

Supplemental Materials

Module 1: Introduction of Impostor Phenomenon and Self-Compassion

Introduction of Impostor Phenomenon

The impostor phenomenon refers to the psychological experiences of believing that one's accomplishments as a result of external factors including luck, charm, and extraordinary effort. Individuals who experience impostor phenomenon often find it difficult to internalize their successes despite their achievement. They tend to experience persistent fear of failure and fear of being discovered as fraud. Here are some of the feelings they might experience: (1) feeling afraid that people might find out they are not as capable as others think they are; (2) feeling disappointed in their achievements because they believe they should have achieved much more; (3) constantly comparing oneself to others and believing that they don't belong because others seem to be more competent. It has been found that impostor feelings are correlated with depression, anxiety, relationship difficulties and low self-esteem.

What Self-Compassion Is?

Self-compassion involves treating yourself the way you would treat a friend who is having a hard time—even if your friend blew it or is feeling inadequate or is just facing a tough life challenge. Self-compassion is a practice in which we learn to be a good friend to ourselves when we need it most—to become an inner ally rather than an inner enemy. Although a simple way to think about self-compassion is treating yourself as you would treat a good friend, the more complete definition involves three core elements that we bring to bear when we are in pain: self-kindness (i.e., offering ourselves warmth and unconditional acceptance), common humanity (i.e., all humans are flawed works-in-progress), and mindfulness (i.e., being aware of moment-to-moment experience in a clear and balanced manner).

What Self-Compassion Is Not?

Many people have misgivings about whether it is good to be self-compassionate or whether we can be too self-compassionate. Here are some common misconceptions about self-compassion:

(1) Self-compassion = self-pity

Some people might fear that self-compassion is just a form of self-pity. In fact, self-compassion is a remedy to self-pity. While self-pity says, “poor me,” self-compassion recognizes that life is hard for everyone. Research shows that self-compassionate people are more likely to engage in perspective taking, rather than focusing on their own distress. They are also less likely to ruminate on how bad things are, which is one of the reasons self-compassionate people have better mental health. When we are self-compassionate, we remember that everyone suffers from time to time (common humanity), and we don't exaggerate the extent of our struggles (mindfulness). Self-compassion is not a “woe is me” attitude.

(2) Self-compassion will make us weak and vulnerable

Another big fear is that self-compassion will make us weak and vulnerable. In fact, self-compassion is a reliable source of inner strength that confers courage and enhances resilience when we're faced with difficulties. Research shows self-compassionate people are better able to cope with tough situations like divorce, trauma, or chronic pain.

(3) Self-compassion = making excuses for bad behaviors

Another fear is that self-compassion is really a form of making excuses for bad behavior. Self-compassion provides the safety needed to admit mistakes rather than needing to blame someone else for them. Research shows that self-compassionate people take greater personal responsibility for their actions and are more likely to apologize if they've offended someone.

(4) Self-compassion will result in lower motivation to achieve

Most people believe self-criticism is an effective motivator, but it's not. Self-criticism tends to undermine self-confidence and leads to fear of failure. If we are self-compassionate, we will still be motivated to reach our goals—not because we're inadequate as we are, but because we care about ourselves and want to reach our full potential. Research shows that self-compassionate people have high personal standards; they just don't beat themselves up when they fail. This means they are less afraid of failure and are more likely to try again and to persist in their efforts after failing.

Benefits of Self-Compassion

Here is what research has found about the benefits of self-compassion: People who are more self-compassionate experience greater well-being.

Attention check item 1: According to the video, which of the following statements does NOT describe impostor phenomenon?

- a. "I can give the impression that I'm more competent than I really am."
- b. "At times, I feel my success has been due to some kind of luck."
- c. I often compare my ability to those around me and think I am more intelligent.

Attention check item 2: Which are the three core elements of self-compassion?

- a. self-acceptance, mindfulness, and humanity
- b. mindfulness, self-kindness, and common humanity
- c. self-soothing, validating, and protecting

Attention check item 3: Which of the following statement is an accurate description of self-compassion?

- a. Self-compassion is just a form of self-pity.
- b. Self-compassionate is really a form of making excuses for bad behavior.
- c. People who are more self-compassionate experience greater well-being.

