A coastal scene featuring a lighthouse on a rocky island. The lighthouse is white with red horizontal stripes. Waves are crashing against the rocks, creating white foam and splashing water. In the foreground, there are large, dark, jagged rocks and pieces of driftwood. The sky is blue with some clouds. The overall mood is serene and somewhat somber.

Supporting the
Bereaved: Slowing
Down Grief in a
TikTok World.

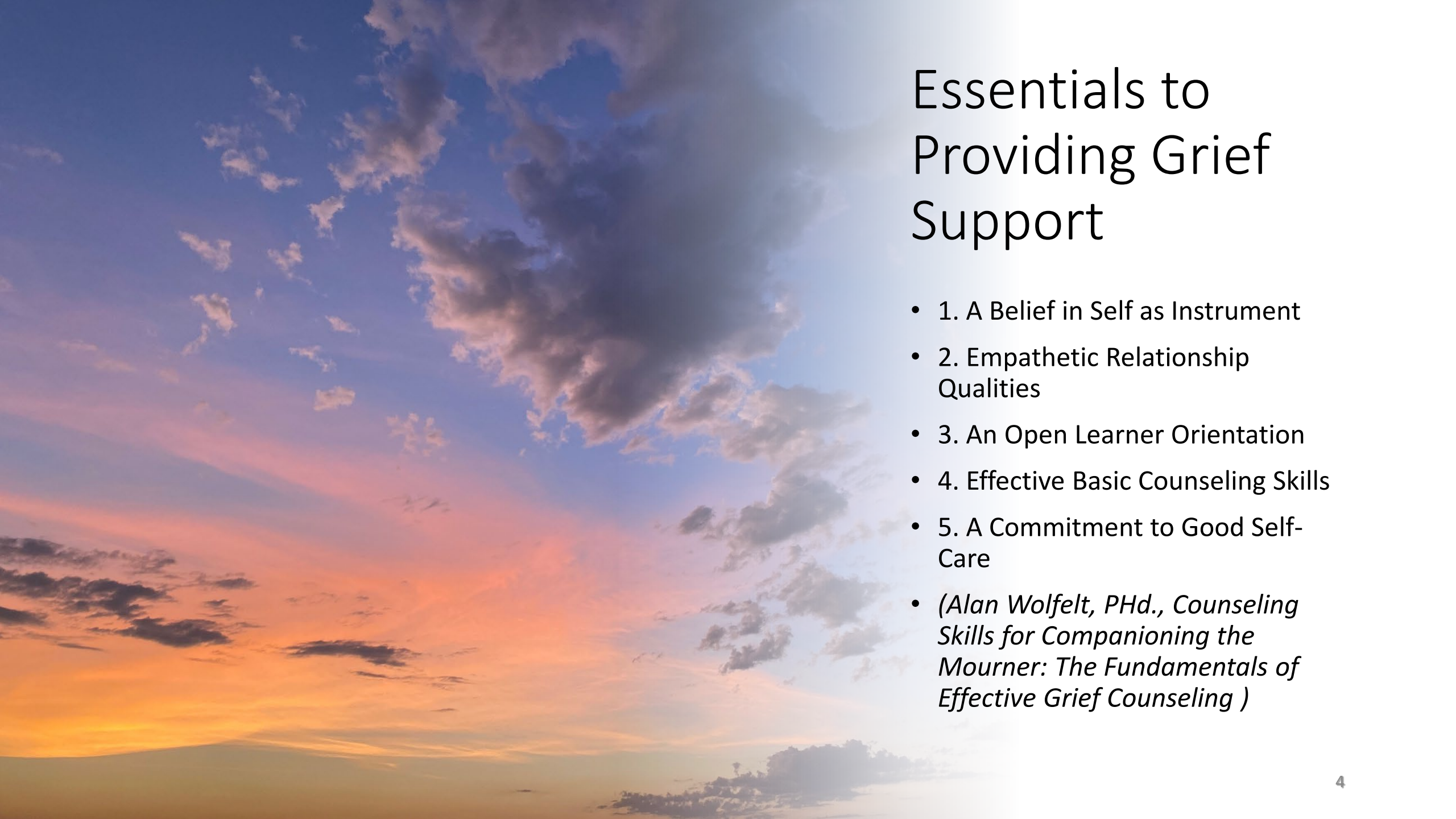
Kelly Karavousanos, LPC, CT



Today's Roadmap

1. Welcome
2. Essentials and Best Practices to Providing Grief Support
3. Techniques for your Toolbox
4. Teaching the Importance of Self Compassion
5. Self Compassion for the Caregiver





