

Session 5

LOVING KINDNESS AND COMPASSION

Topic Overview

For the first four sessions, students have been focusing on calling attention to the present moment and noticing without judgment. In Session 5, their focus will turn toward an intentional calling up of good will, kindness, generosity, and compassion. Beginning with themselves, students will practice offering loving kindness and compassion in response to their self-criticisms. The goal is not to eliminate self-critical thoughts, but to allow students to acknowledge them without avoidance, then meet them with loving kindness. Practices will then extend this loving kindness stance to others, which carries the benefit of fostering deeper connection to all humans in their shared experience of suffering and need for compassion.






Student Goals

- Understand the terms *inner critic; compassion; self-compassion; loving kindness; empathy*
- Distinguish between inner critic phrases and self-compassion phrases
- Understand the benefits and resilience gained from self-compassion and loving kindness
- Journal to discover their inner critic's language and target areas
- Connect more deeply with others through the commonality of suffering
- Practice and model empathetic listening and emotional mirroring




Teacher Goals


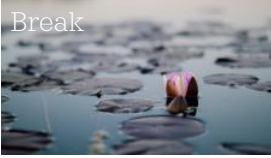

- Balance authority in didactic presentations and coaching in leading practices
- Help define and provide examples to understand *inner critic; compassion; loving kindness*
- Facilitate reflective journaling, partner sharing, and group sharing



Lesson Script

Slide	Script	Min.
	Welcome students, answer questions, complete necessary paperwork.	0
	<p>Welcome to Session 5. Our topics today are <i>loving kindness</i> and <i>compassion</i>. Here are some other helpful words and phrases to put us in mind of our topic: <i>self-compassion</i>, <i>empathy</i>, <i>self-kindness</i>.</p> <p>We want to be mindful of when and how we are hard on ourselves and each other. Judgement and criticism can be automatic reactions, whether expressed in words, actions, avoidance, facial expressions. We want to grow in our capacity to meet life's challenges effectively, and self-compassion is proven to build that ability.</p> <p>We'll start with a focus on self-compassion.</p>	1
	<p>What is self-compassion?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting oneself with warmth instead of harmful self-criticism or avoidance • Acceptance that suffering is part of our common human experience without blame or self-blame • Mindfulness of unpleasant emotions or sensations without over-identification with them • NOT: avoidance, resistance, suppression, or denial of challenges • NOT a simplistic "self-esteem boost" 	2
	<p>Here's what the research shows us. Self-compassion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • benefits our emotional wellbeing and resilience • increases motivation to make amends after a transgression • increases motivation to improve on a performance area or weakness • increases our growth mindset • encourages us to confront mistakes and weaknesses without self-deprecation • enables sustainable self-confidence in our ability to grow 	2
	Let's enter into a practice. We'll do a seated meditation and then reflect on the experience. In this way, we'll embody and come to better understand exactly what self-compassion is and how it can affect our minds and bodies.	10

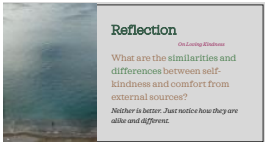

	<p>When stress arises because of a difficult situation, we can turn to this meditation, which will guide us through self-compassion in the face of a challenge.</p> <p><i>Giving Yourself Compassion for a Difficult Situation.</i></p> <p>Let's settle the body into a comfortable position, relaxed but alert. Close the eyes or keep them with a soft focus a few feet ahead. [Pause]</p> <p>Allow the spine to lift and shoulders to soften [Pause]</p> <p>Take a full breath in [Pause] and a long slow breath out. [Pause]</p> <p>Take a few grounding breaths, feeling the body in the seat and the feet on the floor. [Pause for 3-4 breaths]</p> <p>Now, bring to mind a situation that's difficult. Something that causes worry or stress, tension or anxiety. It can be with the self, a relationship, or among others. Choose something that will not cause overwhelm during this practice. [Pause]</p> <p>Bring to mind the circumstances of the situation—who is involved, what happened, what was said, what makes it difficult, and what all parties desire for an outcome. Just recall the details. [Pause]</p> <p>Now, simply acknowledge that this is a difficult situation. Find language to label what's happening right now, both the emotions and the sensations that may be arising. [Pause]</p> <p>Say, "This is difficult. This is sad. This is frightening. This is lonely." [Pause]</p> <p>Say, "I feel anxious. I feel angry. I feel resentful." [Pause]</p> <p>Label and name what is happening, with mindful awareness, openness, curiosity, acceptance. [Pause]</p> <p>Next, acknowledge that difficulty is a part of life. It's something all have experienced before and will again. [Pause]</p> <p>Remember our common humanity. Difficulty is part of the lived experience, and like everything else, will shift. [Pause]</p> <p>Difficulty can be faced with openness and kindness. Difficulty can be met with courage and compassion. [Pause]</p> <p>Finally, we are all invited to listen and say: <i>May I be kind to myself in this moment.</i> [Pause]</p> <p>"May I be kind to myself in this moment." [Pause]</p> <p>Acknowledge that no matter how hard the situation is, all have the ability to be kind to the self and others. This is difficult, but kindness is possible. [Pause]</p>	
--	---	--


