

Soothing the Self, Connecting with Others: Self-Compassion and Communication Strategies for Persistent Pain

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Land Acknowledgement

The Winnipeg Health Region provides services to all nations on the traditional and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Ininiwak, Anishinewak, Dakota-Oyate, Dene, Inuit, and the national homeland of the Red River Métis. Treaties were created with the First Nations and include past, present, and future inhabitants, so we are all treaty people. Winnipeg Health Region serves those on Treaty 1 and Treaty 5 lands.

We acknowledge the five Dakota communities in Manitoba that are not signatories to any treaties with Canada. We acknowledge that Winnipeg takes its drinking water from Shoal Lake 40 First Nation. We acknowledge that the acts of colonization which are part of our history have caused deep, lasting harm, which continues today.

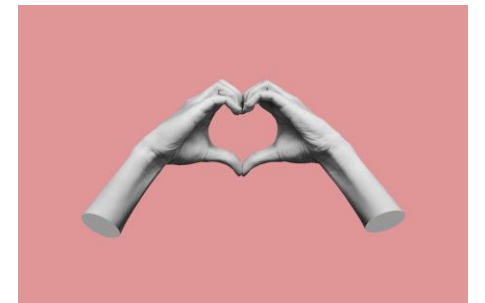
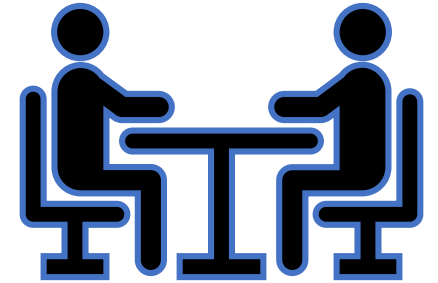
We commit ourselves, in a good way, to learning about truth and reconciliation, promote healing, and creating a better future for all.

Housekeeping

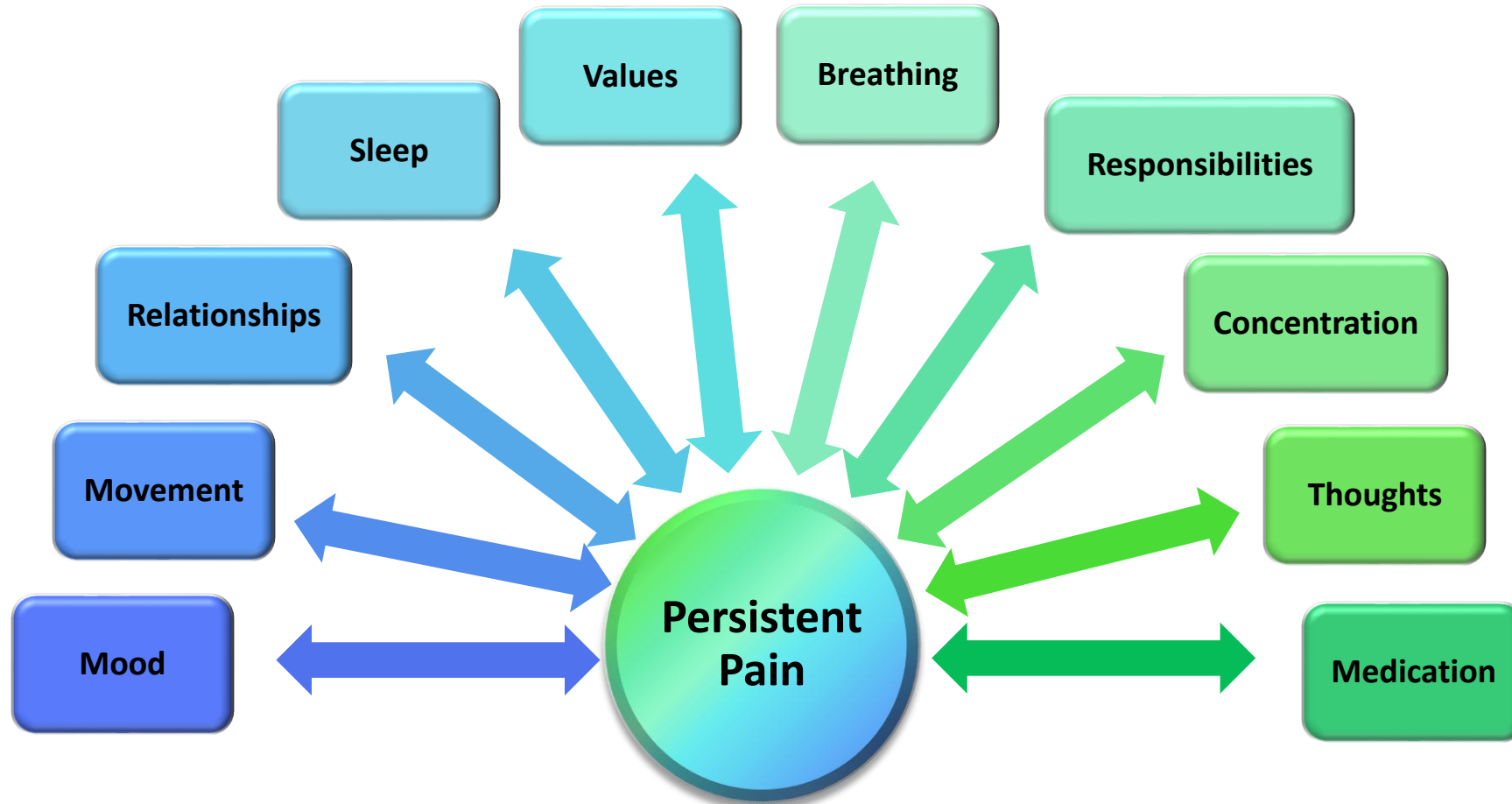
- Please be respectful and remember confidentiality
- Please place your cellphones on silent
- Please do not record today's presentation
- Make yourself comfortable- feel free to move, stretch and stand up as needed
- You may print off/download the slides from today's presentation at:
<https://www.panamclinic.org/patients-visitors/patient-resources>
- This session is to provide general information that applies to the most commonly experienced persistent pain conditions

