

# Incorporating Mindfulness & Self-Compassion in Therapy

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# CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

THE PRESENTERS  
HAVE NO ACTUAL  
OR POTENTIAL  
CONFLICTS OF  
INTEREST IN  
RELATION TO THIS  
PROGRAM.

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# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*We would like to acknowledge the land on which the University at Buffalo operates, which is the territory of the Seneca Nation, a member of the Haudenosaunee/Six Nations Confederacy. This territory is covered by The Dish with One Spoon Treaty of Peace and Friendship, a pledge to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. It is also covered by the 1794 Treaty of Canandaigua, between the United States Government and the Six Nations Confederacy, which further affirmed Haudenosaunee land rights and sovereignty in the State of New York. Today, this region is still the home to the Haudenosaunee people, and we are grateful for the opportunity to live, work, and share ideas in this territory.*



# Goals for Program

- Review definitions of mindfulness and self-compassion
- Recognize differences between self-esteem, self-care, and self-compassion
- Identify how you may already use mindfulness and self-compassion skills
- Learn additional ways to use mindfulness and self-compassion in-session
- Engage in experiential practices
- Share knowledge with each other

The background is a solid light green color. On the left side, there are several stylized elements: a large light green circle at the top left, a smaller medium green circle below it, a dark green leaf with a central vein pointing left, a large light green leaf with a curved tip pointing right, and a bright lime green teardrop shape at the bottom. 

# Practice #1

Mindfulness:  
Grounding with Senses



# Definition of Mindfulness

Paying attention with *intention*

maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment *through a gentle, nurturing lens\**

*\*Definition from Greater Good Magazine (emphasis mine):*  
<https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/mindfulness/definition>



## Benefits for Therapy:

- Offer client strategies for grounding
- Teach clients increased internal awareness (e.g. notice and name)
- Offer clients tools to recognize and to tolerate their emotions
- Provide opportunities for clients to have in-session experiences



## Question:

In what ways do you *already* incorporate mindfulness into your therapy work?





# Moving from Exteroception to Interoception

Start with external senses;  
shift towards internal, body-  
based experiences and  
neuroceptive awareness  
*(Polyvagal theory)*





# Working with Feeling Tones

- Have intention to notice and name sensations in the body or activity in the mind as simply ***pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral***
- Notice what feeling tones are predominant
- Cultivate **curiosity** - awareness without judgment

## Unpleasant

If more unpleasant, get curious and open to pleasant or neutral.

## Pleasant

If more pleasant, get curious and open to neutral or unpleasant.

## Neutral

If more neutral, get curious and open to pleasant or unpleasant.

Adapted from:  
Desmond, T. (2017). *The Self-Compassion Skills Workbook*.

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# Practice #2

Mindfulness:

Body Scan *with feeling tones*



## Question:

How might you use this type of skill with your clients?



# Working from A Wider Lens

Mindfulness helps clients  
to recognize and to  
overcome the natural  
negativity bias





**Dr. Rick Hanson,**  
Clinical Psychologist

## More on Negativity Bias:

- Dr. Hanson Tedx Talk, Hardwiring Happiness  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jpuDyGgleh0>
- Dr. Hanson at Chicago Ideas Week, Take in the Good  
<https://youtu.be/1LDDzhDIqcM>
- The Negativity Bias and How to Beat It, The Pocket Mentor App  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0LfteZ9k8YU&ab\\_channel=ThePocketMentorApp](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0LfteZ9k8YU&ab_channel=ThePocketMentorApp)



## Research Findings on the Negativity Bias:\*

- In a relationship, it typically takes *five* good interactions to make up for a single bad one
- People will work much harder to avoid *losing* \$100 than they will work to gain the same amount of money
- Painful experiences are *much* more memorable than pleasurable (Velcro versus Teflon [non-stick pan])
- Nervous system responses are *involuntary* - threat perception is through the lens of the primitive brain, “better safe than sorry”


