

Session 6 – Living Deeply

Objectives

- Practice breathing for oneself and others—“one for me, one for you.”
- Discover core values and learn to reorient to those values in daily life.
- Find hidden meaning in life difficulties.
- Practice compassion and self-compassion while listening to others.

Before Our Session

Core Values

Core Values and Needs

The quintessential self-compassion question is, “What do I need?” but we really can’t fully answer that question unless we also know what we value most—our core values. Both needs and values seem to reflect something essential in human nature. Needs are more commonly associated with physical and emotional survival, such as the need for health, safety, or connection, whereas values tend to have an element of choice, such as the choice to focus on friendship or creative pursuits. **Knowing our needs and values supports our ability to respond with compassion in challenging times regardless of whether we’re struggling to survive or searching for happiness** (McGehee, Germer, & Neff, 2017).

Our suffering depends, in part, on our core values. For example,

- If you value free time and new adventures, losing your job may be a blessing; but if you want to provide for your family, losing your job can be a catastrophe.
- If you value connection, having a friend cancel a visit may be deeply disappointing; but if you value private time, it may feel like an unexpected gift.

Goals and Core Values

The differences between goals and core values are:

- Goals can be achieved; core values guide us after achieving our goals.
- Goals are destinations; core values are directions.
- Goals are something we do; core values are something we are.
- Goals are set by us; core values are discovered.

Some examples of core values are:

- Compassion
- Generosity
- Honesty
- Loyalty
- Courage

Many of our core values have to do with how we treat others, but many have to do with meeting personal needs that are deeply important to us. Examples of personal core values include:

- Autonomy
- Strength
- Personal growth
- Tranquility
- Exploration
- Nature

Social Norms and Core Values

There is also a difference between social norms and core values. If you feel energized and inspired by a particular motivation, then it's probably an authentic core value and not simply a social norm.

**“If you want to identify me,
ask me not where I live,
or what I like to eat,
or how I comb my hair,
but ask me what I am living for, in detail,
ask me what I think is keeping me from living fully
for the thing I want to live for.”**

~ Thomas Merton

Finding Hidden Value in Suffering

An important aspect of living deeply is learning from our struggles and challenges in life. While most of us are afraid of failure and hardship, it's often failures and hardships that teach us lessons we wouldn't have learned otherwise.

Relevant quotes:

- "No mud, no lotus" Thich Nhat Hanh (meditation teacher)
- "Suffering leads us to beauty the way thirst leads to water." Jane Hirschfield (poet)

Challenges force us to go deep inside and discover resources and insights that we didn't know we had. Sometimes we learn nothing from suffering, and our triumph is simply to return to ordinary life. That's okay, too!

Self-compassion helps us to feel safer, and it gives us the courage to turn toward suffering, be with it, and learn from it.

Live Session in Zoom

Opening Meditation: Giving and Receiving Compassion

Discussion: How is your practice going?

Exercise: Discovering Our Core Values

Exercise: Silver Linings

Topic: Listening with Compassion

Informal Practice: Compassionate Listening

After Our Session

Living with a Vow

Often our feelings of dissatisfaction, frustration, and anxiety arise out of an awareness that we are not living in accord with our core values. When we discover that we're "in the wrong place, at the wrong time, doing the wrong thing, with the wrong people," it's time to remember our core values.

- A core value can be made into a vow.
- A vow is an aspiration to which we can continually reorient ourselves when we've gone astray in our lives.
- A vow anchors our life in what matters most. It is not binding contract.
- A vow functions like the breath in breath meditation—a safe place to return to when we're lost and adrift.
- Loving-kindness phrases can also be vows if they reflect core values, such as "May all beings be happy and free from suffering." Or, "May I learn to love all beings."

We need to be very compassionate with ourselves when we notice we've strayed – no shame or self-recrimination - and then refocus on our core values again.

This week you're invited to practice with a vow. Please select a core value that you may like to manifest for the rest of your life. Write it in the form of a vow: "May I..." or "I vow to ... as best I can." Close your eyes and repeat your vow silently. How does it feel when you set your intention in this direction? Does it feel right?