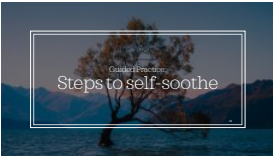
	<p>Feel free to use any language you'd like that supports this sense of kindness. Perhaps choose wording that would help a loved one. <i>I'm here for you. You are loved.</i> [Pause]</p> <p>If desired, rest a hand over the heart, offering kindness to the self. [Pause]</p> <p>Take in that kindness. [Pause]</p> <p>Breathe deeply into that kindness. [Pause]</p> <p>Slowly bring the attention back to the present moment, back to the body, back to the breaths in and out. Recognize the compassion for self and carry it into the present. When ready, open the eyes.</p>	
	<p>Thank you for that practice. Let's take a moment to do some reflective journaling. Write for about 3 minutes, freely answering both questions in any way or order you find helpful.</p> <p>[Allow 3 minutes to write and up to 4 minutes for sharing.]</p>	8
	<p>We can be very hard on ourselves when faced with difficulty, demanding perfection, doubting our choices, judging and criticizing. Sometimes it feels as if there's a voice inside us, almost apart from ourselves, verbalizing all of this negativity.</p> <p>We call this the Inner Critic. The inner critic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on weaknesses, potential failure, or obstacles • Speaks negatively and harshly • Points to threats • Monitors mistakes • Judges the self and others • Triggers guilt, shame, anger, and hostility <p>The inner critic's function is to monitor our behavior, keep us from making mistakes, and keep us safe from harm. None of these are intrinsically bad functions. Keep in mind that <i>the way</i> the inner critic evaluates is the problem.</p> <p>Consider whether you would want a loved one to live with a person like the inner critic. Would you want them exposed to these thoughts repeatedly? Or would you want a loved one to be met with acceptance, warmth, nurturing, and forgiveness?</p>	3
	<p>Let's turn now to a reflective exercise about the inner critic. Our goal is to grow aware of what our inner critic sounds like—sometimes we can mistake that voice for concern or caring, when in reality it's not bringing us compassion. We will also clarify some of the consequences of the inner critic voice.</p>	1

