

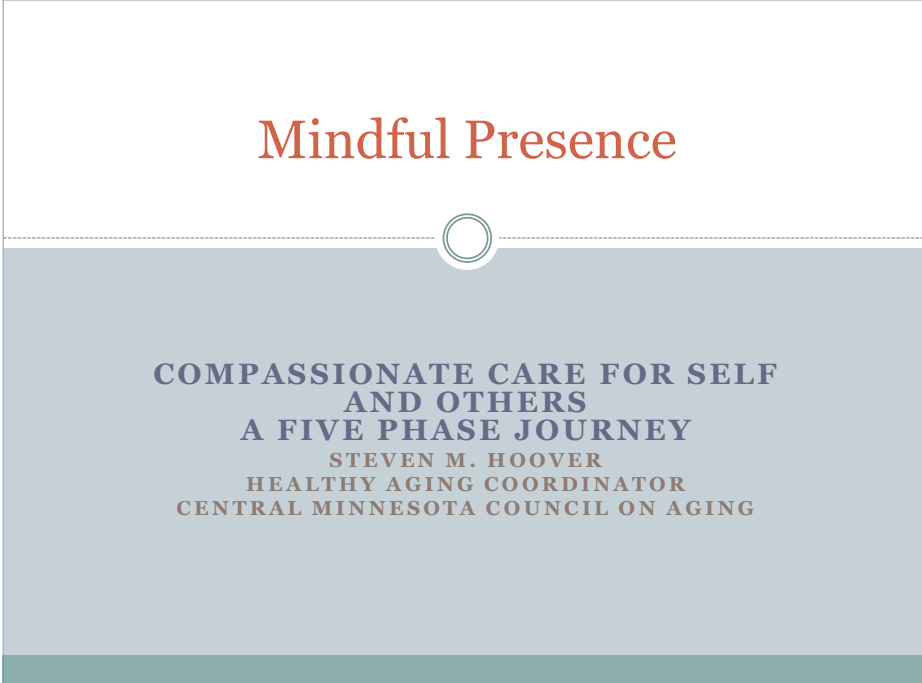
# Mindful Presence

Presenter:

Steve Hoover, PhD, Healthy Aging Coordinator  
Central Minnesota Council on Aging



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**Mindful Presence**

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**COMPASSIONATE CARE FOR SELF  
AND OTHERS  
A FIVE PHASE JOURNEY**  
STEVEN M. HOOVER  
HEALTHY AGING COORDINATOR  
CENTRAL MINNESOTA COUNCIL ON AGING

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## Setting an INTENTION helps to facilitate ATTENTION



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## How Was Your Day, Dear?

- I survived!
- I was Busy.
- I was productive.
- I made a difference!

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## Daily Difference Initiative

- Set an intention each day to make a difference.
- Look for opportunities – they are everywhere.
- Reflect daily on your successes
- Add this dimension to a Gratitude Practice.

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My Intention:

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## Simple Personal Plan



- Based on this session, what is one thing to:
- **START** \_\_\_\_\_
- **STOP** \_\_\_\_\_
- **CONTINUE/EXPAND** \_\_\_\_\_
- **EXPLORE** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Overview



- Begin with "inward training" and move to "external Practice."
- Conceptual foundation with options for practice(s).

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## Core Assumption, Caveats and Givens



- Operate from a belief in a Core Goodness
  - Life has “layered” over an essential foundation.
  - Recognizing this allows for our ability to Respond rather than React.
    - To the Person and not the Emotions.

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## Recognize Our Personal Relationship to Stress(ors)