You might begin repeating your vow first thing in the morning, before you get up, or create a little ritual such as lighting a candle when you say your vow. Starting the day with a vow keeps us headed in the right direction throughout the day. Or you might remind yourself of your vow before you go to sleep, especially remembering small ways that you behaved consistent with your core values (Jinpa, 2016).

Home Practice

New Practices This Week

- Giving and Receiving Compassion
- Living with a Vow
- Compassionate Listening

Extra Home Practice

If you wish, you could extend the Silver Lining exercise still further when you're home. Is there a current difficulty in your life that might also have a silver lining? If so, what hidden lesson might be contained in your current dilemma?

Reminders

- Remember to check your handout, "What Works for Me," for an outline of the meditations and informal practices learned so far.
- Also, please let me know if you do not want your email address shared with the other participants in the group, as we will have the opportunity to do this soon.

Practice suggestions for this week

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

- Affectionate Breathing each day;
- Practice with your lovingkindness 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;
- Practice the Giving and Receiving Compassion meditation twice during the week.

Giving and Receiving Compassion meditation recording by Chris Germer

<https://chrisgermer.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/GivingandReceivingCompassion21.21ckgamplified12-14-14.mp3>

The Way it is ~ William Stafford

There's a thread you follow. It goes among
things that change. But it doesn't change.
People wonder about what you are pursuing.
You have to explain about the thread.
But it is hard for others to see.
While you hold it you can't get lost.
Tragedies happen; people get hurt
or die; and you suffer and get old.
Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.
You don't ever let go of the thread.

"One Morning" by Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

One morning
we will wake up
and forget to build
that wall we've been building,
the one between us
the one we've been building
for years, perhaps
out of some sense
of right and boundary,
perhaps out of habit.

One morning
we will wake up
and let our empty hands
hang empty at our sides.
Perhaps they will rise,
as empty things
sometimes do
when blown
by the wind.

Perhaps they simply
will not remember
how to grasp, how to rage.

We will wake up
that morning
and we will have
misplaced all our theories
about why and how
and who did what
to whom, we will have mislaid
all our timelines
of when and plans of what
and we will not scramble
to write the plans and theories anew.

On that morning,
not much else
will have changed.

Whatever is blooming
will still be in bloom.

Whatever is wilting
will wilt. There will be fields
to plow and trains
to load and children
to feed and work to do.

And in every moment,
in every action, we will
feel the urge to say thank you,
we will follow the urge to bow.

“I wish I could show you,
when you are lonely or in darkness
the incredible light of your own being.” ~ Hafiz

Optional Extras

Tapping into Core Values – Lady Gaga

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XcxVJ7ZSiFQ&feature=emb_logo

The Power of Wisdom – William Ury Tedx Talk

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=saXfavo1OQo&feature=emb_logo

A Silver Linings Story – Sharon Shelton-My Journey To Peace

https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLGZ-qBcM2T2b0_Pd07W7I1OPs1irpKQY3&v=OJOFSaj7euY&feature=emb_logo

Reading to Support Chapter 6

- Mindful Self-compassion Workbook chapters 14 & 15
- Self-Compassion, Kristin Neff chapter 12
- The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion APPENDIX B and pages 227-228 "The Power of Commitment"

Research and Articles

The Spiritual Art of Saying No - <https://onbeing.org/blog/the-spiritual-art-of-saying-no/?hash=87b38df1-f19b-4534-a3dd-c64488e15724>

by Courtney E. Martin, 8/22/14 (courtneyemartin.com)

Taxi drivers have been some of my best therapists.

Monday morning, I disembarked a ferry with a sea of other passengers trying to get the most out of the last days of summer and made it out to the parking lot. I approached a van cab with a woman who looked to be in her 60s sitting in the driver's seat, yapping on her cell phone. I waited patiently while she finished her conversation: "Look, I'm not coming in Thursday, so you're going to have to figure out another plan. No, I'm serious. That's the deal. Figure it out."

She hung up. I confirmed that she was free and then climbed into the back seat. "I'm sorry about that — just had to finish up that call," she said, turning back to look at me. She didn't smile apologetically, but had a kind voice and a genuine tone.

"Please don't apologize," I said. "I've been trying to learn how to say no with more clarity, earlier on, so this was a good, impromptu lesson."

“You got to, girl. If you don’t learn to say no, you’ll either be miserable or die. One or the other.”