## Additional Points:

- We tend to *replay* negative experiences in our heads *over and over* (rumination, over-thinking, racing thoughts)
- We can develop skills to help us “tilt” toward the good facts that *already exist* in our lives



*expression first used by neuropsychologist Donald Hebb in 1949 to describe how pathways in the brain are formed and reinforced through repetition, aka **neuroplasticity***

*\*First 3 bullets adapted from Dr. Rick Hanson, Take in the Good: <https://www.rickhanson.net/take-in-the-good/>  
Last bullet adapted from Lynn Fraser Stillpoint “Perception of Threat”: <https://lynnfraserstillpoint.medium.com/perception-of-threat-42ec166432a9>*



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# Practice #3

Mindfulness:  
HEAL Practice





# Steps of Heal

## 1. Have a Positive Experience

**Most facts of our lives are positive or neutral** - consider everyday good things, such as completing a task, seeing the colors of the sunset, feeling the warmth of the shower, having someone smile at you, learning something new

## 2. Enrich It

Stay with the experience for 10-20 seconds or longer. Open up to noticing how it feels in the body.

## 3. Absorb It

Savor the experience. Allow it to sink in. What would make this experience “stick,” to be more of a “Velcro” experience?

## 4. Link Negative Material to Positive Experience

Open up to positive feelings of compassion when noticing distress - combination of bittersweet and benevolence



# Tilting Towards the Good

- Recognize the negativity bias
- Allow space around negative experiences
- Remember that the brain adapts (*neuroplasticity*)
- Become a positivity private detective
- Allow good facts to become good experiences
- Engage in savoring and SIFT (*polyvagal theory*)
- Utilize a gratitude or “3 Good Things” journal
- Create a “Kudus” folder to track compliments
- **Other Thoughts?**



# Exploring Self- Compassion





# Definition of Self-Compassion

An attitude towards self that includes kindness, recognition of humanity, and mindful awareness of thoughts and feelings, *particularly in situations involving difficulties, failure, or challenges\**

*\*Definition adapted from Dr. Kristin Neff*

<https://self-compassion.org/the-three-elements-of-self-compassion-2/>



## Question:

How does self-compassion differ from self-care and self-esteem?  
What cultural differences might be relevant to these concepts?



## Self-Esteem

- Degree to which we evaluate ourselves positively
- Often relies on comparisons to others
- Can require continual external validation
- Is still a form of judgment

## Self-Care

- Degree to which we treat ourselves kindly
- Can exist without self-compassion  
(e.g., *criticizing self while practicing yoga*)
- Can become overly focused on materialism  
(e.g., *“treat yo’ self!”*)
- Can wind up being unbalanced in the face of other needs  
(e.g., *binge watching, binge eating*)

