Reignite Your Passion and Rediscover Compassion: Overcoming Compassion Fatigue



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Disclosures

No disclosures related to today's presentation

Learning Objectives

- Identify the signs of compassion fatigue and its impact on dietitians' well-being and professional performance.
- *Apply Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) techniques to manage stress, build resilience, and maintain emotional balance.
- * Develop a personalized self-care plan to sustain passion, prevent burnout, and foster long-term well-being.

Performance Indicators

- * 1.1.6 Recognizes and exercises professional judgment within the limits of individual qualifications.
- 1.3.1 Recognizes actual or potential ethical issues and dilemmas encountered in practice.
- 2.1.2 Develops awareness of one's own personal biases, privilege, beliefs and values to inform understanding of and reduce biases.

Today's Spa Menu



Have You Lost a Passion for Compassion?



Welcome to the World of Mindfulness



Putting Your New Tools into Practice

Nice to Meet You!

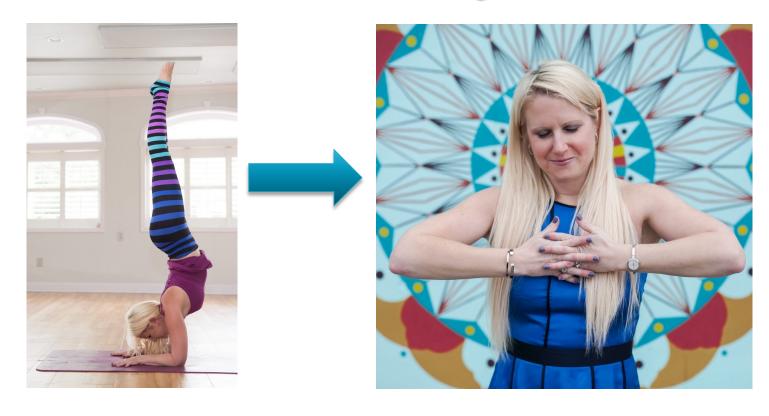








Yoga Transitions: From Body to Mind



Before We Dive In...



REMOVE YOUR DIETITIAN HAT!
BE A STUDENT TODAY



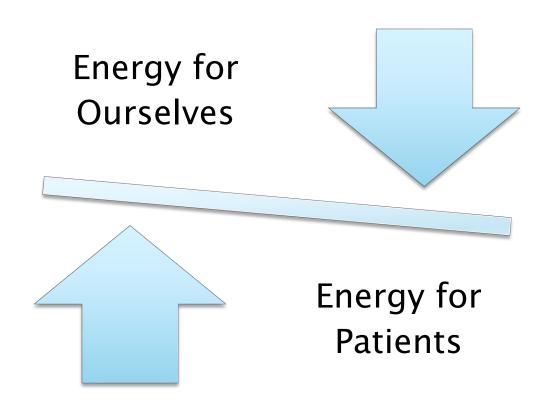
Compassion Fatigue: >>>
Has Your Passion Burned Out?



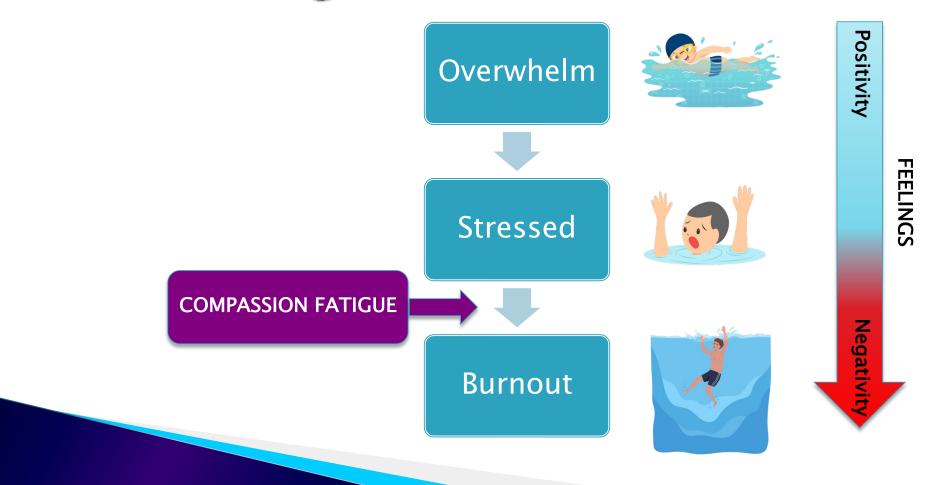
The #1 Reason We Become RDs:



BUT Can We Be Helping Too Much?



