

# Workshop Wednesday: Managing the Inner Critic with Self-Compassion

Christina Ruggiero, RP

December 14, 2022



Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

MHTTC

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network  
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

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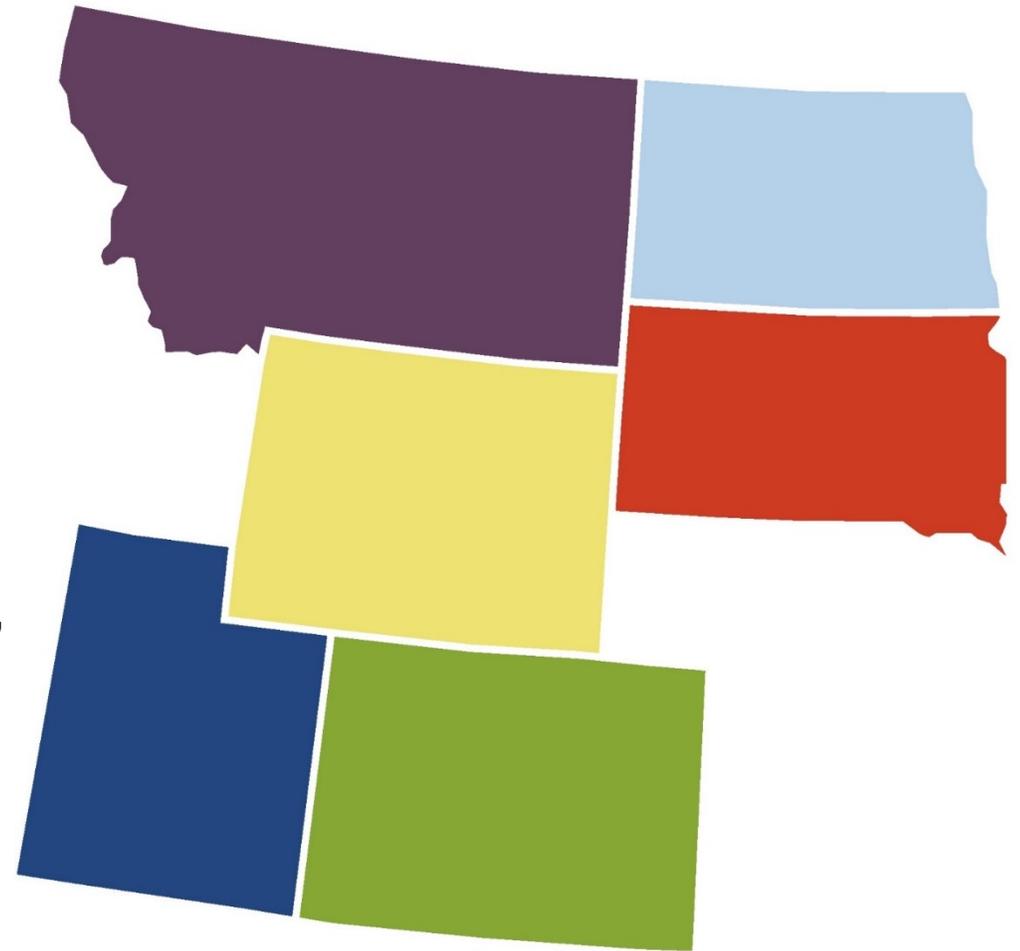
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# The Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center

The Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (Mountain Plains MHTTC) provides training and technical assistance to individuals who serve persons with mental health concerns throughout Region 8 (Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming).

We belong to the Technology Transfer Center (TTC) Network, a national network of training and technical assistance centers serving the needs of mental health, substance use, and prevention providers. The work of the TTC Network is under a cooperative agreement by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA).



# Land Acknowledgement Statement

Today, the University of North Dakota rests on the ancestral lands of the Pembina and Red Lake Bands of Ojibwe and the Dakota Oyate - presently existing as composite parts of the Red Lake, Turtle Mountain, White Earth Bands, and the Dakota Tribes of Minnesota and North Dakota. We acknowledge the people who resided here for generations and recognize that the spirit of the Ojibwe and Oyate people permeates this land. As a university community, we will continue to build upon our relations with the First Nations of the State of North Dakota - the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Nation, Spirit Lake Nation, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, and Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians.



