

SELF COMPASSION AND MORAL INJURY

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Caring for the Human Spirit
March 14, 2017

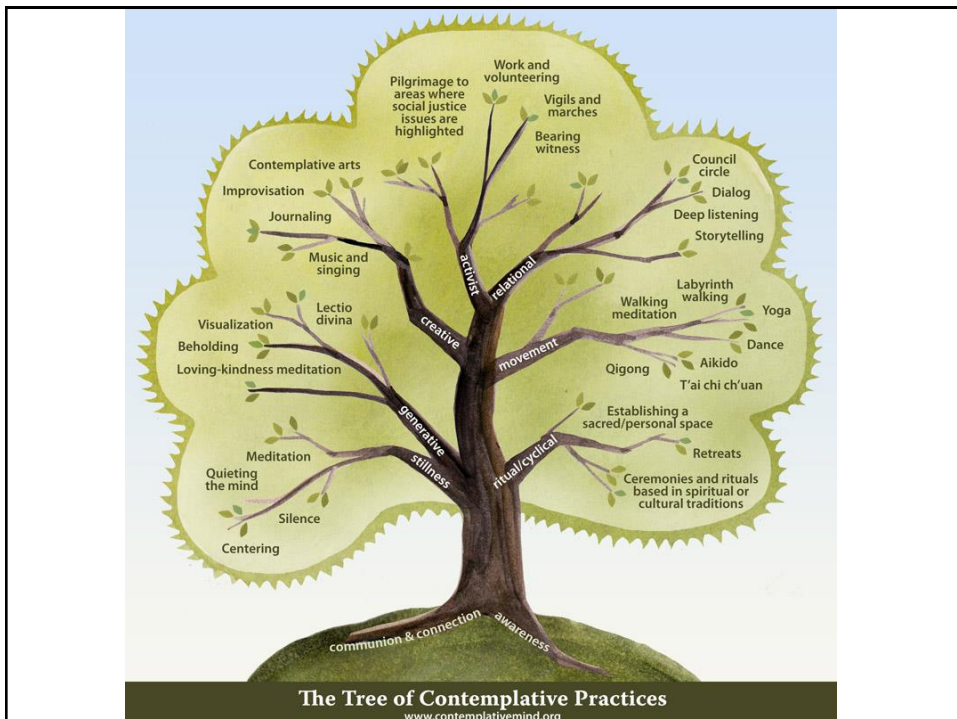
Contemplative Learning

Contemplation is not so much concerned about the mere acquisition of knowledge, but about learning that can transform us... Bill Scheffel

Compassion and Compassion Fatigue

- Healthcare is by nature person-intensive
 - ▣ Interpersonal and human connection to those we care for
 - ▣ Inspiration: to help others
- Compassion
 - ▣ Awareness of and feeling for the pain and suffering of others
 - ▣ “impels and empowers people to not only acknowledge, but also act”
- Compassion fatigue
 - ▣ Stress response from caring without expected rewards, results, and often closure
 - ▣ May result in diminished capacity for empathy / interpersonal engagement

Raab K. Mindfulness, Self-Compassion, and Empathy Among Health Care Professionals: A Review of the Literature. *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy* 20 (3), 2014 .



Contemplative Strategies

- Range of reflective practices
 - ▣ Mindfulness meditation
 - ▣ Compassion practices
 - ▣ Somatic exercises
- Self-awareness and recognition of own limitations and suffering
- Commitment to address one's own suffering
- Clarification of values and world view(s)
- Receptivity, compassion, and resilience

Mindfulness

- Research evidence
 - ▣ Emotional regulation and improved attention
 - ▣ Greater calm and stress reduction
 - ▣ Enhanced coping skills
- Befriend pain and/or fear
- Less emotional reactivity / more stability of mind
- Resilience and increased empathy
- Within care-giving interactions for patients, families and caregivers



Zinn JK, Siegel D, Bauer-Wu S. The Healing Power of Mindfulness. A Shambhala Sun Forum, <https://www.upaya.org/uploads/pdfs/ShambhalaSunpaneldiscussionJKZDSSBW.pdf>

Taming the Mind



Cultivating Compassion



- For self and others
- Formal and informal practices
- Awareness when struggling with feelings of inadequacy, despair, confusion (mindfulness)
- Responding with kindness and understanding (self-compassion)
- Holding difficult emotions - fear, anger, sadness, shame and self-doubt - and ourselves, in loving awareness

Germer CK and Neff KD, Self-Compassion in Clinical Practice, J Clin Psychology 69(8), 2013

Self Compassion

- Directed inwards
- Warmth and understanding when we suffer, fail or feel inadequate

- Self kindness
 - ▣ Addresses self-criticism, blaming and rumination
- Common humanity
 - ▣ We are part of greater humanity that is also suffering
- Mindfulness
 - ▣ Counters over-identification and fixation on negative thoughts

Neff, K. D. (2003b). Self-compassion: An alternative conceptualization of a healthy attitude toward oneself. *Self and Identity*, 2, 85-102.



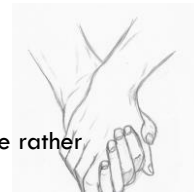
When we encounter suffering

- Factors in responding to suffering
- Use of empathy – emotional attunement
- Perspective taking – cognitive attunement
- Memory – personal experience
- Moral sensitivity – moral attunement
- Interrelated and iterative

Rushton CH, Kaszniak AW, Halifax JS, Addressing Moral Distress, J Palliative Medicine 16(9), 2013

Self Compassion and Caring for Others

- Empathy
 - Affective concern for well-being
 - Capacity to differentiate self from other
 - Ability to regulate own arousal so it becomes resilience rather than overwhelming
- Boundaries between self and other blue
- For caregiver, may become over-arousal and aversion
- Fatigue and depletion



Rushton CH, Kaszniak AW, Halifax JS, Addressing Moral Distress, J Palliative Medicine 16(9), 2013

Self Compassion and Caring for Others

- Perspective taking
 - ▣ Ability to understand and appreciate unique vantage points of others
 - ▣ Cognitive alignment in team-based healthcare
 - ▣ Congruence in goals and values between clinicians, patient, family
 - ▣ Roles and perspectives of team members may differ
 - i.e. between nurses, surgeon, PCPs



Rushton CH, Kaszniak AW, Halifax JS, Addressing Moral Distress, J Palliative Medicine 16(9), 2013

Self Compassion and Caring for Others

- Moral sensitivity
 - ▣ Institutional and normative ethics
 - ▣ Behavioral ethical guidelines
 - ▣ Recognizing conflicts and obligations to respond
 - ▣ Ability to locate and articulate source of internal discontent
 - ▣ Supports caregiver decision-making

Rushton CH, Kaszniak AW, Halifax JS, Addressing Moral Distress, J Palliative Medicine 16(9), 2013

Re-aligning Ethics and Morals

- Ethics and moral behavior
 - thought and justification of moral guidelines (normative ethics)
 - meaning in moral terms (meta-ethics)
 - specific moral guidelines (applied ethics)
 - how people actually behave (behavioral ethics)

- Life-long relationships with power and influence
- Embedded in all social relationships
- Noticing cognitive, emotional and somatic responses



Embodying and Enacting Power

Personal

Role

Status

Mindful Inquiry

- Recall a difficult dialogue
- See it in front of you

- Observe
- Invite questions for yourself / for other

- Free write
- Offer one insight / question to the circle

Closing

- Into the circle
- One sentence: An idea that excites and/or scares you
- One question for yourself or others in the room

Thank You!

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