Outline

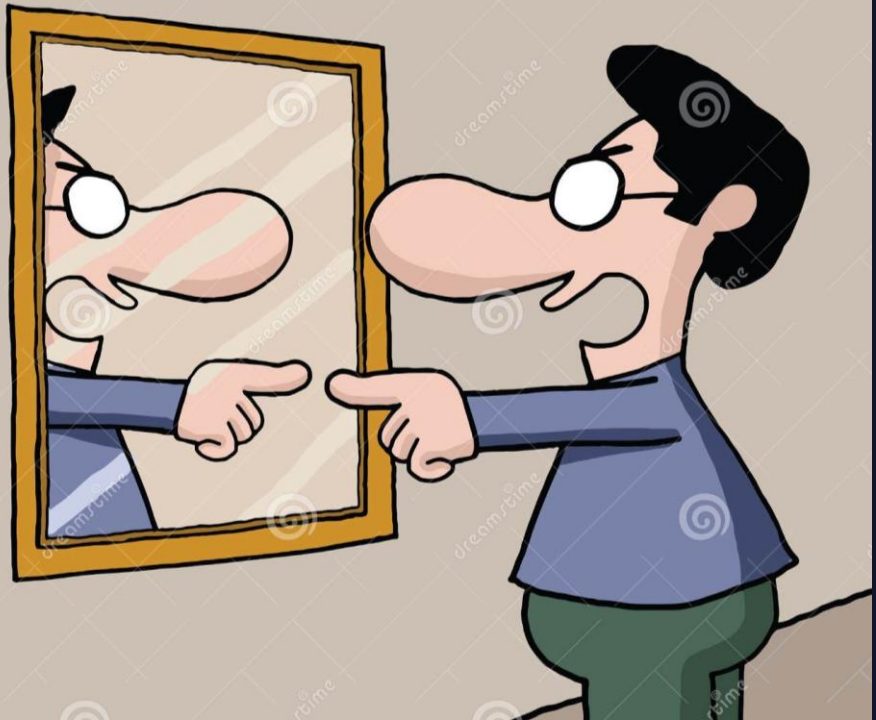
- **What is Self-Compassion?**
- **Why Use Self-Compassion**
- **The Yin and Yang of Self-Compassion**
- **How To Practice Self-Compassion?**
- **Pain and Communication**
- **Communication styles**
- **Setting Healthy Relationship Boundaries**
- **Communication Strategies**
- **Communicating with Self and Others**



Persistent Pain is COMPLEX!




Imagine.....



Consider.....

- What would you say?
- How is your tone of voice?



What is Self-Compassion

"With self-compassion, we give ourselves the same kindness and care we'd give to a good friend."

self-compassion.org



What is Self-Compassion

Self-Kindness

- "You've got this"
- Physical comfort

Common Humanity

- "I'm only human after all. I don't need to hold myself up to these impossible standards that I would never hold anyone else in the world up to."

Mindfulness

- "Being present with what hurts"
- Label what we are feeling



What Gets in
the Way of
Self-
Compassion?

Self-Compassion is not:

Self-pity

Self-indulgence

Selfishness



Self-
Compassion

**“Only once I accept myself
just as I am, then I can
change”
- Carl Rogers**



How Do I Practice Self- Compassion

Strategy 1: Self-Compassion Break



How Do I Practice Self- Compassion

Strategy 1: Self-Compassion Break

- 1. Mindfulness** – “This is a moment of suffering”
- 2. Common Humanity** – “Suffering is a part of life”
- 3. Self-Kindness** – “May I be kind to myself”



People with
higher self-
compassion
have better...

