

Session 5 – Discovering Your Compassionate Voice

Objectives

- practice loving-kindness meditation using our own authentic phrases
- reflect on the stages of progress and how MSC is going
- motivate ourselves with encouragement rather than criticism

Before Our Session

Please go over any material from Session 4 that you haven't had a chance to look at, or that you feel you don't quite have a handle on.

Stages of Progress

We are now in the "muddy middle" of the program. If you are finding that you have doubts about your ability to become more self-compassionate, know that that's not a problem. In fact, it may mean you are making progress!

Self-compassion training typically goes through three stages:

- Striving
- Disillusionment
- True Acceptance

You may have seen these stages in the video "The Fly" (on the "Optional Extras" page for Session 3)—striving to get rid of the flies, breaking down in the futility of the struggle, and then opening the hand of acceptance.

Progress is the refinement of intention—learning to practice self-compassion for its own sake, not as an effort to manipulate moment-to-moment experience. "Progress" really means dropping the idea of progress. The refinement of intention is best expressed in the paradoxical statement: "We give ourselves kindness not to feel better, but because we feel bad."

Striving

We all start to practice self-compassion, or any self-improvement effort, with the intention to feel better. It is full of hope. Sometimes the practice bears fruit right away; for example, when

we discover for the first time, “I can love myself!” This realization can be quite elevating, like the infatuation phase of a romantic relationship.

Disillusionment

Of course, as in any romantic relationship, infatuation is usually followed by disillusionment. In interpersonal relationships, disillusionment is the discovery that our beloved is no longer the answer to all our problems and is, after all, a human being. In self-compassion practice, disillusionment corresponds to the discovery that “I am still the same person as before!” with the same uncomfortable feelings and personal flaws. When this happens, we might blame ourselves or the training program for failing to make a more substantive change. The problem usually lies in the intention behind the practices—the wish to change our personalities or how we feel rather than accepting “what is” with an open heart. Self-compassion has been hijacked in the service of resistance. The fault is not in the techniques but in the intention behind their use.

Consider the following example of using loving-kindness phrases to overcome insomnia. When we first learn loving-kindness and have a curious, beginner’s mind, we may successfully comfort ourselves with the phrases when we’re lying sleepless in the middle of the night and easily drift off to sleep. Upon waking in the morning, we may be excited by this success and decide to use loving-kindness phrases the next night to fall asleep. Predictably, it doesn’t work because the intention behind using the phrases has changed from self-comfort to a slick, new strategy for resisting or avoiding suffering. That’s when we become disillusioned. Meditation teacher Bob Sharples (2003) describes these efforts as the “subtle aggression of self-improvement” and, as an antidote, he recommends that we “practice meditation as an act of love.” Disillusionment is an important phase of self-compassion training because it lays bare our counterproductive striving.

Radical Acceptance

Radical acceptance is the last stage (Brach, 2003). Radical acceptance refers to “fully entering into and embracing whatever is in the present moment” (Robins, Schmidt & Linehan, 2004, p.40), which also means embracing ourselves and others just as we are. How do we progress toward radical acceptance? Mostly we do less. In radical acceptance, we are not throwing compassion at ourselves to make our pain go away; rather, the heart melts from the warmth of compassion. Some sayings that may reduce unnecessary striving are:

- “We are not here to learn self-compassion—we are here to embrace our imperfections!”
- “Practice makes imperfect.” (Bob Long, personal communication)
- “The point of spiritual practice isn’t to perfect yourself, but to perfect your love.” (Kornfield, 2017)

- “I’m not okay, you’re not okay...but that’s okay!”

To repeat an earlier analogy, radical acceptance is like a parent comforting a child with the flu. The parent is not trying to drive out the flu with their kindness—they give care and comfort as a spontaneous response to the child’s suffering until the illness passes on its own. Another metaphor is to “respond the way an eyelid responds to a dry eye” (Treace, 2003). All human beings suffer in life. Can we offer ourselves the same kindness and affection as we might extend to a child with the flu? When we can, that’s radical acceptance.

Here are some additional quotations that illustrate the meaning of radical acceptance:

- “...we can still be crazy after all these years. We can still be angry after all these years. We can still be timid or jealous or full of feelings of unworthiness. The point is...not to try to throw ourselves away and become something better. It’s about befriending who we are already.” (Chödrön, 1991/2001, p. 4)
- “A person should not strive to eliminate his complexes but to get into accord with them.” (Freud, in Jones, 1955, p. 188)
- “The curious paradox of life is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change” (Rogers, 1961/1995, p. 17)
- “The goal of practice is to become a compassionate mess.” (Nairn, 2009). To be a compassionate mess means to be fully human--often struggling, uncertain, confused—with great compassion. This is the invitation of self-compassion.