Burnout Progression



Compassion Fatigue Defined

Stress due to exposure to traumatized, stressed, or suffering individual(s)

Taking on other people's problems as your own

Result of "over-empathy" → secondary trauma

Also called "Secondary Trauma Syndrome" or "Vicarious Trauma"

Sympathy = I *care about* your suffering.

Empathy = I *feel* your suffering.

Compassion = I *want to relieve* your suffering.

Cocker et al. (2016)

Compassion Fatigue IS NOT Burnout

COMPASSION FATIGUE

Stems from OTHER'S stress/trauma/suffering



BURNOUT

 Cumulation of ongoing, prolonged, unmanaged stress



BUT many symptoms overlap and they can exacerbate the other

Signs of Compassion Fatigue



Physically

Headaches

Exhaustion

Insomnia

Muscle Tension

Reduced Immunity



Emotionally

Anger

Irritability

Hopelessness

Dissatisfaction

Cynical

Loss of Purpose



Behaviorally

Isolationism

Absenteeism

Drug/Alcohol Use

Appetite Changes

Exaggerated sense of

responsibility

Trouble separating personal/professional life

Presenteeism



Cognitively

Impaired ability to make decisions

Trouble focusing

Low self-esteem

Self-blame

Depression

Cocker et al. (2016)

Areas of Dietetics Often Susceptible to Compassion Fatigue

Low-Income & Food Insecurity

Palliative Care

Oncology

Eating Disorders

Pediatrics

ICU

What Do We Do If We Are Experiencing Compassion Fatigue?

Quit our Job?



Run Away?





Leave Dietetics & Join the Circus?

How to Combat Compassion Fatigue



Communicate & Collaborate with Colleagues & Supervisors



Resiliency Training



Reconnect with Purpose



Mindfulness



Meet Mindfulness



Let's Give Mindfulness a Try



Mindfulness is:

Paying attention to your *present moment* experience with an *attitude* of openness and curiosity

9 Attitudinal Foundations of Mindfulness

Non-judging

Patience

Trust

Beginner's mind

Non-striving

Acceptance

Letting go

Gratitude

Generosity

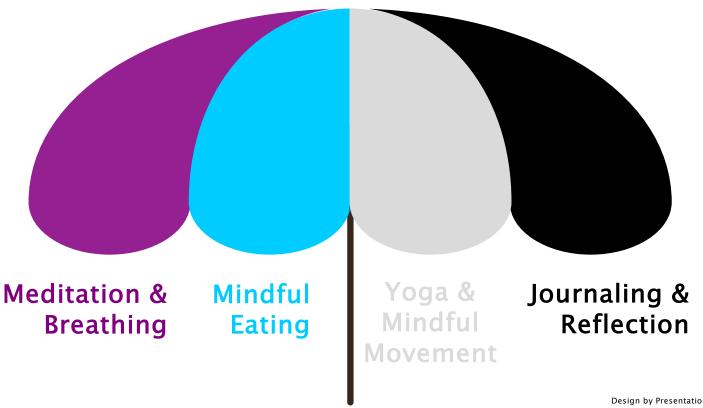
Kabat-Zinn, J. (2013)

Mindfulness



Meditation

MINDFULNESS



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Mindfulness is NOT

- Tuning out
- Being relaxed
- Stopping your thoughts
- Being passive
- Self-improvement

Mindfulness IS

- Being self-aware
- Being perceptive and curious
- Responding instead of reacting
- Staying focused on what's important
- Connecting deeply with others
- Acceptance

MINDFULNESS IS NOT **ABOUT** FEELING BETTER. IT'S ABOUT GETTING BETTER AT FEELING.