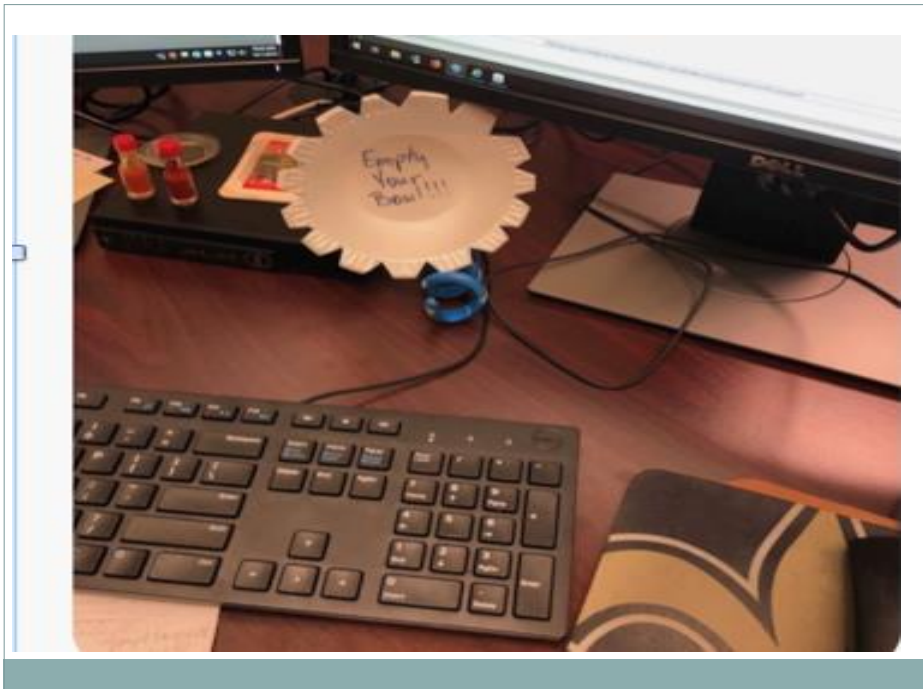
- Acute Stress
- Chronic Stress
- Toxic Stress

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## Mindful Presence

- The ability to be fully present to the moment, people, feelings and emotions in our lives.
- Developed through “Inward Training.”
- Exercised in “Compassionate Impact.”
- Requires us to “Empty our Bowls.”

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## Compassion

- “...a state of concern for the suffering or unmet need of another and oneself, coupled with a desire to alleviate that suffering...distinct components:
- 1. an *awareness* of an antecedent (i.e., suffering or need) in another;
- 2. *feeling* “moved;” that is, having a subjective physical experience that involves involuntary arousal of branches of the ANS;
- 3. *appraisal* of one’s own bodily feeling, social role, and abilities within the context of suffering;
- 4. *discernments* regarding the person who is suffering & the situational context;
- 5. *engagement* of the neural systems that drive social affiliation, caregiving and motivate helping.”

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## Nature of Compassion

- Two elements: empathy for suffering or an unmet need; desire to alleviate.
- Empathic Distress: a self-focused reaction to observing suffering with a desire to alleviate personal discomfort.
- Compassion engages the parasympathetic nervous system (connect and recover)
- Empathic Distress engages the sympathetic nervous system (fight, flight or freeze)

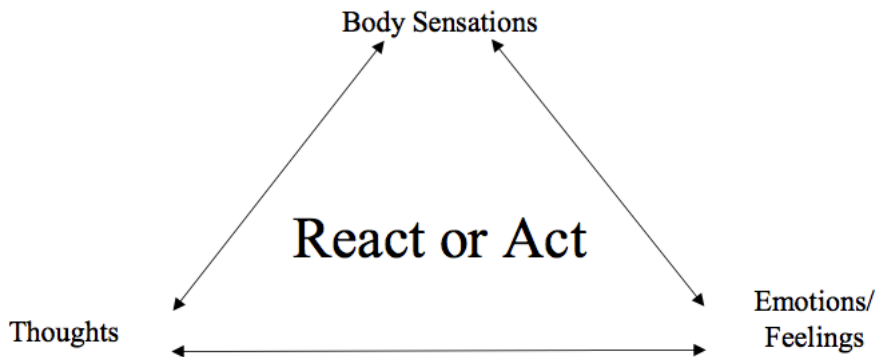
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## I Know Someone Going Through a Hard Time