Experiential Exercise (The experiential exercises were embedded in Qualtrics survey sent to the participants)

I. How Do I Treat a Friend

Close your eyes and reflect for a moment on the following question:

Think about various times when you've had a close friend who was struggling in some way—had a misfortune, failed, or felt inadequate—and you were feeling pretty good about yourself. How do you typically respond to your friends in such situations? What do you say? What tone do you use? How is your posture? Nonverbal gestures?

Please write down what you discovered.

Now close your eyes again and reflect on the next question:

Think about various times when you were struggling in some way—had a misfortune, failed, or felt inadequate. How do you typically respond to yourself in these situations? What do you say? What tone do you use? Your posture? Nonverbal gestures?

Write down what you discovered.

Finally, consider the differences between how you treat your close friends when they are struggling and how you treat yourself. Do you notice any patterns?

Experiential Exercise II

Step 1. Please write down one of your recent experiences of impostor phenomenon/feelings. Please note your responses here will be kept confidential.

(Some examples of the thoughts you might have when you are experiencing impostor phenomenon include “I must never fail” “I don’t deserve my success because I might have just been lucky” “My success is nothing compared to those of others” and “I can give the impression that I’m more competent than I really am”.)

Step 2. Please keep in mind the incident you just wrote about while completing this audio-guided exercise. Self-compassion break (5:20)

https://self-compassion.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/self-compassion.break_.mp3

Transcription of the audio-guided exercise:

The exercise is called self-compassion break. And it's something you can do any time during the day or at night when you need a little self-compassion.

To practice this exercise, we actually need to call up a little suffering.

So, I invite you to think about a situation in your life right now. That is difficult for you. Maybe you're feeling stress, or you're having a relationship problem, or you're worried about something that might happen and invite you to think of something that is difficult, but not overwhelmingly difficult especially if you're new to practicing the self-compassion break.

So, finding the situation and getting in touch with it. What is going on? What happened? What might happen? Who said what? Really bring the situation to life in your mind's eye.

And then I'm going to be saying a series of phrases that are designed to help us remember the three components of self-compassion, when we need it most.

So, the first phrase is, "this is a moment of suffering." Right, we are bringing mindful awareness to the fact that suffering is present. And I invite you to find some language that speaks to you. Something like this is it is really hard right now. Or I'm really struggling, or actually turning toward our difficulty acknowledging it naming it. This is a moment of suffering.

The second phrase is "suffering is a part of life". Okay, we're reminding ourselves of our common humanity. Suffering is a part of life. And again, find the language that speaks to you. It may be something like. It's not abnormal to feel this way. Many people are going through similar situations. Right, the degree of suffering may be different, the flavor of suffering may be different.

That suffering is a part of life, part of being human.

And then the third phrase is, "may I be kind to myself in this moment." To support bringing kindness to yourself, I'd invite you to, perhaps, put your hands over your heart, or some other place on your body that feels soothing and comforting feeling the warmth of your hands, the gentle touch. Letting those feelings of care stream through the fingers.

May I be kind to myself. And using any language that supports that sense of kindness. Perhaps the language you would use with a good friend you cared about who was going through a very similar situation. You know it may be something like, I'm here for you. It's gonna be okay. I care about you.

You can even try using a diminutive if that feels comfortable. You know, darling. I'm so sorry. Or you can try calling yourself by your first name. Anything that feels natural to express your deep wish

that you'd be well, and happy and free from suffering. And then letting go of the practice and noticing how your body feels right now, allowing any sensations, to be just as they are. Allowing yourself to be just as you are in this moment.

Treatment Fidelity Question:

To what extent did you engage in the meditation activity? Please rate your engagement on a 1 (not at all) to 10 (very much) scale.

Module 2: Mindfulness

Introduction to Mindfulness

Default Mode of Living/MindLESSness

Before we talk about mindfulness, it might be helpful to understand its opposite: which is mindless or the default mode of living. In our everyday life, people tend to have the default mode of living that keeps us away from being aware of our feelings, thoughts, or surroundings so that our brain can focus on potential issues or threats. Have you ever had the experience of sitting down to eat a meal, and before you knew it the entire plate of food was gone? Where was your mind? While your body was eating, your mind was elsewhere lost in the default mode of living. The brain uses its “spare” time to focus on potential problems that need solving. For example, the coming test you will going to have, or the stress caused by the issues you have with your loved ones. This is beneficial from an evolutionary point of view because when humans were living in caves, we really needed to have the spare time for our brain to anticipate or focus on the threats to our survival. However, the problems we are facing right now are much less likely to be life threatening. It will be rather unpleasant to continue living this way.