## Self-Compassion

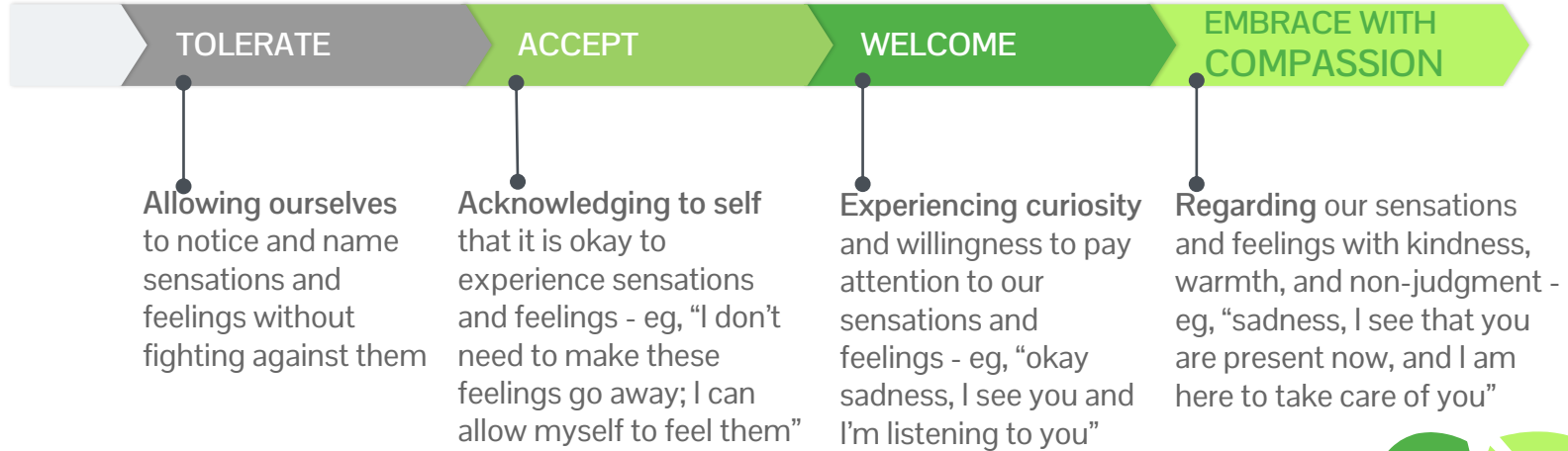
- Degree to which we regard ourselves kindly
- Can choose self-compassion *without* self-esteem
- Absence of self-evaluation, judgment, or comparison
- Ability to be with our own suffering with kindness\*

\*Adapted from:

Dana, D. (2018). *The Polyvagal Theory in Therapy*.



# Moving Towards Self-Compassion



Adapted from:  
Desmond, T. (2017). *The Self-Compassion Skills Workbook*.



# Cultivating Self-Compassion

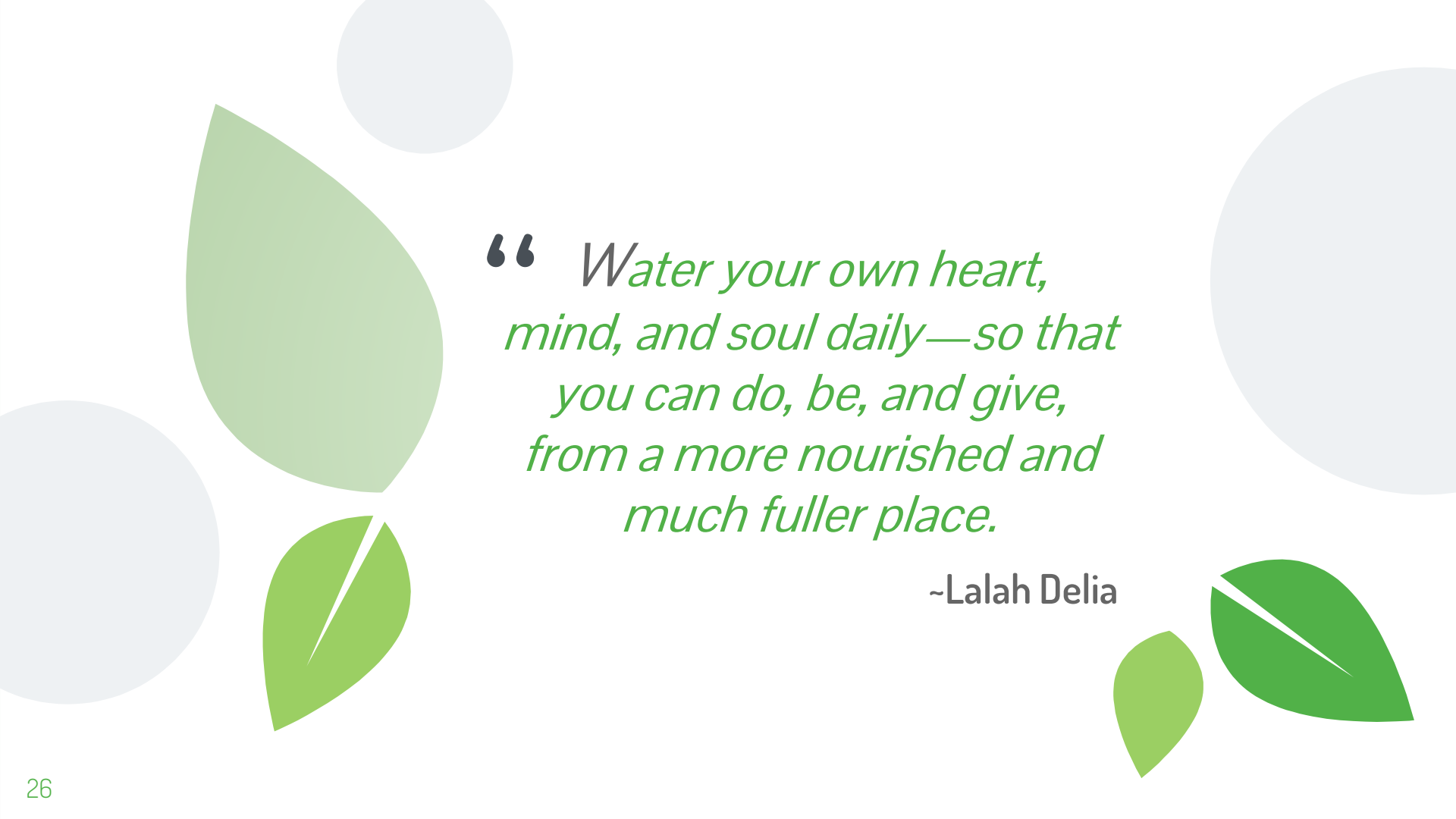
- Start with mindfulness
- Befriend the nervous system (*polyvagal theory*)
- Recall self as a child (*internal family systems/parts*)
- Investigate what is needed (*RAIN technique*)
- Call to mind feelings towards someone else in a similar challenging situation
- Engage in lovingkindness practice (*next slide*)
- **Other Thoughts?**