Essentials to Providing Grief Support

- 1. A Belief in Self as Instrument
- 2. Empathetic Relationship Qualities
- 3. An Open Learner Orientation
- 4. Effective Basic Counseling Skills
- 5. A Commitment to Good Self-Care
- *(Alan Wolfelt, PhD., Counseling Skills for Companioning the Mourner: The Fundamentals of Effective Grief Counseling)*

Best Practices in Providing Grief Support

- Recognize the Uniqueness of each Griever
- Grief Work
- Role of Culture



Theoretical Orientations

- Dual Process Model (Strobe and Schut)
- Adaptive Grieving Styles (Martina and Doka)
- Meaning Reconstruction (Neimeyer)





Continuing Bonds

- Sensing the presence of the deceased
- Talking to the deceased
- Use of the deceased as a moral guide
- Talking about the deceased
- Use of linking objects

Rituals (Kenneth Doka)

- Rituals of Continuity
- Rituals of Transition
- Rituals of Affirmation
- Rituals of Intensification



Identifying Complicated Grief From Uncomplicated Grief

Symptoms of prolonged grief disorder (APA, 2022) include:

- Identity disruption (such as feeling as though part of oneself has died).
- Marked sense of disbelief about the death.
- Avoidance of reminders that the person is dead.
- Intense emotional pain (such as anger, bitterness, sorrow) related to the death.
- Difficulty with reintegration (such as problems engaging with friends, pursuing interests, planning for the future).
- Emotional numbness (absence or marked reduction of emotional experience).
- Feeling that life is meaningless.
- Intense loneliness (feeling alone or detached from others).
- In addition, the person's bereavement lasts longer than might be expected based on social, cultural, or religious norms.



Grief Techniques for your Toolbox





The Grief River

Thom Dennis

Exercise

- Headwaters: (What shapes your loss: culture, religious or spiritual beliefs, relationship with your loved one, previous losses, your personality and life experience)
- Rapids: (Acute phase of grief: stressors, secondary losses, who is in your support system and the resources you have and what you still need) There may be many sets of rapids along your river
- The Run: (time of refocus on the scenery of everyday life and go with the flow. A run can extend for a long period of time with no conscious grief work occurring but grief remains an undercurrent. Time of transition and adjusting to life without their loved one.
- Delta: When we approach then end of our own journey. Time of life review, life slows down and our losses shape our point of view.





Self Assessment of Tasks of Mourning

J.Shep Jeffereys



Strategies for Coping with Grief

Meichenbaum and
Myers



A close-up photograph of lavender flowers in a field. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, with some in sharp focus and others blurred in the background. The colors range from deep purple to light lavender. The background is a soft, out-of-focus mix of purple and green, suggesting a natural outdoor setting.

The Relaxation Response Heather Stang



SELF COMPASSION

What is Self Compassion

(Kristin Neff, Ph.D.)

- Treating yourself in the same way you would treat a friend you love when you are going through a difficult time.
- Self-compassion for grief is the practice of making skillful choices that will reduce suffering and improve the quality of your life.
- Self-compassion is about both awareness and action. Awareness that you are suffering and action to alleviate your own suffering.



Self Compassion in Grief

- An attitude of compassion, care, and kindness for self in body, mind, and spirit rather than harsh self-criticism or a “to-do “ list
- Unique to each person rather than a one size fits all
- A way to ease the effects of life challenges rather than a way to disconnect or build defenses.
- A personal practice that takes time to develop rather than a one-time event.
- An understanding that life is fragile, flawed and imperfect rather than assuming perfection is the goal in life.