I’d never heard it put so bluntly, but as we wound our way through the moss-covered trees of beautiful Bainbridge Island, this spiky-haired, taxi driving, Reiki master schooled me in the spiritual art of saying no. From her perspective, if you don’t learn to say no, you use your energy in ways that don’t make you happy. Do enough of that and you actually get physically ill — heart attacks, cancer, autoimmune illnesses; utter enough unconscious yeses and your body says the biggest, most finite no of all.

It was pretty convincing.

It also wasn’t the first time I’d thought about the spiritual art of saying no and my pathetic lack of skill in it. It’s not that I’m a doormat. So often when this issue gets talked about, I feel like it is portrayed as a problem of wilting flower women who just want to make everyone happy. I don’t mind disappointing people so much as I’m voraciously and indiscriminately interested in the world. I want to learn everything, be everywhere, collaborate with everyone. In thoroughly modern terms, I’ve got major FOMO about anything that fascinates me.

There is a vitality in that, but there is also a violence in it. As Thomas Merton wrote:

“The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence. To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything is to succumb to violence. More than that, it is cooperation in violence. The frenzy of the activist...destroys his own inner capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of his own work, because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful.”

Forget balance. Balance is bullshit. What I mostly crave is integrity and joy — a sense that I’m doing what I do excellently and getting a lot of pleasure out of it, that I’m used up and useful.

I’ve noticed lately that when I try to do too much, the things I should have said no to manifest as monsters under the bed. I wake up at 2 a.m. and am immediately aware of the outsized presence of that thing that, in the light of day, seemed barely possible, and, in the unforgiving darkness, I realize I can’t faithfully execute. I write rambling emails backing out. I apologize sloppily under the moonlight, as if drunk on over-commitment. I hurt people. There’s no grace in it.

I’ve been learning to grow things over the last year — my daughter, first and foremost, but also plants and trees that we share with our co-housing community. Louise is the garden guru in our little community, and she’s been showing me how to trim back the bougainvillea and layer leaves into the compost and pick the artichokes before they explode purple. One of the first things she ever taught me was how to tend to the apple trees.

I was about halfway through my pregnancy, finally and noticeably carrying a creature in my belly rather than an extra layer of blueberry glaze donuts. It was a sunny Saturday and Louise — well into her 70s, willowy, and often wearing a t-shirt with some slogan of peace — showed me how each

branch of the tree can only reasonably support two apples. You have to go, branch by branch, and pluck off little baby apples until every branch has only as much as it can support. It felt sad to me at first, twisting off these hopeful little apples and dropping them into a bucket. They amassed quickly, collectively robbed of possibility by this big-bellied goddess of destruction lumbering her way along the front gate. I felt bad. But then I looked over and watched as Louise pruned without fanfare, gentle and direct. She had lived long enough to know that in order for some things to thrive, some things must die.

You say no so you can say yes. It's sad in the way that all limitations are, but also liberating. You are human and finite and precious and fumbling. This is your one chance to spend your gifts, your attention, most importantly your love, on the things that matter most. Don't screw it up by being sentimental about what could have been or delusional about your own capacity. Have the grace to acknowledge your own priorities. Prune and survive.

Core Values List, WR Miller et al. UNM 2011
www.guilford.com/add/miller2/values.pdf

ACCEPTANCE to be accepted as I am
ACCURACY to be correct in my opinions and my beliefs
ACHIEVEMENT to have important accomplishments
ADVENTURE to have new and exciting experiences
ART to appreciate or express myself in art
ATTRACTIVENESS to be physically attractive
AUTHORITY to be in charge of others
AUTONOMY to be self-determined and independent
BEAUTY to appreciate beauty around me
BELONGING to have a sense of belonging, being part of
CARING to take care of others
CHALLENGE to take on difficult tasks or problems
COMFORT to have a pleasant and comfortable life
COMMITMENT to make enduring, meaningful commitments
COMPASSION to feel and act on concern for others
COMPLEXITY to embrace the intricacies of life
COMPROMISE to be willing to give and take in reaching agreements
CONTRIBUTION to make a lasting contribution in the world
COOPERATION to work collaboratively with others
COURAGE to be brave and strong in the face of adversity
COURTESY to be considerate and polite with others
CREATIVITY to create new things or ideas
CURIOSITY to seek out, experience and learn new things
DEPENDABILITY to be reliable and trustworthy
DILIGENCE to be thorough and conscientious in whatever I do
DUTY to carry out my duties and obligations
ECOLOGY to live in harmony with the environment
EXCITEMENT to have a life full of thrills and stimulation
FAITHFULNESS to be loyal and true in relationships
FAME to be known and recognized