When we’re operating in the default mode, we are often struggling, but we don’t have the presence of mind to know that we are struggling. We might be feeling overwhelmed with stress or our emotional experience. Similarly, to the eating example, we might arrive at a feeling, thought, or situation, without really knowing how we got there. It also keeps us from being in touch with our own body, and we miss warning signs about stress. It keeps us from being present in our relationships and being able to read another person’s reactions. Although there is evolutionary benefit of having the default mode of living, it can cause harm to our well being. One way to cope with it is practice mindfulness.

What is Mindfulness

Mindfulness refers to Awareness and acceptance of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment from moment-to-moment. Or you can understand it as the ability to know what’s happening in your head and your environment at any given moment without getting carried away by it. Behaviorally, being mindful means, we’re paying attention on our purpose, paying attention in the present moment, and paying attention to all the experiences non-judgmentally

Mindfulness and Self Compassion

Mindfulness is a very important component of self-compassion. IT is the foundation of self-compassion training. It is because mindfulness creates space between us and our internal experiences (thoughts or feelings). By taking the time to fully experience and observe your thoughts and feelings, you can look at your thoughts instead of from your thoughts. See those internal feelings and thought as what they are—just words, pictures, and sounds. That mental space will give us the freedom to choose how we might like to respond to a situation. For example, when we are suffering, we are easily overwhelmed by our feelings and thoughts. To offer us the compassion we need, we can ask ourselves, “What do I need right now?” “How am I feeling right now” –which is practicing mindfulness. Then we will have e the freedom to try to comfort and support ourselves as we would a good friend. Research shows that one of the

benefits of practicing mindfulness regularly is that it tends to deactivate the default mode network, both while meditating and during our normal activities. This means that the more we practice being mindful, the more opportunities we have to make better choices for ourselves, including the choice to practice self-compassion.

Mindfulness and Impostor Phenomenon

Individuals with impostor feelings tend to overly focus on the incidents in which they have not succeeded and discredit the evidence of achievement. Overly preoccupied with their inadequacies and personal failures indicates that they might suffer from overidentification or lack of mindfulness. Thus, theoretically, individuals struggling with impostor feelings might lack the ability to take a balanced view for their positive and negative experiences. Therefore, developing the capacities to engage in mindfulness might be helpful in reducing their impostor feelings.

How to be Mindful

Core Features of Mindfulness

Observing – Simply observing thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations

Describing – Noticing fine details of what you are observing

Participating Fully – Notice all aspects of the task or activity

Being Non-Judgmental – Accepting stance toward the experience

Focusing on one thing at a time – Stay present, don't follow or 'chase' distracting or anxious thoughts

Attention check item 1: According to the video, which one of the following statements is an accurate description of mindfulness?

- a. Mindfulness gives us mental space, and with mental space comes the freedom to choose how we might like to respond to a situation.
- b. Mindfulness allows us to operate in the default mode.
- c. When we are mindful, we become lost in our inner narrative.

Attention check item 2: Which is NOT a core feature of mindfulness?

- a. Observing
- b. Describing
- c. Being judgmental

Attention check item 3: Is the following statement true or false?

"The default mode of living keeps us from being in touch with our own body."

- a. True.
- b. False

Experiential Exercises (The experiential exercises were embedded in Qualtrics survey sent to the participants)

I. Five Senses Guided Meditation

Please follow this guided meditation to experience what it is like to practice mindfulness.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7o-oqjiLAOs>

II. Relating to Ourselves with Self Compassion (Mindfulness)

Think about a current struggle you're going through in your life—one that's not too serious. For example, maybe you had a fight with your partner and you said something you regret. Or maybe you really blew it on a work assignment and you're frightened your boss is going to call you in for a meeting to reprimand you.