Immune function and health


Health-related behaviours

Motivation to improve after failure

Coping with challenging life circumstances

Personal relationships





Self-
Compassion
within
Persistent
Pain

Improvements in coping with
persistent pain

Improvement with pain acceptance

Reduction in pain intensity and
interference

Improvement in psychological stress

Strategy 2: the Mother Cat Exercise

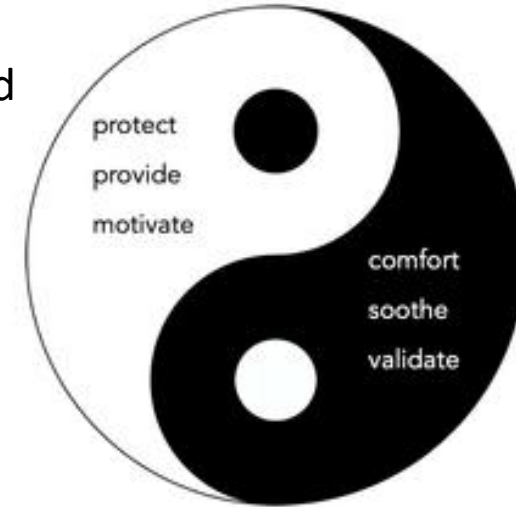
How Do I
Practice Self-
Compassion



The Yin and Yang of Self-Compassion

Acting in
the world

The yin-yang of self-compassion



Being
with
ourselves



How Do I
Practice Self-
Compassion?

Yin and Yang of Self-Compassion: Examples

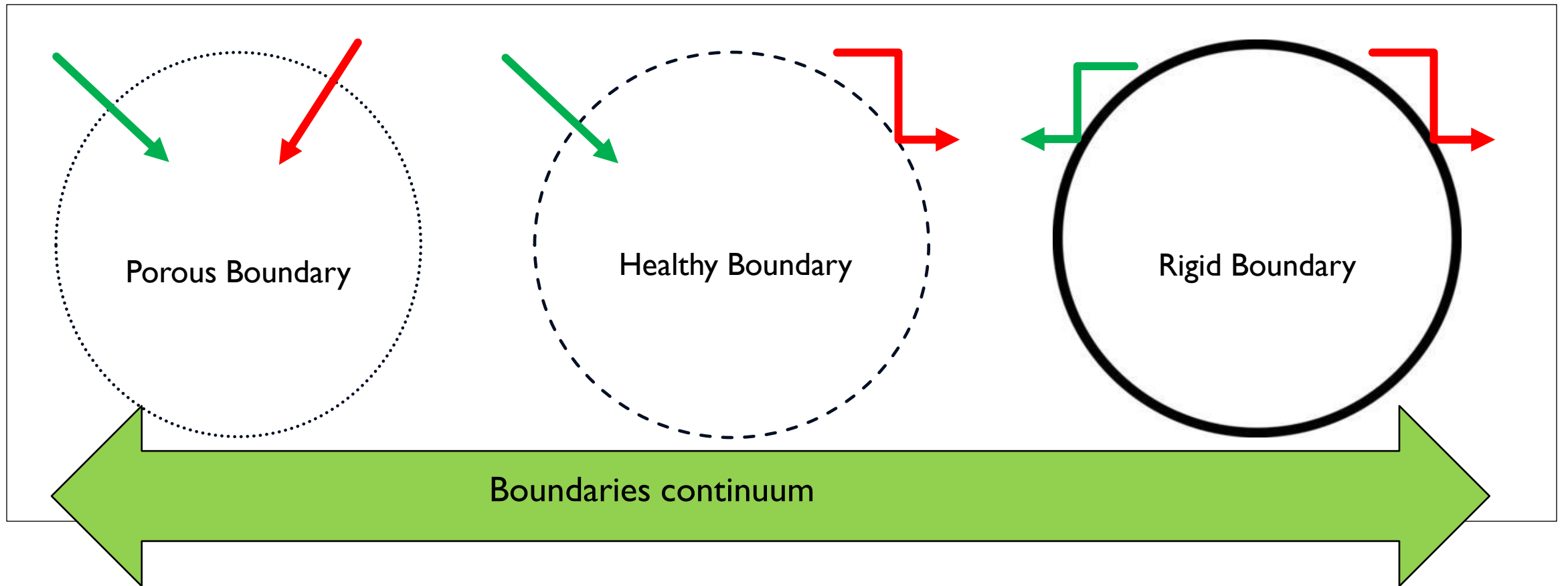
Yin	Yang
Self-compassion break	Set Boundaries
"Me Time"	Communication
Deep Breathing	Motivate yourself



