Mindful Self-Compassion at Harvard Library

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Today

- About the Course and Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC)
- Inclusion, belonging and work
- Pre and post course survey results
- Course evaluation results
- Next steps
# Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mindfulness</th>
<th>Common Humanity</th>
<th>Self-Kindness</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally</td>
<td>feelings of inadequacy and disappointment are universal</td>
<td>being warm and understanding toward ourselves when we suffer, fail, or feel inadequate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Jon Kabat-Zinn**

Center for Mindful Self-Compassion - [https://centerformsc.org/](https://centerformsc.org/)
Course Format and Logistics

- Eight 2.5 hours sessions
- Last 2 classes on Zoom
- Half-day retreat
- 27 library staff participants
- Contracted with the Cambridge Health Alliance Center for Mindfulness and Compassion.
  - Experienced and highly trained teachers - Susan Pollak and Richa Gawande
  - Program evaluation
  - Open introduction to all staff
  - Practice continuation program

- Instruction
- Discussion
- Guided practices/meditations
  - seated and movement practices
- Journaling/reflecting
- Out-of-class practices
## Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC)

### Inclusion and Belonging

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<td>increases the ability to listen with an open mind, increases awareness of judgment and bias</td>
<td>recognize that when we struggle, others in our situation might be feeling similarly and that struggle is common to being human</td>
<td>treat ourselves with the same kindness we extend to others lessen and befriend the inner critic advocacy skills (fierce compassion)</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Why MSC at Work?

• Self-compassion is an **intrinsic skill** that can be strengthened over time and is associated with higher **motivation to learn and grow** [Neff, 2005]

• less **fear of failure** and a higher likelihood to **try again** after failing [Breines, 2012]

• reductions in **stress, anxiety, and perfectionism**, and increases in **gratitude, curiosity, and connectedness** with others [Zessin, 2015]
Program Evaluation

• 125 Pre/post course survey items (quantitative)

• 51 Post course evaluation questions (qualitative and qualitative)

• Student and teacher feedback (qualitative)
Survey Responses

• 27 library staff in course
• 26 completed pre course measures
• 17 complete pre/post pairs
• 21 post course evaluation surveys
Survey Measures – 125 Items

- Acceptance of Change (ACS) (20)
- Emotion Regulation (DERS-18) (18)
- Fear of Failure (FOF) (10)
- Work Group Inclusion (WGIS) (10)
- Internal Body Awareness (MAIA-2) (10)
- Group Openness to Diversity (GOD) (6)
- Perceived Dissimilarity (PD) (6)
- Perspective Taking (PT) (7)
- Self-Compassion (SCS-SF) (12)
- Self-Criticizing (FSCRS) (22)
- Workplace Wellbeing Work/Life Balance (WWQ) (4)
Analysis: Pre & Post Surveys

- **Paired t-test** to determine significant changes between pre and post survey ($\alpha = 0.05$ level)
- **Pre/post % change** over time
- **Cohen’s d** for pre/post comparisons
- **Pearson’s correlation** between measures
### Results: Pre & Post Surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Pre-test M (SD)</th>
<th>Post-test M (SD)</th>
<th>Pre/Post % Change</th>
<th>Pre/Post t Statistic</th>
<th>Effect Size Cohen's d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACS</td>
<td>3.10 (1.11)</td>
<td>3.29 (1.14)</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3.90***</td>
<td>0.22 (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DERS-18</td>
<td>3.86 (1.18)</td>
<td>4.07 (1.03)</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4.07****</td>
<td>0.24 (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOF</td>
<td>3.29 (1.26)</td>
<td>3.58 (1.28)</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>3.62***</td>
<td>0.29 (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSCRS</td>
<td>3.34 (1.22)</td>
<td>3.97 (1.00)</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13.64****</td>
<td>0.73 (M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOD</td>
<td>4.04 (0.83)</td>
<td>4.26 (0.85)</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2.77**</td>
<td>0.29 (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAIA-2</td>
<td>3.31 (1.30)</td>
<td>4.36 (1.14)</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>12.52****</td>
<td>0.99 (L)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>3.93 (1.16)</td>
<td>4.13 (0.97)</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>0.21 (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT</td>
<td>3.75 (1.10)</td>
<td>3.89 (1.20)</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>0.14 (N)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCS-SF</td>
<td>2.68 (1.09)</td>
<td>3.49 (1.00)</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>10.14****</td>
<td>0.71 (M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WGIS</td>
<td>3.83 (0.99)</td>
<td>4.18 (1.00)</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4.63****</td>
<td>0.37 (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWQ</td>
<td>2.94 (1.10)</td>
<td>3.50 (0.87)</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>4.28****</td>
<td>0.54 (M)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. ACS=Acceptance of Change; DERS-18=Emotion Regulation; FOF=Fear of Failure; FSCRS=Self-Criticizing; GOD=Group Openness to Diversity; MAIA-2=Internal Body Awareness (Version 2); PD=Perceived Dissimilarity; PT=Perspective Taking; SCS-SF=Self-Compassion; WGIS=Work Group Inclusion; WWQ=Workplace Wellbeing.

M=mean; SD=standard deviation; (L)=large effect size; (M)=moderate effect size; (S)=small effect size; (N)=negligible effect size.