(Click the play button if you want to listen to the audio version of the instruction above)

Please write down any ways you may be lost in the story line of the situation and running away with it. Is it all you can think about, or are you making a bigger deal out of things than is warranted? For example, are you terrified that you will be fired even though the mistake was pretty minor?

(Click the play button if you want to listen to the audio version of the instruction above)

Now see if you can mindfully acknowledge the pain involved in this situation without exaggerating it or being overly dramatic. Write down any painful or difficult feelings you may be having, trying to do so with a relatively objective and balanced tone. Validate the difficulty of the situation, while trying not to get overly caught up in the story line of what you're feeling. For example: "I'm feeling really frightened that I will get in trouble with my boss after this incident. It's difficult for me to feel this right now."

(Click the play button if you want to listen to the audio version of the instruction above)

Experiential Exercises (The last one)

III. Mindfulness Meditation (10 minute)

Treatment Fidelity Question:

To what extent did you engage in the meditation activity? Please rate your engagement on a 1 (not at all) to 10 (very much) scale.

You have completed this module! Thank you very much for your participation! Here are some extra resources of mindfulness that you can choose to try outside this study just in case you want some tips to destress.

I. Here-and-Now Object

Step 1: Find a small object (e.g., a stone, a pen, a cellphone...) that you find especially attractive or is meaningful to you. Then try the following exercise:

1. Start by carefully examining your object. Notice the colors, the angles, and the way the light plays on the surface of it. Allow yourself to enjoy the sight of the object.
2. Now, explore the object with your sense of touch. Is it smooth or rough? What is its temperature?
3. Let yourself become absorbed in your object, pouring yourself into the experience of handling it.

4. Allow yourself to experience your object with all your senses, appreciating its uniqueness.
5. Notice that when you are focused on your object, with appreciation, there is little room for regret or worry, for the past or the future. You are “at home” in the present moment.

Step 2: Reflection.

Please write down your reflection by answering the following questions.

1. What did you notice when you anchored your awareness in your here-and-now object?
2. When you were engaged with your object, did your default mode activity—the wandering mind—lessen somewhat? If so, you can think of this as your “magic stone” because it can turn off your default mode network. Going forward, you may want to keep your stone in your pocket. Whenever you get swept up in emotion, just rub your stone with your fingers. Feel the sensation of touching your stone. Enjoy it. Come home to the present moment.

II. Mindfulness in Daily Life

Mindfulness can be practiced every moment of the day—while you brush your teeth, while you walk from the parking garage to work, when you eat your breakfast, or whenever your cell phone rings.

1. Pick an ordinary activity. You might choose drinking your cup of coffee in the morning, taking a shower, or putting on your clothes. If you wish, select an activity that occurs early in the day before your attention is pulled in many directions.
2. Choose one sensory experience to explore in the activity, such as the sensation of taste as you drink your coffee or the sensation of water touching your body while showering.
3. Immerse yourself in the experience, savoring it to the fullest. Return your mind to the sensations again and again when you notice it has wandered away.
4. Bring gentle, friendly awareness to the activity until it has been completed.

Module 3: Common Humanity

Introduction to Common Humanity

Common humanity is recognizing that being imperfect is only being “human” and one’s personal inadequacies are part of a shared human experience rather than an isolating personal failure. It’s recognizing that all humans are flawed works-in-progress, that everyone fails, makes mistakes, and experiences hardship and difficult feelings in life. It refers to this sense of interconnectedness which is central to self-compassion. This is what distinguishes self-compassion from self-pity. While self-pity says “poor me,” self-compassion recognizes suffering is part of the shared human experience. The pain I feel in difficult times is the same pain that you feel in difficult times. The triggers are different, the circumstances are different, the degree of pain is different, but the basic experience is the same.

Frustration at not having things exactly as we want is often accompanied by an irrational but pervasive sense of isolation – as if “I” were the only person suffering or making mistakes. A lot of people when they notice something about themselves that they don’t like or when something goes wrong, they irrationally feel as if they are the only one that is having this problem. It’s not a rational process, but somehow, I’m supposed to be perfect and things are supposed to be going well. What is wrong, what’s happened? When the thinking “this shouldn’t be happening” comes up, we often feel very isolated, lonely and we feel very cut off from others.

