

This offering is an intensive version of the empirically-supported 8-week Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) program designed to cultivate the skill of self-compassion. It was developed by Christopher Germer, PhD, a leader in the integration of mindfulness and psychotherapy (www.MindfulSelfCompassion.org) and Kristin Neff, PhD, a pioneering researcher in the field of self-compassion (www.Self-Compassion.org). This program fulfills a prerequisite for becoming a MSC teacher.

MSC combines the skills of mindfulness and self-compassion to enhance our capacity for emotional wellbeing. Mindfulness is the first step—turning with loving awareness toward difficult experience (thoughts, emotions, and sensations). Self-compassion comes next—bringing loving awareness to *ourselves*. Together, mindfulness and self-compassion comprise a state of warm, connected, presence during difficult moments in our lives.

Most of us feel compassion when a close friend is struggling. What would it be like to receive the same caring attention from yourself when you needed it most? All that's required is a shift in attention—recognizing that as a human being, you, too, are a worthy recipient of compassion. Self-compassion involves the capacity to comfort and soothe ourselves, and to motivate ourselves with encouragement, when we suffer, fail, or feel inadequate. Self-compassion is learned in part by connecting with our innate compassion for others, and self-compassion also helps to grow and sustain our compassion for others.

Burgeoning research shows that self-compassion is strongly associated with emotional wellbeing, coping with life challenges, lower levels of anxiety and depression, healthy habits such as diet and exercise, and more satisfying personal relationships. It is an inner strength that enables us to be more fully human—more fully ourselves.

Fortunately, self-compassion can be learned by anyone, even those of us who did not learn these skills as children.

MSC Objectives

At the completion of this activity, participants should be able to:

- describe the theory and research supporting mindful self-compassion
- motivate themselves with encouragement rather than self-criticism
- relate to difficult emotions with greater moment-to-moment acceptance
- respond to feelings of failure or inadequacy with self-kindness
- begin to transform difficult relationships, old and new, through self-validation
- practice the art of savoring and self-appreciation
- integrate core mindfulness and self-compassion exercises into daily life
- teach simple self-compassion practices to patients, students, or clients

This program is designed for members of the general public, based on the values of equity, diversity and inclusiveness. Meditation experience is not necessary to participate in MSC. All are welcome!

Program activities include short talks, experiential exercises, meditation, group discussion, and home practices. MSC is an opportunity to explore how we typically respond when difficulties arise in our lives and to learn tools for becoming a warm and supportive companion to ourselves.

The MSC program is a journey—an adventure in self-discovery and self-kindness. Self-compassion has the paradoxical effect of both soothing our emotional distress as well as opening us to the pain that we may have been unconsciously holding inside, often for many years. **Therefore, difficult emotions are likely to surface during the program, including past traumas. MSC teachers are committed to helping participants feel safe and comfortable during the course. However, participants agree at the outset that they will take primary responsibility for their emotional wellbeing.**

MSC is therapeutic but it's not therapy. The emphasis of the program is on building the resources of mindfulness and self-compassion. MSC is not a substitute for medical or mental health care.

Participants should also be aware that MSC is mindfulness-based *compassion* training. Mindfulness and compassion go hand-in-hand, but our main purpose is compassion training.

In a randomized, controlled study, MSC significantly increased self-compassion, compassion for others, mindfulness, and life satisfaction, as well as decreased depression, anxiety and stress. Improvements were linked to how much a person practiced in their daily lives. For the full-text article, [please click here \(PDF\)](#). Improvements were linked to how much a person practiced in their daily lives. After the Intensive, MSC participants are encouraged to practice mindfulness and self-compassion up to 1/2 hour per day, and teachers will provide tips for home practice.

MSC is taught in a variety of formats and an Intensive is the most emotionally challenging format to learn MSC. This is because it is 5 days of full immersion in self-compassion and participants do not have as much time to digest the course material and they don't have access to their usual social supports. The depth of the training also means that difficult emotions are more likely to surface. Nonetheless, the deep dive into self-compassion that happens at an Intensive is a unique opportunity to experience its transformative potential.