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uPLifted Series

An Informational Digest of EmpowerM3 by Coach Cindy

Open the Door to Self-Compassion

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Self-compassion is treating yourself with kindness, understanding, and acceptance, particularly during struggle or suffering.

How is your inner voice guiding you? Is the chatter lifting you or holding you under? What if your thoughts took on the narrative as your best friend or most trusted mentor? What, then, would you hear?

Now, let's be honest. How close are your thoughts to something your best friend would say? More often, it's negative chatter that takes hold. Are you unknowingly and willingly throwing a home invasion party for ten armed invaders? Do you have the door swung wide open, letting in anything and everything? If so, let's close the door and create choice in what you let in.

Knock, knock. Who's there? Compassion. Compassion who? Compassion for you.

Self-compassion is the magic potion for deepening relationships and coping with life's struggles. It is also one of the most challenging practices when you are stuck in the negative narrative running repeat in your head. In this article, I will explain why it is essential to strengthen self-compassion when you have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and offer five practices you can employ to put a safety door in place with self-compassion practices.

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"Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do."

Why is it essential to strengthen self-compassion?

In coaching, the client pinpoints "the why coach on this topic" in every session. Establishing your "why" is essential for the next step. Why is it important to take back your inner narrative? Hating on yourself does not give you the fulfilling life you wish for, nor does it create the change you want for yourself. The negative chatter will not ignite you into a better place or get you to perform better next time. It does the opposite. From a neuroscience standpoint, the brain is a prediction machine. It is also excellent at making prediction errors based on previous information. If you are constantly feeding it the "I suck" message, guess what? The brain then uses "I suck" as evidence to predict the following action when it meets it again. This is known as prediction errors. Is it true that you will actually suck this time around? Maybe not, but you have coded the experience for that message. Internal dialog is essential to notice. What are you messaging yourself?

Would you say this to someone else? Even your worst enemy?

When I ask clients this same question, most often, I get a resounding, "No. I wouldn't say it to anyone." This acknowledgment is followed by a long pause, a sigh, "Yet, I say it to myself." This admission sparks a new desire to change the narrative.

ADHDers are prone to negative feedback and are often extremely hard on themselves. Dr. William Dodson shares something like 20,000 more negative messages are received by ADHDers by age twelve when compared to their same neurotypical peers (Dodson, 2016.) Add negative messages held within your thinking, I believe this number will skyrocket. There is no better why for self-compassion than to combat the bombardment of judgment of self, others, and circumstances.



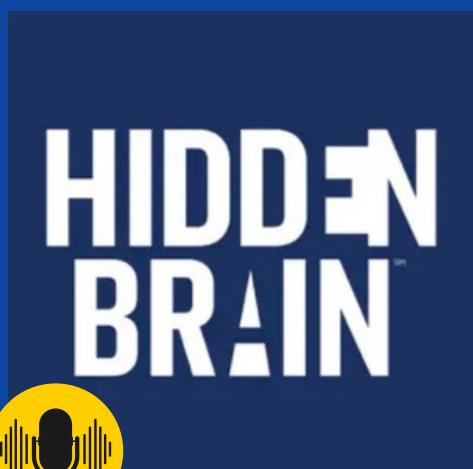
Curious Question: How do I prioritize self-care and self-compassion in my daily life?



Kristen Neff states, "Instead of mercilessly judging and criticizing yourself for various inadequacies or shortcomings, self-compassion means you are kind and understanding when confronted with personal failings – after all, who ever said you were supposed to be perfect?" (What Is Self-Compassion?, 2011)

Neff is considered a pioneer in self-compassion. Her work offers extensive self-compassion tips. It starts with how you talk to yourself.

A silver lining of recent times is the awakening to mental wellness. Self-help is no longer in the back corner of a self-help book that people are ashamed to admit they are reading. Focusing on mental health is becoming more mainstream, taking a more holistic approach to what being healthy means. Wellness is all-encompassing and includes physical, mental, and emotional health. Emotional Intelligence has integrated into the business world as a crucial skill in the workforce.



