

February 2021: Self Care/Self Compassion:

Have you ever paid attention to how you talk to yourself? No, I am not suggesting that you walk down the street talking out loud to yourself. We all have an inner dialogue with ourselves that we may or may not be aware of. Do you have an inner critic or an inner coach? What kind of demands do you put on yourself? Do you tell yourself that you have to do things perfectly? Do you give yourself room to make mistakes? Do you give yourself some grace when you do make mistakes? Sometimes we can be our own worst enemy. Sometimes the things we say to ourselves are things that we would never say to someone that we love. Why do we do that to ourselves?

I have found that people that tend to be the most giving and compassionate people are often the ones that are not very kind and compassionate towards themselves. Taking care of ourselves and being compassionate towards ourselves is just as important as being kind and compassionate towards others. I always think about the airline safety reminder of "Put on your own mask before assisting others with theirs." We cannot be good to others if we are not taking care of ourselves.

At one point, I decided to pay attention to my own self talk and became aware that I was not very nice to myself. Mindfulness teaches us to just notice and observe how we talk to ourselves but not judge it. In order to change something you have to first be aware that it is even happening. Once I realized that I was talking to myself in a negative way, I began to catch myself. I learned to notice and label the thoughts by saying "Oh there are those unkind things that I say to myself." Once I was able to catch myself and label them, I was able to replace some of those unkind things with comforting or kind words instead. Our brains have a tendency to latch onto what we tell it, so we might as well as tell it nice things.

Some ways that I have learned how to practice self compassion in my own life is noticing my self talk, and being kinder and more comforting in the way that I talk to myself. Another way that I have learned to be kinder to myself is by building in daily mini self care activities into my day and weekend routine.

One thing that I have figured out as I have gotten older is that I need to build in some down time for myself. I am an introvert, which means that I get my energy by spending time alone. Sometimes I need to build in alone time to regain my energy. Sometimes that means turning down an invitation to attend an event or not packing my schedule so full that I don't have my downtime to regroup. Extroverts get their energy from other people, so they may not understand this about an introverted person or they may get their feelings hurt when we say no to an invitation. I have learned to communicate with the extroverts in my life so that they understand my need for alone time. Are there some boundaries that you can set in your life that would allow you to spend time taking care of yourself? What are some ways that you can take care of yourself and be more compassionate towards yourself this month? How can we role model the importance of self compassion/self care to our students?