FAMILY to have a happy, loving family
FITNESS to be physically fit and strong
FLEXIBILITY to adjust to new circumstances easily
FORGIVENESS to be forgiving of others
FREEDOM to be free from undue restrictions and limitations
FRIENDSHIP to have close, supportive friends
FUN to play and have fun
GENEROSITY to give what I have to others
GENUINENESS to act in a manner that is true to who I am
GOD'S WILL to seek and obey the will of God
GRATITUDE to be thankful and appreciative
GROWTH to keep changing and growing
HEALTH to be physically well and healthy
HONESTY to be honest and truthful
HOPE to maintain a positive and optimistic outlook
HUMILITY to be modest and unassuming
HUMOUR to see the humorous side of myself and the world
IMAGINATION to have dreams and see possibilities
INDEPENDENCE to be free from depending on others
INDUSTRY to work hard and well at my life tasks
INNER PEACE to experience personal peace
INTEGRITY to live my daily life in a way that is consistent with my values
INTELLIGENCE to keep my mind sharp and active
INTIMACY to share my innermost experiences with others
JUSTICE to promote fair and equal treatment of all
KNOWLEDGE to learn and contribute valuable knowledge
LEADERSHIP to inspire and guide others
LEISURE to take time to relax and enjoy
LOVED to be loved by those close to me
LOVING to give love to others
MASTERY to be competent in my everyday activities
MINDFULNESS to live conscious and mindful of the present moment
MODERATION to avoid excesses and avoid a middle ground
MONOGAMY to have one close, loving relationship
MUSIC to enjoy and express myself in music
NON-CONFORMITY to question and challenge authority and norms
NOVELTY to have a life full of change and variety
NURTURANCE to encourage and support others
OPENNESS to be open to new experiences, ideas and options
ORDER to have a life well-ordered and organized
PASSION to have deep feelings about ideas, activities, people
PATRIOTISM to love, serve, and protect my country
PLEASURE to feel good
POPULARITY to be well-liked by many people
POWER to have control over others
PRACTICALITY to focus on what is practical, prudent, and sensible
PROTECT to protect and keep safe those I love
PROVIDE to provide for and take care of my family

PURPOSE to have meaning and purpose in my life
RATIONALITY to be guided by reason, logic, evidence
REALISM to see and act realistically and practically
RESPONSIBILITY to make and carry out responsible decisions
RISK to take risks and chances
ROMANCE to have intense, exciting love in my life
SAFETY to be safe and secure
SELF-ACCEPTANCE to accept myself as I am
SELF-CONTROL to be disciplined in my own actions
SELF-ESTEEM to feel good about myself
SELF-KNOWLEDGE to have a deep and honest understanding of myself
SERVICE to be helpful and of service to others
SEXUALITY to have an active and satisfying sex life
SIMPLICITY to live life simply, with minimal needs
SOLITUDE to have time and space where I can be apart from others
SPIRITUALITY to grow and mature spiritually
STABILITY to have a life that stays fairly consistent
TOLERANCE to accept and respect those who differ from me
TRADITION to follow respected traditions of the past
VIRTUE to live a morally pure and excellent life
WEALTH to have plenty of money
WORLD PEACE to work to promote peace in the world

What else? Add your own description

What are your top 10 values?

Provided by Change Talk Associates contact@changetalk.ca | <http://changetalk.ca>

Meeting the Fear of Pursuing Core Values: Some strategies, by Kristy Arbon

This article describes how challenging it might be to align ourselves with our core values, and offers some strategies for meeting the challenge.