The sense of common humanity helps us realize we are all in the same position and in the same boat. When we remember that pain is part of the shared human experience, however, every moment of suffering is transformed into a moment of connection with others. The pain I feel in difficult times is the same pain you feel in difficult times. The circumstances are different, the degree of pain is different, but the basic experience of human suffering is the same.

We are all imperfect human beings whose actions stem from a web of interdependent conditions that are much larger than ourselves. In other words, we don’t have to take our mistakes and imperfection so personally.

The recognition of common humanity entailed by self-compassion also allows us to be more understanding and less judgmental about our inadequacies. Our thoughts, feelings and actions are largely impacted by factors outside of our control: parenting history, culture, genetic and environmental conditions, as well as the demands and expectations of others. After all, if we had full control over our behavior, how many people would consciously choose to have anger problems, addiction issues, debilitating social anxiety, an eating disorder? Many aspects of ourselves and the circumstances of our lives are not of our intentional choosing, but instead stem from innumerable factors that are outside our sphere of influence. When we acknowledge this reality, failings and life difficulties do not have to be taken so personally.

Lastly but very importantly, common humanity also reminds us that having good qualities is part of being human too. We can acknowledge our strengths without feeling isolated or better than others. I don’t know if you have ever had the experience of not being able to acknowledge your own strengths or talents. Or have you ever had experiences where you felt guilty about celebrating your successes because you don’t want others to feel bad. Maybe next time, when you have that experience, you can remind yourself it is part of shared human experiences to have

good qualities and successes. You don't have to feel isolated and guilty. They are worth celebrating. Like how you'd want to celebrate for your best friend's successes.

Common Humanity and Impostor Phenomenon

Individuals with impostor feelings tend to feel discouraged if they are not proven to be “the best or at least very special in situations that involve achievement”. They might constantly engage in maladaptive perfectionism and work addiction to pursue the sense of specialness. They might also perceive personal failure as shameful and try their best to prevent or hide their perceived inadequacies. These struggles with perfectionism, motivation for specialness, and avoidance of showing personal failures can be linked to their difficulty to see imperfection as part of common humanity. Being able to acknowledge being imperfect is just part of being human might help alleviate people's impostor feelings. Common humanity also means each of us is just a human being like everyone else. When people (even it is you) experience impostor feelings, it is important to remind ourselves that we are not alone in this difficult feeling. There are many people out there who also experience my fear of inadequacy and my struggle with being perfect.

Attention check item 1: According to the video, which one of the following statements is accurate?

- a. Common humanity teaches us that we have to take our mistakes and imperfection so personally.
- b. Common humanity honors the unavoidable fact that life entails suffering, for everyone, without exception.
- c. For people who experience impostor feelings, it is beneficial to remind themselves that they are alone in this difficult feeling.

Attention check item 2: Which is NOT an accurate statement about common humanity?

- a. Common humanity is recognizing that being imperfect is only being “human” and one's personal inadequacies are part of a shared human experience.
- b. Common humanity helps people feel less alone when suffering.
- c. The recognition of common humanity entailed by self-compassion doesn't allow us to celebrate our successes.

Attention check item 3: Is the following statement true or false?

"Common humanity also reminds us that having good qualities is part of being human too. We can acknowledge our strengths without feeling isolated or better than others."

- a. True.
- b. False

Experiential Exercises (The experiential exercises were embedded in Qualtrics survey sent to the participants)

I. A Self-Compassion Journal

Journaling is an effective way to express emotions and has been found to enhance both mental and physical well-being. Try writing a self-compassion journal to enhance the sense of common humanity. In your journal, write down a recent incident in which you have experienced impostor

feelings. (Some examples of the thoughts you might have when you are experiencing impostor phenomenon include “I must never fail” “I don’t deserve my success because I might have just been lucky” “My success is nothing compared to those of others” and “I can give the impression that I’m more competent than I really am”).

1. Write about how you felt: sad, ashamed, frightened, stressed, and so on. As you write, try to be accepting and nonjudgmental of your experience, without diminishing it or becoming overly dramatic. (For example, “I was ashamed because I wasn’t able to understand the material in class while others seem have all understood it. I got angry at myself and felt discouraged afterward.”)

