



DIALOGUES



A NEWSLETTER FROM CONVERSATIONS-
CENTRE FOR POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

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BUILDING BLOCKS OF WELLBEING- SELF COMPASSION AND BOUNDARIES

As we ring in the new year, we wanted to explore what sets the foundation for our mental well-being i.e. self compassion and boundaries with others. How do we practice being compassionate towards ourselves and set boundaries with others as a way of taking care of our mental health? How does this enhance our sense of well-being?

Members of our community, including students, alumni and the members of the counselling team, have shared their perspectives and thoughts in the form of articles, artwork and poetry.

Happy reading!

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CONTRIBUTIONS FROM STUDENTS & MEMBERS OF AZIM PREMJI FOUNDATION

ENDARKENMENT

by V. Manikandan

Faculty (School of Development)



I recently jumped out of my way
to get back to the known path.
Not that known paths are
safe and comfortable,
they are at times unavoidable.

Even the rare companions
of the unknown way
share their fears
of being lonely and
not seeing an end
to their journey.

The other day
I met this friend of mine,
who never deviates from the way.

'So, how does it feel to be back
on the known path?',
she asked with a smile.

'It feels sort of loss of ground'

'Does that mean you are flying?'

'No, floating'

'Floating and thus moving with the flow?'

'Not exactly.
This floating is something like
wandering in the wind'

'Being weightless'

'No, burdensome'

'Why so?'

'Because, with each strong wind
one is thrown from
one extreme to the other
and always falling on the face'

She then took me for a short walk
under the moonless sky of
countless stars.

'One, at times, needs to withdraw
from the light to be able to see things.
The enlightening moon is blinding
and you miss to see the stars'

That restored my smile,
'Ah! That's so profound'

She continued,
'When released from its cage,
an animal has two options,
either to go back to the forest
or to get tamed.
You, for all so-called reasons,
have chosen
what is good for others
and not for yourself'

I could just look at her
with a strange calmness.

'When forced to be away
from one's own way,
one does not just forget the way
but also forgets
where one has come from',
she had a parting smile.

'But my friend,
what about the goal?',
I asked my last question.

Filling me with her warmth,
she said,
'Isn't the way itself the goal,
my dear?!'

TAKING A STEP TOWARD UNDERSTANDING SELF - PRACTICING MINDFUL SELF-COMPASSION

by Astha Saxena
Assistant Professor
(School of Education)



Understanding self is an important part of our wellbeing. Self can be referred to as the totality of the individual, consisting of all characteristic attributes, conscious and unconscious, mental and physical. This is apart from personal identity, being, and experience.¹ Also, WHO defines health as a complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Thus, self-compassion can be understood as conscious mental effort for our inner and outer wellbeing. Self-compassion cannot be compared with self pity as it is more mindful and helps in creating a more positive self-concept. Research has also proven that individuals who are more self-compassionate are much happier, satisfied, motivated, have better relationships and are less prone to anxiety and depression.²

¹ APA Dictionary of Psychology
(<https://dictionary.apa.org/self>)

² Reference: <https://www.mindful.org/the-transformative-effects-of-mindful-self-compassion/>

There could be different phases on one's life where one needs to be self-compassionate rather than always blaming oneself for various events or catastrophes in one's own life or others. These events could be any kind of failure, broken relationship, health crisis, death, depression, etc. Being self-compassionate is being kind and comfortable with oneself and viewing things or events from a different perspective. It is about prioritising one's own self and practicing self-care in any untoward circumstance. Self-compassion means being gentle, kind and understanding with oneself; accepting that we are not perfect; and understanding that there is potential for learning and growth in every mistake we make (Neff, 2003). Sometimes people think that being self-compassionate would make them more vulnerable or less valued, however, that is a myth.

— “ —

“IF YOU DON'T LOVE YOURSELF, YOU CANNOT LOVE OTHERS. YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO LOVE OTHERS. IF YOU HAVE NO COMPASSION FOR YOURSELF THEN YOU ARE NOT ABLE OF DEVELOPING COMPASSION FOR OTHERS.”

THE DALAI LAMA

— ” —

The Buddhist understanding of compassion means offering patience, kindness, and non-judgmental understanding to others as well as oneself. Taking reference from one self-help book which I have been reading myself, “The Monk who sold his Ferrari”,

presents an inner and life-transforming journey of a well established rich lawyer who leaves his mansion to attain a life of inner happiness and peace. The book teaches us the lesson that our outer self is a reflection of our inner self and we need to work seriously on our inner self in order to attain eternal happiness and bliss. A quote from the same book is worth mentioning here.

“

“IT IS ONLY WHEN YOU HAVE MASTERED THE ART OF LOVING YOURSELF THAT YOU CAN TRULY LOVE OTHERS. IT'S ONLY WHEN YOU HAVE OPENED YOUR OWN HEART THAT YOU CAN TOUCH THE HEARTS OF OTHERS. WHEN YOU FEEL CENTERED AND ALIVE, YOU ARE IN A MUCH BETTER POSITION TO BE A BETTER PERSON.”

SHARMA (1999)

”

Experts have also suggested a few ways of practicing self-compassion in daily life.

STEP 1: PRACTICE FORGIVENESS

We need to stop blaming ourselves and need to accept for who we as well as others are rather than trying to change oneself and others endlessly. This will save much of our energies in some better and constructive pursuits.



STEP 2: EMPLOY A GROWTH MINDSET

Life is full of challenges of various kinds and we need to embrace these challenges as stepping stones toward larger success rather than treating them as obstacles in our way.

GRATITUDE LIST

♡

♡

♡

♡

♡

♡

♡

STEP 3: EXPRESS GRATITUDE

Rather than fretting over what we do not have or possess, it is important to feel gratitude toward what we have at present. This will help us in appreciating and living life more happily.



STEP 4: BEING GENEROUS BUT WITH CAUTION

It is good to be generous and helping anyone in need by providing them resources, however, care has to be taken that we don't neglect our own needs at the same time.



STEP 5: BEING MINDFUL

Mindfulness involves being aware of oneself and what makes one feel better and at peace. Mindfulness helps in reducing self-judgement and thus has a positive impact on self-compassion (Kabat-Zinn, 2014).

Thus, practicing self-compassion helps in living life more meaningfully and building peace with oneself as well as others.

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THE TWIN TOWERING TENETS OF THRIVING: SELF- COMPASSION AND SETTING BOUNDARIES

by Souhard Sharma (MPG 2022)

*Oh building blocks of wellbeing,
Two pillars strong and true,
Self Compassion and Boundaries,
A foundation through and through.*

*Self Compassion, a gentle voice,
That speaks with love and grace,
It offers comfort in our trials,
And helps us find our place.*

*Boundaries, a shield of sorts,
That helps us to defend,
Our sense of self, our hearts, our minds,
From those who seek to rend.*

*Together, these two forces,
A powerful duo indeed,
They help us to weather life's storms,
And plant our feet with stead.*

*So let us cultivate these virtues,
In all that we do and say,
For they are the building blocks,
Of a life that's rich and gay.*

Two pillars that support the basis of wellness are self-compassion and boundaries. In times of hardship or failure, the former, self-compassion, is treating oneself with love and understanding rather than harsh judgement. The latter, boundaries, entail establishing limitations and boundaries in our relationships and undertakings to prevent ourselves from being overwhelmed or exploited. These values, when combined, produce a feeling of balance and resilience, allowing us to weather life's storms and thrive in both body and mind.

Self-compassion entails being compassionate and understanding to oneself, especially during times of adversity or failure. This entails admitting and embracing one's flaws and shortcomings rather than being too judgmental. According to research, self-compassion has been connected to various favourable outcomes, including greater emotional well-being, resilience, and relationship satisfaction. One of the essential benefits of self-compassion is its potential to help with mood management. We can better notice and embrace our feelings when we can be self-compassionate rather than getting overwhelmed or avoiding them. This allows us to deal with difficult emotions more healthily rather than resorting to

destructive coping techniques like drug addiction or disordered eating. Self-compassion promotes psychological resilience as well. When we can be kind and compassionate to ourselves, we are better equipped to recover from setbacks and disappointments. This is because self-compassion allows us to see our difficulties as a natural part of the human experience rather than as personal shortcomings. This will enable us to deal with challenging circumstances more successfully and positively. Self-compassion has been linked to increased relationship satisfaction and its emotional advantages. When we can be kind and understanding to ourselves, we are more likely to be kind and understanding to others. This results in more pleasant and meaningful interactions because we are more compassionate and understanding of others. Another crucial part of self-compassion is allowing ourselves to make errors. We often set unreasonable goals for ourselves and demand perfection from ourselves. This might result in emotions of inadequacy and self-worth. We may be human and make errors by practising self-compassion rather than beating ourselves up for not being flawless. This may make us more robust and capable of dealing with problems. Furthermore, self-compassion has been demonstrated to improve physical health. According to research, those who are more self-compassionate have lower levels of inflammation, which is a significant contributor to a number of chronic health disorders such as heart disease and diabetes. They also have better habits, such as exercising frequently and getting enough sleep. On the other hand, a lack of self-compassion might have harmful repercussions.

Individuals who are highly critical of themselves are more prone to suffer from anxiety and depression and develop destructive coping methods such as drug misuse or disordered eating. So, how can we cultivate self-compassion? One important tactic is to remind ourselves that we are not alone in our challenges and that everyone makes errors. We might also strive to be more sympathetic and compassionate when facing difficulties rather than harsh and judgmental. It might be beneficial to engage in self-compassionate self-talk, such as telling oneself, "It's alright; everyone makes mistakes" or "I'm trying my best."