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001, ****p < 0.0001 for paired pre-post t-test.
Pre/Post % Change: All Measures

- Internal Body Awareness: 32%
- Self-Compassion: 30%
- Workplace Wellbeing: 19%
- Self-Criticizing: 19%
- Work Group Inclusion: 9%
- Fear of Failure: 9%
- Acceptance of Change: 6%
- Emotion Regulation: 6%
- Group Openness to Diversity: 5%
- Perceived Dissimilarity: 5%
- Perspective Taking: 4%
Pre/Post % Change: Internal Body Awareness (top 5 items)

- When I am upset, I take time to explore how my body feels. 59%
- When I feel overwhelmed I can find a calm place inside. 50%
- When I am caught up in thoughts, I can calm my mind by focusing on my body/breathing. 48%
- I can use my breath to reduce tension. 35%
- I listen to my body to inform me about what to do. 34%
Pre/Post % Change: Self-Compassion (top 5 items)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<td>When I’m going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.*</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.*</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I fail at something that’s important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.*</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
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* Score was computed by reverse coding.
Pre/Post % Change: Workplace Wellbeing

- After work, do you find it hard to wind down?* 23%
- Do you feel that you can separate yourself easily from your work when you leave for the day? 21%
- Do you find yourself thinking negatively about work outside work hours?* 18%
- Does your work eat into your private life?* 15%

* Score was computed by reverse coding.
Pre/Post % Change: Self-Criticizing (top 5 items)

- I remember and dwell on my failings.* 49%
- I find it easy to forgive myself. 44%
- I am easily disappointed with myself.* 38%
- I am gentle and supportive with myself. 38%
- There is a part of me that puts me down.* 35%

* Score was computed by reverse coding.
Pre/Post % Change:
Work Group Inclusion (top 5 items)

- People in my work group listen to me even when my views are dissimilar. 14%
- While at work, I am comfortable expressing opinions that diverge from my group. 13%
- When my group’s perspectives become too narrow, I am able to bring up a new point of view. 10%
- I can bring aspects of myself to this work group that others in the group don’t have in common with me. 8%
- I belong in my work group. 8%
Pre/Post % Change: Fear of Failure (top 5 items)

- If given a choice, I have a tendency to select a relatively easy task rather than risk failure.* 14%
- I usually rely heavily upon feedback from others when I attempt to determine if a task is easy or hard.* 9%
- Sometimes I think it is better not to have tried at all, than to have tried and failed.* 7%
- When I start doing poorly on a task, I feel like giving up.* 6%
- I usually find that I am well prepared for success on a task that I value, but I do not perform that task well under the pressure of the moment.* 6%

* Score was computed by reverse coding.
Correlation

ACS=Acceptance of Change; DERS-18=Emotion Regulation; FOF=Fear of Failure; FSCRS=Self-Criticizing; GOD=Group Openness to Diversity; MAIA-2=Internal Body Awareness (Version 2); PD=Perceived Dissimilarity; PT=Perspective Taking; SCS-SF=Self-Compassion; WGIS=Work Group Inclusion; WWQ=Workplace Wellbeing.

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I found that the curriculum was relevant and applied to my work life
At Work

• Guided meditation before a meeting that I knew would be difficult
• Use self compassion breaks when feeling stressed at work
• General practice has given me a better work/life balance and attitude
• It's now more automatic to take a pause, a breath, to get up and walk around before responding. I also have more self-compassion for myself when I feel that I'm falling behind in my goals or not living up my own expectations. I've also found myself being more compassionate to others when they don't live up to my expectations.
• Improving my ability to express compassion in my communication.
• I gave myself a break and asked what I needed when I found myself becoming angry about computer malfunctions,
• When I feel hurt by someone's words I just walk away from the email for a while and take care of myself.
• I was able to tame the inner critic to allow me to work on a project with confidence
• In dealing with a difficult colleague; in caring for my direct reports; by caring for myself during the workday
• Mindfulness while reading email; using kind eyes with colleagues
“In pursuit of excellence there can be a critical inner voice with demanding and unhealthy expectations “to succeed.” Self-compassion, on the other hand, is a key element in sustaining ourselves and our work, and its impact on individual well-being is well established in the scientific literature."

Martha Whitehead, Vice President for the Harvard Library and University Librarian 2019
How did the course impact your relationship to your inner critic at work?

“I'm coming to an understanding that people generally aren't as critical of me as I am of myself.”

“I found it was really helpful to learn how common the inner critic is for all of us and how important it is for us to give ourselves positive feedback and encouragement instead.”
Ability to be aware of others' pain or struggle, especially those who may be different from you?

“I thought that I was doing pretty well at being aware of others' pain or struggle and I learned that I always have room to learn.”

“I learned a good deal about my classmates by listening compassionately.”
Awareness of Common Humanity

“The realization of common humanity helped some with the inner critic, these are more connected than I would have initially said.”

“...It was nice to see the common humanity in all of us, regardless of our rank in the organization.”
"Being at home due to the pandemic is exhausting and stressful--the skills I learned are SO INCREDIBLY HELPFUL in dealing with the current reality that I can't imagine how I could go through this without them."

MSC Course Participant 2020
Recommend Again!

“This course was amazing, and I would love to see it offered more widely both in the Library and at Harvard in general.”

“Definitely worth my time. I viewed the extended time as crucial for learning which tools would be helpful to me. It was an immersive experience with a repetition/layering of various MSC methods that helped me internalize and deeply learn these changes of habit.”
What Comes Next

• Continuation Program (completed in September)
  • 45 minutes per week for 4 months
  • 45 minutes every other week for 2 months

• Skills for Inner and Outer Belonging: A Mindfulness and Compassion Introduction for Harvard Library Staff (completed in August)
  • 8 weeks, 3 times a week, 15 minutes per session
  • Taught through a lens of Diversity Inclusion and Belonging
  • Zoom and recorded

• Analysis comparing results across class formats

• Sharing results and recommendations with participants, library staff and administration, University, and external partners.
Martha Whitehead
Center for Wellness
Cambridge Health Alliance Center for Mindfulness and Compassion
Office of Work/Life
Susan Pollak and Richa Gawande
Senior Administration
Colleagues
Classmates
Human Resources
Thank you!

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