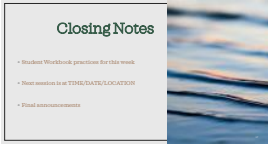

 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In what areas do you hear the inner critic most loudly? 2. What does the Inner Critic sound like? What does it say? 3. With a partner, share 1 and 2. When does the Inner Critic motivate, inspire, or support? 4. How would a loving friend respond to your Inner Critic? 5. What if we replaced the Inner Critic with that friend? 	<p>First, take a moment to write freely about the parts of yourself or your life that you are most critical of. Where do you hear the voice of the inner critic most loudly and most often?</p> <p>Next, describe what your inner critic's voice sounds like and what it says. Do you hear insults? Warnings? Regrets? Arguments? Lists of wrongs? Sighs of disappointment?</p> <p>Now, turn to a partner for the next part of the exercise. Share to the extent you're comfortable about what your inner critic says and what your inner critic focuses on.</p> <p>Then discuss with your partner whether your inner critic ever motivates you to do better, inspires you to learn, or supports you as you try new things. Is there anything positive that ever comes from hearing your inner critic's voice?</p> <p>Together, let's talk about what a loving friend would say if they overheard what your inner critic says to you. How would they respond?</p> <p>Finally, let's consider if we could replace the inner critic's voice with the friend's voice. What would change for us? What would become possible?</p> <p>[Announce the break, time to return, location of water and bathrooms.]</p>	<p>15</p>
 <p>Break</p>	<p>Break/Transition</p> <p>5-10 minutes, <i>depending on the conditions of the class</i></p>	
	<p>Welcome back. Let's jump right into our next topic, which is <i>loving kindness</i>. We'll also talk about <i>self-kindness</i>.</p> <p>Both these terms refer to caring for oneself rather than criticizing. Loving kindness offers warmth and acceptance in the face of stress or difficulty, helping soothe or comfort oneself first, before trying to fix anything.</p> <p>Loving kindness is not an escape from problems. Rather, it's an approach that makes us more empathetic to others. When we recognize that our humanity includes imperfection, failure, mistakes, stress, sadness, and difficulty, we connect to others. We recognize we are not alone in these conditions.</p> <p>As a part of practicing mindfulness, loving kindness involves balancing our awareness of painful situations. We don't ignore or avoid. Nor do we overwhelm ourselves.</p> <p>Our aim is to increase feelings of care and warmth, both for ourselves and others. We'll set our intention to be a better friend to ourselves and others. By recognizing that everyone</p>	<p>3</p>

	<p>wants to be happy and free from suffering, we can more deeply connect more freely.</p> <p>We can also come to respond differently to difficult situations by learning to turn the volume down on our inner critic.</p>	
	<p>Notice how we can change the script of the inner critic by meeting it with words of loving kindness.</p> <p>[Use the worksheet Loving Kindness Responses to the Inner Critic, found right after this lesson script.]</p> <p>Let's read these inner critic words, and the loving kindness response with which we can meet the inner critic.</p> <p>Would anyone like to share other inner critic words or phrases, and how we might meet those with loving kindness as well?</p>	3
	<p>Let's move into a Loving Kindness meditation. This one is focused on compassion for our failures and mistakes. Know that we can let go of any expectations of how we <i>should</i> be feeling during the meditation. There's no amount of positive feelings you should aim for, simply gentle and compassionate openness toward ourselves.</p> <p>Let's find a comfortable sitting position. Bring the attention to the body seated, to the feet on the floor. Breathe as the spine straightens and the shoulders relax. [Pause]</p> <p>Be in the body, right here, right now, fully inhabiting the lived experience. [Pause]</p> <p>Allow the attention to move outward to sounds. Let them arrive in the senses, label them as they come. [Pause]</p> <p>Now focus on breathing, the sensation of inhaling and exhaling. Feel each breath in the nostrils, in the chest, in the diaphragm. Notice each breath and bring full attention to each. [Pause]</p> <p>Now, bring to mind something the inner critic's voice speaks about in the mind. It can be a failure, a mistake, an aspect of personality, a weakness, an inadequacy. Call it to attention without overwhelming the mind or emotions. Label it. [Pause]</p> <p>When did the inner critic first begin focusing on this issue? How long has it been criticizing about it? [Pause]</p> <p>Sense into how this issue makes you feel. Perhaps it's a tightness in your throat, a heaviness in your heart, tension in the shoulders. Perhaps it's sadness, loneliness, abandonment. Label the feeling and locate it in the body. [Pause]</p> <p>Just allow sensations and emotions to be there instead of resisting. Just notice them. [Pause]</p>	15