The MHTTC Network uses affirming, respectful and recovery-oriented language in all activities. That language is:

STRENGTHS-BASED  
AND HOPEFUL

INCLUSIVE AND  
ACCEPTING OF  
DIVERSE CULTURES,  
GENDERS,  
PERSPECTIVES,  
AND EXPERIENCES

HEALING-CENTERED AND  
TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE

INVITING TO INDIVIDUALS  
PARTICIPATING IN THEIR  
OWN JOURNEYS

PERSON-FIRST AND  
FREE OF LABELS

NON-JUDGMENTAL AND  
AVOIDING ASSUMPTIONS

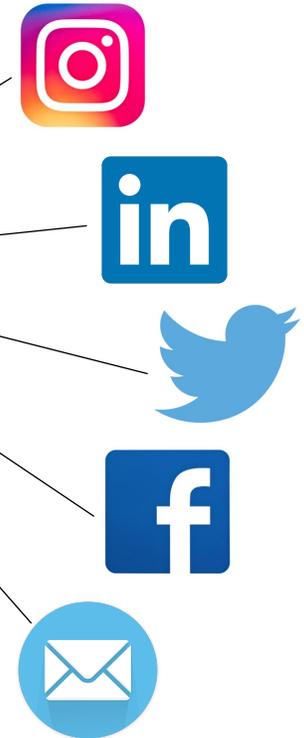
RESPECTFUL, CLEAR  
AND UNDERSTANDABLE

CONSISTENT WITH  
OUR ACTIONS,  
POLICIES, AND PRODUCTS

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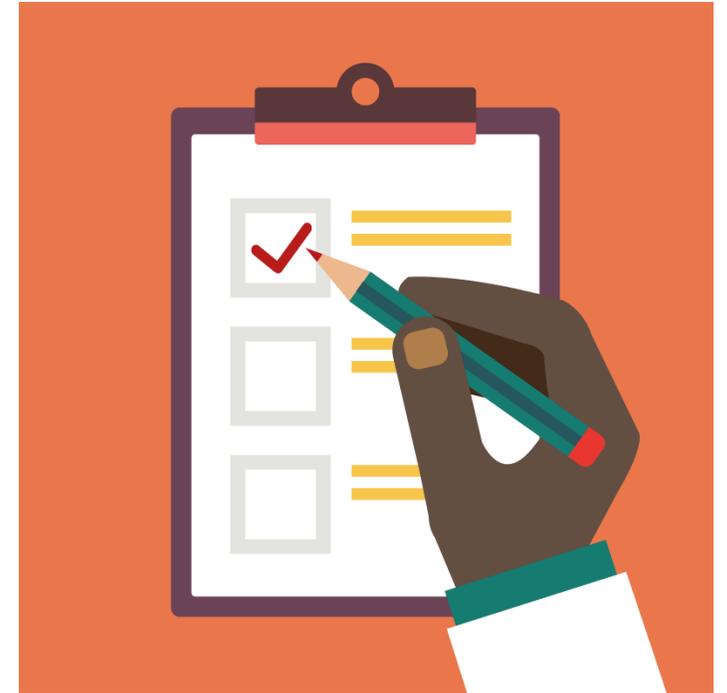
# OVERCOMING YOUR INNER CRITIC USING SELF-COMPASSION



Christina Ruggiero, MCP, RP  
Toronto, Ontario

# AGENDA

- Gain understanding of our inner critic as a survival response.
- Gain understanding of self-compassion (SC) & benefits of reducing inner critic.
- Develop and try SC strategies/ behaviours to manage our inner critic.



A group of people, mostly men, are shown from the chest up, arranged in a circle. They have their hands raised, palms facing up, in a gesture of participation or agreement. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the hands and the text. The overall tone is professional and collaborative.

LET'S TALK ABOUT  
OUR INNER CRITIC...

# Definition of inner critic

- We all have one – an inner voice that expresses criticism, frustration or disapproval about our actions. It might sound like, “you should,” “why didn’t you?” “what’s wrong with you?,” or “why can’t you get it together?” The actual self-talk is different for each of us, as is its frequency or intensity.
- Why do we form an inner critic? How is it trying to help us?
  - It’s a survival resource learned in our younger years, it thinks it’s keeping us safe, it’s protecting us, defending us.