\* I know someone going through a hard time,  
 \* And I will not make it harder  
 \* by making about me.  
 \*  
 \* I know someone going through a hard time.  
 \* He's irritable, over reactive, and difficult to be around.  
 \* That's grief talking, I remind myself.  
 \* And my love expands like an umbrella in a downpour.  
 \*  
 \* I know someone going through a hard time.  
 \* She's moody and over-the-top dramatic.  
 \* That's teen angst talking, I remind myself.  
 \* And my love settles and steadies like a faithful friend.  
 \*  
 \* I know someone going through a hard time.  
 \* She's emotional, fidgety and anxious.  
 \* That's fear talking, I remind myself.  
 \* And my love whispers to her like a calming prayer.  
 \*  
 \* I know someone going through a hard time.  
 \* He's slow, repetitive and forgetful.  
 \* That's growing old talking, I remind myself.  
 \* And my love supports him like an old oak tree.  
 \*  
 \* I know someone going through a hard time.  
 \* She's awkward and sassy.  
 \* That's hormones talking, I remind myself.  
 \* And my love endures like a worn pair of blue jeans.  
 \*  
 \* I know someone going through a hard time.  
 \* He's irritable, defensive and angry.  
 \* That depression talking, I remind myself.  
 \* And my love breaks through the clouds and warms his face.  
 \*  
 \* It's not easy to respond when I want to retreat,  
 \* To forgive when I want to freak out,  
 \* To detect when I want to dictate,  
 \* To bite my tongue when I want to bite back.  
 \*  
 \* But when I do, love does the talking.  
 \*  
 \* And when love speaks,  
 \* Peace is felt.  
 \* Healing begins.  
 \* Miracles happen in front of us and within us.  
 \*  
 \* It's a beautiful way to begin a new season.  
 \*  
 \* Let's begin.  
 \* Rachel Stafford

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## Finding Space to Choose



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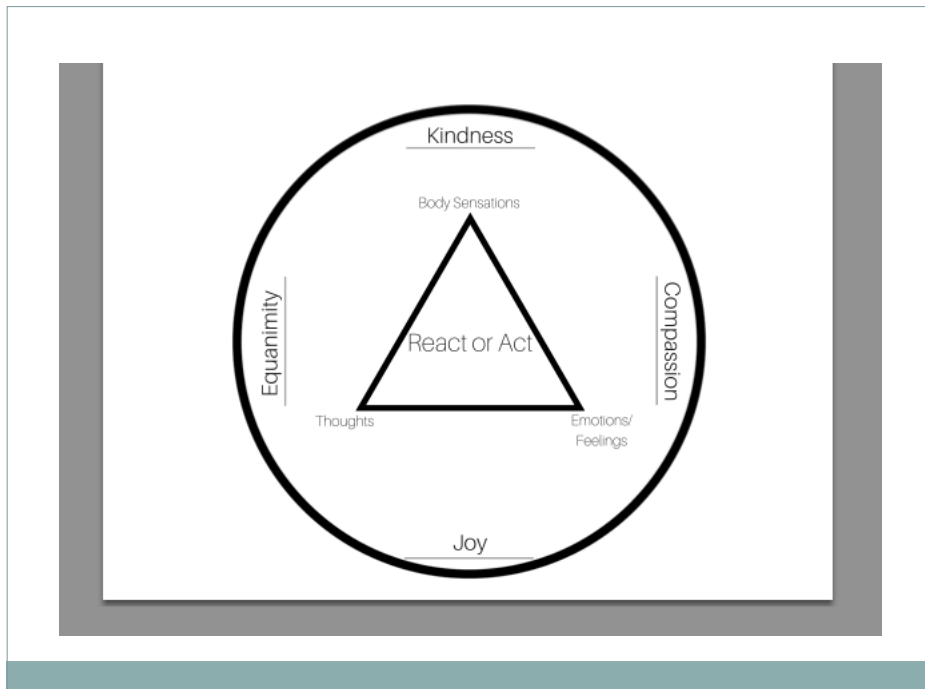


## Science of Gratitude: *The Gratitude Project*



- Gratitude is the driver that moves us from a “me” orientation to a “we” orientation.
- Science:
  - Reduction in depressive symptoms
  - Increase in positive emotions: joy, optimism, pleasure
  - Improves interpersonal relationships
  - Reduction in inflammation
  - Reduction in self-reported stress
  - Increased sleep

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## Phase One: Working with Body Sensations



- Body Scan Breathing.
- Distinction between sensation and perception.
- Awareness of the sensations AND the narrative!
- <https://www.stcloudstate.edu/healthwellness/get-healthy/meditation.aspx>

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## Working with the Body



- Body Scan for centering and creating space.
- Awareness of breath AND breath control.
  - Sympathetic NS
  - Parasympathetic NS

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## Check Your Balance



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## Mindful Presence PhaseTwo

**WORKING WITH OUR  
EMOTIONS**

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## Being with Emotions

- Emotions are *perceptions of sensations* with a message.
- Emotional *sensitivity* allows for the awareness of emotions as they arise.
- Emotional *awareness* allows for the space to explore the message.
- Emotional *intelligence* allows us to choose how we ACT on the emotion.