Boundaries are another vital aspect of happiness. Boundaries are the restrictions we create for ourselves and others to keep our relationships balanced and respectful. They might be physical, emotional, or psychological, and they help us define our wants, desires, and boundaries. Having healthy boundaries is critical for maintaining a sense of self and preventing oneself from being exploited or abused. Establishing boundaries in all facets of life is crucial, including relationships with friends, family, and love partners. Having good boundaries has numerous significant advantages. One of the most important is that they assist us in maintaining our feeling of self and independence. We may establish our wants and goals by creating boundaries rather than always sacrificing ourselves for others. This increases one's feeling of self-worth and self-esteem. Boundaries are also necessary for the maintenance of good partnerships. We can convey our requirements and restrictions to others with healthy boundaries, which helps avoid misunderstandings and disputes.

This results in more pleasant and rewarding interactions since we may create mutual respect and understanding with others. Boundaries are vital for preserving balance and well-being in our lives, in addition to their advantages. Setting limitations on time and energy allows us to prioritise our needs and avoid being overwhelmed or burned out. This enables us to live healthier, more satisfying lives.

In conclusion, self-compassion and boundaries are vital components for overall well-being. They help us to regulate our emotions, cope with challenges, and maintain positive and fulfilling relationships. By cultivating these skills, we can establish the foundation for a healthy, fulfilling life.



BECAUSE YOU MATTER TO YOURSELF

by Shankar Bhil (MAD 2022)

Last year I met a girl in our Azim Premji University, who behaves like an introvert, but actually she was not like that a year before, now she keeps everything to herself only. After getting to spend some more time with her, I came to know that she used to be like everyone else who would mingle with friends and enjoy spending time with them, have fun with them. But then she started to realize that she was not being herself, she was just trying to behave like her friends' expectations. Then she started to stay off from this friend circle and

started to say no to things and spend time with herself. It is not to say but sometimes you get attached with your friend and when you also have expectations it can be hurtful. It is just not setting limits for others but you should also understand that others also have the limited boundaries of themselves.

This is just to show that it is important to spend time with yourself and to say no when needed. With the new year everyone makes a new resolution, so it will be a good decision to spend time with yourself, love yourself, and get to know yourself better. When you spend time with yourself and concentrate on thoughts coming to your mind, you get to know yourself better. APU campus is huge and all the time crowded, in this public you never know who could hurt you the most at what moment. So it is better to be open minded in this space and be critical when needed, and not to take everything personally.

Here in APU we get encountered with so many identities and ideologies, and when you stay open minded, it doesn't hurt your feelings or offend you in any way. In this space your mental wellbeing should be your priority only. APU is a different space in the sense of academics and open for different ideologies. It is overwhelmed with the academic burden sometimes, all the assignments and exams come at the same time sometimes, and the mental breakdown happens in the fear of not being able to complete our work on time or we get offended by contradictory opinions. It happens because we have gone through the merit and grade culture of our academic journey since 1st standard till the graduation. And it is not easy to get over

over this thinking of grades having that much importance in our further education. I also try to do better in assignments or in exams for grades but in discussions with faculties I am now trying to do my best, what I can, not for the grades, but as a learning experience. Because our mental wellbeing is everything here in the university. The best way of setting our boundaries would be first getting to know our boundaries and to what extent we can tolerate, and setting the boundaries for others. And this can happen only when you will spend time yourself and get to know yourself deeper, because Self love is very important to maintain our mental well-being.

with the potential to fill me with self-doubt. They also don't seem to account for the gray-ness or the in-between-ness that is an inevitable part of being human. As a result of which, they tend to restrict my ability to fully become aware of my feelings, critically think, discern and thereafter show up in more genuine and effective ways for myself, people and work.



PRACTICING SELF COMPASSION: A JOURNEY

by Keerthana Paulraj (MAE 2019)

To be critical of my fears, worries or shortcomings is to act from a place of familiarity and habit. The critical inner voice may sound like -

- 'Oh, you're incapable of doing all of these things on your to-do list.'
- 'Oh you're not good enough.'
- 'I'm ashamed of you for scrolling all day, and doing nothing else.'
- 'Oh, you're being a bad person for not showing up for this friend.'

These statements often seem to have an all-or-nothing connotation to them, brimming

Seeking therapy enabled me to become more aware of the nature of this inner critical voice itself. It more so brought my attention to the larger ideas that were at the core, giving power to the voice. My ideas of success, a good person and relationality with other people, things and social constructs were useful to understand in order to make sense of my patterns in behaviors, thoughts and feelings.

When this knowledge met with self-compassion, it gave me the chance, for the very first time, to radically forgive, accept and feel kindness for myself. To say - 'Sorry, I've been so mean to you; I hear you and you're welcome here; I love you as you are' - did not mean stagnance or

resignation. It meant, seeing things as they were before taking steps towards becoming a fuller person.

Having tuned into this inner critical voice for long enough now, it's habitual for me to slip into its rhythm. It feels more strained to create a new symphony of an inner compassionate voice. Hence, I had to scout for instruments that I could use in setting up an orchestra for this.

These instruments were in the form of books, articles, lectures, conversations, self-reflections, among other moment-to-moment opportunities that empowered me. Engaging with these removed the vagueness of self-compassion and offered me a lens to think, feel and act upon it. One of these happens to be Tara Brach's practice of R.A.I.N (Recognise, Accept, Investigate and Nurture).



Feeling overwhelmed?

Remember RAIN.

**4 steps to stop
being so hard on
yourself**

R

*Recognise
what is
going on*

A

*Allow the
experience
to be there,
just as it is*

I

*Investigate
with
kindness*

N

*Non-identification-
you are not the
emotion or
experience*

Here's a sharing of the way I practiced R.A.I.N. when I journaled about my to-do list. I had 3 large tasks on my list for the day, and my panic was escalated by thoughts such as 'Oh you're not going to be able to finish it all, oh you're always like this, oh you're incapable of doing anything on time, oh you're going to be so bad at this because you've never done something like this before (indicating to the tasks).'

R - I first tuned into my body and noticed my physical sensations. I could feel a tightness in my stomach, racing heartbeats and cold feet. I was feeling restless - my thoughts were scattered, my eye movements were rapid and I was also trying to write really fast.

A - I asked myself if I can be with these feelings. I allowed them to be. I took a few deep breaths in and out, and invited them to have tea with me. I used reassuring statements like 'I'm here for you', 'It's okay', 'You can be here as you are.'

I - I investigated further the things that step 'R' had brought up for me. Here's where I recognised this overwhelm and restlessness as fear and asked - 'What information does this fear offer me in this situation?' - Writing further meant, digging deeper and discovering that there was a fear of consequences. One of the tasks came with a tighter deadline than the others. My fear was in some ways trying to remind me that I tend to take time with work and that I should probably finish this one before the other two. Also, in relation to the other 2 tasks, I was able to show my fear evidence of how I had excelled before and so it may not be such a bad deal to try

it out; and even if I failed, I had evidence again to show it that I had worked my way through failure. Great! My fears have found some safety and almost dissipated.

N - I said, 'Hey, love. No matter what happens today with these 3 tasks, I'm here for you and I love you and nothing will ever change that.' This offered me reassurance that it is safe to fall and that my loving kindness is unconditional.

On many occasions, I've had to use step 'N' even before 'R' to remind myself that it is safe to peel off layers of ourselves. On other days, I forget all of this and run wild into the fields of self-pity, selfishness, self-hate and self-indulgence. But the return to a state of self-compassion has been slightly faster and slightly more accessible.

In Trungpa Rinpoche's words, 'Well, it's a lot like walking into the ocean, and a big wave comes and knocks you over. And you find yourself lying on the bottom with sand in your nose and in your mouth. And you are lying there, and you have a choice. You can either lie there, or you can stand up and start to keep walking out to sea.'

This was written by Keerthana Paulraj, the founder of The Centre for Mindful Presence. When she is not curating wellbeing workshops, she can be found digging into a bowl of food, reading poetry, taking long walks or gazing at the sky.



I BROKE IT AGAIN...

by *Myneni Venkata Sai Vamsi*
(MPG 2021)

Hello! This is the first time I am writing something that is going to be read by people. I want to talk about goals that we keep for ourselves. It is so painful and hurtful when you are not able to do them. We always strive for something in life, essentially joy or pleasure. To achieve that we make certain promises to ourselves so that we are able to realize those goals. This becomes the purpose of that promise. When we fail to fulfil that promise then we fear losing that purpose. This will lead to unhappiness and disappointment. The greater the purpose you feel the higher the level of disappointment. If some other person couldn't keep the promise that was made to us, we feel the importance that another person has for us is threatened, then we have a range of things to do to express that disappointment; breaking up with them, being angry at them or sometimes we will listen why they couldn't do it and give them one more chance. You do any of these and you will be fine because the source of your disappointment is not you. At least for this part, you will be happy until you become that person who won't be affected by others' failures. But when you fail to keep up the promise that you kept for yourself, then none of the above things work. One cannot break up with oneself, one can shout at oneself by looking at a mirror but it doesn't work because it is the same person at the receiving end too. When you are in great disappointment, it leads to anger which will not let you sit down and see why you could not do it. Think that you broke that

promise a few more times, then you don't even think of giving one more chance and it is difficult to start all over from Zero. Then what to do?



My reflections. First things first, Yes! The moments of guilt that follow have to be experienced. But I do not want to be like this, no one does; disappointed self. Then? Same! Give yourself one more chance. You are the only hope that you have. But this time you have to reconcile yourself between your goals and what should be your possible progress. Accept that you are not ready enough to handle the joy or pleasure your goal brings, otherwise one has to relive this same disappointment. I took vows that were not possible by that past self of mine, I failed to keep them. But I still repeated the same thing without looking back on what went wrong. On the other hand, I didn't give up too because I am convinced that my purpose is for my joy. But the process is what determines my eligibility to reach it. I had to accept my incapability and then tried in small pieces and became good at maintaining them. Keeping everything under our control is also not possible, that's where external help or motivation pushed me further, so

don't hesitate to seek help. But later, again I became ambitious and set a distant goal which brought me back to **ZERO**. One of the reflections is that I kept my promises unbroken to the threshold that my patient practice with small pieces gave me, but after that hmm!! Those small pieces actually show one's true potential, and that happiness is more amazing than this disappointment.

