

Enhancing Dignity and Reducing Humiliation through the Practice of Mind-Body Skills

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“For someone to develop genuine compassion towards others, first he or she must have a basis upon which to cultivate compassion, and that basis is the ability to connect to one’s own feelings and to care for one’s own welfare... Caring for others requires caring for oneself.” – Tenzin Gyatso, - 14th Dalai Lama

Mind-body interventions combine the skills of internal and external awareness building, imagery, journaling, genograms, autogenics, biofeedback, rituals, meditation (including expressive, mindful self-compassion and concentrative) to provide powerful tools for emotional resilience and trauma recovery (Gordon, 2010, Linger, 2014).

The Mind-body practice of Mindful Self-Compassion is the first step in emotional healing and forgiveness, increasing our sense of dignity and worth—being able to turn toward and acknowledge our difficult thoughts and feelings (such as inadequacy, sadness, anger, confusion) with a spirit of openness and curiosity. Learning to shift perceptions about how unlikeable and unworthy we are is a central tenant of mind-body skill building. We learn to shed the cloak of humiliation toward self and others, for a shared cloak of dignity and respect (Linger, 2014). Self-compassion involves responding to these difficult thoughts and feelings with kindness, sympathy and understanding so that we soothe and comfort ourselves when we’re hurting. Research has shown that self-compassion greatly enhances emotional wellbeing. It boosts happiness, reduces anxiety and depression, and can even help maintain healthy lifestyle habits. Being both mindful and compassionate leads to greater ease and well-being in our daily lives (Neff, 2014).

The three components of self-compassion are self-kindness, a sense of common humanity, and balanced, mindful awareness. Kindness opens our hearts to suffering so we can give ourselves what we need – relieving ourselves of indignity and humiliation and learning to become kinder embracing the dignity that lies within as we become more accepting of ourselves. Common humanity opens us to others so that we know we aren’t alone (Neff, 2014).

Self-compassion is a skill that can be learned by anyone, even those who have experienced extreme trauma or those who feel uncomfortable when they are not good to themselves. It is a courageous attitude that stands up to harm – the harm not only inflicted upon us by others but harm we inflict on ourselves through practicing meanness, self-criticism or self-denial (Germer, 2013). Self-compassion provides us with emotional strength and resilience, allowing us to forgive ourselves, motivate ourselves with kindness, care for others and be fully human as we heal and experience dignity in new ways. We are then able to re-shape and re-engineer relationships and interactions with others that have been untenable in the past through the art of self-appreciation and seeing in new ways the value of others (Linger, 2014).

Mind body skills are simple ways of relating to all experience that can reduce suffering and set the stage for positive personal transformation through an increase of dignity. It is a core psychological process that can alter how we respond to the unavoidable difficulties in life—not only to everyday existential

challenges, but also to severe psychological problems such as suicidal ideation (Linehan, 1993), chronic depression (Segal, Williams & Teasdale, 2002), and psychotic delusions (Bach and Hayes, 2002).