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## Permission to Feel

M. Brackett, Ph.D.

### MOOD METER

Enraged	Furious	Frustrated	Shocked	<b>M</b>	Hyper	Lively	Motivated	Ecstatic
Livid	Frightened	Angry	Restless	<b>O</b>	Energized	Cheerful	Inspired	Excited
Fuming	Apprehensive	Worried	Annoyed	<b>O</b>	Relaxed	Happy	Optimistic	Thrilled
Repulsed	Troubled	Concerned	Peevish	<b>D</b>	Pleasant	Joyful	Proud	Blessed
<b>M O O D M E T E R</b>								
Disgusted	Disappointed	Guilt	Sad	<b>E</b>	At Ease	Content	Loving	Fulfilled
Pessimistic	Lonely	Mopey	Bored	<b>T</b>	Relaxed	Secure	Chill	Grateful
Helpless	Depressed	Discouraged	Tired	<b>E</b>	Calm	Satisfied	Grateful	Carefree
Despair	Hopeless	Miserable	Exhausted	<b>R</b>	Relieved	Peaceful	Tranquil	Serene

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## RAIN on Emotions



- Recognize the emergence of an emotion.
- Accept that you are having an emotion.
- Identify and Investigate the emotion.
- Non-identification with the emotion.

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## Working with Emotions



- Emotional reactions are often habits used to facilitate and to protect.

“That which we resist will persist.”

Get “space” around our emotional reactions:

“I am having an angry feeling.”

“That’s very diagnostic.”

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## The Guest House

(Rumi)



- *This being human is a guest house.  
Every morning a new arrival.*
- *A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
some momentary awareness comes  
As an unexpected visitor.*
- *Welcome and entertain them all!  
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,  
who violently sweep your house  
empty of its furniture,  
still treat each guest honorably.  
He may be clearing you out  
for some new delight.*
- *The dark thought, the shame, the malice,  
meet them at the door laughing,  
and invite them in.*
- *Be grateful for whoever comes,  
because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond.*

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## Mindful Presence

Phase Three



**WORKING WITH  
THOUGHTS  
BUILDING SELF  
COMPASSION THROUGH  
STRENGTHS**

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## Working with Thoughts



- Thoughts are the *narratives* we lay over the sensations and emotions.
- A full flight or fight emotional reaction lasts 90 seconds! (*My Stroke of Insight*)
- We chose to relive the emotion, over and over and over.....

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## Mountain Meditation



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## Thoughts as Leaves on a Stream



- Create a space between “you” and the thought.
- I am not my emotions or my thoughts.
- Not: “I am angry.”
- Instead: “I am having an angry thought.”
- Allow it to arise, be aware of it, allow it to float downstream.

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## Building Compassionate Presence: Using Your Strengths To Build Resilience in Self and Others



*FINDING YOUR CHARACTER STRENGTHS*

VIA CHARACTER STRENGTHS ASSESSMENT –  
TAKE THE FREE SURVEY.

[WWW.VIACHARACTER.ORG](http://WWW.VIACHARACTER.ORG)

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## Character Strengths



**transcendence**

**APPRECIATION OF BEAUTY & EXCELLENCE**  
Appreciating beauty, excellence, and/or skilled performance in various domains of life

**SPiritUALITY**  
Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose, the meaning of life and the meaning of the universe

**GRATITUDE**  
Being aware of and thankful of the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks

**HOPE**  
Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it

**HUMOUR**  
Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side

### The 24 Character Strengths

From Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification  
by Prof Chris Peterson and Prof Martin Seligman