Meeting the Fear of Pursuing Core Values: Some strategies By Kristy Arbon Getting to know and understand our core values is probably one of the most valuable exercises we can do for ourselves. Working out what truly makes us happy is crucial if we're going to give ourselves what we need. In both the Somatic Self-Compassion and the Mindful Self-Compassion program we spend some time exploring our inner landscape to find, name, and start to move toward more intentionally living our life in alignment with our core values. But there are many good reasons why we don't head off immediately in the direction of manageable goals that point us in the direction of authenticity and a life fully lived. We might call these obstacles to living in alignment with our core values. Identifying these obstacles is the next great service you can do for yourself.

I'm going to talk about six potential obstacles to making the changes we need to make so that we can live in alignment with our core values and offer some steps we can take to realign ourselves, to find ourselves on the map and reorient ourselves again.

Disconnection from our goals

In order to consciously live in alignment with our core values, we may need to first find them and then regularly remind ourselves what they are. The busyness of life can take over; we can be swept away by responsibilities to family, work and friends; and we can be motivated more by fear of failure than by the anticipation of success. A bit like finding Wally, it can be hard to see what our core values are amongst the competing components of our life. But while we are busy reacting to the people and events in our life, it can be difficult to respond to our own needs, and we can't give ourselves what we truly need if we don't know what we value.

Living in alignment with core values is not an intuitive exercise for many of us, so we need to continually check that our goals are in alignment with our core values. Goals are landmarks in the adventure of authentic living. My core value might be social justice and my goal might be getting a law degree and working for underserved populations. In order to stay in touch with our core values and related goals, we might start by writing down our thoughts about these important guideposts in our life; re-reading what we've written to help keep our intentions alive; and sharing our core values and goals with friends. Steven Hayes and Spencer Smith write, "There is nothing in life that is not made more real by sharing. Intimacy is a matter of sharing your values and your vulnerabilities. If you are building new patterns and breaking up old ones, share that process. If you see a form of avoidance and you are ready to let it go, tell others of what you see. It's like shining a light down a dark hole where you hide."

Another way to help keep our commitment to our core values and goals fresh is to make a vow to ourselves or sent an intention to remind ourselves every day about what's important to us, and to even create a little ritual around this commitment like lighting a candle and

reciting the vow or intention to ourselves every morning. Ritual can be a useful way to make this activity more real and more pleasurable.

Overidentification with negative beliefs about ourselves

When we start to become aware of some changes we will need to make in our life to start to live more in alignment with our core values, the task at hand may seem daunting and we can sidetrack our trajectory by overidentifying with negative beliefs about ourselves. Does this sound familiar: “This is really different to what I’m used to...this seems quite hard...maybe I can’t do it...I can’t do it...it is too hard...I’m wasting my time...there’s no point in trying...I don’t deserve to be happy anyway.” It can seem easier to give up because of these internal barriers than to dare to take those courageous steps into the arena of our authentic existence.

Mindfulness can help us to notice if the inner party pooper or the inner critic are having a lot to say and self-compassion can help us to offer ourselves kindness in the face of such internal sabotage. Exercises from the MSC program like “Discovering Our Core Values,” “Compassionate Letter to Myself” and “Motivating Ourselves with Compassion” can be helpful in this process. You can find all of these exercises in The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook – you might choose to enroll in the MSC Workbook Online Companion to help you deepen your exploration of this material.

Perfectionism

We need to be willing to make mistakes if we are going to allow ourselves to explore and grow, but some of us are so afraid of not doing things perfectly that we’d rather not try at all. Perfectionism:

- blocks creativity because it prevents us from trying new things;
- is aiming to please others, to perform for others, so that we can satiate our need for approval;
- is driven by shame – the fear that if we do not please others they won’t love us and we will be rejected from the community;
- is an addiction.

Brené Brown writes that “Healthy goal setting and working toward those goals is self-oriented, perfectionism is other-oriented.”

In order to seriously move in the direction of our core values, we must tool ourselves up to take care of ourselves when we inevitably “fail” or miss the mark. Self-compassion practice is all about tooling ourselves up for this kind of work. Reading about and working with shame can be particularly useful in meeting perfectionism. Mindfulness practice can help us to keep the larger view in perspective – to see that we are approval-seeking and to dare to look beyond that shackled existence. Our core values are undeniable, worthy of us making some mistakes in the short term in order to live a life fully lived in the long term. We learn by making these mistakes – we learn what doesn’t work so that we can identify what does work and as a result we become more effective at working toward our goals.