BOUNDARIES

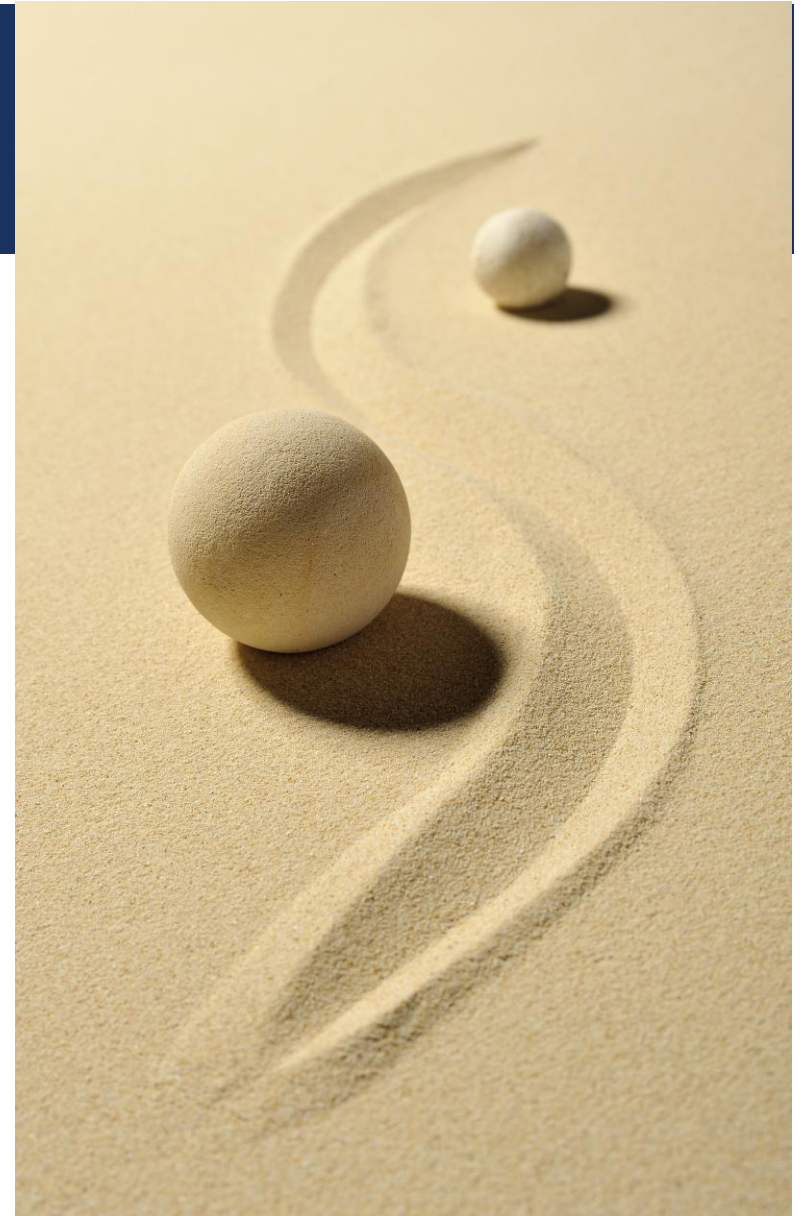
- Boundaries are limits we set for ourselves and with others.
- Our boundaries may be different depending on the relationship.
- Maintaining boundaries may be challenging if we prioritize the needs of others over ourselves or if we have certain expectations for our behaviours.

BOUNDARY TYPES



How To Create Healthy Boundaries

- Know your limits
- Know your values
- Listen to your emotions
- Respect yourself and others
- Be assertive
- Think long-term
- Communicate your boundaries