**These are strengths we all possess. Which of them are strongest in you?**

**wisdom**

**CREATIVITY**  
Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and to do things

**CURIOSITY**  
Taking an interest in ongoing experiences for its own sake; exploring and discovering

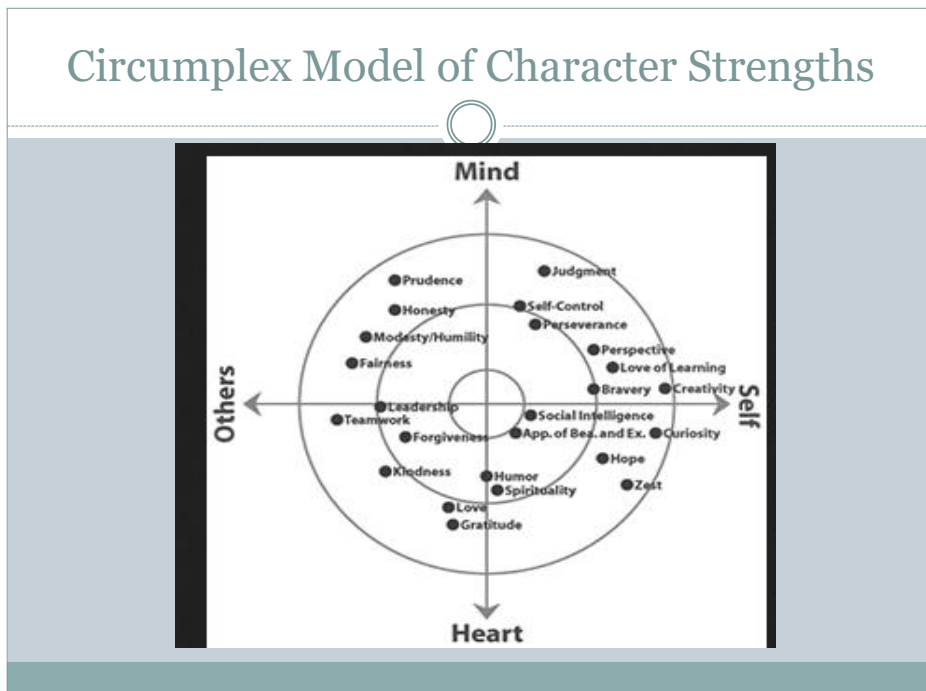
**OPEN-MINDEDNESS**  
Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; weighing all evidence fairly

**LOVE OF LEARNING**  
Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether on one's own or formally

**PERSPECTIVE**  
Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that makes sense to oneself and to others

<b>temperance</b>	<b>FORGIVENESS &amp; MERCY</b> Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting the shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful	<b>justice</b>	<b>humanity</b>	<b>courage</b>	
<b>SPiritUALITY</b>	<b>HUMILITY &amp; MODESTY</b> Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is	<b>CITIZENSHIP</b> Working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group	<b>LOVE</b> Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated	<b>BRavery</b> Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty or pain; working on convictions even if unpopular	<b>CREATIVITY</b>
<b>GRATITUDE</b>	<b>PRUDENCE</b> Being a careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted	<b>FAIRNESS</b> Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others	<b>KINDNESS</b> Doing favours and good deeds for others	<b>PERSISTENCE</b> Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles	<b>CURIOSITY</b>
<b>HOPE</b>	<b>SELF-REGULATION</b> Regulating what one feels and does; being disciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions	<b>LEADERSHIP</b> Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done and at the same time maintain good relations within the group	<b>SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE</b> Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself	<b>INTEGRITY</b> Preserving oneself in a genuine way; taking responsibility for one's feelings and actions	<b>OPEN-MINDEDNESS</b>
<b>HUMOUR</b>				<b>VITALITY</b> Approaching life with excitement and energy; feeling alive and activated	<b>LOVE OF LEARNING</b>

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## Practicing with Your Strengths

- Phase 1: Awareness
  - In what ways do I manifest the strength?
  - Do family and friends readily observe it in me?
  - Is it core to who I am? Does it feel like the real me?
  - Is the strength highly energizing to me?
  - Do I express this strength across settings and adapt it easily in many situations?

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## Practicing Your Strengths

- Phase Two: Explore
  - How have I used this strength when I was at my best?
  - What does it look like for me to express this strength?
  - When and where do I use this strength in my daily life?
  - How have I used this strength at times of stress and upset?
  - What benefits does this strength bring me and others?

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## Practicing Your Strengths

- Stage Three: Application
- Daily intention.
- Daily reflection.
- Mindful application in times of stress/challenge.

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## Strength Spotting

- Fine Tune Your Observation Skills
  - Bring to mind someone who is significant in your life.
  - Reflect on the individual's character strengths
    - ✦ How does s/he demonstrate the skill(s)?
    - ✦ How do others react when s/he demonstrates the skill.
    - ✦ In what ways can you acknowledge the skill in him/her?