# THE 7 TYPES OF INNER CRITIC

- Jay Earley, PhD and Bonnie Weiss. LCSW
  - Identified the following 7 types of Inner Critics that people are troubled by.

the perfectionist, the taskmaster, the inner controller, the guilt tripper, the destroyer, the underminer, and the molder



### **Perfectionist**

- It wants you to do things perfectly. It has very high standards of performance, and when you don't meet them, attacks you personally.

- *"You will never do it right."*
- *"You didn't do this well enough"*
- *"Your work is worthless!"*

### Survival?

- Wants us to fit in and make sure you aren't judged or rejected by others.
- Its expectations probably reflect the expectations of important people in your life growing up, either said, or unsaid.



## Controller

- Controls impulsive behaviours that are "bad for you" i.e. binge eating, smoking, drinking.. If you slip up, this critic blames and criticizes.

- *"You did it again... Shame on you!"*
- *"You have no willpower."*
- *"You will never break free from this!"*

## Survival?

- Trying to protect you from yourself.
- It is motivated to try to make you a "good person" who is accepted and functions well in society.



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### **Taskmaster**

- It's the pusher! It thinks it's motivating you by telling you you're lazy or stupid.
  - "You're so lazy."
  - "Get to work already!"
  - "Rest means you're weak."
  - "You won't achieve anything in life unless you always work hard."

### Survival?

- It fears that you may be mediocre or lazy and will be judged a failure if it does not push you to keep going.



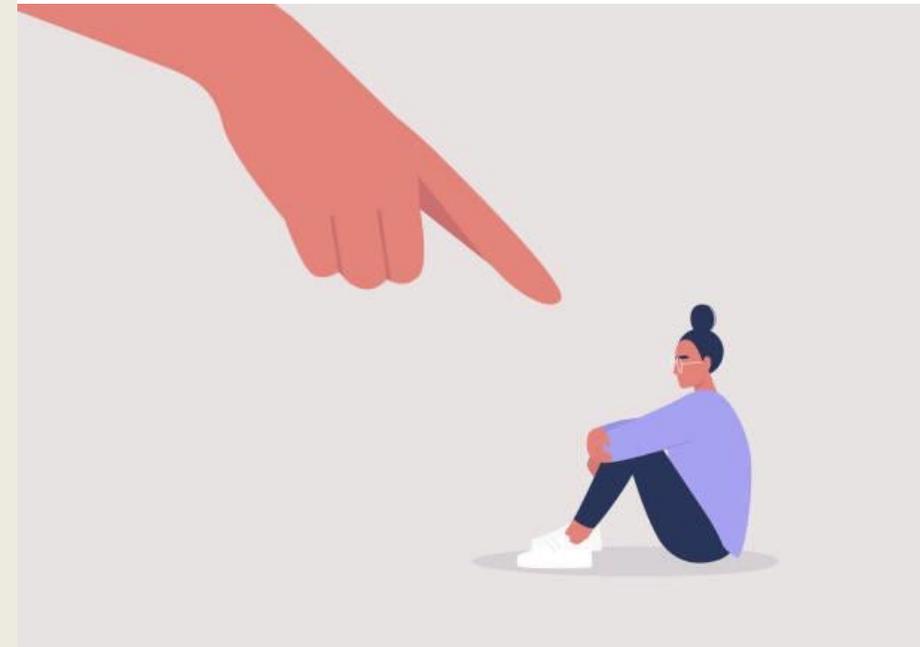
### **Underminer**

- This critic lowers your self-confidence and self-esteem, which paralyzes you and prevents you from taking any action.

- *"You suck and can't do this"*
- *"Don't even try because you will fail anyway."*
- *"It's pointless. You're not good enough, you're worthless"*

### Survival?

- It makes direct attacks on your self worth so that you will stay small and not take chances where you could be hurt, injured, or rejected.
- It's mainly afraid of your being too big or too visible and failing.



### **Guilt-Tripper**

- It blames you and makes you feel guilty about decisions you took (or didn't take) in the past. Usually the decision involved hurting others you care about, regardless of whether it was deliberate or not.

- *"You will regret this for the rest of your life."*
- *"She/He will never forgive you."*
- *"You shouldn't be forgiven"*

### Survival?

- It tries to protect you from repeating past mistakes by making sure you never forget what you did.