The stages of progress do not always proceed in a linear, sequential manner. They are more like an upward spiral, or we can bounce back into striving and disillusionment when we meet more formidable challenges. Over years of practice, however, our periods of striving and disillusionment seem to diminish and radical acceptance increases.

Self-Criticism and Safety

We say that radical acceptance is important, but there's an aspect of ourselves we typically don't want to accept - our inner critic. We tend to see it only as a source of pain, and would like to get rid of it if we could. Therefore, it's worth getting to know our inner critic a little better.

What function does self-criticism serve? Is there any value in self-criticism? If so, what good may it do? Please explore this topic in the discussion board this week. Note that this discussion is about harsh self-criticism, not critical discernment. The tone of the critical voice makes all the difference - the **inner critic's voice feels disapproving of self while critical discernment has more of a subjective feel**.

The desire to keep ourselves safe underlies most self-criticism. The self-critic is usually trying to help us in some way, to protect us from some perceived danger, even if the methods it uses are unproductive.

Sometimes a critical inner voice is internalized from early caregivers with no redeeming value whatsoever. Agreeing with harsh messages from abusive or neglectful caregivers may have kept us safe and connected when we were young, but probably not now.

When we stand up to abusive voices from the past, or start being kind to ourselves, we may feel frightened and unsafe. It might feel as if we are breaking an invisible contract that helped us survive when we were young. This fear can be met with self-compassion as well but we need to proceed slowly and have access to a personal trauma counselor if we are working with this kind of material in our personal inner landscape.

Some people do not have a harsh inner critic. Others have never explored this aspect of their experience and they cannot recognize critical self-talk but they still have a sense of deflation, discouragement, disapproval or being judged.

Note that just like the inner critic, our inner compassionate self also wants us to be safe. While providing unconditional self-acceptance, it would like us to change behaviors that are causing us harm. During our session this week we are going to explore what it feels like to motivate a behavioral change from both a self-critical and self-compassionate perspective.

Session 5 Schedule

Topic: Stages of Progress

Topic: Self-Criticism and Safety

[Live Session in Zoom](#)

Meditation: Loving-Kindness for Ourselves

Exercise: How is MSC Going for Me?

Topic: Self-criticism and Safety

Exercise: Motivating Ourselves with Compassion

Home Practice

After Our Session

The Language of Loving-Kindness Phrases

Finding phrases is like writing poetry—finding words that express something that cannot be put into words. We are angling for language that evokes the energy or attitude of loving-kindness and compassion. Here are some tips for finding your own Loving-Kindness phrases:

- There is no need to use phrases that may have been passed down for millennia. Make them your own.
- Just as the breath can be an anchor for meditation, loving-kindness phrases can anchor our awareness. Much of the power of meditation comes from concentration, so if we can settle upon 2-4 phrases that we are willing to practice with for years to come, it will support the concentrative aspect of meditation.
- Loving-kindness phrases can also be used during everyday life, and we can be flexible with phrases we use in a responsive way to situations in our daily life.
- The best phrases are simple, clear, authentic, and kind.
- If there is any argument in the mind when we offer ourselves a loving-kindness phrase, then it's best to leave that phrase alone and search for another one. We know we have found a good phrase when we feel gratitude: "Oh, thank you! Thank you." Good loving-kindness phrases allow the heart to finally rest.
- You don't need to use "may I" phrases if these feel awkward or too much like asking. Loving-kindness phrases are wishes. "May I" is simply an invitation to incline the heart in a positive direction. It means, "That it would be so" or "If all the conditions would allow it to be so, then..." Loving-kindness phrases are like blessings.
- The phrases are not positive affirmations (for example: "I'm becoming healthier every day."). We are simply cultivating good intentions, not wishing ourselves into a future where things are other than they are. Research has shown that positive affirmations tend to make people with high self-esteem feel happier and people with low self-esteem feel worse (Wood, Perunovic & Lee, 2009).
- The phrases are designed to evoke good will, not necessarily good feelings. A common reason for difficulty with loving-kindness meditation is that we have expectations about how we're supposed to feel. Loving-kindness practice doesn't directly change our emotions. Good feelings are an inevitable byproduct, or side effect, of an intention of good will.
- You might address yourself as "I," "you," or using your actual name ("George"). You may also use a term of endearment, such as "Sweetheart" or "Dear One." Addressing

oneself in this way helps promote a sense of affectionate self-to-self relationship. For example, using “you” rather than “I” is more likely to motivate you into action if that’s the purpose of your practice (Dolcos & Albarracin, 2014; Kross et al., 2014).