Now it happened again. This time I am giving one more chance to myself, but before that, I will look at what worked and what didn't. So, I say at the end - Purpose, Past, Process and accepting all of these are important. Okay, now time to leave my friend Zero. Be joyful! You are meant to be!



तुम्हे क्या लगा हमें पता नहीं हैं

अरे बता दे हसमुख
तेरी रजा क्या है
जो भी है, तेरी नुर पे
साफ साफ दिखाई दे रहा है..

तु एक झोंके जैसा
कभी दाये मुड रहा है,
कभी बाये मुड रहा हैं
तुम्ही क्या लगा,
हमें पता नहीं है
तुम्हारे मन के अंदर,
एक चिंगारी जल रही हैं...

नजरे बोहोत ही नायब हों गई है
कभी धरती को छान रही हैं
तो कभी आसमान को ढूँढ रही हैं
तुम्ही क्या लगा हमें पता नहीं हैं
तुम्हारे अंदर की बैचेनी शांत नहीं हो पा रही हैं....

बहोत दिलेरी बढ गई है, आजकल तुम्हारी
जैसे उंचे उंचे पर्वतो की तरह
तो कभी गहरे समुंदर की तरह
और तुम्हे क्या लगा हमें पता नहीं हैं
तुम्हे बहने की जरूरत है एक नदिया की तरह....

- गीता इंगळे

BUILDING BLOCKS OF WELLBEING: SELF COMPASSION AND BOUNDARIES

by Rahul K. A. (MAE 2022)

Self-compassion and boundaries are two key building blocks of well-being that are essential for leading a healthy, happy, and fulfilling life.

Self-compassion involves treating oneself with kindness, care, and understanding, rather than criticizing or judging oneself harshly. This means acknowledging and accepting one's own weaknesses and limitations, as well as being understanding and supportive of oneself during difficult times. When we practice self-compassion, we are more likely to be resilient in the face of challenges and setbacks, and to bounce back from difficult experiences more quickly.

Boundaries, on the other hand, refer to the limits we set for ourselves in our relationships with others. These limits may involve physical boundaries, such as personal space, or emotional boundaries, such as the limits of what we are comfortable sharing with others. Setting and maintaining healthy boundaries is essential for maintaining a sense of autonomy and control in our lives, and for protecting ourselves from being taken advantage of or mistreated by others.

Both self-compassion and boundaries are essential for well-being, as they allow us to take care of ourselves and to have healthy relationships with others.

Both self-compassion and boundaries are essential for well-being, as they allow us to take care of ourselves and to have healthy relationships with others. When we practice self-compassion, we are more likely to have a positive relationship with ourselves, which can boost our self-esteem and self-worth. This, in turn, can help us to feel more confident and capable in our daily lives.

Boundaries, meanwhile, help us to establish healthy relationships with others. When we set clear boundaries, we communicate to others what is and is not acceptable in our relationships, which can help to prevent misunderstandings and conflicts. This can lead to more harmonious and fulfilling relationships, which are an important source of happiness and satisfaction in life.

In order to build self-compassion and boundaries in our lives, it is important to engage in self-reflection and to be honest with ourselves about what we need and what we are comfortable with. This may involve setting aside time to reflect on our values and priorities and to identify areas where we need to set clearer boundaries or be more compassionate towards ourselves.

It is also pertinent to be mindful of the messages we give ourselves, and to challenge negative self-talk or self-judgment when it arises. Instead of criticizing ourselves, we can try to be understanding and supportive of ourselves, and to remind ourselves that it is okay to make mistakes and to be imperfect.

In addition, it is important to seek support

from others when needed. We all need a supportive network of friends and family who can help us to practice self-compassion and to set and maintain healthy boundaries. By seeking out this support and building strong relationships with others, we can create a foundation of wellbeing that will serve us throughout our lives.

Summing up, self-compassion and boundaries are fundamental components of well-being that are necessary for living a long, happy, and fulfilled life. By practicing self-compassion and setting healthy boundaries, we can take care of ourselves and have positive relationships with others, which are essential for our overall well-being.



LET ME BE

by Divya Nambiar
(Azim Premji Foundation)

She studied Physics and is now earning through her artwork. He was supposed to be this generation's Einstein, wonder what he is doing there drawing graffiti!

Sounds too familiar, isn't it? Switching careers seems to be on the rise now. Or was it like this, always? I think about it, and realise that maybe I was too young to understand why an uncle who had specialised in dissecting cadavers had started a Motor Driving School (is dissecting cadavers and the machine equivalent?) – a question from a long time ago that stayed with me. The reasons

unfurled bit by bit for me – an experience for sure!

All I wish for is freedom for every person to choose what they want to do in life and what to make of it. To make or break it should entirely be their choice. I have seen too many people who are in the 'wrong' places at the 'right' time. No, neither their horoscopes nor their time is to be blamed.

This is for all those who often end up thinking about what others would say rather than what their kids want to say. This is also for those who think they are living somebody else's life and not their own—now is the time to take that much-needed step. It is often only the first step that seems tough. Once that is taken, the road ahead may not be that scary.

Of course, nothing is a cakewalk but then imagine the happiness it would give you to make a career out of what you like to do best, to breathe in an atmosphere where you would love to be, no matter what the weather is! Adrenaline rush already, eh?

Just the other day, I read a confession by a friend who was an engineer by profession. We have been friends for a long time. I once asked him, after reading his blog, whether he ever wanted to pursue engineering. Pat came the reply—no. Then what led you to this, I had asked. There was never really an answer for that. This was a year ago. Today, he has left the job that offered him fat pay checks and other perks of working in one of those sophisticated-looking offices, often with polished glass doors.

Often, in a constant tug of war between

one's heart and brain, many a life is threatened by the shadow of 'what is' for 'what could have been'.

To follow the norms of society or to scrap them to make new ones is entirely a decision to be made by you. Maybe it is just that one wants to walk a path that doesn't give directions, just to see where it leads. If it leads somewhere, awesome, and if not, then it isn't the end but just the beginning of a new road.

Some may say that it is easier said than done. Well, dear reader, the author of the piece you are reading right now is an example of 'what is' and 'what could have been'. As a science student, with red lines

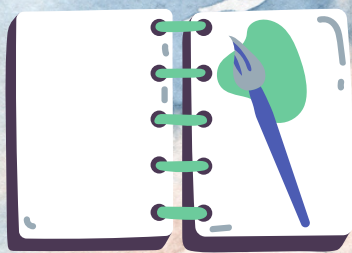
under my marks, it taught me that marks are just statistics and nothing more. If I would have been sitting in one of those classes where the formation of chemical bonds would try and hit the last threads of my active brain, then probably I would have had to compromise the life I truly love now.

It isn't easy to step ahead when you think there is a steep pit waiting but then it takes a few steps to see the beauty of the valley and to enjoy the feeling of a free fall (of course I wouldn't have known about it if it weren't for Physics! Ah wait... Was it Physics? Well, let's move ahead for now).

Give wings to your dreams. Fly, because that's the only way to reach the stars.

SUBJECT	JULY 50/35	AUG 50/35	SPET. 50/35	OCT. 50/35	NOV. 50/35	DEC. 50/35	Pre-Board Exam 100/70		
							Pre-S. I	Pre-S. II	Pre-S. III
English	41/50	25/35	34/50			77/100		80/100	
Hindi / Sanskrit									
Maths	05/50	14/35	18/50			12/100		21/100	27/100
Social Science									
Science / Physics	11/35	09/35	06/35			15/70		14/70	34/70
Chemistry	12/35	16/35	08/35			23/70		12/70	08/70
Biology / Comp. Science	34/50	20/35	19/35			30/70		62/70	
Attendance	100/112		176/180						
Class Teacher's Sign.									
Principal's									
Parent's Sign.									
Class Teacher's Remark									
1. Work hard esp. in Mathematics and Physics. 2. Work hard in Physics & Chemistry. 3. Work hard in Physics. 4. Maths, Physics & Chemistry need attention.									

Progress Cards apparently made to track 'progress'



VEDA'S VISUAL VERSES

AS JULIA CAMERON ONCE SAID, "ART OPENS THE CLOSETS, AIRS OUT THE CELLARS AND ATTICS. IT BRINGS HEALING."
WELCOME TO A SPACE WHERE I EXPLORE MENTAL HEALTH THEMES AND CAPTURE EXPERIENCES THROUGH ART AND WRITING!



1. CARE FOR WELLBEING

An important place to start is with a caring motivation. This means experiencing a basic desire to reduce suffering and enhance the wellbeing of ourselves and others we come into contact with.

2. SENSITIVITY

By being sensitive, suffering shows up on our radar. We notice and become aware of suffering and pay attention to it instead of looking away. Sensitivity allows us to tune into the person in need of care, including ourselves.



3. SYMPATHY

This involves being emotionally moved by the experiences and feelings that we or others face. Sympathy helps motivate us in approaching and addressing our suffering by spurring us to take compassionate action.



6 ATTRIBUTES TO ENGAGE COMPASSIONATELY WITH SUFFERING



4. DISTRESS TOLERANCE

Engaging with suffering brings us into contact with discomfort and pain, which can be difficult. This is why being able to engage, tolerate and accept distress helps us be compassionate while we work to address the discomfort.

5. EMPATHY

This involves understanding the experience of the person who is suffering, whether it is ourselves or someone else.



6. NON JUDGEMENT

Being non-judgmental means trying our best to refrain from criticizing or condemning our own experience or that of others.