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# Practice #4

Self-Compassion:  
Lovingkindness/Metta



“ *Water your own heart,  
mind, and soul daily—so that  
you can do, be, and give,  
from a more nourished and  
much fuller place.*

-Lalah Delia



# Resources

## Websites:

- [self-compassion.org](https://self-compassion.org) - Dr. Kristin Neff (self-compassion)
- [rickhanson.net](https://rickhanson.net) - Dr. Rick Hanson (HEAL, Just One Thing)
- [tarabrach.com](https://tarabrach.com) - Dr. Tara Brach (RAIN mindfulness)
- [sharonsalzberg.com](https://sharonsalzberg.com) - Sharon Salzberg (lovingkindness)

## Books:

- Dana, D. (2018). *The Polyvagal Theory in Therapy*.
- Desmond, T. (2017). *The Self-Compassion Skills Workbook*.
- Hanson, R. (2009). *Buddha's Brain: The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love, and Wisdom*.
- Hanson, R. (2011). *Just One Thing: Developing a Buddha Brain One Simple Practice at a Time*.
- Hayes, S. & Smith, S. (2005). *Get Out of Your Mind & Into Your Life: The New Acceptance & Commitment Therapy*.
- Salzberg, S. (1995). *Lovingkindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness*.
- Simon, T., editor (2016). *The Self-Acceptance Project*.
- Smith, J.A., Newman, K.M., Marsh, J., & Keltner, D., eds. (2020). *The Gratitude Project*.



# Thank You!

## ANY QUESTIONS?



**Connect with Me:**

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[geneseo.edu/mindbody](http://geneseo.edu/mindbody) or [go.geneseo.edu/drbeth](http://go.geneseo.edu/drbeth)

Yoga & Mindfulness Videos:

[youtube.com/@yogibethc](https://youtube.com/@yogibethc)