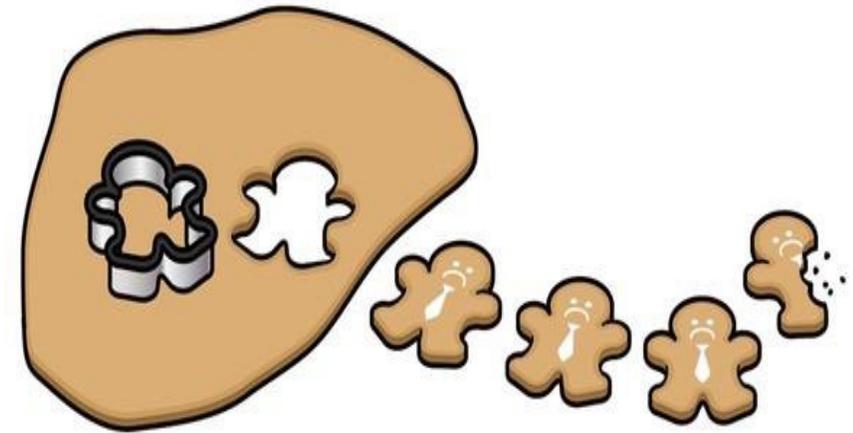


## Molder

- It molds you to become someone who fits into a certain social framework, i.e. the values of family and/or culture.
  - *"Don't make a fool of yourself."*
  - *"Keep your head down! Be quiet!"*
  - *"Do as you are told."*
  - *"What will other people think?"*

## Survival?

- It wants you to be liked, and protects you from abandonment, shame, or rejection.
- Believes if you act "like you", you will be rejected.



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### **Destroyer**

- It makes direct attacks on your self-esteem by making you believe that you shouldn't exist. Deep rooted shame.
  - *"You should have never been born"*
  - *"You are one big failure"*
  - *"You are worthless"*

### Survival?

- It is motivated by a belief that it is safer not to exist at all vs. experiencing abuse and/or neglect.





## Reflection: Why is your inner critic present?

- What WAS the reason for your inner critic initially? Did they protect you? Help you survive? Keep you safe? Help you belong? Motivate you in some way?
- the perfectionist, the taskmaster, the inner controller, the guilt tripper, the destroyer, the underminer, and the molder

# What it leads to...

- Procrastination
  - Over preparing
  - Rumination
  - Poor self-worth/self esteem
  - Abandoning goals
  - Aggression towards self/others
  - Self abandonment
  - Etc...
- 
- What has your inner critic negatively done over time to you?



Benefits of  
reducing our  
inner critic

<b>Less</b>	<b>More</b>
Depression	Happiness
Anxiety	Life Satisfaction
Stress	Self- confidence
Shame	Self-esteem

The background features a dense crowd of stylized human figures in various shades of brown and tan. In the center, a single figure is highlighted in a light, iridescent glow, holding a glowing, multi-colored sphere. The overall scene is set against a dark, textured background.

MANAGING THE INNER  
CRITIC WITH SELF  
COMPASSION

It's our  
turn to  
choose...

When we are younger, we develop an inner critic to help us survive in the environments we were in, and we take this into adulthood to push through life.

As an adult, we have the choice to try to reframe and replace our inner critic, one way is using self compassion.

Taking us out of survival mode into living mode, and working towards what we want to feel, and do.

# What is self compassion (SC)?

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- Compassion acknowledges suffering, fosters warmth, shows care, lets others know they are not alone.
- Use understanding and kindness when mistakes are made...
  
- Self Compassion is no different than compassion you get from - and give to - others, but turned inwards (usually towards our younger selves).



Skeptical???

1.39 minutes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MGxmw7BgZE&vl=en>

# THREE CIRCLES OF EMOTIONAL REGULATION

According to Paul Gilbert's model, people often switch between three different systems to manage their emotions.



In order to help you get a sense of where you might be out of balance, your practitioner may ask you to imagine how big each of your circles is.

Adapted from Gilbert, P. (2009). *The Compassionate Mind: A New Approach To Life's Challenges*. London: Constable and Robinson.

# Why is it so hard?

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- **Threat system** - our brain is hardwired to shift into threat mode (survival resource)
- **Early life experiences** - we may not have been taught or shown when growing up how to be compassionate to ourselves
- **Negative beliefs about SC** - because its not something we are taught about or talk about a lot. "touchy feely".