Unrealistic expectations

It can be easy to have unrealistic expectations in our current climate of megasuccess and 20-year old millionaires. The Mark Zuckerbergs and Justin Biebers of this millennium have influenced us as we grew up – we can tend to believe that we can do anything ... by tomorrow. Unrealistic expectations might mean that your goals are too big, you expect too much, you are impatient for change, you don't have the skills yet or you don't have the resources yet.

You can manage unrealistic expectations through strategies like breaking goals down into manageable chunks, planning a realistic timeframe for taking the necessary steps, and planning to acquire the new skills or resources you'll need. If you can't see a way to find the skills or resources you need right now because of external obstacles, then mindfulness and self-compassion can help you to let go of that goal for now, knowing that you still have your eye on your core values but you'll need to find an alternative goal to help you live authentically.

Resistance to Difficult Emotions

Resistance to being with difficult emotions is inherent in our culture: the plethora of strategies for numbing, distracting, overwhelming, driving and denying ourselves is unending. However we would be well-served to work out how to meet our difficult emotions rather than to resist them because we will undoubtedly meet difficult feelings when we contemplate making a change.

Something always needs to be released in order for something new to be born, and the results along the way are not always predictable. We may simply know that something in our life needs to go, like a job that is sucking the soul out of us, but we might have no idea if something else will catch us when we take that leap into the abyss of uncertainty and hand in our resignation.

Steven Hayes and Spencer Smith write, "Saying yes [to your core values and goals] doesn't mean that your life will suddenly get easier, but it is guaranteed to become more alive. [Saying yes is] about doing this, not in spite of your pain, but with your pain."

Fortunately, self-compassion training is all about learning to meet difficult emotions. Through bringing more awareness to our experience we can notice resistance and through self-compassion we can tend to ourselves when we're noticing difficult emotions. Both Mindful Self-Compassion and Somatic SelfCompassion tool us up with skills for being with difficult emotions. Being prepared to be with ourselves and our difficult emotions, and reminding ourselves that they are arising as we work toward our wider goals, can help us to find the courage to allow novelty and uncertainty into our life.

Guilt, Blame and Forgiveness

When we start to consider our core values it can become painfully apparent that we have wasted opportunities in our life that might have been in alignment with our core values, and that those missed opportunities have put us in our current position of feeling off balance.

This can result in feeling guilt over wasted time and opportunities. Maybe you stayed in that relationship for 30 years too long and now you're running out of time to find your soulmate. Maybe you cheated on that ex-partner and you're left with the label of "cheater" that will haunt you for the rest of your life. Maybe you committed to a life of children, mortgage, work and weekend lawn mowing that leaves you exhausted and creatively bankrupt, without any idea of how to escape.

Or maybe someone else did something to you that forever affected your ability to feel authentic. Maybe you were ill-treated in your childhood and you lack a sense of safety now. Maybe you were shamed by an authority figure and you still can't get out from under that sense of doom. Maybe the laws of the land let you down and you feel as if you've lost something dear to you in a court battle.

It can be tempting to spiral down to feelings of guilt or to blaming others. However, when we start to dig down into working with ourselves and our relationship with shame, vulnerability and worthiness, we will find that the common theme in teachings is that we are inherently worthy of our own respect, patience, tolerance and commitment. We can learn to never abandon ourselves. When we start to look at our relationships with others and the ways that others have affected us, we learn that we can't necessarily change the attitude or behavior of others, but we can change our own. What happened to us was not good, but we can make decisions now to support ourselves to heal and move on.

The remedy for guilt and blaming is forgiveness: forgiving ourselves and those who have done us wrong. We can't practice forgiveness without first opening to, acknowledging and validating the pain that we feel, and then self-compassion helps us to bear the weight of that pain when we get there. Once we have opened to our own pain around a situation and have taken care of our unmet needs, we can then turn to the task of forgiving others if we want to. When we forgive others we let go of anger and resentment – heavy burdens to carry around – so forgiveness is an act of self-compassion. Hayes and Smith write, "Forgiveness is really a gift to yourself, not to the events or persons who created hurt in your life." (Please note that forgiveness of others is not always the best idea, so learning some wisdom around this, probably with the help of a therapist, is crucial.)