**Drawing Healthy
Boundaries**

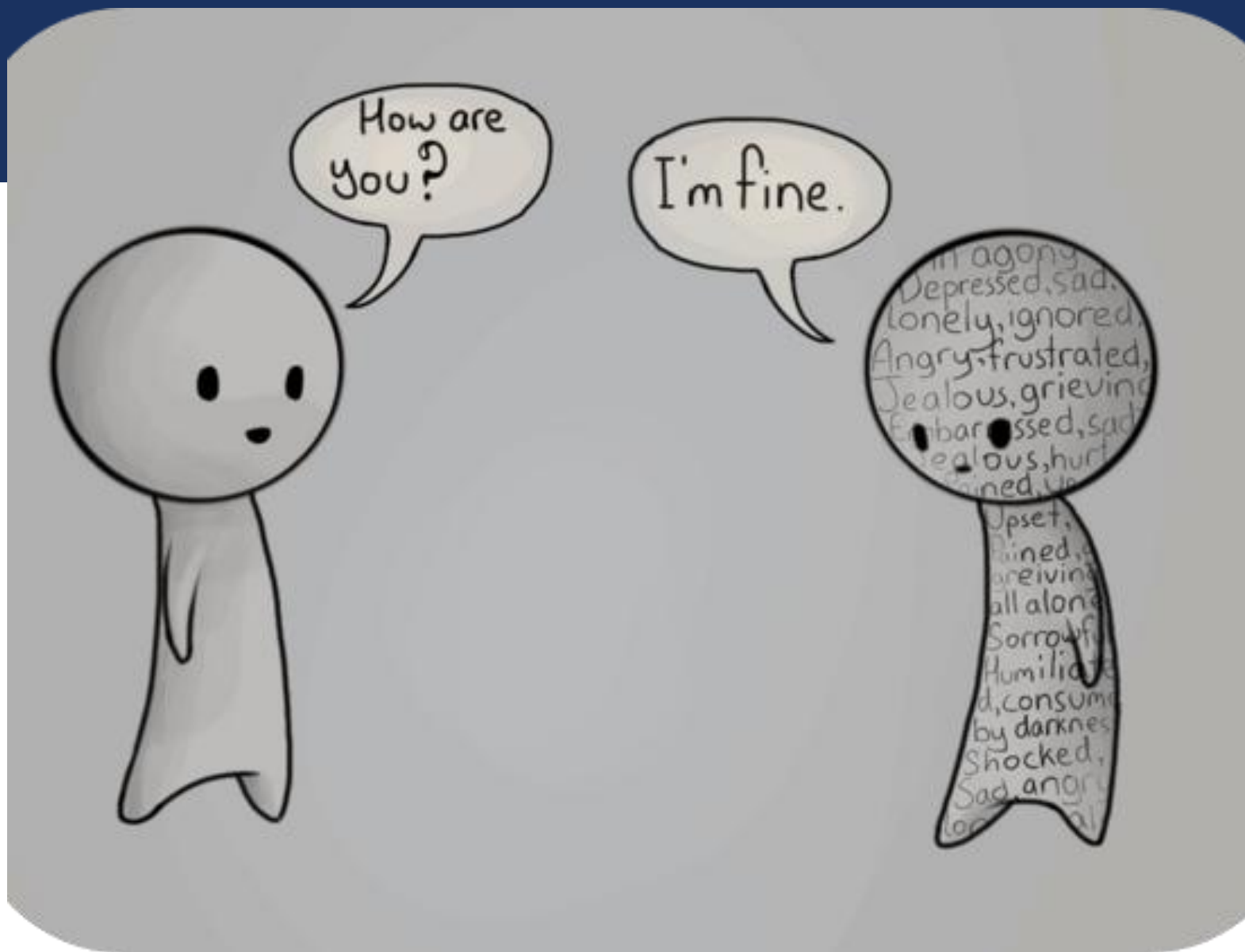
with Dr. Kristin Neff

@neffselfcompassion

COMMUNICATING WITH SELF



- What you say to yourself, in your thoughts or out loud, matter
- We tend to believe our thoughts
- What we tell ourselves may increase feelings of distress and may increase pain



HOW DOES
THIS RELATE
TO PAIN?

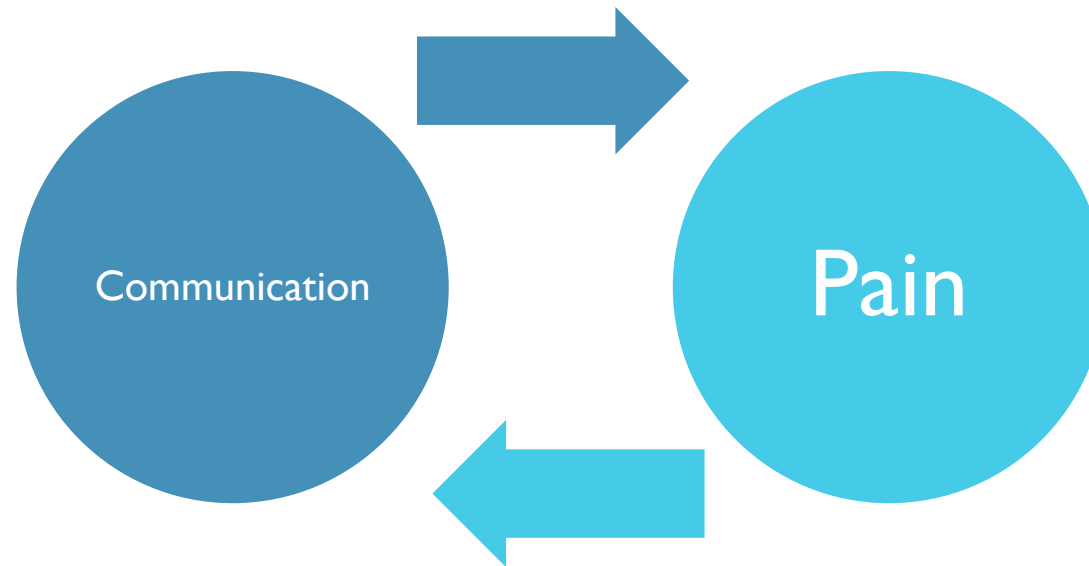
VERBAL VS NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Your Body Can Speak!

Verbal	Non-Verbal
The words we say	Eye contact
Sounds we make (e.g.: mhmm, ah, umm)	Facial expressions
Words we write	Body language (e.g.: crossed arms, nodding head)
The tone and volume of voice we use	Gestures (e.g.: using the hands while talking)

COMMUNICATION AND PAIN

- Stress/tension
- Anxiety, anger
resentment
- Being
misunderstood
- Not getting our
needs met
- Estrangement
from loved ones
- Confrontation
and hurt feelings
- Worsening of
pain



- Distracting
- Fatigue
- Difficult emotions: anger,
frustration
- Feel you have little to share
- Don't want to burden
others

WHY YOU DON'T TALK ABOUT YOUR PAIN WITH OTHERS

- Acute vs. Persistent pain- others limited understanding of what persistent pain
- Person vs. Diagnosis- people focusing too much on your pain and diagnosis and not on you as a whole person
- Pain and energy levels fluctuate
- No one gets it
- Unhelpful suggestions from others (eg, Have you tried this?)