Source: *Experiencing Compassion-Focused Therapy from the Inside Out* by Russell L. Kolts, Tobyn Bell, James Bennett-Levy and Chris Irons



SWATI'S STORYBOARD

COLLATING VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

The community was invited to share responses, experiences and stories about incidents of self compassion, taking steps towards boundaries, and reminding yourself to be self-compassionate.

Feel free to be influenced from these ways, and keep adding to your list! 😊

A moment/incident in your recent past where you felt you were being compassionate to yourself

Lately I have been reflecting on myself a lot. I recently got married, it's not even a month now, and since change is a very difficult aspect for me to face I knew the whole process wasn't gonna be easy for me. Hence, I made it a point that I will practise mindfulness, where I will be aware of everything that I do, keeping myself at the centre of the universe and not please the world for once. It was a phenomenal step which I took for the first time in my life, the timing wasn't great hehe (I must say) but I could see how it made me happy. At first, I felt guilty for giving importance to myself. and yes, I might've hurt a few people, but I have come to terms with the fact that I cannot really make everybody happy. So this was my baby step towards being kind to myself.

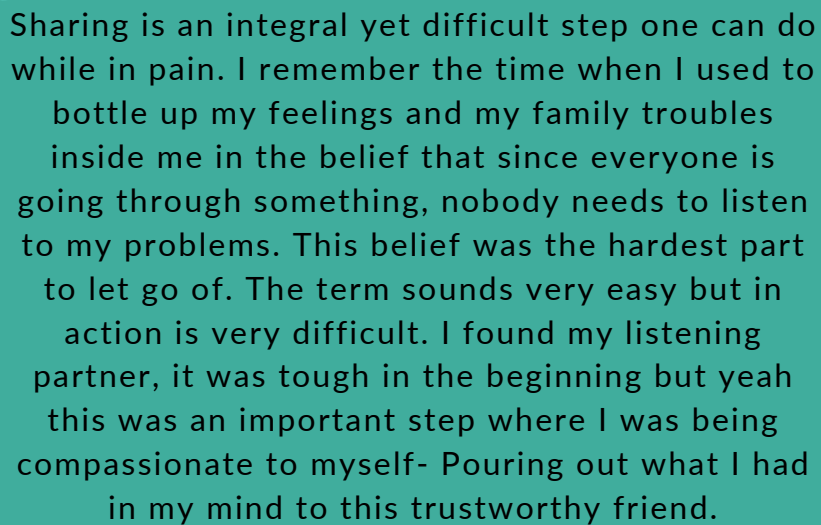
Recently I have been spending time with myself, and that urge where you feel that there should be someone to talk to, that is no more there. And I am still happy. Now I have got time to think of what I feel about the things and what I think.

I was preparing for government job exams in the past and I decided the railway exam is my last attempt. After that I will not appear for any other exams and I was unable to clear that exam. Then I excused myself and chose another option.

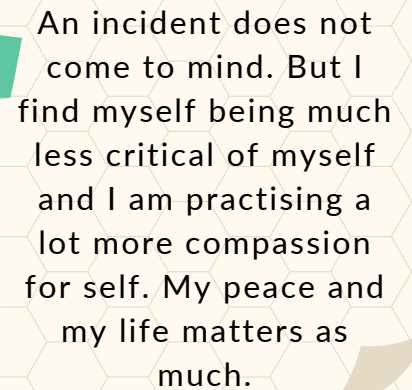
Bad grades may bring in a lot of doubts about one's self worth. This happened to me too wherein I mixed this with past experiences and went to a negative mindspace. When I started dissecting the situation, I realised that I had done sincere and meticulous work to the best of my abilities. So I told myself that there was nothing to regret or worry about and that these grades are insignificant in this long journey of life. I also saw that the good grades outnumbered the bad ones and decided to treat myself with good food and a movie.

I am currently doing my Winterfield Project focusing on development and growth of children. When I go through the work done chosen by my peers, I feel I have either chosen something very small or of less importance. But, through my journey of pursuing this subject diligently I realised it might be a small scale, but working with children is important. The unadulterated thoughts shared in the session made me realise it is important to be compassionate with yourself. You cannot understand or practise compassion unless you do it for yourself.

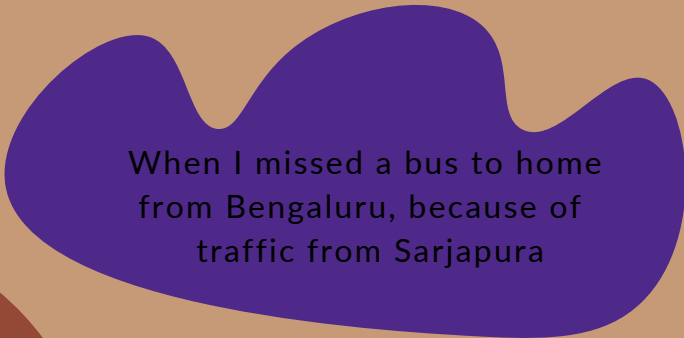
Some days back, one of my friends said something to me which I didn't like. So my first I thought very uncomfortable and bad but then i myself explained that because you don't know what is intention behind that statement of him. Leave it.



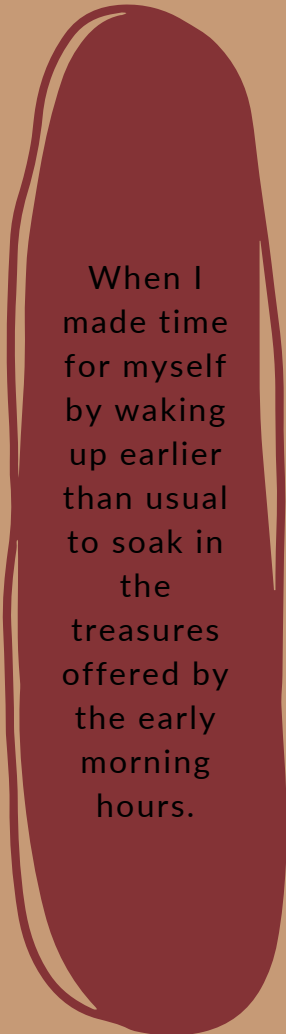
Sharing is an integral yet difficult step one can do while in pain. I remember the time when I used to bottle up my feelings and my family troubles inside me in the belief that since everyone is going through something, nobody needs to listen to my problems. This belief was the hardest part to let go of. The term sounds very easy but in action is very difficult. I found my listening partner, it was tough in the beginning but yeah this was an important step where I was being compassionate to myself- Pouring out what I had in my mind to this trustworthy friend.



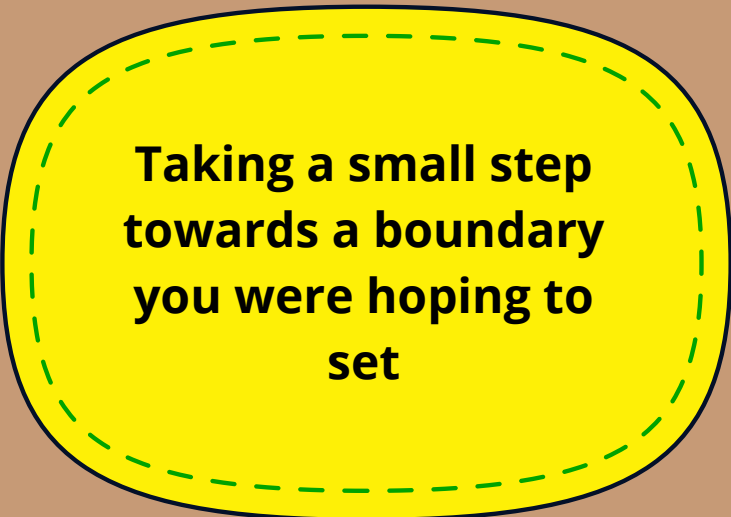
An incident does not come to mind. But I find myself being much less critical of myself and I am practising a lot more compassion for self. My peace and my life matters as much.



When I missed a bus to home from Bengaluru, because of traffic from Sarjapura



When I made time for myself by waking up earlier than usual to soak in the treasures offered by the early morning hours.




Taking a small step towards a boundary you were hoping to set

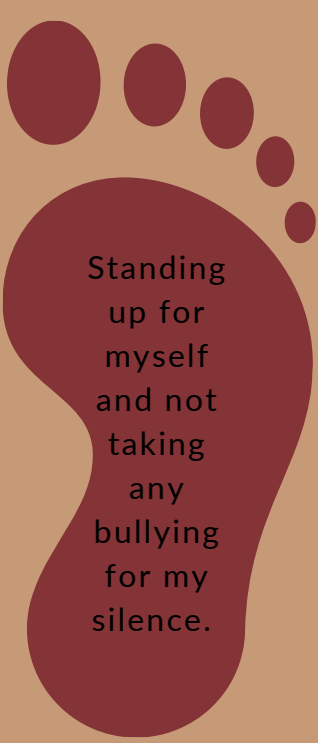
When we talk about setting boundaries, the sense we get is usually from outside. However, I believe setting boundaries within oneself is highly important. Setting boundaries to what we can do, and are capable of doing. You are one being trying to do a lot of things, which sometimes can be overwhelming. Taking care of the family, working for the desired career, socialising, and maintaining relationships. In the rush to do everything we sometimes forget to set boundaries of what we can do. Therefore, as a little step, I have decided to set boundaries, set limits which involve taking a break, self-loving rituals like focusing on my body and skin, writing, and just being with myself.

Yes, boundaries as a concept I wasn't familiar with before. And it was only when I set boundaries for others that I realised that I too can have healthy boundaries with people without feeling bad about it. I set a boundary and limit myself from sharing toxic discussions, banter, or complaints with my friends so as to not drain them and expect the same from them. I know how harsh negative conversations can be and don't want to participate in them anymore even if I am directly or indirectly affected.