- The best phrases are general rather than specific. For example, it is better to say, “May I be healthy,” than “May I be free from my diabetes.” We cannot control the outcome of many situations in our lives no matter how much we wish we could. The idea is to stick to the wishing side of the phrases rather than get fixed on an outcome. Once the wishing attitude is deeply ingrained, it’s even fine to use a single word such as “peace” or “love” rather than a phrase.
- The best phrases are said slowly: there’s no rush – the most phrases in the shortest time doesn’t win the race!
- The best phrases are offered warmly, like whispering them into the ear of someone you truly love. What matters most is the attitude behind the phrases.

Home Practice

- Loving-Kindness for Ourselves
- Compassionate Letter to Myself
- Finding Loving-Kindness Phrases

This week you can continue exploring what words or phrases are deeply meaningful to you, then use those phrases in meditation or informally throughout the day.

Tips for Practice

- When you sit down to meditate, consider it a chance to know what you are feeling and to love and accept yourself as you are, rather than improving yourself. Soften the natural inclination to practice to:
 - train your brain
 - be a good student
 - prepare for a better day
 - reduce stress
 - fulfill an obligationAs Rumi wrote, “Close your eyes. Fall in love. Stay there.”
- If self-compassion practice feels like work, then it’s not self-compassion. Self-compassion should feel like letting go. [some say “*letting be*” instead of *letting go*]
- Throw off any stress associated with self-compassion; practice in a way that is easier than everyday life. While meditating, ask yourself, “Is there anything I can let go of?” “Can I do this in an easier way?”

- Don't worry about your progress; just practice in a slow-learner kind of way.
- Use recorded meditations if you're still finding it difficult to practice.

Reminder: Refer to the handout, "What Works for Me," (class 3 notes) for an outline of the meditations and informal practices learned so far.

If you're looking for a structured approach to practice this week, you could try the following:

- Affectionate Breathing each day
- Revisit the "Finding Loving-Kindness Phrases" exercise to continue to refine your phrases
- Practice with your phrases each day. You might start your meditation session with Affectionate Breathing, then do 10 minutes of lovingkindness, then end your session with Affectionate Breathing
- Continue writing your compassionate letter to yourself. You could do this each day for just 5 minutes. If you have a journal, you might like to incorporate this into your journal entries.

LOVING-KINDNESS FOR OURSELVES

- Please find a comfortable position, sitting or lying down. Letting your eyes close, fully or partially. Taking a few deep breaths to settle into your body and into the present moment.
- Putting your hand over your heart, or wherever it is comforting and soothing, as a reminder that you are bringing not only awareness, but loving awareness, to your experience and to yourself.
- After awhile, feeling your breath where you notice it most easily. Feeling your body breathe in and out, and when your attention wanders, noticing the gentle movement of your breath once again.
- Then gently releasing the breath and offering yourself words of kindness and compassion, over and over ...words that you need to hear, words you can savor.
 - If you already have phrases that are meaningful to you, please use these.
 - If you are new to meditating with phrases, please open your heart and mind to what you need to hear – words of wisdom and compassion that speak to you in the deepest way – and whisper them gently into your own ear, again and again.
- Allowing the words in, allowing them to fill your being, allowing them to be true, at least for this one moment.
- Whenever you notice that your mind has wandered, refreshing your aim by feeling the sensations in your body. Coming home to your own body. And then feeling the importance of your words. Coming home to kindness.
- Finally, releasing the phrases and resting quietly in your own body.
- Gently opening your eyes.

FINDING LOVING-KINDNESS PHRASES

This is a pen and paper exercise. You will close your eyes and do some reflection, then open your eyes and write, and then close and open and close your eyes again.

The exercise is designed to help you discover loving-kindness and compassion phrases that are deeply meaningful to you. If you already have phrases and wish to continue using them, you can try this exercise as an experiment but please don't feel the need to find new phrases.

What Do I Need?