An aerial photograph of a demolition site. In the center, a large, rectangular structure is being dismantled, with its interior exposed. The structure is surrounded by a dense field of debris, including wooden planks, metal scraps, and other construction materials. A yellow excavator is visible in the upper right quadrant, and another piece of heavy machinery is in the lower left. The overall scene is dark and desolate, with a strong contrast between the white text and the dark background.

BUILDING UP OUR  
SELF COMPASSION

## Exercise 1: How Do I treat a friend?



**STEP 1:** First, think about a time when a close friend is really struggling in some way – had a misfortune, failed, or felt inadequate – and you were feeling pretty good about yourself.



How would you respond to your friend in such situations? Please write down what you typically do, what you say, and note the tone in which you typically talk to your friend.



Write down on a piece of paper what you discovered.



## Exercise: How Do I Treat A Friend?



**STEP 2:** Now, think about times when you feel bad about yourself or are struggling in some way – had a misfortune, failed, or felt inadequate.



How do you typically respond to yourself in these situations? Please write down what you typically do, what you say, and note the tone in which you talk to yourself.



Write down on a piece of paper what you discovered.



### **Exercise: How Do I Treat A Friend?**



**STEP 3:** Finally, did you notice the difference between how you treat your close friends when they are struggling and how you treat yourself? If so, ask yourself why. What factors come into play that lead you to treat yourself and others so differently?



**STEP 4:** Please write down how you think things might change if you responded to yourself in the same way you typically respond to a close friend when you're suffering.



***Why not treat yourself like a good friend & see what happens?***

***Benefits of reducing our critic? Over a week? Month? Year???***

# Exercise 2: Reframing our thoughts

## Self Compassionate Thought Record with Behaviour

## CBT Psychology for Personal Development

<p><b>Situation</b> When? Where? With who? What happened?</p>	<p>7th year of PhD -one paper rejected -one paper accepted with major revisions</p>
<p><b>Feelings 0-100%</b> List and rate your emotions</p>	<p>anxiety/stress 80% worry 80% fear 50%</p>
<p><b>Self Critical Thoughts</b> What thoughts come to my mind? What do I say to myself in this situation?</p>	<p>“I don’t think I have what it takes to be a scholar/scientist” “I don’t think I am good enough” “I don’t think I will ever finish this PhD!”</p>
<p><b>What would I say to a friend in this situation?</b> What would a caring friend say to you about this? Is this a fact or an opinion? Are there any small experiences that contradict this thought?</p>	<p>“You have worked incredibly hard and overcome many obstacles – even though you don’t believe it right now I know you can do it” “I believe in you”</p>
<p><b>Self Compassionate Thoughts</b> What can I say to myself in this situation instead?</p>	<p>“I have been through a lot and have come really far, with hard work, effort and dedication I can finish this PhD”</p>
<p><b>Re-Rate Moods 0-100%</b> Copy the emotions listed in row 2 and rate again</p>	<p>anxiety/stress 40% worry 40% fear 25%</p>
<p><b>Behaviour</b> What did you do after the self-compassionate thought?</p>	<p>Called a supportive friend, went for a walk, began some of the revisions for the paper that WAS accepted.</p>

# SELF-COMPASSION SAYS

@iamhayleykaye

I am not meant to be perfect, I'm human

I forgive myself for what I did when I was still learning

@iamhayleykaye

They have a right to turn me down and do what's best for them, it is not a reflection of my worth

I may not be where I want yet, but that doesn't mean I won't get there

I have stuff to work on, but I am worth the work

I made a mistake, but I am not a mistake

Things didn't go as planned, but I can celebrate trying my best in whatever way that looks from day to day



## Exercise 3: SC Meditations



**Self-Compassion Break (meditation 5.20 mins)**

**Audio :** <https://self-compassion.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/self-compassion.break.mp3>

**Exercise Script:** <https://self-compassion.org/exercise-2-self-compassion-break/>



# Some ways to integrate SC in your life

Attention  
retraining  
(mindfulness)

Reframing self-  
critical thoughts

Keeping a self-  
compassion or  
gratitude journal

Comfort yourself  
with a physical  
gesture,  
soothing touch

Compassionate  
movement

Writing self-  
compassion  
letter

High Five!