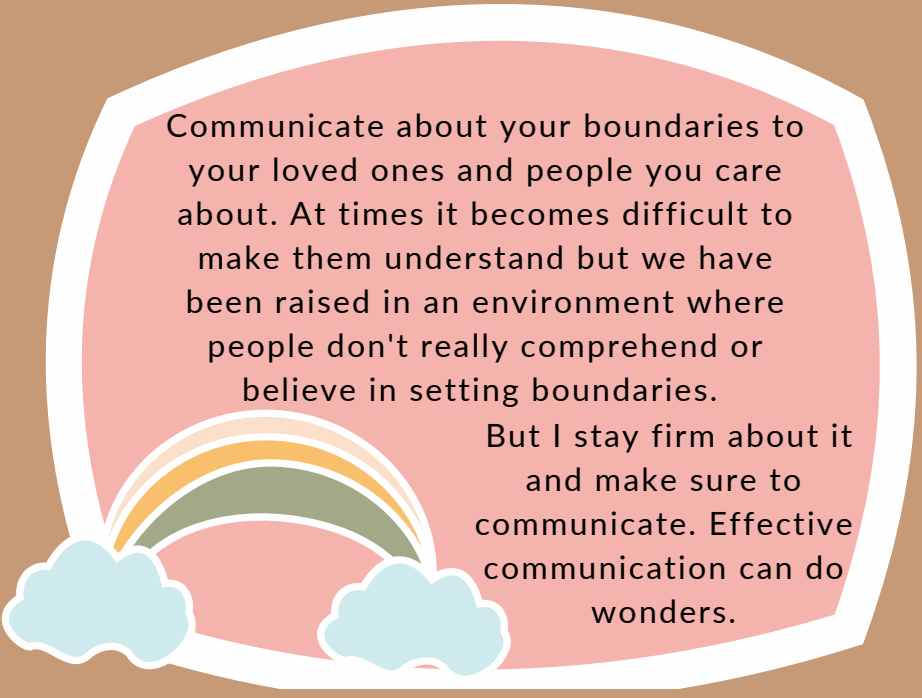
Setting boundaries is not easy, even though I am struggling with saying no to things I don't want to do. I will have to dare to say no to things, that is the first step I am going to take this year.



Planning ahead of deadlines so that the tasks run smoothly without burdening your mind or stressing you out by the time you complete them. If there are constant modifications, spend time to discuss these in detail before frivolously changing plans.




Standing up for myself and not taking any bullying for my silence.



Communicate about your boundaries to your loved ones and people you care about. At times it becomes difficult to make them understand but we have been raised in an environment where people don't really comprehend or believe in setting boundaries.

But I stay firm about it and make sure to communicate. Effective communication can do wonders.



Looking at the my past experiences or others'



Be consistent

I have been hoping to set boundaries recently, on my too friendly behaviour since it makes it easier for people to misuse my time and misbehave. To set the boundary; I can take the following steps;

01. talking when it is necessary
02. to keep myself busy and available when it is required



Open communication is a prerequisite in setting boundaries. More often than not, we dwell on what would happen if we say outrightly what we are and are not comfortable with. So, I think honest and open communication without thinking too much about consequences is necessary.

What do you wish to remind yourself of/hold onto from something compassionate you have told your friend/family

Whatever
happens, happens
for the best

Leave it! it's not
permanent. You will
not even remember
it in some days.

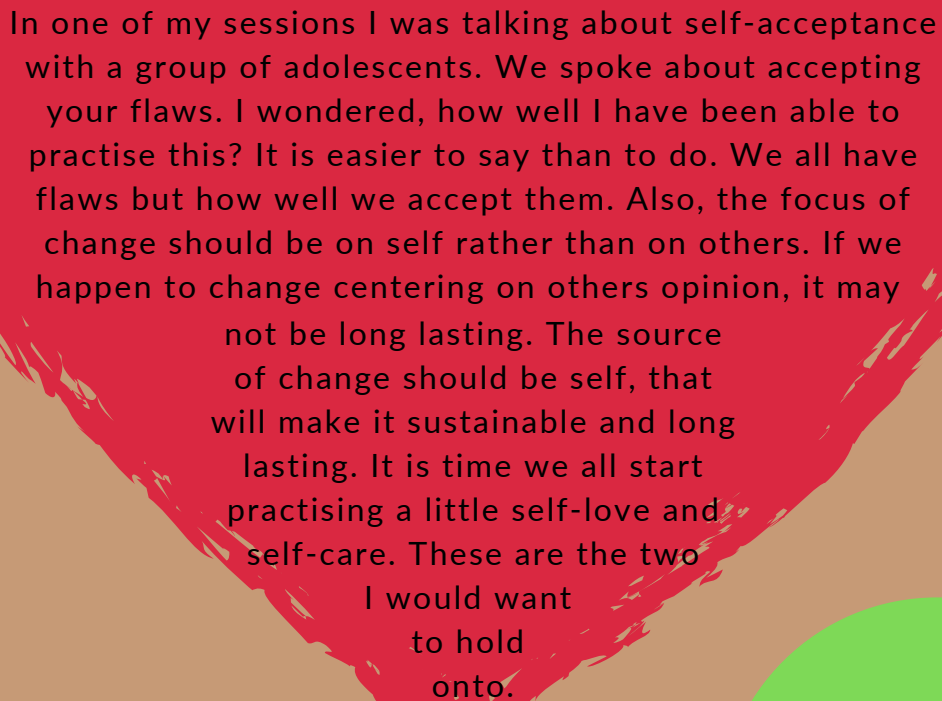
Take care of
yourself, practice
self care and make
time for yourself
and your needs.

Some people change
our lives in ways we
will never know. But
they definitely do.
Be that someone for
yourself.

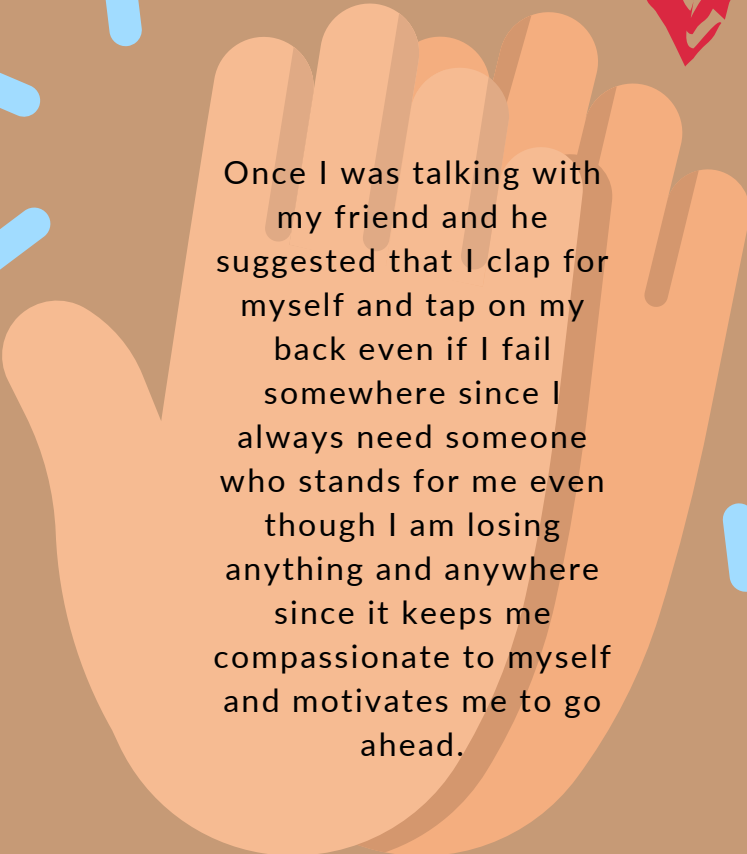
You may think that
you are not good
enough or talented
enough, but you may
be more than enough
in the eyes of so
many.

Don't lose hope you
can definitely do
something for
yourself. Don't lose
hope, be confident
and try your best.

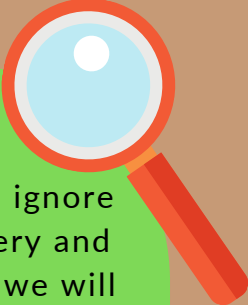
I have always reminded my friends that it is okay to fail or fall professionally and personally, but when it came to my own downfalls I have always harshly judged myself, so recently when one of my friends went through a heart-break and the other failed in a professional pursuit while explaining to them, I reminded myself that I too need to be ready for anything in life and apply all that I am saying to them, no matter how difficult or impossible it seems. I promised to be kind to myself, the way I try to be with others



In one of my sessions I was talking about self-acceptance with a group of adolescents. We spoke about accepting your flaws. I wondered, how well I have been able to practise this? It is easier to say than to do. We all have flaws but how well we accept them. Also, the focus of change should be on self rather than on others. If we happen to change centering on others opinion, it may not be long lasting. The source of change should be self, that will make it sustainable and long lasting. It is time we all start practising a little self-love and self-care. These are the two I would want to hold onto.

