

Compassion Resilience and Anxiety Management During Tough Times

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September 22, 2021



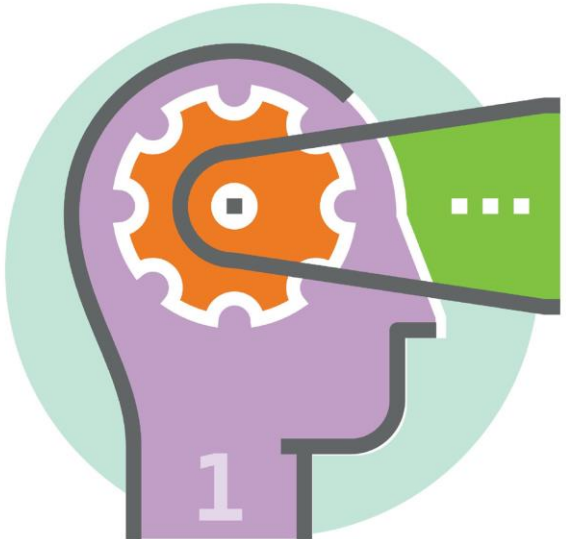
What we will cover

1. Recap Compassion Resilience Basics
2. Stress resilience as a Compassion Resilience wellness practice
3. Take things ones step further
 - What is Stress?
 - Ways to best manage stress
 - Questions

Compassion Resilience

“The power to return to a position of empathy, strength, and hope after the daily witnessing of the challenges those we support face and the realities of the workplace. To be optimistic in an imperfect world.”

Compassionate Action Steps



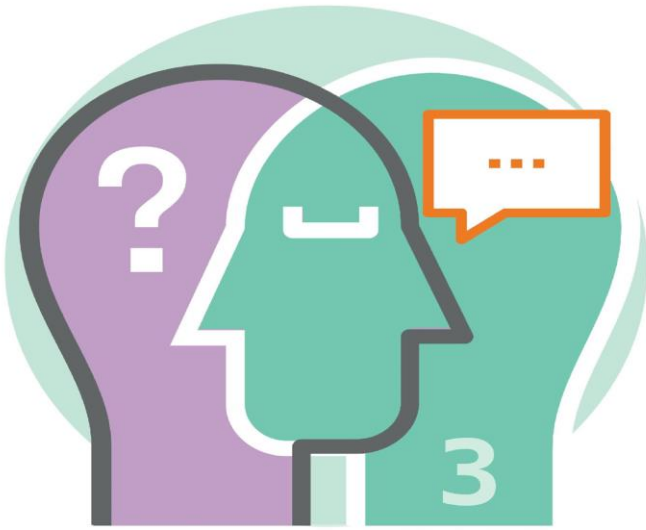
1
NOTICE

Be present in the moment and able to recognize signs of distress.



2
SELF CHECK

Be aware of your initial thoughts and feelings.



3
SEEK UNDERSTANDING

Suspend appraisals. Listen for feelings and strengths.



4
CULTIVATE EMPATHY

Develop genuine concern based on your connection to what the person is feeling.



5
DISCERN BEST ACTION

Co-plan with the person to figure out what would be helpful to them.



