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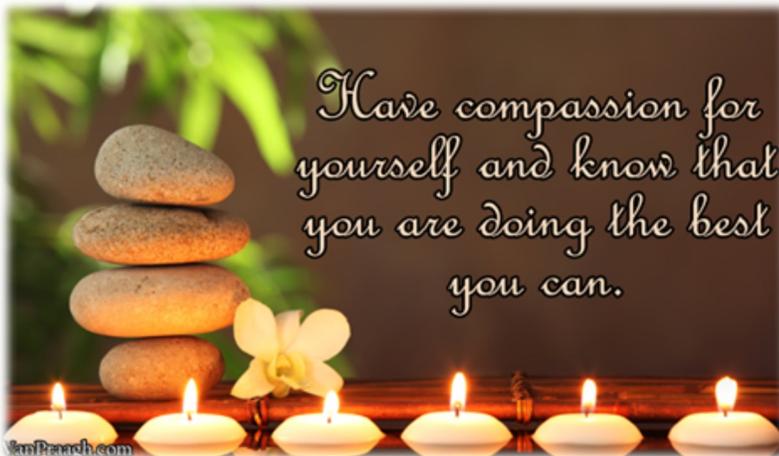
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Soul 2 Soul



Shirley A. Nelson

Self-Compassion

One of the most challenging aspects in life is the capacity to be kind to ourselves. It's like carrying a big stick around beating our selves up. We say things that are self defeating; we question and analyze situations over and over again; and we judge ourselves as bad, stupid, or crazy. Life is short and at some point you have to learn how to be your own best friend.

Self-compassion means you are kind and understanding toward yourself in instances of pain or failure, rather than being harshly self-critical. Self-compassion provides a stable sense of self-worth that does not fluctuate over time and it is not contingent upon looking a certain way or competing with others.

We live in a society that regularly sends us messages to strive for more, work even harder, and aim to be the best! We're so busy marching to the beat of this drum that we don't have time to stop and think whether or not it's what we really want.

Try talking to your friends about it and they're doing the same thing and can't help you get off the treadmill, even if they wanted to. And you may be thinking, "What does this have to do with self-compassion? What's wrong with being busy?"

Nothing's wrong with being busy if it's working for you. But you might not really know until you ask yourself a few questions such as: Am I really interested in how I spend my time? Am I fully engaged, or am I simply running as fast as I can trying to keep up with life? Am I treating myself with compassion?

You are invited to attend a San's Sacred Circle mini spiritual retreat on the first Sunday of the month now and until our last session for the year in December 2015.

The topic for October is **Self-Compassion**. We will discuss how being kind and compassionate to yourself will enhance the quality of your life and influence others to support you in your efforts.

The next retreat is October 4th at 3:00—6:00 p.m. We meet in the comfort of my living room and enjoy light snacks, music, meditation, prayer and lively conversation.

Donation \$15. First time guests are free (call for location). Questions and comments are welcome.

Peace,
Shirley

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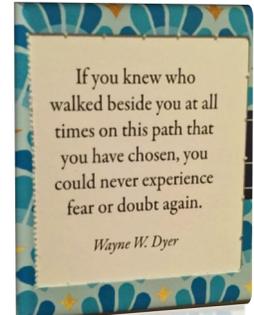
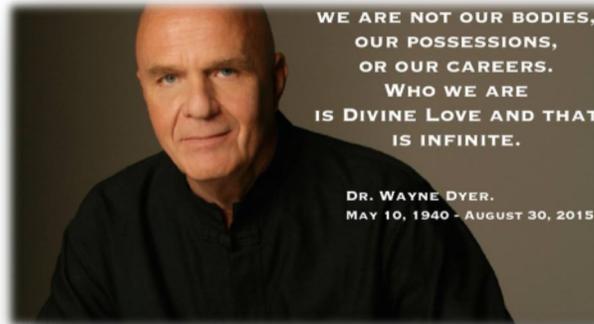
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Soul 2 Soul

(cont'd)

Although you may be successful, your happiness will always hinge on having whatever it is you have strived to achieve. If you ever lose it, you lose yourself along with it. This could be a job, a relationship, things you have acquired along the way, a particular lifestyle, etc. etc. However, research studies reveal that our society's emphasis on achievement and self-esteem lies at the heart of much unnecessary and even counterproductive suffering.

You are always a valuable, worthwhile human being -- not because anybody says so, not because you're successful, not because you make a lot of money -- but because you decide to believe it and for no other reason.



Dr. Kristen Neff, pioneer in the research about self-compassion, says: "With self-compassion, you value yourself not because you've judged yourself positively and others negatively but because you're intrinsically deserving of care and concern like everyone else. Where self-esteem leaves us powerless and distraught, self-compassion is at the heart of empowerment, learning, and inner strength. . . . When we stop being self-harming and start being kind to ourselves, it opens up the pathway to increase resilience."

Self-compassion can be learned. It is a practice that can help us all become less self-critical and perhaps even achieve more and give more. The three elements of self-compassion are: Self-kindness, Common Humanity, and Mindfulness.

Being kind to ourselves when we suffer, fail, or feel inadequate is a step in the right direction. Too often the voice that's closest to us is the one that's most devastating. It's the enemy within that does the most harm. Unkind thoughts and judgments that appear to be innocent since you're the only one who hears them, can actually be deadly. Instead of waiting for others to offer a gentle word, or two, give to yourself. When you get used to hearing the voice within you speaking in a kind and compassionate tone, you will undoubtedly attract others who do the same, as nothing less will be acceptable.