2. Write down the ways in which your experience was part of being human. This might include acknowledging that being human means being imperfect and that all people have these sorts of painful experiences. (“Everyone experiences difficulties sometimes—it’s only human.” “This is how people are likely to feel in a situation like that.”) You might also want to think about the unique causes and conditions underlying your painful event. (“My frustration was exacerbated by the fact that I was half an hour late for my doctor’s appointment across town and there was a lot of traffic that day. If the circumstances had been different, my reaction probably would have been different.”)

II. Changing Your Critical Self-Talk

The first step towards changing the way to treat yourself is to notice when you are being self-critical. It may be that – like many of us — your self-critical voice is so common for you that you don’t even notice when it is present. Whenever you’re feeling bad about something, think about what you’ve just said to yourself. Try to be as accurate as possible, noting your inner speech verbatim.

What words do you actually use when you’re self-critical?

Are there key phrases that come up over and over again?

What is the tone of your voice – harsh, cold, angry?

Does the voice remind you of any one in your past who was critical of you?

You want to be able to get to know the inner self-critic very well, and to become aware of when your inner judge is active. For instance, if you’ve just eaten half a box of Oreo’s, does your inner voice say something like “you’re so disgusting,” “you make me sick,” and so on?

Really try to get a clear sense of how you talk to yourself.

The second step is to make an active effort to soften the self-critical voice but do so with compassion rather than self-judgment (i.e., don’t say “you’re such a bitch” to your inner critic!). Say something like “I know you’re worried about me and feel unsafe, but you are causing me unnecessary pain. Could you let my inner compassionate self say a few words now?”

Write to yourself in a friendly and positive way to remind yourself it is just normal to experience difficulty in life. Find a way to tell yourself that imperfection is just part of being human.

Treatment Fidelity Question:

To what extent did you engage in the writing activities? Please rate your engagement on a 1 (not at all) to 10 (very much) scale.

Module 4: Self-kindness

Self-Kindness

Self-Kindness means being supportive and understanding towards ourselves when we're having a hard time, rather than being harshly self-critical. It's amazing how often people are critical and judgmental toward themselves. We are much more critical and judgmental to ourselves than we are to other people especially to other people we care about. For most people self-criticism is such a habit they don't even notice. They even believe that attacking and criticizing ourselves for being inadequate is the best way to motivate ourselves. However, it is not the case. In fact, research has shown that self-criticism is not a good way to motivate ourselves. And often times, it has a negative impact on our motivation level. Self-kindness on the other hand, offers this alternative way to motivate ourselves. Instead of attacking and berating ourselves for being inadequate, we offer ourselves warmth and unconditional acceptance, which serves as the foundation for us to feel ok about what we have right now and move on to the next challenge.

It might be easier for us to use examples to see how self-kindness is a better motivator compared to self-criticism. Let's say there is a father whose son comes home from school with a failing math grade. The father has two different ways to try to motivate his child. The first is with harsh criticism. The son comes in and shows the father the math grade. And the father says "I'm ashamed of you. What a loser, you'll never amount to anything." How does that criticism sound? Is that too harsh? But Isn't that the precisely the type of language we use with ourselves? What's going to happen to that son? Will he try harder? Yes he will for the short term, but eventually he's going to lose faith in himself. He's going to become depressed, and he will become afraid of failure. And probably give up math because the consequences of failing again are just too dire. What if the father takes a compassionate approach? The son shows him the failing math grade, and the father says "uhh ouch, wow you must be hurting. I'm sorry. Give me a hug, I still love you. It happens to everyone. I know you want to get your math grade up because you want to go to college. Let's see what I can do to help." Here's what compassion says "What can I do to help?" "How can I support you?" The more loving, compassionate the father is, the better place, emotionally the son will be in to do his best. So self-kindness can help us feel more supported and cared for and make us prepared for more challenges in the future.

Self-Kindness and Impostor Phenomenon

Individuals who suffer from the impostor feelings often believe that their success is due to luck or mistakes and have the internalized fear of being exposed as an "impostor". To manage their fear, they tend to be extremely harsh and judgmental toward themselves and deny their own competence even in the face of the clearly evidenced achievement. The extreme level of denial of self-competence and self-harshness suggests that these individuals might suffer from the extremely high self-judgment. Offering self-kindness might help these individuals appreciate themselves more.