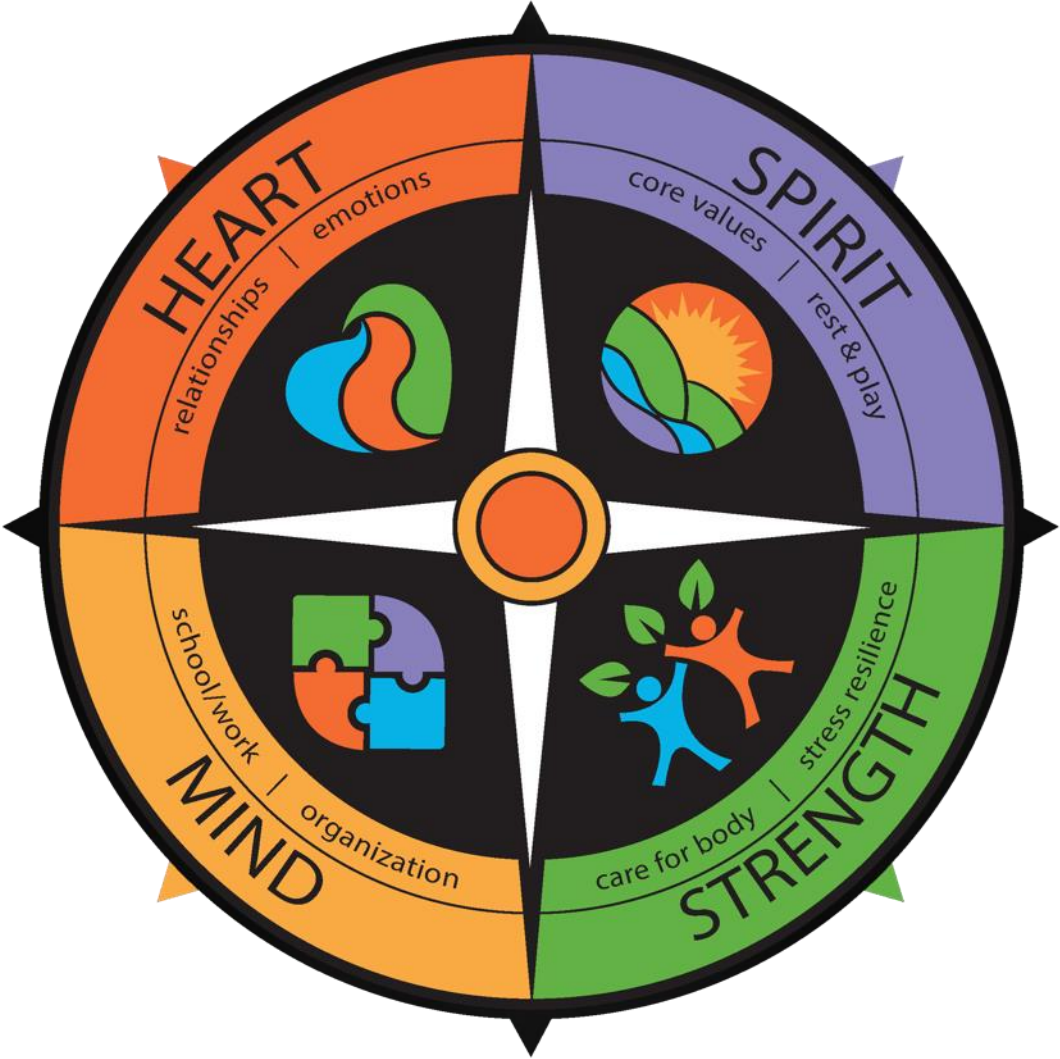
6
TAKE ACTION

Be aware that intention alone is not compassionate action.

Compassion Fatigue Cycle



Wellness Practices in the Toolkit



Mindfulness and Growth Mindset
Organizing our schedule, commitments, workspace, etc
Appreciative Inquiry Reflection on Competence



Core values aligned with the mission of your work
Balance work and play to renew self



Stress Resilience to deal positively with the challenges of life
Build healthy habits around physical well-being and end unhealthy habits



Emotional regulation planning for adults
Relationship building with colleagues

Stress

Signs of emotional distress (SAMHSA, 2019)

- Eating or sleeping too much or too little
- Pulling away from people and things
- Having low or no energy
- Having unexplained aches and pains, such as constant stomachaches or headaches
- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Excessive smoking, drinking, or using drugs, including prescription medications
- Worrying a lot of the time; feeling guilty but not sure why
- Thinking of hurting or killing yourself or someone else
- Having difficulty readjusting to home or work life

Stress

- Stress can be a problem when we feel stress for no apparent reason or feel stress symptoms continuously
- Stress symptoms are excessive or out of proportion to what is reasonable for a given situation or condition
- Stress symptoms significantly interfere with our normal routine, work or school functioning, social activities or general quality of life (e.g., problems concentrating, irritability, withdrawal)

Stress: Somatic, Emotional and Behavioral Responses

(Mayo clinic, 2019)

On your body

Headache

Muscle tension or pain

Chest pain

Fatigue

Change in sex drive

Stomach upset

Sleep problems

On your mood

Anxiety

Restlessness

Lack of motivation or focus

Feeling overwhelmed

Irritability or anger

Sadness or depression

On your behavior

Overeating or undereating

Angry outbursts

Drug or alcohol misuse

Tobacco use

Social withdrawal

Exercising less often

Major Life Events vs. Daily Hassles

Trauma, divorce, death, job loss, financial and legal concerns, and illness

VS

Traffic jams, misbehaving children, argument/disagreement with spouse, children, coworker issues, on the phone with customer service, daily/weekly activities (grocery shopping, paying bills, cleaning, etc.)

- ✓ Both major life events and daily stressors can contribute to feeling overwhelmed and lead to changes in mood

Ways to Manage Stress

- Activation
- Relaxation
- Social support
- Lifestyle-Diet, Exercise & Sleep

Activation

- ✓ Based on idea that when we are stressed, anxious or depressed we tend to isolate and withdraw from usual activities because we feel tired, unmotivated, and do not enjoy things as much as we once did.
- ✓ The more we withdraw, and the fewer obligations we meet, the more likely we are to feel even more stressed and depressed
- ✓ Solution? Temporarily adjust expectations to meet your current level of energy and motivation. Set small pleasurable, routine and valued goals each day (go for a walk, window shop, clean your room, pay bills, go to a coffee shop, lunch with friend, rent a movie, etc.)

Relaxation

Why relaxation?