COMMUNICATION STYLES

Aggressive

- Reactive
- Disregards others; prioritizes the self

Passive

- Difficulty expressing needs; prioritizes needs of others

Passive Aggressive

- Appears passive, but has underlying message

Assertive

- Responsive
- Respects the needs of others and the self

COMMUNICATION STYLES

- Your significant other get silent rather than saying what is bothering him/her. You respond:
- "I am wondering if you are uncomfortable talking about something. I think we can sort it out and make the situation better if you tell me what is bothering you" **Assertive**
- At a family dinner, one person often interrupts you when you are speaking. You say
- "Excuse me, I would like to finish my statement" **Assertive**

COMMUNICATION STYLES

- Your sister is insisting she knows a shortcut to a park to which you are both cycling for an outdoor concert. You are unsure and say..
- "Well if you think that's that right route to take, we'll do it. Hopefully it won't be like the last time you got us totally lost and made us late"" **Passive Aggressive**
- The family in the apartment about you is having a loud karaoke party that has gone past 11pm .You respond:
- "Hey, knock off the noise. You guys are pathetic and the screeching is giving me a headache." **Aggressive**



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

TALKING AND LISTENING

- Take time to organize your thoughts ahead of time
- Communicate clearly and directly
- Openly share your likes wants needs
- "Feel the guilt and say no anyways"
- Listen actively
- Ask for clarification
- Confirm what you are hearing
- Ask for confirmation that they are hearing you
- Provide validation

Communicating Effectively With Others

Relationships

Family

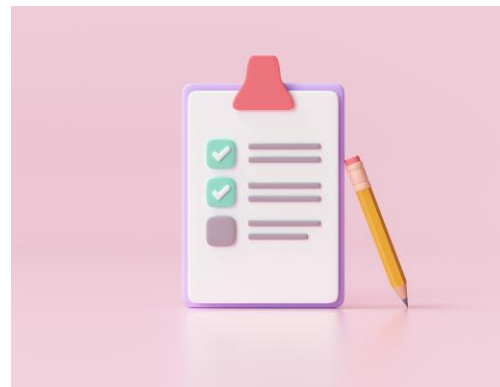
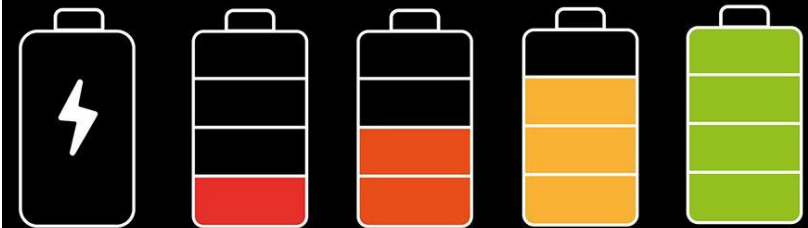
Friends

Coworkers or
peers

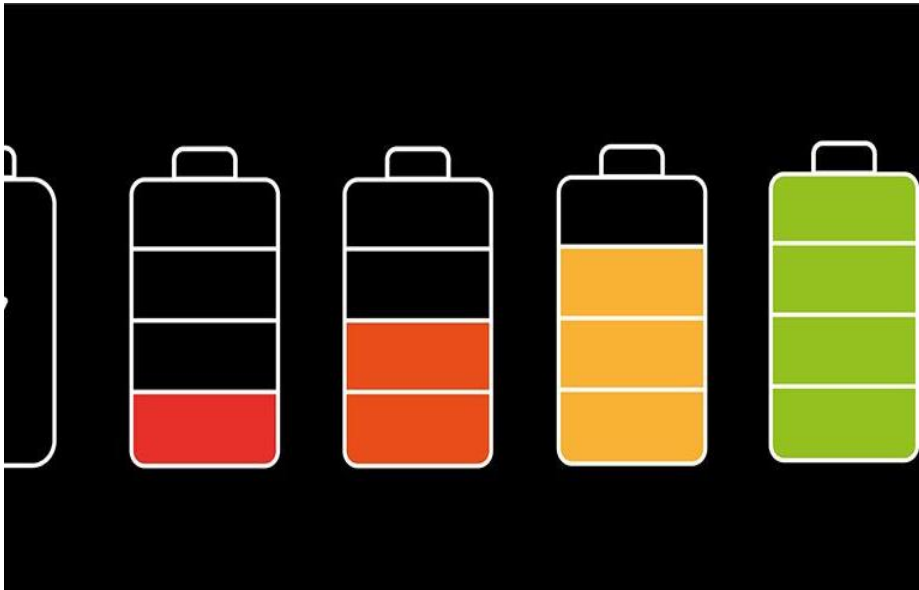
Healthcare
Team

Acquaintances

Strangers



COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY: FAMILY AND CLOSE SUPPORTS



- Be honest and communicate clearly about how you are and what can you do
- Let them know how much you can participate today (25%, 50% 75%etc)
- Make a flexible plan or a Plan A, B and C
- Encourage flexibility in others and let them know how they can help you (delegate, listen,)
- Attend to your basic personal needs, before the needs of others

COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY : HEALTHCARE

■ **Barriers:**

- Time-feeling rushed
- Lack of understanding
- Anxiety around appointment
- Previous experiences with providers