Suffering is something that we all share, so to suffer is to be human—no one gets in and out of here without a dose of it in some form or fashion. Childbirth is one of the most sacred phenomenon's that human's experience, yet there is much suffering. You are not alone because you suffer and when you have those feelings that you're the only one going through something, you suffer even more because you feel isolated. Let it go. It's time to move on. You're not the only one dealing with this. It's all part of being human. It's our common dilemma.

Lastly, you can move towards a balanced approach to life by being more mindful. By observing your negative thoughts and emotions with openness and clarity, you become more aware and more mindful. So next time you're feeling a little out of sorts, Stop, Look, and Listen. Instead of beating yourself up when things go bump in the night, give yourself some love and compassion. You deserve it!

*Peace ~
Shirley*

References: "Self-Compassion" by Emma Seppala, *Spirituality & Health*, September/October 2011 and *Self-Compassion: Stop Beating Yourself Up and Leave Insecurity Behind*, Kristen Neff, PH. D, author



Seeds of Wisdom ... Self-Compassion

From where do you live your life? Which Self do you claim? That which you see when you look in the mirror, or that which is within you? If you live your life from the former, it may be difficult to have compassion for yourself when it seems that you begin and end with your physical self. Then, again, if you live your life from within it still may be difficult to navigate life's ups and downs. The difference lies in how you identify yourself.

The person in the mirror has limited options about life because everything seems to fall on that person's shoulders. We then tend to project our discomfort on to others. It's very hard to experience self-compassion under these circumstances. Living from within we have a better opportunity to listen to something greater than what is in the mirror. We can ask for guidance or we can just rest in the knowledge that the burden of living is not ours alone. Something else will be working on our behalf that allows us to remember how to extend the love that emerges from within toward whatever life has sent us. In extending love we are calling on our self-compassion to lead us. We are not confused by what we feel or how to define it. This allows us to remember that there is more to our identity than flesh and bones. The lyrics to a popular song by India Arie really shed some light on this phenomenon.



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*I show you my burns,
You show me lessons learned.
I show you my scars,
You show me works of art.
I show you a blemish,
You say that God's not finished.*

~ India.Arie

The face in the mirror makes the statement. That which is within delivers the compassionate response. If we are to experience self-compassion, then we must become aware of its location. It is within us, not outside of us. Life is lived from within us. Compassion is within us. It extends outward to enrich our lives and, as a result, we experience a more wholesome definition of our existence. We must come from our real selves so as to remind ourselves who we be, the perfect child of God. From time to time there will be a case of amnesia that will take over our thinking. Going inside to trust our source can restore the lost years of the locust.

Once again, we are self-compassionate so that we may extend the love we really are. We cannot just rely on that which is in the mirror. The outside world is a reflection of an inside condition. So choose how you identify yourself--a human being with five senses that will help you navigate life, or a perfect child of God, an eternal, limitless, changeless being that is quite capable of extending the love that is the very foundation of your compassion.

Spend time cultivating your inner gifts that remind you of your true identity. If you do this, you will always be in touch with your compassion and you will extend it to the rest of the world. We can all do this.

*Peace,
Rashid*



Listen for the Word

This article is dedicated to the Rev. Dr. Lenny Z., a man who, in my mind, exemplified genuine love and compassion for all around him. He was a man of great intelligence (a Ph.D. in clinical psychology) as well as ordination in his particular religious tradition. I knew Lenny for close to 20 years, right up until his untimely death, at his own hands. You see, Lenny had compassion for everybody, but himself.

Lenny's suicide came just after I was about to write this article. It led me to rethink my whole approach to the topic. I began to seriously research what different faith and philosophical traditions had to say about compassion, most especially self-compassion. I discovered something that was staring me in the face for years. I think we recognize that all major religious/philosophical traditions urge us, in the strongest terms, to be compassionate with one another, as the Divine has been with us. However, when you pay close attention to the wording in ancient Scriptures, it tells us clearly, "...love your neighbor, as you love yourself..." Jesus taught us that this was one of the two laws upon which all other laws were built. We seem willing to take seriously the first part (love your neighbor) but we tend to dismiss the latter part, almost as if it were an insignificant addendum. An afterthought. But Buddhism (and Hinduism, among others) state unequivocally that one cannot have compassion for others unless you have compassion for yourself. You can't extend out to others what you don't have internally for yourself. Maybe Jesus should have reversed the order: "Love yourself the way you love your neighbor."

I know, I know. I hear the same voice in my head. "If only people knew what I'm really like. All the mistakes I've made. All the things I've done wrong." We forgive others and offer them compassion, but are so fearful that we are so bad, perverse or unacceptable, that if anyone really knew us, they'd be hard pressed to forgive us our perceived misdeeds and shortcomings. Then how is it all the sacred texts hold to the notion that the Holy One is "...slow to anger and quick to forgive..."? Do we imagine ourselves somehow superior to the Holy One that we can ignore such notions of forgiveness, kindness and compassion? I don't think so.

It's time to get real and cut yourself some slack! Show yourself some self-compassion. Try a little exercise I just learned. When you arise in the morning, look at yourself in the mirror. Remind yourself you are looking at the Child of God. Then close your eyes for a moment to allow that to sink in. When you open your eyes again, look at your eyes in the mirrored image and note the Divine spark in your own eyes. Bow (at least in your mind) to that Divine spark. Then, throughout the day, look for that same Divine spark in the eyes of everyone you meet, and (at least in your mind) bow to that Divine spark, realizing it is the same as the spark that lives within you. Realize that since we are all the Child of God, we are all deserving of compassion, especially self-compassion.

Listen for the word, which is: self-compassion. Remember, compassion for others starts at home with compassion for yourself.

*Peace ~
Will*



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**Self-
Compassion**

