



Right about now is when you start to become aware of little heart shaped candies, big stuffed teddy bears, red roses and outrageous heart balloons...yes...Valentine's Day is right around the corner.

Society's focus on the holiday is on romance and intimacy, however, we would like to remind you and our patients, that this holiday can be more than that. We would like to celebrate all of the important people in our lives – our friends, family, coworkers, partners and ourselves!

Ways that we can shower ourselves and others with love is through compassion and gratitude! It can feel cheesy and weird at first, yet with practice it can feel therapeutic and be effective!

Research shows that self-compassion helps us to feel more connected and less isolated. Self-compassion is linked to well-being and associated with greater levels of happiness, optimism, life satisfaction and motivation (Neff & Germer, 2017).

Research has also shown how a gratitude practice can improve relationships, physical and psychological health, enhances empathy and reduces aggression (Morin, 2014).

So instead of focusing on the woes of being single or unhappy in a relationship, turn toward a gratitude or self-compassion practice this Valentine's Day! Check out our skill of the month below:

Kristin Neff's Self-Compassion Break!

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Will You Be My Valentine? Did I Marry the Right Person?



“The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change.”
– Carl Rogers

In my DBT practice, I come across many couples who feel that they are in joyless and unfulfilling marriages. Conversations in my office may revolve around complaints about lack of intimacy, ‘falling out of love’; not enough change, poor understanding of the others’ needs, and/or the other doing deliberate acts to cause marital conflict and continued unhappiness. The joy of thinking that they have found ‘The One’ is replaced by the questions like, “What was I thinking?”, “I should have known better” and “Why did I marry you?”.

When a person feels that their needs are unmet, they oftentimes look outside the marriage. As the initial bloom of love fades and the mundane of life sets in, whether it be money, intimacy, kids, work – it can become easy to blame your spouse for your unhappiness as your eye (and heart) may start to wander.

I give this great handout to couples with the title - “Have I Married The Right Person?”. I have no idea who the author is, enough to share that it is an article that makes so much sense from a Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) perspective.

This is where understanding the dialectic of **Acceptance** and **Change** comes in.

DBT rests upon the idea that two seemingly oppositional things like **Acceptance** and **Change** can be balanced, compared and synthesized. An important aspect of succeeding in marriage does not lie in finding the Right Person. It comes from learning how to love the person you found! Learning how to love and **accept** this person with all their idiosyncrasies, with different belief and value systems, and trying not to **change** them to act or think in the way you think they should, is extremely important in sustaining a respectful, meaningful, and loving relationship. **Changing** the way you respond is equally important.

A small anecdote from my own life is that after many years of marriage, my husband absolutely refused to put anything in the dishwasher. Through the years of graduate school, I would return home exhausted to piles of pots, pans, and dishes in the sink. I would curse and scream and failed to understand how a ‘reasonably minded’ human being could not see the value of a dishwasher. “If he really loved me, he would know what I needed - what I was asking for”. This was my complaint to our couples’ therapist. When I finally came to understand and accept that he was not deliberately trying to anger or hurt me by this behavior - I began to change how I responded. I grew to understand that my husband was born at a time when a mom was seen as the consummate ‘homemaker’. His mom did everything for him. My husband still does not pack a dishwasher - instead he hand-washes, dries and puts everything back in its place. Loving your spouse is about finding compromise, being in acceptance of who that person is, and changing the way you respond.

Dr. Michele Lob PsyD., MFT, CEDS
Executive Director

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Skill of the Month: Self-Compassion Break



Think of a situation in your life that is difficult, that is causing you stress. Call the situation to mind, and see if you can actually feel the stress and emotional discomfort in your body.

Now, say to yourself:

1. This is a moment of suffering

That's mindfulness. Other options include:

- This hurts.
- Ouch.
- This is stress.

2. Suffering is a part of life

That's common humanity. Other options include:

- Other people feel this way.
- I'm not alone.
- We all struggle in our lives.

Now, put your hands over your heart, feel the warmth of your hands and the gentle touch of your hands on your chest. Or adopt the soothing touch you discovered felt right for you.

Say to yourself:

3. May I be kind to myself

You can also ask yourself, "What do I need to hear right now to express kindness to myself?" Is there a phrase that speaks to you in your particular situation, such as:

- *May I give myself the compassion that I need.*
- *May I learn to accept myself as I am.*
- *May I forgive myself.*
- *May I be strong.*
- *May I be patient.*

This practice can be used any time of day or night, and will help you remember to evoke the three aspects of self-compassion when you need it most.

From Kristin Neff's Wonderful Work and Website:

<https://self-compassion.org/exercise-2-self-compassion-break/>

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Our Blog



[Stop Should-ing On Yourself: A Call To Eradicate The Word “Should”](#)

“Should” is a shame-based statement, here’s how to move towards non-judgement and still knock out your to-do list in 2019.



[Will You Be My Valentine? Did I Marry the Right Person?](#)

In my DBT practice, I come across many couples who feel that they are in joyless and unfulfilling marriages. Read this blog to learn ways to apply DBT skills and improve your relationship!



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**Mindfulness allows us to
see our internal and
external environments
clearly. This helps show
us how to respond.**

~Sarah Silverton
#MindfulMonday
DBT Center of Orange County

**Mindfulness is simply being
aware of what is happening
right now without wishing it
were different; enjoying the
pleasant without holding on
when it changes (which it will);
being with the unpleasant
without fearing it will always
be this way (which it won't).**

~James Baraz
#MindfulMonday
DBT Center of Orange County



Resources Utilized in Our Newsletter:

Morin, A. (2014). 7 Scientifically Proven Benefits Of Gratitude That Will Motivate You To Give Thanks Year-Round. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/amymorin/2014/11/23/7-scientifically-proven-benefits-of-gratitude-that-will-motivate-you-to-give-thanks-year-round/#23df7be3183c>.

Neff, K. D. & Germer, C. (2017). Self-Compassion and Psychological Wellbeing. In J. Doty (Ed.) Oxford Handbook of Compassion Science, Chap. 27. Oxford University Press



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