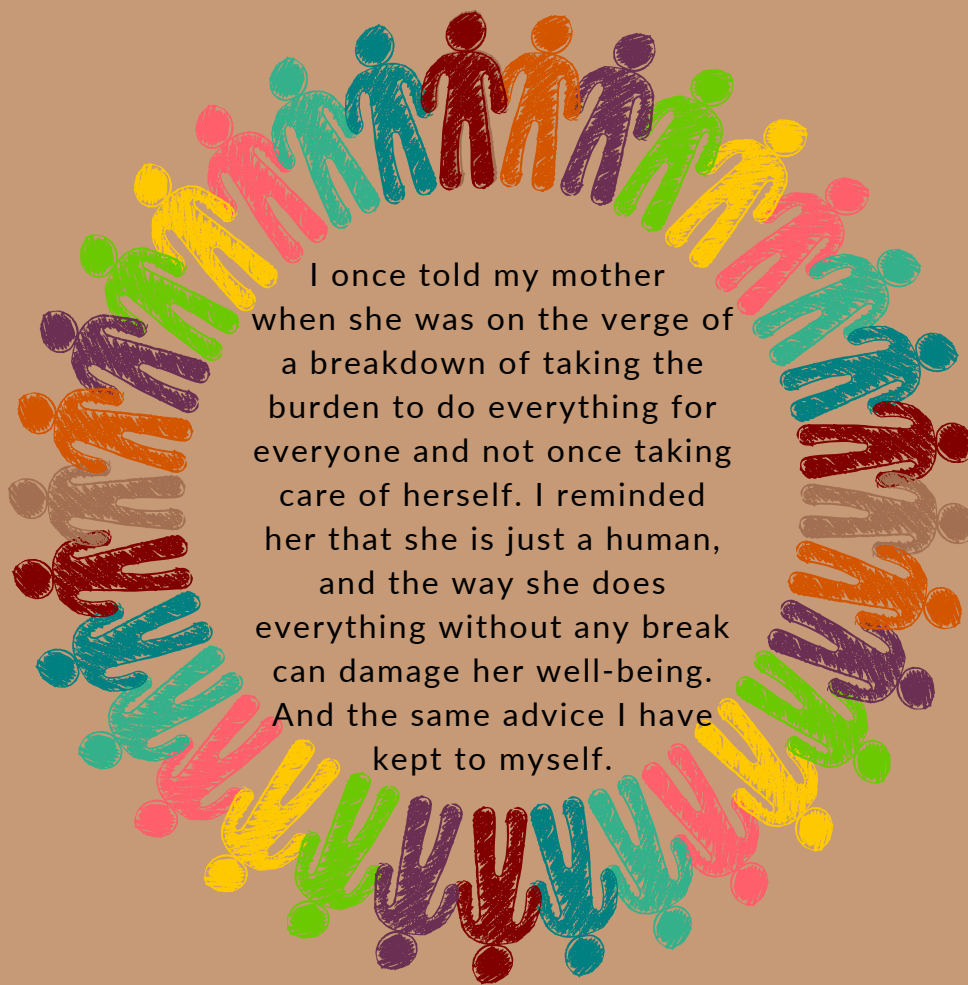


Once I was talking with my friend and he suggested that I clap for myself and tap on my back even if I fail somewhere since I always need someone who stands for me even though I am losing anything and anywhere since it keeps me compassionate to myself and motivates me to go ahead.



It is easier to ignore our own misery and sorrows. But we will have to accept that we are not feeling well or we are in depression.

Everything is situational and context specific so it is going to do more harm when we hold on to things that hurt us and make us more miserable.



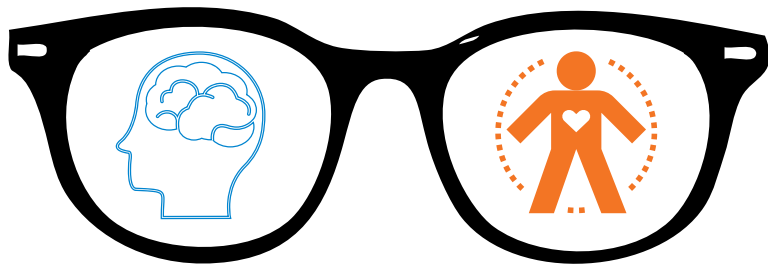
I once told my mother
when she was on the verge of
a breakdown of taking the
burden to do everything for
everyone and not once taking
care of herself. I reminded
her that she is just a human,
and the way she does
everything without any break
can damage her well-being.
And the same advice I have
kept to myself.

**Thank
You!**

**to all of you who contributed to
the Storyboard! It was a delight to
read all your responses!**



LAKSHMI'S LENS



**DEFINING &
RESPECTING
PERSONAL
BOUNDARIES FOR
HEALTHY
RELATIONSHIPS**

“

“Setting boundaries is your responsibility. People will continue to do what you allow. You get to decide what is and what isn’t allowed in your life. Setting boundaries is not to offend anyone, but to respect yourself and your needs”.

”



My cousin had come home recently. We were chatting and I requested my daughter to get me a glass of water, “Hey! Can you please get me a glass of water?” My cousin started laughing and said that it was so funny and strange that I was being so polite and formal with my daughter. He said it reminded him of a similar exchange between my mother and me. My mother used to always say “please” when she asked me for anything. This always amazed him because he had not experienced parents being so polite and respectful to their children.

This got me thinking that what my cousin said was true not just between parents and children but also in other relationships. People think that being polite and respectful is being formal. Being polite and respectful is being considerate and thoughtful of the other person. It is not taking the other person, however close the relationship may be, for granted.

Being considerate towards yourself and others and having healthy boundaries is the key to healthy relationships.

Some examples of defining personal boundaries are:

- To be able to hold on to your perspectives, thoughts, opinions, and values and respect the same in others without having the pressure to agree.
- Being able to express your emotional availability based on your emotional capacity on any given day or time. You can be supportive without getting stressed.
- Ability to choose topics you do and do not feel comfortable discussing and expressing to others.
- Being able to assert your personal space, and privacy and define your comfort levels with physical proximity.
- Setting clear expectations by defining the amount of time you would be able to give/ spend with someone or on something without feeling guilty about it.

- Regulating the amount of time, you spend on yourself vs on others. Taking time for self and self-care.

The benefits of setting boundaries:

- Improves relationships.
- Avoid resentment.
- Improves emotional health.
- Decreases stress.
- Avoids burnout.
- Sets clear expectations for others.
- Improves self-respect and respect from others.
- Better self-care
- More autonomy

We all live, think, feel, and act in relation to someone or something. So, most of our actions and behaviours are for others, and/or because of others, but we also are with ourselves. Our values determine the way we treat ourselves and others in our relationships.

Healthy vs Unhealthy Boundaries in Relationships

Healthy Boundaries	Unhealthy Boundaries
Respect, support, and encourage each other's growth	Disrespect, judge and criticize each other.
Opinions are heard and respected	Opinions are dismissed and discarded
Feelings are validated	Feelings are invalidated
Encourage to express and communicate personal needs and wants	The other person dictates what you should think and feel and how to behave.
Respect each other's boundaries	Overstep and dismiss each other's boundaries
Non-abusive behaviour towards each other	Physical, mental, sexual, and/or emotional abuse.
Respect and encouragement for self-care	The other person is expected to play the role of a care-taker
Trust and comfort to share fears, dreams, ideas, and concerns.	Lack of trust and honesty. Difficulty in sharing anything.
Feeling safe and comfortable to be one's authentic self.	Controlling and intimidating environment.
Happy and light environment	A constant fear of conflict and a feeling of walking on eggshells.
Enjoy doing things together	Avoid investing time in the relationship.
Permission to invest time in other relationships	Connections with other relationships are slowly cut off.



HELLO. I HAVE A LOT OF OPINIONS.

SELF COMPASSION & BOUNDARIES THROUGH DOODLING



Over the last month, one of the things I've done to nurture my relationship with myself is doodle. Doodling is something I've done for a very long time during class, meetings, etc but this time I'm doodling intentionally. My intentions are to allow myself to show up, rather than be perfect. To set boundaries with myself and the people I show my doodles to about what kind of feedback I'd like to hear. Expressing myself creatively was very hard earlier because the moment I felt like my work wasn't perfect, I would beat myself up for it and quit the task. Doodling has helped me consciously deal with these feelings of rejection. I use my agency and I've been trying to change my narrative from a very critical voice to that of compassion and

kindness for myself. When I notice thoughts and feelings of rejection and criticism, I pause and try to use kind words instead. It is also important to note that I was able to make these changes in myself because I've been fortunate enough to be in a safe environment. I try not to judge myself for coping in ways that I did when I had fewer and different resources than I do now.

Anyway, here is me practicing what I preach. Here is a doodle that I'm not very happy with but I allowed myself to complete it. I am allowed to make bad art. I'm allowed to be imperfect. :)



Take some time out of your day and use this bingo to practice self-compassion and check in with yourself!



SELF-COMPASSION

Bingo

Stop and take a self-compassion break. Take a deep breath and check if you have been compassionate towards yourself...

Stopped pushing yourself to be perfect <input type="radio"/>	Found out "Feel Good" things for you <input type="radio"/>	Discovered healthy activity that makes you feel happy <input type="radio"/>	Eliminated any negative self talk <input type="radio"/>
Considered that you are not alone <input type="radio"/>	Responded to your own feelings positively <input type="radio"/>	Told yourself - "I am doing my best" <input type="radio"/>	Practiced being here and now <input type="radio"/>
Told yourself- "Its ok to make mistakes" <input type="radio"/>	Spent quality time with yourself <input type="radio"/>	Recognised the shared experiences around you <input type="radio"/>	Took quality sleep <input type="radio"/>
Treated yourself with love and care <input type="radio"/>	Checked if you are doing OK <input type="radio"/>	Congratulated yourself on a job well done <input type="radio"/>	Took yourself out for a treat <input type="radio"/>
Complimented yourself before anyone <input type="radio"/>	Told yourself that you are enough and worthy <input type="radio"/>	Looked in the mirror with compassion <input type="radio"/>	Paid attention and validation to your feelings <input type="radio"/>

Have a compassionate year ahead



SHIBANI'S SNIPPETS

SO WHAT DOES "PSYCHOLOGY" ACTUALLY SAY....?

As we move into the space of greater awareness about mental health and its well-being, self-care as a concept is now necessarily popularized by the sea of information present all around us.