## Reflection:

- What did you take away today?
- Which strategy stood out the most?
- Any final questions/comments about what was shared today?

# References

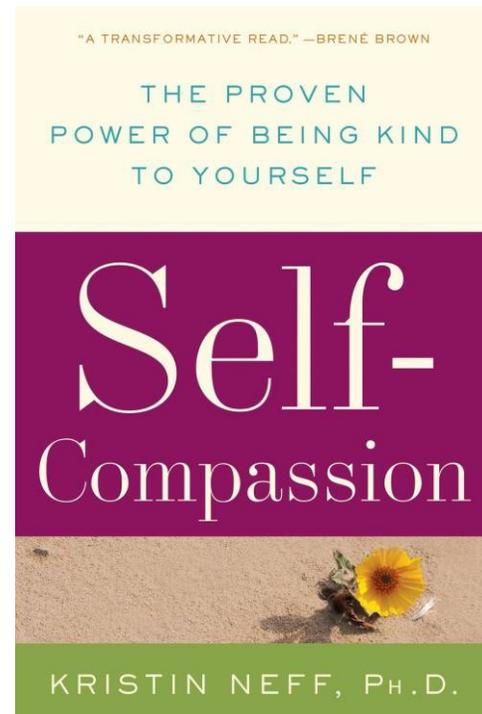
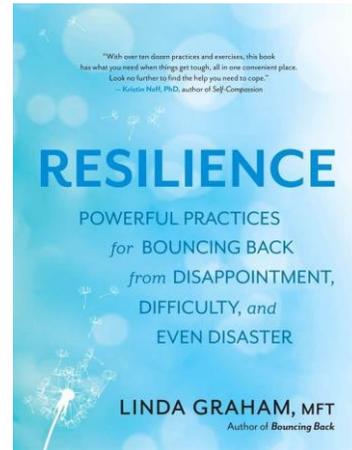
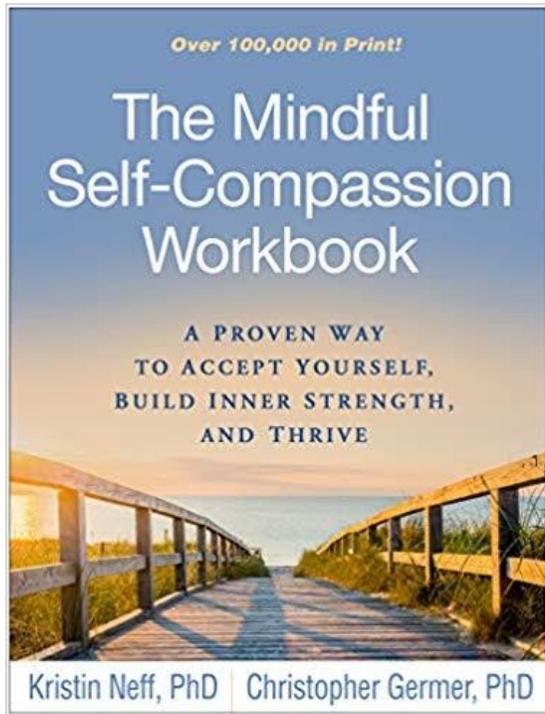
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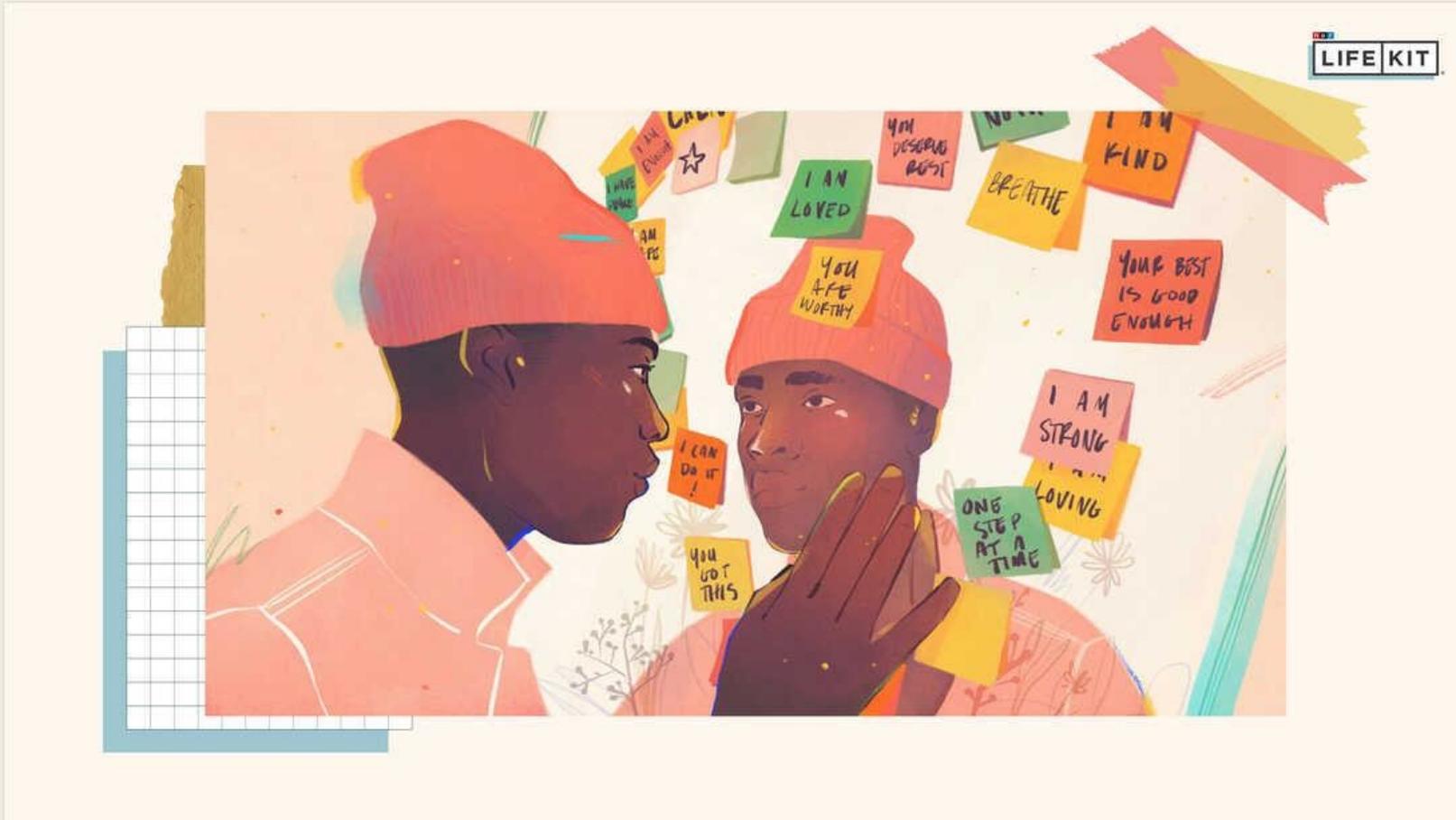
Centre for Clinical Interventions (CCI)  
Workbook: *Self-Compassion*