Now, taking a moment, opening your heart, and asking yourself this question:

- "What do I need?" "What do I truly need? (pause) If this need has not been fulfilled in a given day, your day is not complete.
- Let the answer be a universal human need. Examples are the need to be connected, kind, peaceful, free. (pause)
- When you are ready, please open your eyes and write down what you, as a person, really need.
- If you wish, you can translate your needs into wishes for yourself, such as,
 - "May I feel connected to others"
 - "May I be kind to myself"
 - "May I live in peace"
 - "May I be free"

What Do I Long to Hear?

- Now, closing your eyes again and asking yourself the following:
 - What do I long to hear from others?
 - What words do I long to hear because, as a person, I really need to hear words like this.

Open the door of your heart and wait for words to come.

- If I could, what words would I like to have whispered into my ear every day for the rest of my life—words that would fill me with gratitude every time I hear them?
- Open to this possibility, with courage. Listen.
- Now gently open your eyes again and take a moment to write down what you heard.

- If you heard a lot of words, see if you can make the words into a short phrase—a message to yourself.
- Words that we long to hear from others are often qualities that we wish to actualize in our own lives, or attitudes that we wish to know for sure. They are subtle wishes for ourselves. For example, longing to hear “I love you” means that we wish to know that we are lovable.
- You can use your phrases just as you wrote them down, with an implicit wish behind them, or you can shape them into an explicit wish for yourself.

For example:

- “I love you” can become the wish, “May I love myself just as I am.”
 - “I’m here for you” can become the wish, “May I be there for myself,” or “May I be strong.”
 - “You’re a good person” can become the wish, “May I know my own goodness.”
You can offer yourself what you long to hear from others.
- Now, take a little time to review what you have written, and settle on 2-4 words or phrases that you would enjoy hearing again and again. (pause)
 - Finally, let’s close our eyes for a last time. Begin saying your phrases over and over, slowly and gently, whispering them into your own ear as if into the ear of a loved one. (pause 4-5 minutes).
 - Please consider this exercise to be only the beginning of a search for phrases that are just right for you. Finding phrases is a soulful journey, a poetic journey. Hopefully you will find yourself returning to this process (“What do I long to hear?” “What do I need?”) as you practice loving-kindness meditation.
 - Gently open your eyes.

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<p>~ May I be kind to myself ~ May I wrap my flaws in love and warmth ~ May I have joy in my life ~ May I know connection</p>
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Compassionate Letter to Myself

Everybody has something about themselves they don't like; something that causes them to feel shame, insecure, or not "good enough" (i.e., an unhealthy habit, a physical attribute, or a way of relating to others). When you notice that you are being unnecessarily critical toward yourself, the following exercise can help to cultivate a more compassionate, encouraging voice.

From a Friend to Yourself

- Think about an imaginary friend who is unconditionally wise, loving and compassionate. Imagine that this friend can see all your strengths and weaknesses, including what you don't like about yourself. This friend recognizes the limits of human nature, and is kind, accepting, and forgiving.
- 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 from the perspective of unlimited compassion? And if you think this friend would suggest possible changes you should make, how might these suggestions embody feelings of care, encouragement, and support?
- After writing the letter, put it down for a little while. Then come back to it and read it again, really letting the words sink in. Feel the compassion as it pours into you, soothing and comforting you. Love, connection and acceptance are your birthright. To claim them you need only look within yourself.

From Yourself to a Friend

- Write a letter as if you were talking to a dearly loved friend who was struggling with the same concern that you are. What words of compassion and support would you offer? Then go back and read the letter, applying the words to yourself.

From Your Compassionate Self to Yourself

- Write a letter from the perspective of your own compassionate self. This part of you would like to help you because they care deeply about you. The intention behind your compassionate self is, "I love you and I don't want you to suffer." Put the letter away and read it to yourself later on.

Questions from Inner Critic and Compassionate Voice Exercise

- Could you connect with an inner critic or hear a self-critical voice?
 - How did it feel to give compassion to the part of you that felt criticized?
 - Did you discover any way your critical voice was trying to help you?
 - Did it make sense to thank the inner critic for its efforts?
 - What was the impact of saying the words, “I love you and don’t want you to suffer”?

Exercise: How is MSC going for me? Please take out a paper and pencil.

- **Stages of Progress.** Remembering that we cycle through the stages of progress, please take a moment to reflect on what part of the cycle you might be in right now – striving, disillusionment, or radical acceptance?

Please write it down.
- **MSC.** Now, please close your eyes and consider the following 3 questions, opening your eyes when you have an answer and jotting it down, and then closing your eyes again: (pause)
 - MSC - How is the program going for you now, near the middle of the program? Has there been anything particularly surprising, challenging, uplifting, or confusing so far during the course?