Being Kind to Yourself Hidden Brain

Self-criticism is often seen as a virtue. But psychologist Kristin Neff says there's a better path to self-improvement – self-compassion. She says people who practice self-compassion are more conscientious and more likely to take responsibility for their mistakes.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/hidden-brain/id1028908750?i=1000538246142>

Mental wellness and mental health issues are more common now to hear about in conversation, on the news, or in social media threads. Social media has been instrumental in shining a light in the dark corners most have been living in the dark with. Reels have gone viral, highlighting the significant ADHD struggles leading to greater unity, community, and support for neurodivergence. Big tech companies are embracing neurodivergence to bring attention to strength-based skill sets. What if you could tap into your strength-based skill sets? What if you fostered self-compassion to do what you do best and support what you do less well with no judgment?

The big question is whether this increase in awareness translates to compassion when people are struggling. Or do we fall into the old traps of working harder and longer, trying to jump through the hoops while on performance improvement plans? The gap still exists. Negative messaging still feeds the inner critic. If you struggle to have self-compassion, expectations within yourself and from others will continue to feed shame, blame, and guilt. Many of my clients share a common narrative: "Everybody else can. What's wrong with me?!?"



Self-compassion and mindfulness support long-term resilience and can help people manage the stress associated with ADHD.



I invite you to join me in turning off the energy drain that is going on in your head. The "hater" in your head is like the apps running in the background on your phone that zap your battery life without you even noticing the demand they are pulling.

STRENGTHEN SELF-COMPASSION

It is time to take back your joy. Self-compassion is a crucial practice, especially for ADHDers. It is due time that you open the door to welcome self-compassion into your home, the home that takes residence between your ears and in your thinking. Strengthening self-compassion improves all lives, but it is vital for people with ADHD.

Practicing self-compassion for ADHDers is vital in shifting the narrative from shame, blame, and self-criticism. With self-compassion, you bring attention inward to bring your best self outward. Self-compassion strengthens one's ability to empathize, explore, innovate, navigate, and activate daily.

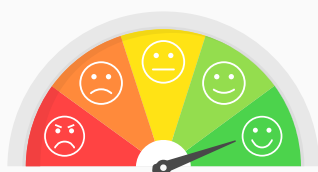
It is time to take ownership of your happiness. Do not wait for others to "make" you happy. Happiness starts by cultivating self-compassion through empathy for self and taming your self-judgment. You have to consciously choose your happiness, starting with your thoughts. I am not suggesting this is easy. In fact, it is consciously effortful. The brain is hard-wired with mirror neurons that mimic what it sees. It's those moments when you are in a great mood, and suddenly your energy shifts, and you feel edgy because the person you are with is in a bad mood. This is your brain adapting to its surroundings. Behaviors, in a sense, can become contagious. This is why you must consciously practice creating your own happiness narrative starting from the dialog in your head. Choosing to self-command what you focus on requires presence.

5 WAYS TO INCREASE SELF-COMPASSION



1. Mindfulness Practice

Commanding attention through your senses (eyes, ears, smell, touch, taste, movement, and balance) is an excellent way of training presence and activating the portion of the brain, the prefrontal cortex, that houses executive functioning. This is how you can monitor the prediction loops that want to take quick hold in your thinking.



2. Reduce Negative Influence

What you spend time with often directs your thoughts. Identify your negative sources. How do you take in the news, social media, and who are you surrounding yourself with? Creating ways to implement effective boundaries to limit exposure to negativity is essential. What if you read the news instead of watching it? What if you carefully choose who you follow on social media and surround yourself with messaging and people who lift you up? How do you feel this could positively affect your ability to have greater self-compassion and influence your happiness meter?

Smile more!

3. Trick Your Brain by Smiling

Smiling releases serotonin and dopamine associated with happiness. Both are feel-good chemicals found in the brain. "Science has shown that the mere act of smiling can lift your mood, lower stress, boost your immune system, and possibly even prolong your life (Spector, 2017)." Smiling also has a ripple effect on others through the mirror neuron effect.

Experiment: What thoughts run through your mind when you choose to smile? Do you give yourself greater grace when you smile?



4. Take a Think Around Break

Negativity cannot be avoided. Bad things happen. Mistakes are part of human nature. However, how you internalize the negative messaging from it can be avoided.

Walk Around the Situation- look at as many perspectives as possible from "less-than-desirable" outcomes. What can you accept without absorbing shame, blame, or guilt? What can you convert from its result into value-added steps forward? This is the act of reframing.