■ **Strategies:**

- Prepare
- Bring a friend
- Take notes
- Be honest
- Ask questions to clarify
- Leave with a plan

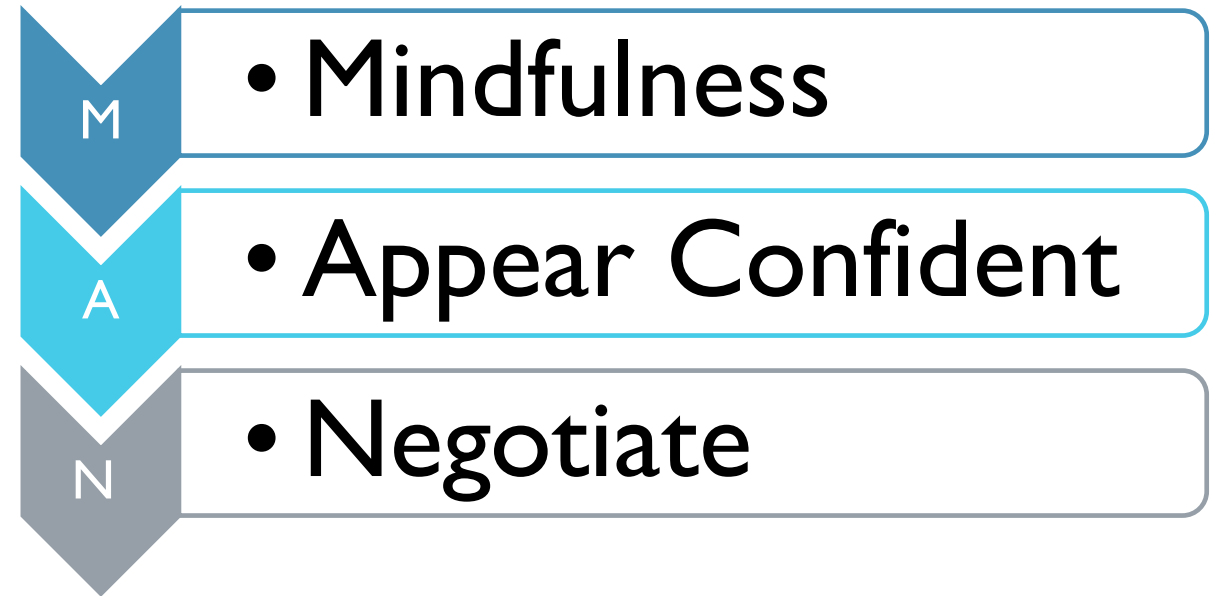
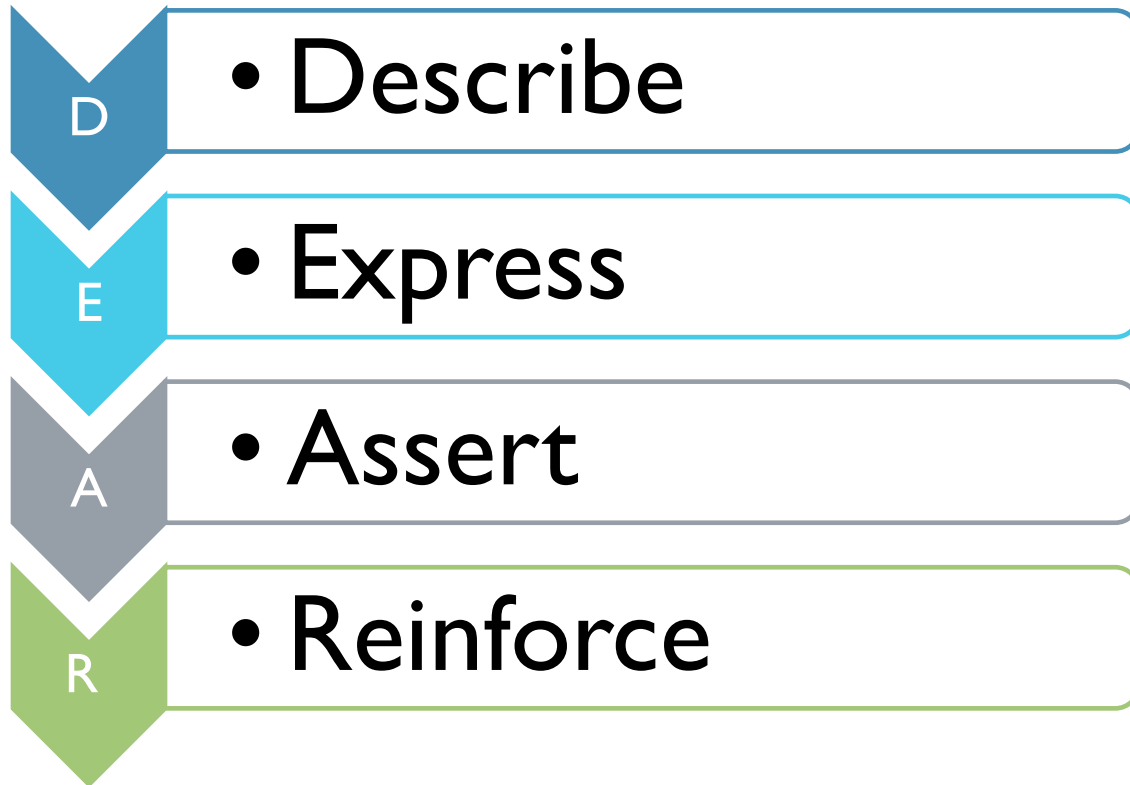
COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