Pause, close your eyes, reflect then open your eyes and write down your reflections
 - Mindfulness. If you are struggling, is there any way that you can reduce the struggle? Is there any experience that you would like to give a little more space, or let go of, that would make your participation in the program easier or more delightful? For example, are you feeling confused, frustrated, or unhappy? Can you allow that to be so?

Pause, close your eyes, reflect then open your eyes and write down your reflections
 - Self-Compassion. We all have difficult aspects of ourselves that we have trouble accepting. For example, jealousy, anxiety, self-criticism, or anger. We also have parts of ourselves that we would like to be rid of, such as the inner critic or being a slow learner. Is there any part of yourself, or aspect of yourself, that you might be starting to embrace, or that you would like to learn to embrace?

Pause, close your eyes, reflect then open your eyes and write down your reflections

The Journey, Mary Oliver

One day you finally knew
what you had to do, and began,
though the voices around you
 kept shouting
 their bad advice —
though the whole house
 began to tremble
and you felt the old tug
 at your ankles.
“Mend my life!”
 each voice cried.
But you didn’t stop.
You knew what you had to do,
 though the wind pried
 with its stiff fingers
at the very foundations,
though their melancholy
 was terrible.
It was already late
enough, and a wild night,
and the road full of fallen
 branches and stones.
But little by little,
as you left their voices behind,
 the stars began to burn
through the sheets of clouds,
and there was a new voice
 which you slowly
 recognized as your own,
 that kept you company
as you strode deeper and deeper
 into the world,
 determined to do
the only thing you could do —
 determined to save
 the only life you could save.

[I added this; it's from something I read online: The questions she raises in her poem ask us in different ways what it means to be kind to ourselves, to be our own best friend, and to make our well-being a priority over others (in the same way the flight attendants direct us to place the oxygen mask over our own faces first before helping others). We cannot serve from an empty glass. Meditation and mindfulness can help us clarify what’s most important as we hear the many voices calling out for our precious attention and life energy.]

Optional Extras

You're more beautiful than you think. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=litXW91UauE>

Kindness by Naomi Shihab Nye

Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,
you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.

You must wake up with sorrow.
You must speak to it till your voice
catches the thread of all sorrows
and you see the size of the cloth.

Then it is only kindness that makes sense anymore,
only kindness that ties your shoes
and sends you out into the day to mail letters and purchase bread,
only kindness that raises its head
from the crowd of the world to say
it is I you have been looking for,
and then goes with you every where
like a shadow or a friend.

I Love My Inner, Sad, Old, Critical Hag: Understanding procrastination By Kristy Arbon

Sitting on a plane headed to Pennsylvania to present three new workshops on feminine archetypes and self-compassion, I became aware of feelings of dread, anxiety, and tension about the work that lay before me. When I unpacked it, I realized that I've been procrastinating preparing these workshops, leading to anxiety over having a large, time-sensitive project unfinished. I remember reading about how *procrastination is a side effect of the inner critic* and I get curious. It didn't feel like the inner critic, but I was willing to start a little adventure. I consciously felt into the physical and emotional tension with my tools for emotional resilience in my backpack and my soul's compass at the ready. The adventure began...

Dopamine Treats

Firstly, I considered the job at hand. While much of my material was going to be quite familiar to me, there would be some new material that I didn't feel a lot of confidence over. It was going to be challenging to do my research and make the links between archetypes and self-compassion practice that I knew, intuitively, existed, but did not fully know how to describe to others. So, the job would be hard. A part of me wanted to do easier tasks, so I tended to my emails and just about anything else I could do more easily. Was my inner critic involved here? It didn't really feel like it – it felt more like lack of energy to start a difficult task. I have one of those addictive personalities where I need to get my dopamine hit regularly to stay motivated. Succeeding at a task gives the human system a dopamine hit, so that's what I was seeking in my easy-to-do tasks. OK, no inner critic here.

Projecting Failure

So then I moved from considering my present task to considering my future “performance.” In my internal landscape I saw the faces of my potential audience and the feeling of failing to have my shit together. I saw 3 hours of poorly prepared material, stumbling over words, long pregnant pauses in my teaching, judgment from the women in the circle, and eventually falling to pieces in tears and either collapsing to the ground or running away. Hmmm, getting warmer, I think.

Cutting Losses

I traveled along a bit further in my internal landscape. Someone along the way told me in a very light and upbeat way, “Hey, if you don't have any material, you won't have to lead a workshop and if you don't lead a workshop, you can't fail.” Hmmm, he had a point. This would explain why I wasn't actively preparing my material. But, was he the inner critic? He seemed so perky and clever, not how I imagine an inner critic to be. I decided to see who else was there.