If we go by Western developmental psychology, self-care among is highly synonymous with self-esteem. As important as it is to realize our potential, there is yet another way of positively relating to oneself and improving your well-being.

Did you know that the concepts of self-compassion and mindfulness are rooted some deep 2500 years ago in the eastern traditional Buddhist philosophy and are relatively new concepts in the Western psychology?

Self-compassion


In the times since then, there is a continuously growing body of research around self-compassion being a substantial part of self-care. Let's check them out!

Compassion or *karuna* is defined as an emotion that brings forth the desire to be free from suffering. According to the research (Neff, 2012), to be compassionate towards oneself, one needs to be mindful of their own suffering, however, this is to be done in a grounded way to avoid "over-identification", meaning to avoid excessively identifying the qualities or characteristics of oneself.


Research shows that high self-compassion is linked to increased optimism, feelings of happiness, curiosity, and connectedness and decreased anxiety, depression, rumination, and fear of failure.

Find it hard to believe?

While at times we believe being self-compassionate can undermine our potential, or what if it comes across as being too self-indulgent, Actual research says the opposite! Because self-compassionate people do not berate themselves; they admit their mistakes and are more inclined towards modifying these behaviors.




Well in a study conducted in 2005, the results showed that self-compassion is positively related to mastery goals and learning, while negatively associated with performance goals.



So, just the simple act of being kinder and being your own cheerleader can not only decrease the pressure and anxiousness related to how well you perform, but can also help you gain this intrinsic motivation to learn and Aren't we all looking for ways to enjoy what we "HAVE" to learn at times!? :p

And, in another study, it was found that practicing techniques like self-compassion meditation, helped reduce the shame attached to body image issues and increase the feelings of acceptance towards one's body in young adult women. Self-compassion leads to a more positive body image, lessening the act of self-punishment and negative health patterns we often subject ourselves to.



Also, did you know self-compassion is associated with relational well-being? In a study done by Neff and Beretvas (2012) it was found that self-compassion allows us to be more true to ourselves. This way we appear more accepting and caring towards our partners and the ties become stronger. But Does that mean giving more in a relationship? Or to let others win over whenever a conflict occurs? Anything, but.

**Wondering how?
:D**

It has been seen that people with a higher tendency to show self-compassion, are more likely to acknowledge the needs of both themselves and their partners, leading to much better conflict management!

We all make mistakes and we all go through times when the pain feels unfathomable or even constant. It's in these moments that the simple act of being supportive towards oneself, whether the pain comes from internal or external realities, can help in ways that we often ignore.

Sometimes, Being kind is all it takes. :)

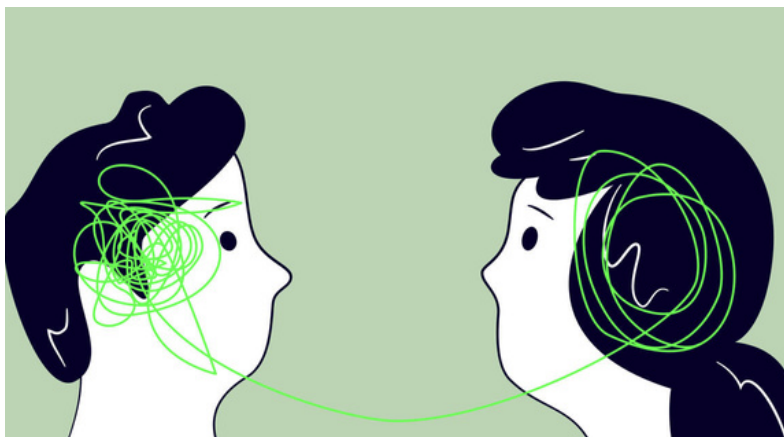




INVENTING EMPATHY

The word empathy was invented in the year 1908. Before that, people used to be horrible to each other. This is exactly why Vlad the Impaler (who has the second best title in history, after Ivan the Terrible) impaled people. Lack of empathy. It's so nice that now we have both empathy and 'empaths' available by truckloads. This is how we will successfully defeat inequity in our society.

The word 'empathy' came only about a hundred years ago, from the German word *Einfühlung*, literally meaning 'feeling-in', by two psychologists working at Cornell University. It's an invention. We invent constructs to better try explaining stuff we cannot otherwise. At the time, it meant quite the opposite of what it is now; empathy literally meant to project one's inner feelings onto the world. The field, at the time, was anyway obsessed with 'projections' and 'projective techniques', so empathy at that time was seen from the lens of form and aesthetics, like geometric shapes, natural objects etc. Like two academics who can hardly agree on the true definition of a term, Rosalind Cartwright, in the 1940s, asserted that the core of empathy was not imaginative projection, rather, it was interpersonal connectedness. And the coming decade, 'true' empathy was defined as the accurate appraisal of another person's thoughts and feelings (I guess no one looked up the 'No True Scotsman fallacy'). Reader's Digest finally defined empathy as 'the ability to appreciate the other person's feelings without yourself becoming too emotionally involved, so as not to affect your judgment.' Look carefully, here. Does this sound like empathy? To me, it sounds suspiciously



like compassion. In our current understanding, empathy does affect our judgment. To be fair, Reader's Digest has also claimed that I must be a good leader who is irritable and prone to respiratory disorders because I was born in October, so they must be right. Anyway, the definition of the 1950s is still what Webster Dictionary defines empathy to be. However, in general understanding, we define empathy as being in the other person's shoes, metaphorically, and to be able to feel their pain and suffering. I think both definitions might be correct, even if they are contradictory to each other. Maybe fifty years down the line, Generation Theta or Gamma might have a completely different definition (inscrutable for oldies like me because they would only talk in slangs and abbreviations).

Every study of human behaviour begins with the self and then moves on to others. I understand self-compassion. Empathy, though, which began as a study of the self, changed into a quality/skill which is meaningless without other people.

Empathy, for some reason, has become the core of a lot of helping professions, especially mine. Professors will passionately (read weepingly) claim that you cannot be a therapist if you don't have empathy. I agree to that, to a certain extent. It's the second most used word on Instagram, after Jevlis ka (I may not have statistics to prove my claim). We keep hearing that we need to put oxygen masks on ourselves first

before trying to put them on other people. Psychologist Paul Bloom, however, claims that empathy, how we define it today, might be detrimental to the entire process of helping others. We don't care about climate change as much, which will be our eventual nemesis, because we don't identify the human factor in it. The key to helping others, lies in compassion and self-compassion. Compassion means to give weight to a concern, whether it belongs to us or someone else. Let's look at empathy again. Are we sure that our empathy towards others exists without our biases? Or would it be more towards groups that we identify with? Every genocide that has occurred, has been enabled by 'normal' people. Nazis in Germany empathized with their own and demonized Jews, Poles, and the Romani. If our situation changes drastically, so does our ability to connect with ourselves and other people. Scandalous psychological experiments, may it be Milgram's Experiment, or the Stanford Prison Experiment, shows that nice, decent people can become horrible monsters if their circumstances are changed.



Paul Bloom

You don't have to be in the other person's shoes all the time. That's what compassion teaches us. You can objectively understand how a situation must be affecting the other person, from a distance. You can understand that a person might need help with a few things. More importantly, you can understand that about yourself. Yes, despite the hundreds of self-loathing memes you have in your saved folder, you can understand that what you've gone through is difficult, that you've done your best, and that you might need help. For those who have attended therapy, it means that you have to look at yourself through a third-person perspective. If you are constantly feeling the feelings, and letting that dictate your decision making, you might not be able to reach out for help.

I wish more students stopped saying how they are being a burden on others. I am not against empathy, and I feel like it does do more good than harm. That's how we relate with stories, and fictional characters (don't empathize with psychopaths and serial killers though). The first step to be kind to yourself, though, begins with compassion. And it begins with you.

No True Scotsman

Example	Definition
<p>Angus: "No Scotsman puts sugar on his porridge."</p> <p>Scotty: "But my uncle is a Scotsman and he puts sugar on his porridge."</p> <p>Angus: "But no true Scotsman puts sugar on his porridge!"</p>	<p>An attempt to defend a generalization of a certain group by excluding any counter-examples for not being "pure" enough.</p>