What does the
research say?

Less negative mind states

Less depression

Less anxiety

Less negative self-image/body image

Higher immune function

Less afraid of failure

Increased motivation

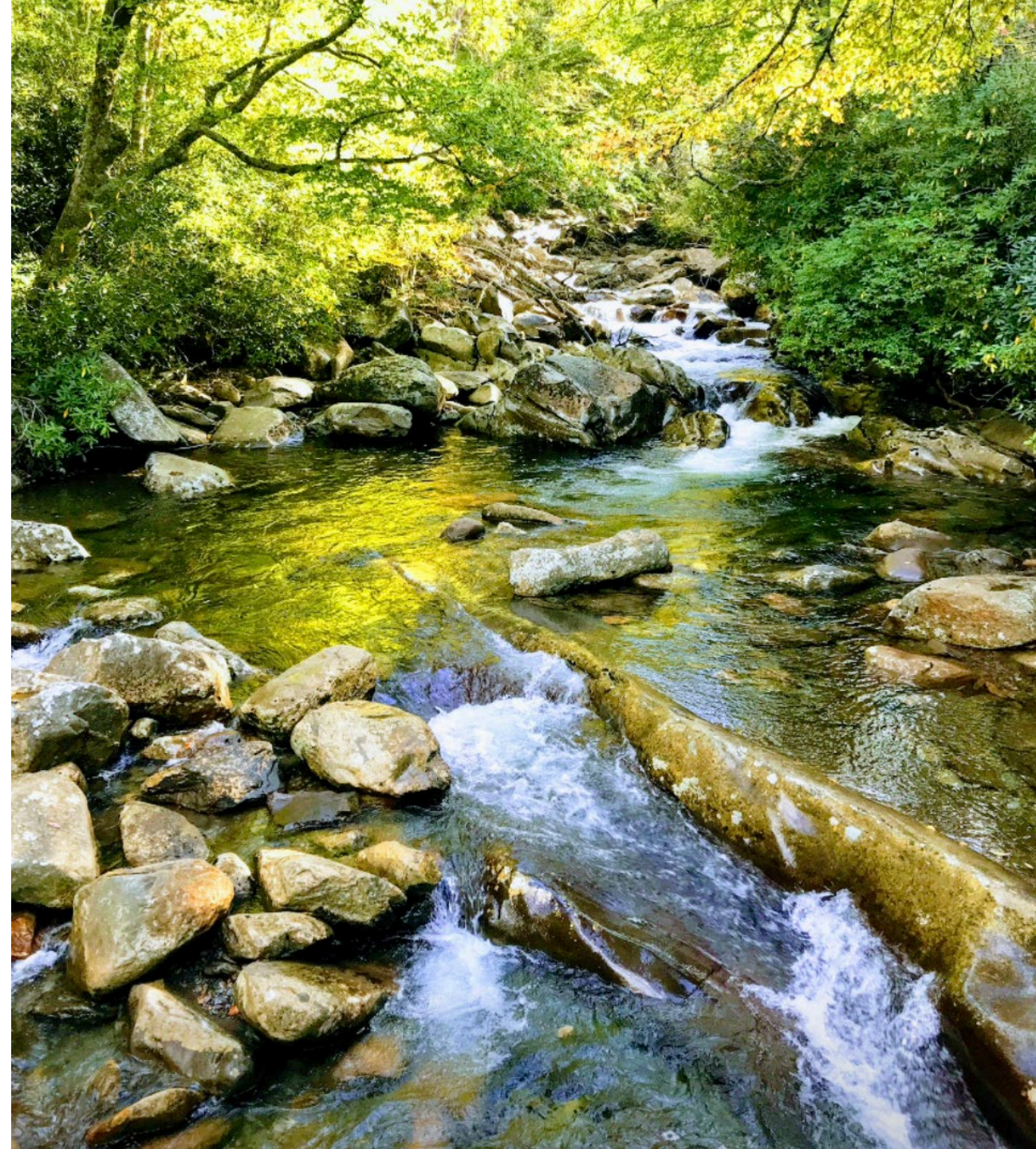
Components of Self Compassion

Self Kindness is being understanding, accepting, and compassionate to oneself rather than harsh or critical while sitting with the pain and suffering of grief.