5. Notice Your Thoughts

The key is to notice what narrative is at play in your head. Take notice of what kind of thoughts you are having. When you are stuck in a negative thinking loop, it can seem like you are locked in a room with no way out. Dr. Amen calls these ANTs, Automatic Negative Thoughts (Stopping Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTs) | Amen Clinics | Amen Clinics Amen Clinics, 2016). The only way to deter an ANT infestation is to know what draws and repels them.

Intercepting thoughts before they become an infestation is an act of self-compassion. As you strengthen your self-compassion, you can re-evaluate the prediction errors in your automatic negative thinking.

Practice Play: Take notice. Are your thoughts wagging their tail or baring teeth? Imagine the negative narrative like a dog baring its teeth. When you notice this, what choice can you make next to create safety for yourself? The goal here is to not let your thoughts continue to bite you over and over.

BONUS



Prime the Pump by Greeting Yourself With Enthusiasm

Imagine a greeting that instantly signals your brain that you are wanted; you know that feeling of being greeted with enthusiasm after a long day apart. Your child running up to you, a partner asking how your day was with a smile, your dog bouncing excitedly to see you, a cat rubbing your leg to welcome you home?

Practice Play: How do you know you are wanted? Now, translate that knowing into choosing to want yourself equally so. What makes the dog bounce with excitement in your presence? How can you love yourself this much? Build a list of ways to greet yourself enthusiastically in your thoughts of unconditional self-love. List what you are proud of yourself for?

There are more ways than mentioned here to grow and strengthen your self-compassion. It is not a one-size-fits-all, just as there is no one correct answer for you on how to do life right when wired with ADHD. Your unique strengths take you to different levels. Your ADHD symptoms require your attention and awareness. Both require self-compassion. It's not about leaping into the unknown but about being comfortable knowing yourself and having compassion for the person you choose to become.

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\$349

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Hello

Thank you for joining me. My name is Cynthia North, but people know me as Cindy. I am an ACC Credentialed Life Coach with the ICF as a Certified ADHD Life Coach (CALC) and Certified PQ Coach™ (CPQC) with Positive Intelligence® devoted to partnering with clients to create self-success within ADHD and living life. I work with all ages having a special interest in how the brain affects the outcome. I help ADHDers and stuck people move from crippled in doubt to capable with clarity. I have expanded to offer personalized Mental Fitness Coaching through Shirzad Chamine's Positive Intelligence® Program. New possibilities bloom with deeper self-awareness and through the strength in your mental fitness. I have an innate desire to empower others no matter what difficulties they face with or without ADHD. I believe everyone is worthy of stepping forward out of stuck.

ADHD has touched me personally and professionally.

I know first-hand how ADHD symptoms and behavior can wreak havoc on family dynamics, school, and work success. I chose to become a Certified ADHD Life Coach as well as a member of Positive Intelligence® as a Certified PQ Coach™ because I want others to discover their greatness within ADHD strengths while working with their executive functioning challenges through a positive mindset. I am where I am today because of my two dynamic ADHD children. They both teach me and open my mind to more each day. Their needs were beyond a hug, discipline, structure, or praise. So, I sought professional help, ultimately finding a trained ADHD Life Coach. And here I am serving people who want different and deserve ease and flow.

Life experiences have made way for opportunity. I am on a journey to slay stigmas surrounding brain differences. Finding a Life Coach to empower my child led me to become a Certified ADHD Life Coach myself to serve others past their stuck ways and ADHD stigmas. Choosing to strengthen your inner self is where Empower M3 starts. The work is an inside job where your "M3" begins. Connecting your heart and brain with a Coach creates empowerment opportunities. EmpowerM3 - is where the 3 connect to take flight.



There is a more extraordinary tomorrow when your discovery starts today.

ADHD is not
something you
outgrow. ADHD
is something
you grow with.

— CINDY NORTH,
LIFE COACH AND AUTHOR



Keep learning!

Resources

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Disclaimer:

The uPLifted Series is not provided to diagnose or treat Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or any other mental illness. The information included in each uPLifted Series is offered with the intention of being value-added to the ADHD community and to those who are invested in brain health. This publication is created to start the conversation. This is not a sole source of available information nor intended to be considered so. I am not affiliated with any product suggested in this publication nor do I receive any compensation from the associated businesses or products. Please consult with your medical professionals only using this information as you see fit.

What do you know now?

Notes & Takeaways