FALLACYINLOGIC.COM

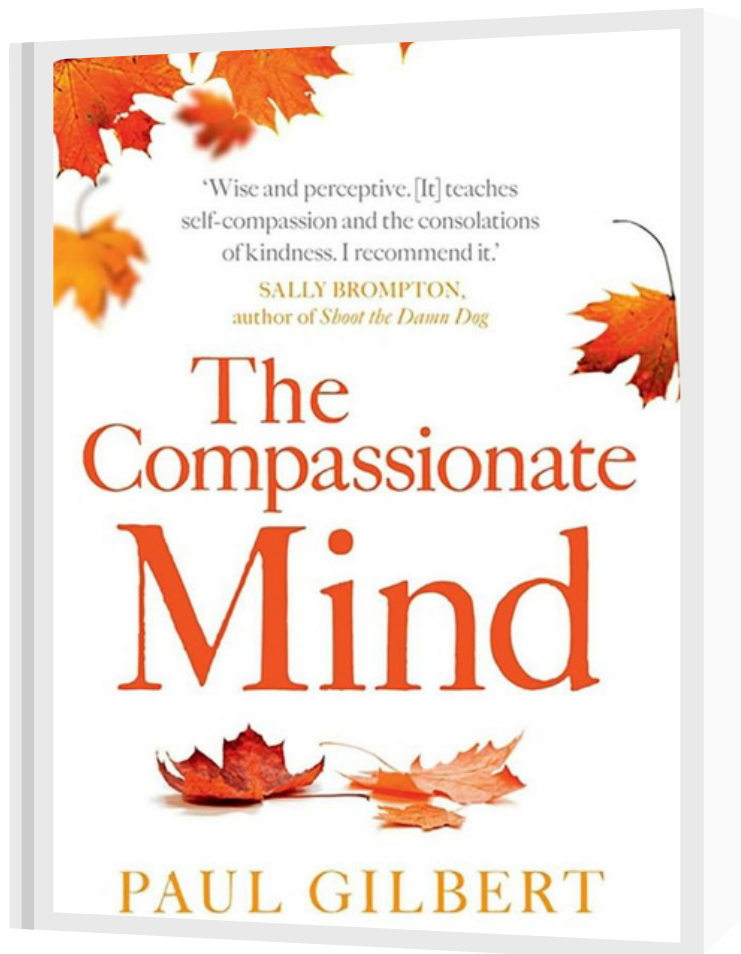
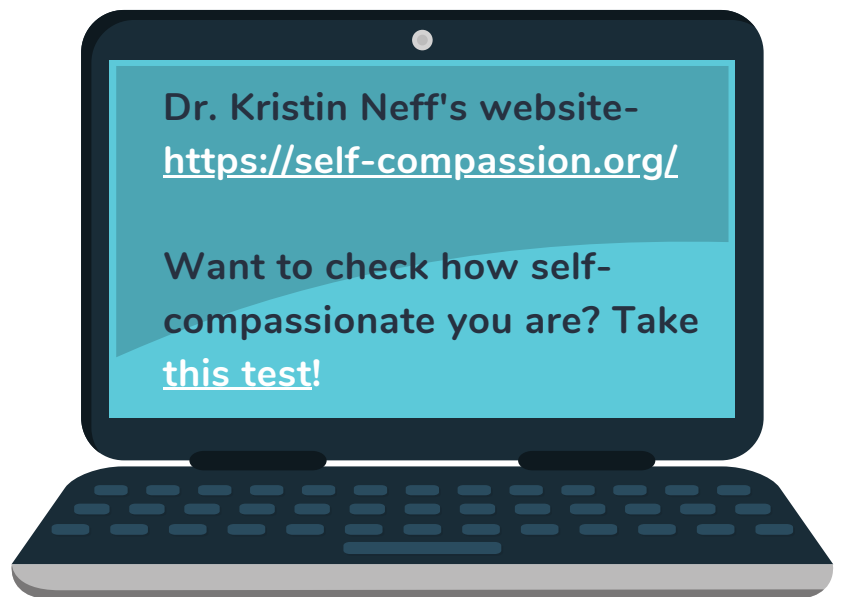


Being compassionate towards ourselves does not occur in vacuum. We learn how to be kind to ourselves from others in our lives and from our experiences.



SELF-COMPASSION RESOURCES

Take a look at some of these resources developed by psychologists who have done extensive research work in the area of self-compassion and mental health!



*Paul Gilbert is a British clinical psychologist who developed compassion-focused therapy. In his book, *The Compassionate Mind*, Gilbert distils his extensive research on self-compassion into a practical and interesting self help book. The book delves into why we need to be compassionate towards ourselves, and how it improves our mental health. He also takes you through various techniques that we can use to be self-compassionate, including breath work, imagery, thoughts, and compassionate actions.*



DEVELOPING SELF-COMPASSION USING EXPRESSIVE ARTS

An experiential skills group

Facilitators: Veda Dandamudi and
Kavitha Gladys

Come and join us if you are interested
in learning how to be more
compassionate towards yourself using
expressive arts and self-reflective
exercises in a supportive group space.



VISUAL ART



BREATH WORK



JOURNALLING



VISUALISATION

We will be announcing more details soon so look out for our emails!

PEER SUPPORT TRAINING (PST-7)



PEER SUPPORT TEAM 7 (PST-7)

In November 2022, our team completed the training for the seventh batch of peer supporters.

Over the course of the training, the students engaged in various mental health related modules including:

- Self-awareness
- Ethics and Confidentiality
- Interpersonal Relationships
- Basic Counselling Skills
- Suicide Prevention in Azim Premji University
- Grief, Loss and Bereavement
- Mental Health Conditions
- Power, privilege and marginalization (caste, gender and sexuality)
- Self Care

As part of their training, the students also attended Suicide Gatekeeper Training conducted by Suicide Prevention India Foundation (SPIF).



Peer Support was something that I was genuinely excited about, and I enjoyed and learned a lot from the training experience. The training, first and foremost, made us aware of ourselves and our mental space, which was essential. Even though we had less time, we got a great gist of the different types of people we will have conversations with and their requirements. Our trainers helped us understand counselling through theory and a lot of case studies and role play, which were extremely helpful. Throughout the training, we had a lot of fun elements in each activity, and we bonded significantly with the rest of the peer supporters in the batch. My passion for PST has increased several folds, and I look forward to conversing with people.

-PRANESH S (PST-7)



The training is complete and we are happy to announce the members of PST-7 are ready to support their fellow peers on campus!

Students can reach out to them for an additional layer of emotional support within the university. The Conversations Team will continue to supervise and mentor the peer supporters.

Take a look at the PST-7 poster in the next few pages for more details!

PEER SUPPORT TEAM (PST-7)



Who are peer supporters?

Peer Supporters are a voluntary group of undergraduate and postgraduate students who are trained, & supervised by the Conversations team to provide emotional support to their peers.

Peer supporters are trained to be caste-sensitive, queer affirmative and are certified by Suicide Prevention India Foundation (SPIF) as suicide prevention gatekeepers.

What do peer supporters do?

- Provide one-to-one emotional support
- Spread awareness on mental health and wellbeing
- Identify and help students in distress
- Identify and refer students to the Conversations Team if professional help is needed

What concerns can you reach to peer supporters for?

- Academic difficulties
- Difficulties adjusting to the university
- Navigating the transition to university
- Feeling stressed
- Feeling anxious
- Friendship or relationship issues

Who can you reach out to?

If you are an undergraduate student, you can reach out to the undergraduate peer supporters. If you are a postgraduate student, you can reach out the postgraduate peer supporters.



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PEER SUPPORT TEAM (PST-7)



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Praticksha Chik Baraik



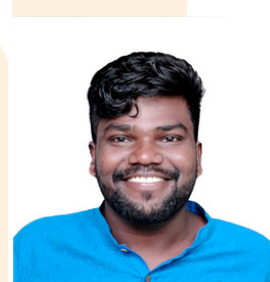
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English

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PEER SUPPORT TEAM (PST-7)



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Marathi, Hindi, English

Anitta Kuriyakose



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CONVERSATIONS' INITIATIVES TOWARDS CREATING A SAFER AND INCLUSIVE CAMPUS

PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID AND DIVERSITY TRAINING FOR RESIDENT MENTORS



From October to December 2022, our team has been conducting psychological first aid (PFA) training for resident mentors in order to be able to respond to emergencies and mental health concerns like panic attacks. The training involved learning basic counselling skills and measures to take in crisis situations.

We also conducted diversity training sessions where we discussed power, privilege and marginalization, particularly in the contexts of caste, gender and sexuality.

After incidents of harassment of some of the undergraduate students residing in residences outside the University campus, some of the peer supporters residing in the residences requested the Conversation team for a training module for student volunteers to be First Responders to anyone who's gone through sexual harassment and violence.

The students volunteers went through a selection process to assess readiness for the First Responders role and then the training was conducted on the topics of the definition of harassment/assault, the effects, ideas and beliefs perpetuating it, how to sensitively address a person as a First Responder and one's own self care.

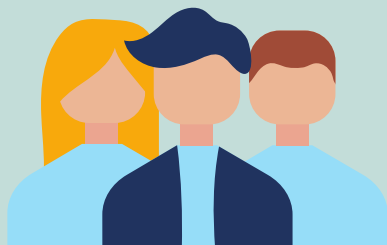
FIRST RESPONDERS TRAINING FOR STUDENTS IN RESIDENCES





CONVERSATIONS' INITIATIVES TOWARDS CREATING A SAFER AND INCLUSIVE CAMPUS

**SUICIDE GATEKEEPER
TRAINING
(CONDUCTED BY
SUICIDE PREVENTION
INDIA FOUNDATION)**



Who is a gatekeeper?

Anyone who can recognize a crisis and warning signs that someone is at risk of suicide and also refer them for help

Gatekeeper training is a World Health Organization (WHO) recommended suicide prevention strategy to help those who are emotionally distressed or potentially suicidal. The more trained gatekeepers we have in our campus community, the more able we are to provide those who are possibly suicidal the timely help they need to keep them safe.

It is for this reason, we collaborated with Suicide Prevention India Foundation (SPIF) to conduct suicide gatekeeper training for members of Azim Premji University. In November and December, SPIF facilitated 3 gatekeeper and emotional first aid training sessions for various members of the university, including the medical team, faculty members across different schools, the IMF team, and resident mentors.



IN THE ROOM WITH MEN

A men's mental health support
group

**AN OPEN SPACE FOR PERSONS
IDENTIFYING AS MEN TO SHARE
THEIR ISSUES AND SUPPORT
EACH OTHER**

Facilitated by Soumitra Saxena and
Pratik Motikar
(Counsellors at Team Conversations)

First batch starts
January, 2023
Registration details will
be shared soon via email



Queer and Here

LGBTQIA+ Support Group

*Facilitated by Veda Dandamudi and Anjana Moraes
(Trained Queer Affirmative Therapists)*

Conversations- Centre for Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing

A space for LGBTQIA+ students to connect, share their experiences and feelings, offer and receive support from each other

Open to all students who identify as LGBTQIA+.

Starting from February 2023

In-person

- INCLUSIVE
- ACCEPTING
- SAFE
- AFFIRMING
- SUPPORTIVE

Write to
veda.dandamudi@apu.edu.in
or anjana.moraes@apu.edu.in
for any queries or for more information.



Registration details will be sent via email