Ways to Practice Self-Kindness

After we have talked about the benefits of self-kindness, let's talk about how can we start practicing self-kindness. One way to start practicing self-kindness is to start noticing the language you use with yourself. If you do tend to use harsh or critical or judgmental language.

Actively try to stop that and replace what you say with words that are kinder, more understanding, more encouraging, more supportive. Some traditional loving-kindness phrases often used in meditation include “May I be kind to myself. May I begin to be kind to myself. May I know that I belong. May I live in peace. May I rest in love.” These phrases have been handed down over centuries, so it’s not surprising they can be a bit hard to connect with. For this reason, it is important to find loving-kindness phrases that resonate. This is especially true when we want to generate feelings of loving-kindness for ourselves—they must feel authentic to have impact. As you are reading this, please take a moment to think of one or two phrases that are deeply meaningful to you. If you have a hard time thinking of one, please think about a dear friend of yours, what would they say that can provide you the kindness you need.

Another good starting point of practicing self-kindness is to try some physical gestures of affection like a stroke, touch, or hug. These physical gestures will help release oxytocin in the body, which is the feel-good hormone. For example, when a mother rocks and cradles her baby, a lot of oxytocin is released and that's what allows the baby to calm down. So next time when we are having difficult times and experiencing feelings of inadequacy, please take a moment to give yourself a gentle touch or a hug to help offer yourself the self-kindness.

That's the end of the video. After the video, you will find a few exercises for self-kindness. I thank you very much for completing all the exercises. Hopefully you will find those exercises helpful. Thank you very much again for your participating in this study. I wish you all the best!

Attention check item 1: According to the video, which one of the following statements is NOT accurate?

- a. Self-kindness means being supportive and understanding towards ourselves when we're having a hard time.
- b. Only the traditional loving-kindness phrases like “May I be kind to myself” can increase people’s self-kindness.
- c. Self-kindness is a better motivator than self-criticism.

Attention check item 2: Which is an accurate statement about self-kindness?

- a. The best way to practice self-kindness is to stop paying attention to our shortcomings.
- b. We don't need to practice self-kindness since everyone treats themselves better than how they treat other people.
- c. Practicing self-kindness might help individuals with impostor feelings appreciate themselves more.

Attention check item 3: Is the following statement true or false?

" Physical gestures of affection and supportive language can have positive effect on our mood and make us feel supported and cared for."

- a. True.
- b. False

Experiential Exercises (The experiential exercises were embedded in Qualtrics survey sent to the participants)

I. Self-Appreciation

This exercise will help you discover qualities that you appreciate about yourself, especially by acknowledging influences in your life that helped you develop these good qualities. If you experience any uneasiness during this exercise, make some space for whatever you're feeling and let yourself be just as you are.

- a. Take two or three deep breaths and close your eyes for a few moments to settle and center yourself. Put your hands on your heart or use some other soothing touch as a gesture of support and self-kindness.
- b. Now think of three to five things you appreciate about yourself. The first few things that come to mind may be somewhat superficial. See if you can open to what you really, deep down, like and appreciate about yourself. Please take your time and be honest.
- c. Now consider each of these positive qualities, one by one, and offer yourself an inner nod of appreciation for having these gifts.
- d. Notice if you feel any discomfort as you think about your good qualities and make space for that, allowing your experience to be just as it is. Remember that you aren't saying you always show these good qualities or that you're better than others. You're simply acknowledging that this, too, is true.
- e. Now consider, are there any people who helped you develop your good qualities? Maybe friends, parents, teachers, even authors of books who had a positive impact on you?
- f. Think about each one of these positive influences and send each one some gratitude and appreciation as well.
- g. Let yourself savor, just for this moment, feeling good about yourself—let it really soak in.

II. Compassionate Letter to Myself

Part One: Which imperfections make you feel inadequate?