References:

- Russ Harris, *The Happiness Trap*
- Steven Hayes and Spencer Smith, *Get Out of Your Mind and In To Your Life*
- Brené Brown *Daring Greatly*

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

Aligning Yourself with Your Values through Setting Goals, by Kristy Arbon

Our values are those deep down beliefs we hold about our purpose and our place in the world. Values might be considered our soul's expression – they tell us who we are. And when we live in alignment with them, we feel authentic and fulfilled.

In order to make our values more manageable, first we need to identify them, then address them one by one through goal-setting. Goals are landmarks along the path as we navigate our way through life guided by our values. For the purposes of this article, we're going to look at goals that are specifically related to spiritual, mindfulness and self-compassion practice.

Values

Start by choosing one of your values – maybe one that you feel most drawn to spending time with. Put your hand on your heart and get in touch with this value.

Strengths

Bring to mind an event when this value was most prominent, when you felt most aligned with this value. As you think about this event, identify how you got there. For example, a value of mine is “education” and one time I felt most alive and aligned with this value was during a speaking event when I presented about self-compassion. I can identify the strengths that got me there:

- commitment to my own education;
- development of material that resonated with me;
- reaching out to organizations that might be interested in what I could offer;
- working mindfully and kindly with prospective partners;
- practicing speaking about my material;
- practicing mindfulness and self-compassion to manage nervousness;
- reminding myself that I am enough;
- reminding myself that my audience is just human;
- being determined to enjoy myself.

Practices of Daily Life

And so all of these strengths that got me there came from practices in my daily life. I can identify daily practices that helped me to get to that event that made me feel most aligned with my values:

- sacred study of spiritual and psychological material related to my passion;
- journaling;
- cultivating and nurturing my community, my tribe;
- practicing mindfulness;
- practicing equanimity;
- connecting with myself and my sense of purpose;
- practicing self-compassion;
- working with my inner-critic;
- practicing common humanity.

Fine-Tuning Goals

To break my daily practices down into even more manageable chunks, I allocate my time like this:

- read for 20 minutes per day;
- contribute to my journal once per day;
- send a blog post to one organization I have a heart connection to, per month
- meditate for 25 minutes per day;
- repeat my intention each day;
- practice lovingkindness meditation for 10 minutes per day;
- watch 20 minutes of an online course about parts work (like Internal Family Systems);
- respond to emails from my community every day.

Keeping Track of Goals

I have an app on my phone which keeps track of all my goals and to-do lists, and categorizes each of these so that I can see that I am cultivating balance in my day – ie, my day is not spent totally in study or totally in cultivating community. Whatever works for you in keeping track of your goals and at least reminding yourself of them each day (even if you don't actually work toward one particular goal on a specific day) – use this tool to continually touch in with your goals, and with your core values. And be very kind with yourself when you don't get to every to-do item in a day: this is self-compassion practice, and will actually help to motivate you toward your goals rather than lead you to feel defeated by them.

Flexibility

It's also important to be flexible in our goal-setting. If you're finding that one particular goal or to-do item consistently doesn't get done in a day, re-evaluate it. Maybe it's not closely linked enough to your values, or maybe it's a part of the process you don't enjoy. If it's not relevant enough, liberate yourself and let it go. If you want to keep trying and you have resistance toward this particular goal, try to see it in the broader perspective of your values and spiritual fulfillment to see if you can re-set your intention to pursue this goal.

Making it Doable

And it's a great act of self-compassion to have things that we like that are also good for us in our to-do list. I have "walk" and "nap" on my to-do list, and I love doing both of these. When my mind is struggling with other items on my list, I can always choose to do some of the things I love to do that nurture me then come back to the other items refreshed.

Set Incentives and Celebrate

It's also important to celebrate when we have met a goal or completed a to-do item. Our brain is rewarded with dopamine when we complete something, so the act of ticking something off your list, or savoring an accomplishment will give your brain a little incentive, making working toward goals that much easier next time. For particularly challenging goals, you could even set up a reward for yourself ahead of time, like, "After I've sent a blog post through, I'm going to give myself an hour off to go for a walk," or, "After I've tended to my emails I'm going to enjoy a bowl of cherries on the back deck."

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