Mainstream Meditation



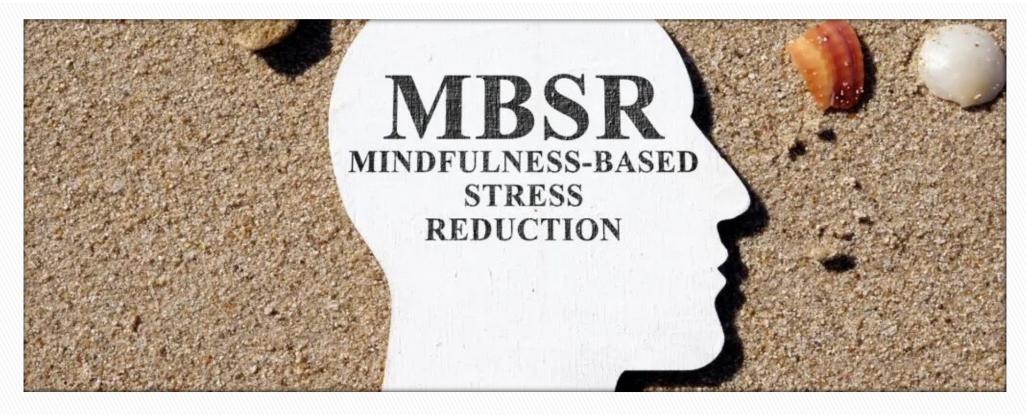
2 Key Mindfulness-Based Programs



Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)



Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC)



Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction >>



Mindfulness-Based Stress Management (MBSR)



Created 1979 by Jon Kabat-Zinn at Umass Medical Center Stress Reduction Clinic



Originally called Stress Reduction & Relaxation Program



Used to treat chronically ill patients cope with pain using mind-body connection



Roots in Buddism & yoga, but is a SECULAR PROGRAM



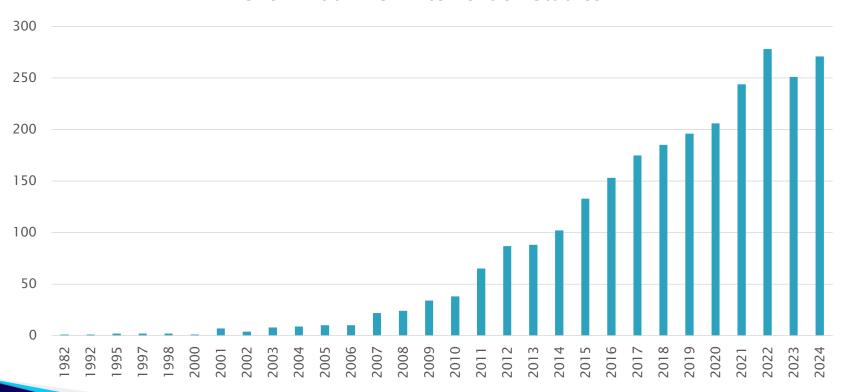
EVIDENCE-BASED



Most researched form of mindfulness

Growing Body of Evidence

Over 2200 MBSR Intervention Studies!



Source: PubMed search conducted 1/7/25

MBSR Program & Practices



8-week program



2.5-hour classes



One day silent retreat



Daily meditation and homework



Group discussions



Mindfulness practices:

Awareness

Body scans

Sitting meditation

Yoga & mindful movement

Loving kindness meditation

Journaling

Gratitude

Benefits of Mindfulness



Emotional

- · Reduce stress
- · Increase resilience
- Cultivate selfawareness
- Enhance emotional intelligence
- Greater empathy and compassion



Cognitive

- Strengthen focus
- Improve memory
- · Reduce bias
- Enhance decisionmaking
- Increase flexible thinking and creativity



Physical

- · Lower blood pressure
- Decrease heart rate
- Strengthen immune system
- Enhance ability to cope with pain
- Improve safety and reduce injury



Behavioral

- · Improve sleep
- Improve listening & communication
- Greater patience & persistence
- · More ethical behavior
- Facilitates habit change

MBSR for Compassion Fatigue in HCPs



2022 study of LTC nurses caring for patients with dementia attended a 6-week online MBSR program



Significant improvement in compassion fatigue & burnout found immediately after program completion & continued 3 months after



Nurses continued using mindfulness tools post-intervention



100% completion rate = high adherence to program & easy to replicate



Nurses felt program helped improve QOL for their patients by using mindfulness in their treatment approaches



HOWEVER overall job satisfaction did not change



Mindful Self-Compassion >>



What Do You Say in This Scenario?