<https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself/Self-Compassion>



## Further reading...

- [Self-compassion.org](https://self-compassion.org)
- [Mindful.org](https://mindful.org)



## How SC am I?      A Short Scaling Exercise

<https://self-compassion.org/test-how-self-compassionate-you-are/>

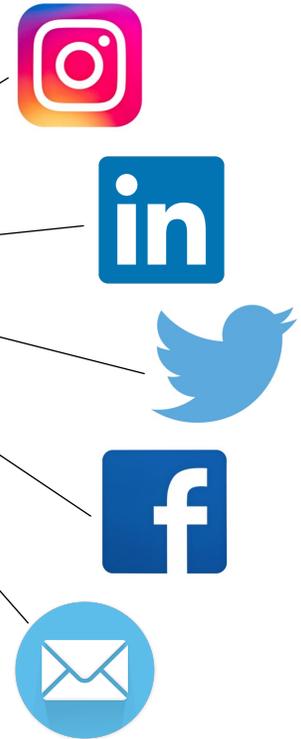
A photograph featuring the words "thank you" spelled out using ten small, light-colored wooden blocks. The blocks are arranged in a single row on a wooden surface. The background is a soft, out-of-focus bokeh of warm, golden-yellow lights, creating a cozy and appreciative atmosphere. The entire image is framed by a thin white border.

thank you

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# Thank You!

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