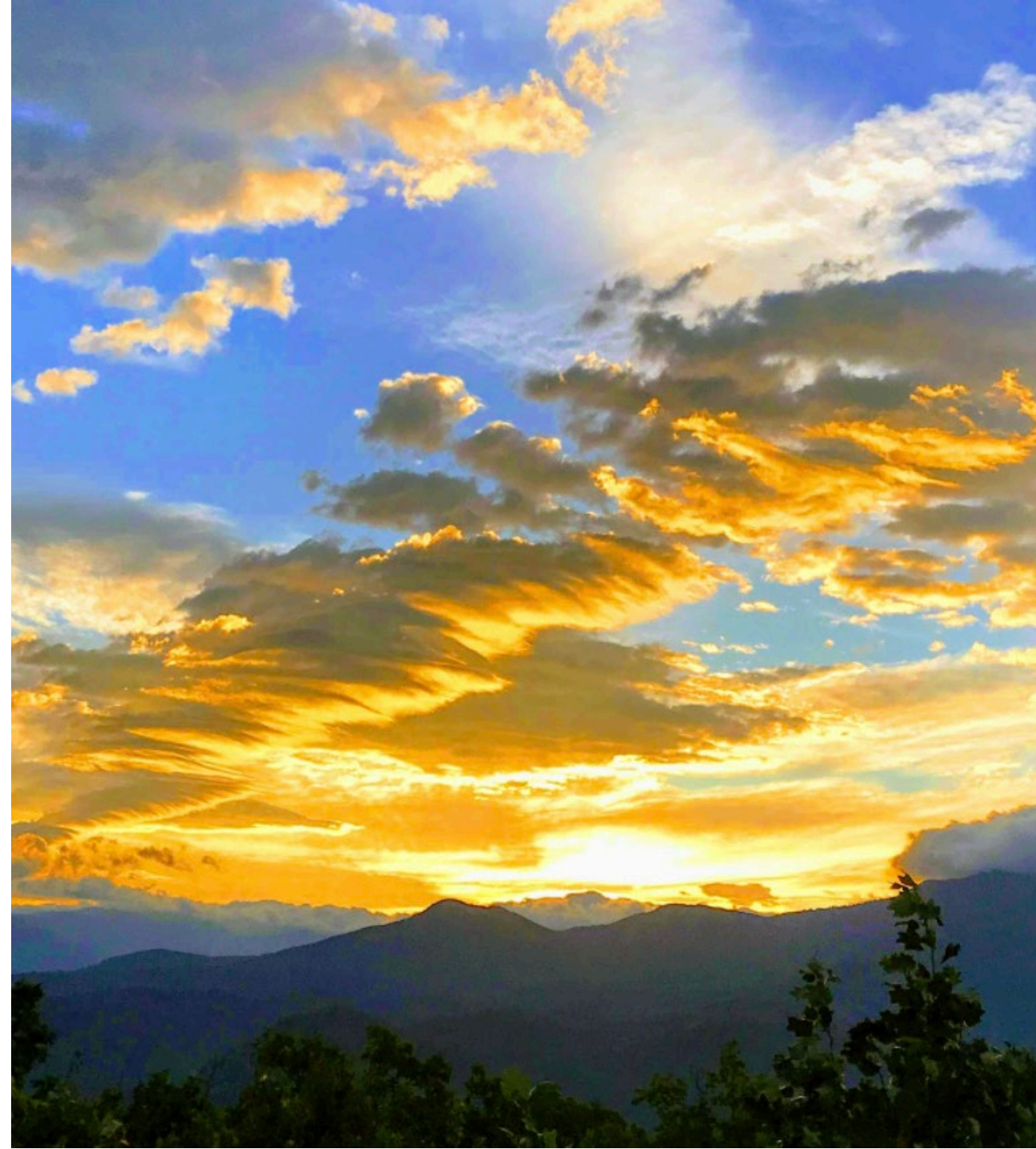
Components of Self Compassion

Common Humanity is the understanding and recognizing how we are more alike than we are different. All humans are flawed works in progress. Everyone makes mistakes, and experiences suffering.