Everybody has something about themselves that they don't like; something that causes them to feel shame, to feel insecure, or not "good enough." It is the human condition to be imperfect, and feelings of failure and inadequacy are part of the experience of living a human life. Try writing about an issue you have that tends to make you feel inadequate or bad about yourself (physical appearance, work or relationship issues...) What emotions come up for you when you think about this aspect of yourself? Try to just feel your emotions exactly as they are – no more, no less – and then write about them.

Part Two: In the following space, please write a letter to yourself from the perspective of an unconditionally loving imaginary friend.

Now think about an imaginary friend who is unconditionally loving, accepting, kind and compassionate. Imagine that this friend can see all your strengths and all your weaknesses, including the aspect of yourself you have just been writing about. Reflect upon what this friend feels towards you, and how you are loved and accepted exactly as you are, with all your very

human imperfections. This friend recognizes the limits of human nature, and is kind and forgiving towards you. In his/her great wisdom this friend understands your life history and the millions of things that have happened in your life to create you as you are in this moment. Your particular inadequacy is connected to so many things you didn't necessarily choose: your genes, your family history, life circumstances – things that were outside of your control.

Write a letter to yourself from the perspective of this imaginary friend – focusing on the perceived inadequacy you tend to judge yourself for. What would this friend say to you about your “flaw” from the perspective of unlimited compassion? How would this friend convey the deep compassion he/she feels for you, especially for the pain you feel when you judge yourself so harshly? What would this friend write in order to remind you that you are only human, that all people have both strengths and weaknesses? And if you think this friend would suggest possible changes you should make, how would these suggestions embody feelings of unconditional understanding and compassion? As you write to yourself from the perspective of this imaginary friend, try to infuse your letter with a strong sense of his/her acceptance, kindness, caring, and desire for your health and happiness.

Part Three: Feel the compassion as it soothes and comforts you

After writing the letter, put it down for a little while. Then come back and read it again, really letting the words sink in. Feel the compassion as it pours into you, soothing and comforting you like a cool breeze on a hot day. Love, connection and acceptance are your birthright. To claim them you need only look within yourself. Please write a few words or sentences to describe how you are feeling now.

III. Loving-Kindness for Ourselves Meditation (This is the audio-guided exercise; and it's the last exercise of this module).

Transcript of the audio recording: Loving kindness is soft and gentle. It's how you might handle a newborn child or the way you might touch and hold something fragile. In those moments you open up and handle what you're given with the greatest care. You can do the same with wild thoughts, worry, and painful memories too. The power of kindness cannot be underestimated. Start by getting comfortable in your kind space. Sit upright, feet flat on the floor, arms and legs uncross, and palms facing up or down, resting gently on your legs. Close your eyes and bring your attention to your breath as you've done with other exercises.

Continue to focus on each gentle inhale and exhale. Simply noticing the rhythm the rising and falling of your chest and belly. As you follow the soft flow of your breath, imagine a Halo of kindness sweeping over you. It starts at your head and slowly move adding and flowing past face and then on to your chest and belly.

As it passes, silently say to yourself on each inhale may I meet my experience with kindness. May I bring peace and gentleness to my experience. I am complete and I am whole. Continue as the Halo gradually sweeps down past your hips over your knees and your toes.

See if you can bring the intention of kind allowing to your experience as you imagine breathing in compassion and kindness. As you do, bring to mind someone you know who is struggling and

suffering. Perhaps it's apparent, a brother or sister, a friend, a spouse, or a coworker. It could be a child, an older person from someone you've heard about in the news or on TV. See if you can imagine their suffering make them present with you now. Now look into your heart and into your capacity for healing and kindness. Imagine that the person you were thinking about is in the room with you that you could extend healing to them and you could restore their mind, broken body, failings, hurts, struggles, and pain and make them whole. Silently repeat extend kindness and healing to you.

In your mind's eye see yourself wiping away their tears and extending love. Open your arms and wrap that person in your kind embrace. Extend your heart. Allow yourself to connect your kindness with that person. They are no longer alone. You are not alone. You are uniting with them in their suffering and in yours too. By your generous act, you were sharing your capacity for kindness and healing. Stay with them as long as you wish.

Continue to sit quietly with this moment in time. When you're ready, gradually widen your attention to the sounds around you. Open your eyes with the intention to extend loving kindness to yourself and others each moment of this day.