*You work bestie comes to you upset because they learned a patient of theirs got very sick due to a nutrition recommendation they made.

***WHAT DO YOU SAY TO YOUR FRIEND?**



BUT... what if this happened to YOU???

- *You just learned a patient of yours got very sick due to a nutrition recommendation you made.
- ***WHAT DO YOU SAY TO YOURSELF???**

DID YOU RESPOND THE SAME WAY???

Why Don't We Treat Ourselves like a Best Friend?

75% of people are kinder to others than to themselves

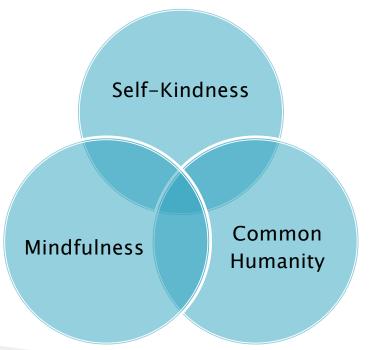
Self-criticism is a survival strategy

Tricks brain into *feeling* a sense of control

"Proactive Punishment"

Self-Compassion: Be Your Ally, Not an Enemy

- Coined by Dr Kristen Neff in 2003
- Comprised of 3 components:



Elements of Self-Compassion

Self-Kindness vs Self-Judgement

- ·Kindness and understanding toward ourselves when we suffer, fail, or feel inadequate
- •NOT ignoring our pain or self-punishment
- Creates sense of safety

Common Humanity vs Isolation

- •All humans suffer but not the same way
- Being "human" = vulnerable, flawed & imperfect
- ·Suffering connects us rather than separates us

Mindfulness vs Over-Identification

- ·Observing things as they are
- •Prevents "over-identifying" with difficult thoughts and feelings → over-reacting with negativity

SELF-COMPASSION MYTH

- Undermines motivation
- Avoids responsibility for actions
- Feeling sorry for yourself
- Self-indulgent
- Selfish
- Creates weakness

SELF-COMPASSION FACT

- Motivates learning & growth
- Take responsibility & repair situation
- Increases perspective-taking & connection with others
- Better long-term health & happiness behaviors
- Reduces burnout to give more support to others
- Increases resilience

Neff, K. (2023

Benefits of Mindful Self-Compassion

Increase In

Life Satisfaction

Hope

Gratitude

Body Appreciation

Happiness

Emotional Intelligence

Resiliency

Work-Life Balance

Healthy Boundaries

Physical Health

Stress

Depression

Anxiety

Disordered Eating

Perfectionism

Isolation/Loneliness

Fear of Failure

Imposter Syndrome

Burnout

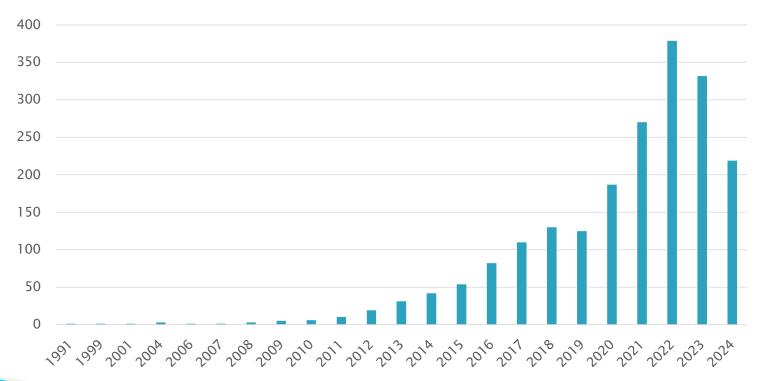
Negative Coping

Mechanisms

Decrease Ir

Research Agrees this is a Growing Topic!

Over 1600 Articles on MSC!



Source: PubMed search conducted 1/7/25



INDIVIDUAL PRACITIONER

Mindfulness Self-Compassion

Burnout
Stress
Depression
Anxiety
Interpersonal Conflict
Compassion Fatigue

ORGANIZATIONS & WORKPLACES

Culture Environment Patient Care

Burnout

Conversano et al. (2020) Lyon & Galbraith (2023) Wasson (2020)



Let's Build Some Skills!