	<p>Get in touch with how much suffering is caused by our self-judgement and the fear of not being good enough. Great suffering is caused by the belief that we should be perfect.</p> <p>Take one or both hands to rest gently over the heart. Make this gesture in a calm, soft, comforting manner. [Pause]</p> <p>Sense into the heart. Discover if the heart can be moved by how difficult it is to listen to the inner critic and feel badly about the self.</p> <p>Listen to some loving kindness phrases and repeat the ones that resonate and cultivate compassion in the heart.</p> <p><i>We are not perfect.</i> <i>We try our best.</i> <i>We all make mistakes.</i> <i>We all fail.</i> <i>This is the human experience.</i></p> <p><i>May I be safe.</i> <i>May I be peaceful.</i> <i>May I be kind to myself.</i> <i>May I accept myself as I am.</i></p> <p>Feel the warmth of the hand on the heart.</p> <p><i>May I be safe.</i> <i>May I be peaceful.</i> <i>May I be kind to myself.</i> <i>May I accept myself as I am.</i></p> <p>Let's repeat these phrases and breathe into them. If the mind wanders, refresh the phrases in the mind or find ones that feel right for what's needed in the moment.</p> <p>May I be safe. May I be peaceful. May I be kind to myself. May I accept myself as I am.</p> <p>Offer the self the same support and acceptance as a good friend.</p> <p>May I be safe. May I be peaceful. May I be kind to myself. May I accept myself as I am.</p> <p>Everyone makes mistakes. Everyone fails. This is the human condition. This is normal. This is something we all share.</p> <p>May I be safe. May I be peaceful. May I be kind to myself. May I accept myself as I am.</p>	
--	---	--

	<p>Let's turn to include everyone in loving kindness and self-compassion.</p> <p>May we all feel safe. May we all be peaceful. May we be kind to ourselves. May we accept ourselves as we are.</p> <p>May we be safe. May we be peaceful. May we be kind to ourselves. May we accept ourselves as we are.</p> <p>Breathe and say the phrases as many times as needed. Say them into whatever is causing suffering or pain. Say them into others who might need loving kindness right now. Say them into anything that is hard to carry.</p> <p>[Based on your read of the room, offer silence and space for individual loving kindness or repeat the phrases with pauses between. Or offer a combination of silence and phrases.]</p> <p>Breathe and bring the attention back to the heart. Notice any warmth or calm, any new vibrancy, openness, tenderness, care, or joy. [Pause]</p> <p>Slowly bring the attention back to the present moment, to the body seated in the chair, the feet on the floor, the spine lifting, the head lifting. When ready, open the eyes.</p>	
	<p>Thank you for that practice. Let's take a moment to reflect on the experience. You can write or simply sit still in the reflection.</p>	4
	<p>Our next activity will ask you to work with a partner. Together, you will model Empathetic Listening, which builds on the skills we have been practicing today: bringing attention, kindness, and compassion to other people's experiences.</p> <p>In this kind of Mindful Conversation exercise, let's keep in mind a few ground rules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each speaker will share for 2 minutes without interruption or feedback. • Each listener will hold compassionate space for their partner's words, listening specifically for feelings. • Each listener will then offer 2 minutes of "mirroring back." They begin by saying, "What I heard you feeling is . . ." and then recalling the feelings heard in their partner's words. • Mirroring feelings is different from mirroring content. Often, we're so used to listening at the level of content 	4

	<p>that we miss the feeling level of what's happening for the other person.</p> <p>Empathetic Listening Structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person A speaks. Person B listens (2 min) • Person B mirrors feelings (2 min) • Person B speaks. Person A listens (2 min) • Person A mirrors feelings (2 min) • Reflection conversation (3 min) 	
 <p>Empathetic Listening <i>Choose one topic:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about a current or past challenge in your life. • Talk about someone who is on your mind right now. • Talk about what brought you to this class. 	<p>Empathetic Listening Topics (choose one when it's your turn to share):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about a current or past challenge in your life. • Talk about someone in your life who is on your mind right now. • Talk about what in particular brought you to this class. <p>Reflection Conversation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did sharing feel? How did listening feel? How did receiving your partner's mirroring feel? 	12
 <p>Steps to self-soothe</p>	<p>Let's move into our final practice for today. This meditation brings awareness to something that feels self-soothing and protective, which you can learn to access whenever needed, even during intensely stressful or busy periods.</p> <p>We can find ways to soothe ourselves, to bring feelings of safety, calm, and caring to the self. When we notice stress, it's important to simply stop (if safe) and allow stillness and breathing.</p> <p>Let's find a comfortable seated position and close the eyes or soften their focus. [Pause]</p> <p>Breathe deeply and sense into the body. [Pause] In and out. Feel the air come into the body, fill up the lungs, and leave the body. [Pause]</p> <p>Call to mind something that creates stress or tension, something unpleasant or difficult. Be careful not to overwhelm the body or senses at this time. [Pause]</p> <p>Bring the attention to the situation or event. Reflect on what is causing the unpleasant emotions and sensations. [Pause]</p> <p>Just notice with open acceptance, awareness, nonjudgement. [Pause]</p> <p>Ask, "How can I respond in a compassionate way?" Bring kindness, acceptance, fairness, and empathy to the self and the situation. [Pause]</p>	10