Messenger of Worthlessness

I found someone else who seemed quite a lot more sinister: An old, wrinkly hag* woman. She pointed her gnarled finger at me and said, “You're worthless. Who do you think you are? Don't bother, you'll never be any good. No matter how hard you try, people won't like you because you were born bad and you will always be bad. You cannot be redeemed. Why don't you just accept your fate, and go and get some cats to keep you company in your hovel for the rest of your miserable life. Like me.” Bingo. Here she is: The inner critic.

Perspective

Interestingly, as a result of many years of doing my own internal work, while her words were sharp they didn't impact me much. It was as if I was seeing her on television, or that I was in a dream with a

strong sense of myself as a psychologically intact being. Also, as she was a combination of people I know, she came more as a source of information than as someone to be feared. “Ah! That’s what’s going on!” was my internal response.

Compassion for the Inner Critic

Immediately after she’d spat those words at me I saw her pain. The pain of, “Like me.” She was the lonely old woman with a hundred cats whose gifts and talents were completely dismissed in her community. Her pain was so intolerable she needed to fling it out at others so that they, too, would be as miserable. She couldn’t stand the isolation or the sense that other people might be happy and successful. She needed an outlet for a lifetime of longing and loss, and I was it.

So, just a pause here to give you a landmark. While I totally respect folks who have developed multiple identities as protection against past trauma, my relationship with my internal parts would not be considered clinically as dissociative identities. I’m also not making this up. This is my internal experience, most likely influenced by my Internal Family Systems and archetype work. This is how I process my material. You may well do things very differently. We all have our own journey.

OK, so back to my dear hag. I felt so sad for her, I immediately reached out to her. I saw in her people I know who have lost opportunities, spent decades hoping something in their life would change so that they didn’t have to make difficult decisions, parked their dreams so that they could sit in an idling car with another wounded soul and go nowhere. I saw how painful that was and I understood how painful any success I achieved would feel to them. The “if onlys” were unbearable for them. Their only recourse seemed to be to drag me back with them to avoid the painful realizations that come when you compare your life choices with someone else’s (and you wish you’d made similar choices). Seeing my inner critic’s pain humanized her and made me fall in love with her. What else would I do in response to such a sad, old gal?

As I fell in love, her words and her threatening power subsided and she stopped trying to get in my way. She gave up the fight and I was left with a much simpler task of putting in the hours necessary to prepare a kick-ass triad of workshops. She could no longer muster the energy to care and I knew from that point that my relationship with her would grow and as I loved her up she would eventually tell me about creativity and wisdom and belonging, as any neglected being will do when someone sees them and hears them. And we’d work together to create something beautiful and new.

Emergent Self-Wisdom Adventures

So while my adventure was not structured in any one particular step-by-step process, it was a complete framework of the getting of wisdom and healing. It was the framework of emergent self-wisdom, of being curious, of traveling those new roads in my inner landscape to find out more. I used some mindfulness and self-compassion; I worked with internal parts and archetypes; I trusted my instincts when they pointed to a rough patch of information and I trusted my tool kit in its ability to give me the tools I needed when I got there; I saw my inner landscape as an adventure and I respected the emergent journey as it unfolded. There were some “aha’s” along the way, but there’s no end to the process. There was no, “Now I’m healed,” because healing is ongoing. We need never cling to the hope that we are “done” because being done means there is no more adventure, nothing more to learn. What we can get to is increasingly skillful levels of being with difficult emotions in a computer game that has an infinite number of levels.

**Hags are the archetypal malevolent old witch often portrayed in a way that is intended to disempower female elder-sages in the community. As patriarchal systems and ways of stereotyping women are changing, the sage-witch archetype is being reclaimed as the powerful (and sometimes intimidating) wisewoman. Saging our own inner hags is one of the first steps toward recognizing the immense untapped resource of elder wisewomen in our communities. Founder of HeartWorks, creatrix of Somatic Self-Compassion and developer of Live Online Mindful Self-Compassion for the Center for Mindful SelfCompassion, Kristy Arbon is an Australian living and loving in the US. After discovering the deep healing power of emergent self-wisdom and selfcompassion in her own life, Kristy felt called to share these practices and trainings with others. She's since made it her life's work. "I teach so that I can learn, and I learn so that I can teach." www.kristyarbon.com*