Loving Kindness Meditation (Metta)



Supportive Touch (Hand on Heart)



Mindful Movement



Micro Practice: STOP

S	STOP what you are doing, and come into a posture that feels stable and balanced
Т	TAKE a few conscious breaths. Feel your feet on the floor or your sitz bones in the chair.
0	OBSERVE what is going on inside you (sensations in the body, thoughts, emotions) with an open and accepting mindset, not judging or trying to change it
P	PROCEED with what is next, with more connection and conscious choices



HOMEWORK: Letter to Yourself

- Pick 1-2 imperfections that make you feel inadequate.
- 2. Write a letter to yourself from the perspective of a loving, caring friend or family member.
- 3. Put the letter down and come back to it in a few hours to read to yourself.
- 4. SEND this letter to yourself at www.futureme.org

See worksheet provided for more info



Rekindling Your Compassion Toolkit



Step 1: Assessment Tools



COMPASSION FATIGUE

Professional Quality of Life (PQOL)

- Compassion Satisfaction
- Burnout
- Secondary Traumatic Stress



BURNOUT

Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)

- Emotional Exhaustion
- Depersonalization
- Personal Accomplishment



SELF-COMPASSION

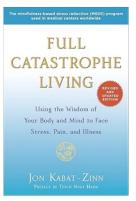
Self-Compassion Scale (SCS)

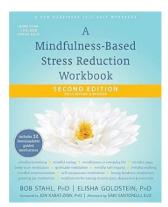
- Self-Kindness
- Self-Judgement
- Common Humanity
- Isolation
- Mindfulness
- Over-identification

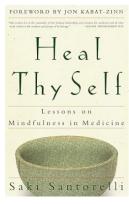
*These tools are not intended to diagnose

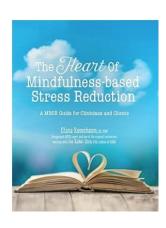
Stamm, BH (2009-2012) Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2021) Neff, K. (2003b)

Step 2: Your Supply Kit * Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction





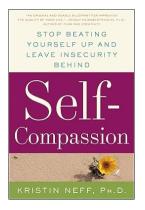


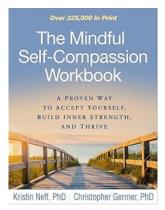


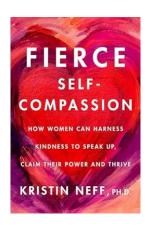
- Explore MBSR programs & resources through:
 - UMass Center for Mindfulness
 - Brown University School of Professional Studies
 - UC San Diego Center for Mindfulness
 - Mindful Leader
- Consider doing with your team or group of colleagues

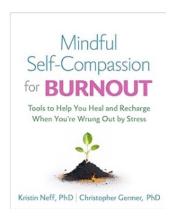
Step 2: Your Supply Kit

Mindfulness Self-Compassion









- * SelfCompassion.Org
 - Practices
- Center for Mindful Self-Compassion
 - Professional Workshops & Trainings
 - Self-Compassion for Healthcare Communities Course
- Consider doing with team or colleagues

Step 3: Daily Plan of Action

PICK 2 TO DO DAILY!

- * Micro-Mindfulness Breaks
- Mindful Eating
- * Journaling
- Meditation
- Breathing Exercises
- * Mindful Movement
- What Else Makes You Feel Taken Care Of?



Step 4: Make Mindfulness a Habit



Periodic Check-Ins



Stuck Waiting?
Practice Mindfulness



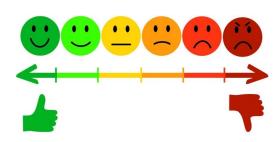
Before or After a Meeting/Session



Practice with Family



Swap Phone Time for Mindfulness Time



Note How You're Feeling Throughout the Day

Step 5: Get Others On Board!



Moving Forward Mindfully



Identify if you're experiencing burnout or compassion fatigue



Check in & COMMUNICATE what you're feeling to YOURSELF and others



Find tools and resources for daily use to be more mindful & self-compassionate

Keep In Touch!

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Let's Get Social!







THANK YOU!



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