	<p>Do this with any situation that is difficult, any feeling, any stressor. When it arises, either in the present moment or in memory, first pause. [Pause]</p> <p>Breathe. Take notice of the body and emotions. [Pause]</p> <p>Bring the attention to safety and protection. Notice the feet on the floor, the breath, the heartbeat. Notice that the body and mind are okay. [Pause]</p> <p>Calm the breathing. Feel into a sense of safety. [Pause]</p> <p>When the body and mind feel soothed and rested, reflect on the best, most appropriate response. Take care of the self first. [Pause]</p> <p>Consider other ways you can care for the self-going for a walk, making tea, sleeping, exercising, eating something nutritious, calling a friend. Care for the self in many ways. [Pause]</p> <p>Bring the attention back to the present moment, back to the spine lifting and the head lifting, back to the feet on the floor. When ready, open the eyes.</p>	
 <p>Closing Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Workbook practices for this week • Next session is at TIME/DATE/LOCATION • Final announcements 	<p>[Answer any last questions, announce the next session date/time, offer contact information.]</p>	
 <p>Wish each other and ourselves well.</p> <p>CLOSING</p>		

Loving Kindness Responses to the Inner Critic

The inner critic says...	Loving kindness and compassion say...
What is wrong with me?	Everyone lives with mistakes and difficulty.
I can't do anything right.	No one is perfect.
How could I do that?	Everyone is allowed to make mistakes.
I am such a fool.	I would never say this to a friend.
This is all my fault.	I can take responsibility without shame.
I am a failure.	I tried my best and learned something.
I always mess up.	Nothing is constant. Everything passes.
I need to fix this right now.	I need to pause and take care of myself first.

Loving Kindness Phrases

A loving-kindness phrase is a wish for something that is universally desirable for all beings, usually beginning with the words "May you..." or "May I..."

"May you be safe and protected."

"May you be free from inner and outer harm."

"May you be healthy and strong."

"May you be physically healthy and free from pain."

"May you be truly happy and deeply peaceful."

"May you live your life with ease."

"May you be peaceful and free from worry."

"May you accept yourself completely-just the way you are."

"May you accept yourself completely the way you are-for this moment."

"May I be peaceful."

"May I be healthy."

"May I be happy."

"May I and all other beings be peaceful."

"May I and all other beings be healthy."

"May I and all other beings be happy."

Assessment

Student	P	D	NI
Grew in awareness of the inner critic's voice, language, and areas of focus. <i>Notes:</i>			
Compared/contrasted loving kindness offered to a friend with loving kindness (or lack thereof) offered to the self.			
Reflected with a partner on the physical and emotional effects of loving kindness and compassion mindfulness practices.			
Teacher	P	D	NI
Completed didactic presentations with engagement in active student learning and knowledge-making.			
Led formal practices with flexibility, responding to the needs of the group, individual, and teacher's meditative consciousness.			
Facilitated self-awareness and new knowledge-making via partner work and reflective practices, as well as didactic presentations.			

P = Proficient. Attempted and completed with demonstrated mastery, success, ability, or required skill.

D = Developing. Attempted with strong effort and partially demonstrated mastery or success. The basic concept is understood, and the individual requires minimal/some additional coaching or practice to enhance ability, develop skill, and achieve mastery.

NI = Needs Improvement. Attempted with partial or incomplete understanding of the basic concept. Additional instruction, repetition, research, discussion, coaching, and/or practice is required to strengthen understanding, promote ability, confer skills, and/or approach mastery.

Journal

Session 5 reflections, questions, and thoughts.

Teaching

Students

Practice

Other