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## Strength Spotting

- Select someone with whom you have challenges.
- Recall how you sometimes react to him/her.
- Instead of reacting to the emotions, take the Character Strengths sheet and list his/her top five strengths.

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## Mindful Presence Phase Four: Gratitude and Self- Compassion



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## Science of Gratitude: *The Gratitude Project*



- Gratitude is the driver that moves us from a “me” orientation to a “we” orientation.
- **Science:**
  - Emmons & Lyubomirsky: “...practicing gratitude has proven to be one of the most reliable methods for increasing happiness and life satisfaction. It also:
    - Reduction in depressive symptoms
    - Increase in positive emotions: joy, optimism, pleasure
    - Improves interpersonal relationships
    - Reduction in inflammation
    - Reduction in self-reported stress
    - Increased sleep”

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## Gratitude Unshackles us from Negative Emotions



- **Wong & Brown:**
- Gratitude group had a higher percentage of positive to negative self-thoughts; fewer negative to positive emotions; fewer negative to positive words.
- Regular gratitude practices shifted attention away from toxic emotions.
- Also found that gratitude practices improved relationships.

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## Health Benefits of Gratitude Practices

- Emmons research:
- Reduction in inflammation – stress responses.
- Increased Heart Rate Variability (HRV)
- Increased vagal tone
- Reduction in chronic pain
- Increased sleep behaviors - deep/restorative sleep; speed of sleep onset
- Greater neural sensitivity in the prefrontal cortex – social connections.

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## Gratitude Practices

- Gratitude for personal strengths.
- Gratitude for origins and circumstances that created and promotes personal strength.
- "Lessons Learned" meditation – resiliency and Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG).
- Gratitude Journal – depth vs breadth.
  - Reflect on things for which you are grateful.
  - Select one and write on why you are grateful, how you feel when reflecting on it, how do you act on the feeling?
- Gratitude Letter (communication).
- See also the Bounce Back Project: Promoting Resilience through Happiness: <https://www.bouncebackproject.org>

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## Mindful Presence Phase Five:



### PATHWAYS TO COMPASSION FOR SELF AND OTHERS

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## Self-Compassion



- First developed by Kristin Neff, PhD.
- “Learning to embrace yourself and your imperfections to build resilience.”
- “Self-compassion is a practice in which we learn to become an inner ally rather than an inner enemy...self-compassion involves treating yourself the way you would treat a friend who is having a hard time.”

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## Self-Compassion vs Self-Esteem

(Neff and Germer, 2019)



- Self-esteem is a positive evaluation of self-worth. Self-compassion isn't a judgment or an evaluation but a way of *relating* to the changing landscape of who we are with kindness and acceptance.
- Self-esteem is built on comparisons with others and is therefore "other-dependent." Self-esteem is contingent (Contingent Self-Worth) on conditions (i.e., successful performance, physical attractiveness, etc.) and feedback from others.
- Self-esteem is linked to social comparison and narcissism.

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## Barriers to Self-Compassion



- Critical and negative self-talk.
- Shaming (vs guilt) as personal attributions.
- Reliance on social comparisons as contingent self-worth.
- Deficit orientation vs strengths orientation.
- Concern over self-indulgence.

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## Full Compassion Practice

- A full compassion practice from “Self to Others”:
  - Yourself;
  - A person for whom you care very deeply;
  - A person for whom you have no strong feelings.
  - A person with whom you have strong negative feelings.
  - To all beings.
  - Saying:
    - May (I) you have happiness and the causes of happiness.
    - May (I) you be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.

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## Humility: A Pathway to Compassion

- Humility: ”...is a particular *psychological positioning of oneself* within the larger context of the universe – one that is both *epistemically* and *ethically* aligned (Nadelhoffer and Wright, 2020).
  - *Epistemically aligned*: the understanding and experiencing of oneself as one among a larger sense of self ( spiritual realization of one’s place in the universe, existential awareness); operationalized as “low self-focus.”
  - *Ethically aligned*: *the understanding and experiencing of oneself as only one among a host of other morally relevant beings whose interests are as legitimate, and as worthy of attention and concern as our own (state of “extended compassion”); operationalized as a “high other focus.”*

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**Humility:**  
Emptying Our Bowls to be Present to Others

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Where do you go from here?



What are the next steps on your journey?