind unconditional friendliness to one's self, these ways of being then infuse our daily life.

The three key components of self-compassion are self-kindness, a sense of common humanity, and balanced, mindful awareness. Kindness opens our hearts to suffering, so we can give ourselves what we need in those difficult times. Common humanity opens us to our essential interrelatedness, so that we know we aren't alone, and we understand the fact that being human means making mistakes and having our glitches as well as our glides. Mindfulness opens us to the present moment, so we can get a wider / clearer picture of our full experience, and how the experiencer is going. Understanding allows acceptance to emerge. Together they comprise a state of warm-hearted, connected presence.

Self-compassion can be learned by anyone, even those who didn't receive enough affection in childhood or who feel uncomfortable when they are good to themselves. It's a courageous attitude that stands up to harm, including the harm that we unwittingly inflict on ourselves through self-criticism, self-isolation, or self-absorption. Self-compassion provides emotional strength and resilience, allowing us to admit our shortcomings, motivate ourselves with kindness, forgive ourselves when needed, relate wholeheartedly to others, and be more authentically ourselves.

Rapidly expanding research demonstrates that self-compassion is strongly associated with emotional wellbeing, less anxiety, depression and stress, maintenance of healthy habits such as diet and exercise, and satisfying personal relationships. Practicing self-compassion has also shown to improve the well-being of those around us.

Attending this MSC enables participants to:

- Practice greater mindfulness and self-compassion in daily life
- Understand the empirically-supported benefits of self-compassion
- Motivate with kindness and support rather than criticism
- Handle difficult emotions with greater understanding and ease
- Transform challenging relationships, old and new
- Manage / prevent empathy fatigue
- Practice the art of savoring, gratitude and self-appreciation

"This has been a profound experience. You've opened me to an inner self who is compassionate and someone I can trust" – Keith (past participant)



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What To Expect

Program activities include meditation, short talks, experiential exercises, group discussion, and home practices. The goal is for participants to directly experience self-compassion and learn practices that evoke self-compassion in daily life.

MSC is primarily a compassion-training program rather than mindfulness training like Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), although mindfulness is the foundation of self-compassion. MSC is also not psychotherapy insofar as the emphasis of MSC is on building emotional resources rather than addressing old wounds. Positive change occurs naturally as we develop the capacity to be with ourselves in a kinder, more compassionate way.

“Love reveals everything unlike itself” (Anon), so difficult emotions may arise when practicing self-compassion, MSC involves that balance of wisdom and compassion. As a MSC teacher I am committed to providing a safe, supportive environment for this process to unfold. At all times I emphasize, teach and cultivate ways of strengthening the connection with one’s own inner wisdom – treading gently, slowly and assuredly with this orientation of MSC.

MSC programs involve 8-sessions of 3-hours and a retreat day. Participants should plan to attend every session and practice MSC at least 30-minutes per day throughout the program. No previous experience with mindfulness or meditation is required to attend MSC. I will call all potential participants prior to confirming their place in the program, this conversation allows time to answer any further questions people may have, and also ensures that people are fully aware of what the program involves. Upon confirmation within a MSC program, participants are required to sign a Compassionate Choices form – for their own reference.

Although the usual format is over 8-weeks, the MSC program can also be presented as a **5-day intensive**. The 8-sessions are delivered over four days with a retreat session occurring either on a separate day, usually a fortnight after the 4-days or as part of a consecutive 5-days of training.

It is recommended, but not required that participants read the following books before the program (I have copies available for loan or to purchase):

- *Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself*, by Kristin Neff
- *The Mindful path to Self-Compassion*, by Christopher Germer



Meet your Teachers:

Tina Gibson is a Certified MSC Teacher, and the only Teacher trainer and Mentor in Australia. She has worked in the Health and Education area for over 20 years. Tina brings to her programs extensive experience in teaching compassion-based mindfulness, as well as humour, warmth and honesty.

Peter Gibson is a Qualified MSC Teacher and trained Counsellor. He assists Tina in the delivery of the 8-week MSC programs. He has worked within the building industry for over 30 years and is passionate about the need for men to understand the strength of compassion. He brings with him a deep appreciation of compassion and the particular struggles men may face in finding their own way in to MSC.