- Relaxation exercises are designed to calm the stress response and help us manage those physical symptoms.
- When our bodies are more relaxed then we tend to feel less anxious and less likely to use other means such as alcohol or withdrawal to manage our stress.
- Examples: diaphragmatic breathing, mindfulness, progressive muscle relaxation, hot bath/shower

Interpersonal skills

Difficulties in interpersonal relationships are very stressful and upsetting to most people. Learning to effectively resolve interpersonal problems when they occur and to build good relationships with others will help to decrease your overall stress level and decrease the intensity of the stress response

Social support and communication skills (assertiveness)

Interpersonal Skills-social support

Social support

- Social support acts as a buffer for psychological distress.
- A good social support network means that we have a variety of different types of relationships that include friends, family, co-workers, and interacting with these people on a regular basis. (Visual of target-the closer we get to the bullseye the more intimate is the relationship)

Interpersonal Skills-Social Support

Forming relationships

- Shared interests - sports, hobbies, volunteer, arts, education and worthy causes
- Convenient connections - neighbors, work peers, other parents
- Family and current friends - look for opportunities to join friends or family in other activities. Let family and friends know that you are looking for things to do.

Interpersonal skills-communication-assertiveness

Assertiveness - Assertiveness is not just a midpoint between passivity and aggressive. The assertive person retains control and responsibility for his or her behavior while allowing others control over their behavior. The assertive style is typically relaxed and friendly. You no longer avoid disagreements with others but express yourself and allow others to express themselves. You don't always get your own way, but you do get to make clear choices about your own behavior, without controlling others

Interpersonal skills-Communication

Assertiveness-example

Scenario: Friend has been 45 minutes late to pick you up on two separate occasions in the past month.

Assertiveness-Basic elements:

Describe - What's the situation? Focus on behavior

“John you've been 45 minutes late to pick me up on a couple of occasions in the past few weeks without a call”.

Express - State how you feel in this situation

“I'm upset that you arrived late and didn't call to tell me”

Specify - What would you like to see happen? Be brief, positive & focus on behavior.

“Moving forward I'd like for you to arrive when you say you will. If you are running late because of something you can't control, please call to let me know.”

Lifestyle-Diet

Diet

During times of stress, depression or crisis it can be difficult to maintain an adequate diet. Stress or low mood may bring on an eating problem, but changes in nutrition may exacerbate the stress or mood problem.

Suggestions:

- Eat by the clock (as opposed to eating (or not eating) in response to emotion)
- Watch your sugar intake
- Avoid dieting (maintain a healthy diet)
- Stay hydrated (dehydration may mimic symptoms of low mood)

Lifestyle-Exercise

Exercise - research support for the anxiety/stress-reducing and mood enhancing effects of exercise.

Effects:

- Exhilaration
- Mood improvement
- Energy
- Stress reduction

Lifestyle-Sleep

- Avoid over-the-counter sleep medication
- Set a standard bed-time and stick to it.
- Don't go to bed too early
- Set a standard rising time
- Save your bedroom for sleep
- Create a good sleep environment-cool, quiet, dark
- Avoid napping during the day
- Prepare for sleep
- Practice breathing or distraction strategies when attempting to get to sleep

Perfectionism

Good enough principle - We are often happier and less stressed when we take the attitude of “good enough”. Often the extra effort we put into making things perfect contributes to our stress and detracts from our enjoyment. Do we really need to find the perfect gift or simply one the individual would like? Do we have to make the perfect meal or one that everyone will enjoy? Sometimes when we back away from doing things perfectly we actually perform better.

Death Anxiety

➤ Irving Yalom noted these things about death from working with patients in a cancer support group:

1. Deciding what is important in life and what is not important. Not being troubled by unimportant matters
2. A sense of liberation: Being able to choose not to do those things that they do not wish to do.
3. An enhanced sense of living in the immediate present, rather than postponing life until retirement or some other point in the future.
4. A vivid appreciation of the elemental facts of life; the changing seasons, the wind, falling leaves, the last Christmas, and so forth
5. Deeper communication with loved ones than before the crisis
6. Fewer interpersonal fears, less concern about rejection, greater willingness to take risks than before the crisis

Thoughts on Happiness

- Frequent small events have a bigger impact on our happiness than occasional large events
- So, spending 15 minutes every evening with a cold beverage and a sympathetic friend will make you happier than winning the lottery
- Stop Looking. Total happiness is not attainable. True happiness, or freedom from unhappiness, comes when we focus on living a life of generosity and integrity.

Mays (2008)

General guidelines to help manage anxiety

- *Confront fears, problem solve and thought challenge.* Don't try to remove the stressor to alleviate anxiety
- *Don't avoid* the things that make you anxious. Avoidance only makes the anxiety worse
- *Instead of providing reassurance ask that others validate your fears* in a way that isn't reassuring or dismissive.
- *Have a plan* in advance of challenging life situations

Thank you!

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