Components of Self Compassion

- **Mindfulness** is being present and riding the waves of emotion as they come as you practice letting go of expectations that things be any different than they are right now.
- If you can't be present to your own grief then how can you offer yourself kindness and understanding?



A blue jay with a black crest and blue wings is perched on a pine branch. The background is a blurred forest scene.

Practice: Self Compassion Break

Think of a situation in your life that is difficult, and that is causing you stress. Call the situation to mind and see if you can feel the stress and emotional discomfort in your body.

Now, say to yourself:

1. This is a moment of suffering

That's mindfulness.

2. Suffering is a part of life

That's common humanity

Now, put your hands over your heart, feel the warmth of your hands and the gentle touch of your hands on your chest. Or adopt the soothing touch you discovered felt right for you.



Practice: Self Compassion Break

Say to yourself:

3. May I be kind to myself

You can also ask yourself, “What do I need to hear right now to express kindness to myself?” Is there a phrase that speaks to you in your particular situation, such as:

May I give myself the compassion that I need

May I learn to accept myself as I am

May I forgive myself

May I be strong.

May I be patient

This practice can be used any time of day or night, and will help you remember to evoke the three aspects of self-compassion when you need it most.

(www.self-compassion.org)

Bringing it all together



- Be present in your grief: Mindfulness helps us ride the waves of grief as they come. Acknowledge what exists instead of denying, avoiding or criticizing to get away from the pain.
- Remember that suffering and grief are both an important and inevitable part of being human: You are not alone. Your support system can bring connection and even more important validation.
- Meet your grief with kindness: Be curious about what you are feeling. Sometimes we resist feelings of guilt, frustration, or relief resulting in them becoming stuck. Offer compassionate warmth, love, and unconditional acceptance

Letting Go of Resistance

- What we resist persists
- Suffering= Pain X Resistance
- What we can feel we can heal
- When we struggle, we give ourselves compassion not to feel better but BECAUSE we feel sad.

(The Mindful Self Compassion Workbook, Neff and Germer)



Self Compassion for the Caregiver

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- “For someone to develop genuine compassion towards others, first he or she must have the ability to connect to one's own feelings and to care for one's own welfare...Caring for others requires care for oneself. “ Dalai Lama



INTEGRATING SELF COMPASSION IN PRACTICE

- Research shows that self-compassion skills can benefit healthcare professionals and caregivers, allowing them to experience greater satisfaction in their caregiving roles, less stress, more emotional resilience, and decreased burnout.



Self Care vs Self Compassion

- Self Care is important, but it is what is provided OUTSIDE of providing care.
- Self Compassion can happen WHILE providing care.





Empathic Response

- **Empathy definition:** empathy is our feeling of awareness toward other people's emotions and an attempt to understand how they feel.
- Caregivers who stay in empathy have more negative effects: self-related, poor health and burnout, withdrawal, avoiding
- **Compassion definition:** compassion is an emotional response to empathy or sympathy and creates a desire to help
- Caregivers who grow compassion have more positive effects: other related concern, good health, a desire to help

Growing Self Compassion to Reduce Burnout

- **Several weeks of Loving Kindness Meditation (Compassion meditation)**
 - Increased brain activation in the compassion area (neuroplasticity)
 - Improved mood & well-being
 - Increased resilience (coping)
 - Increase in true altruism
 - Fostered compassion for the distress of others
- **Compassionate Body Scan**
- **Loving Touch**
- **Loving Kindness Phrases**
- **Self Reflection Journaling**



Thank you