DEARMAN

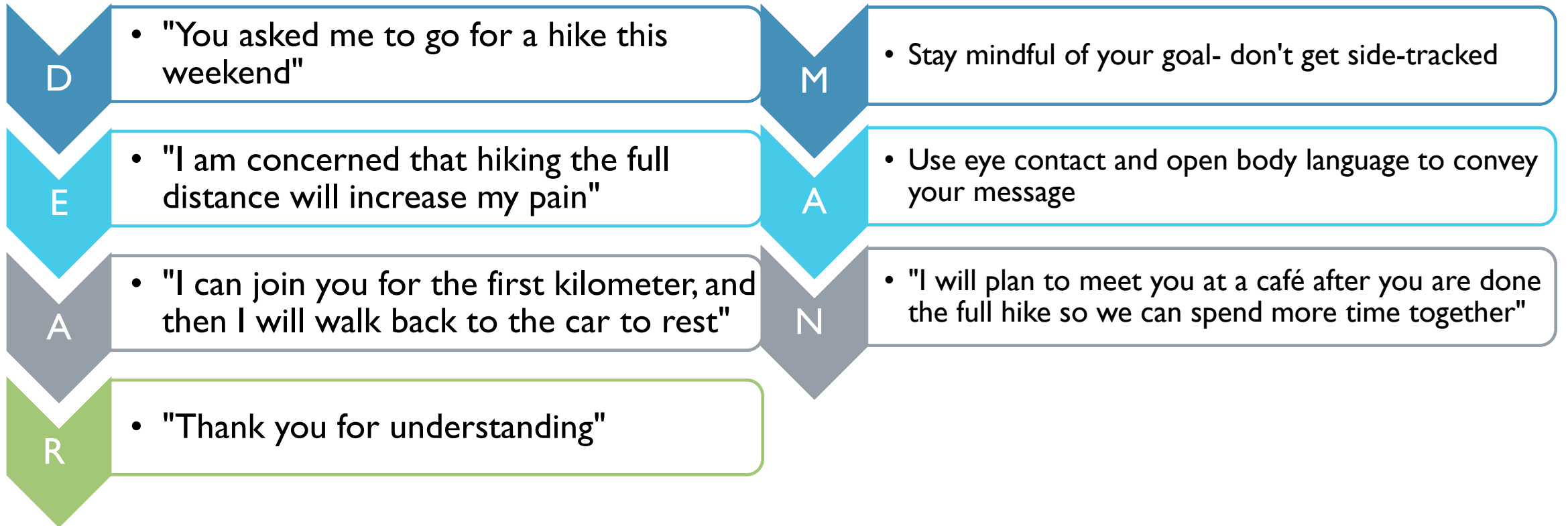
"I" or "WIN" Statements

Broken Record Technique

DEARMAN STRATEGY



DEARMAN STRATEGY



"I" STATEMENTS OR "WIN" STATEMENTS

"I feel _____ when _____"

Emotion *Explanation*

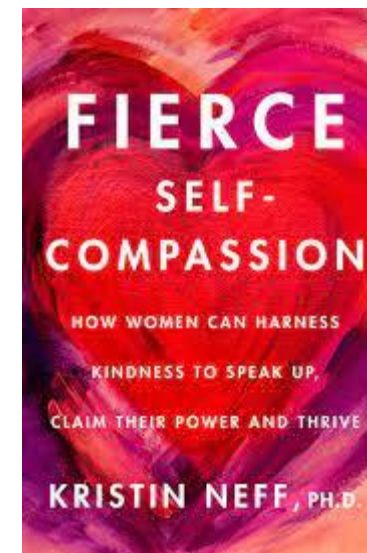
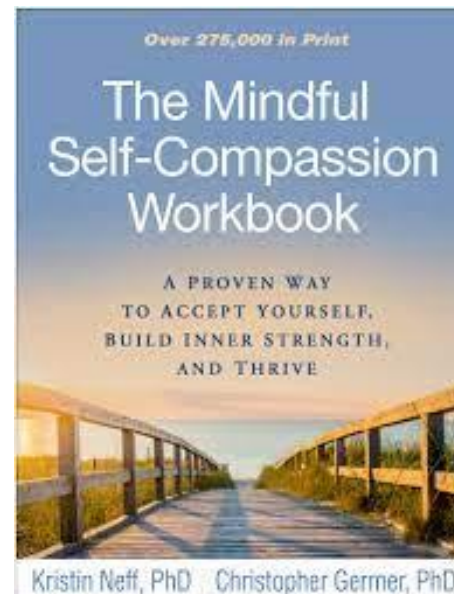
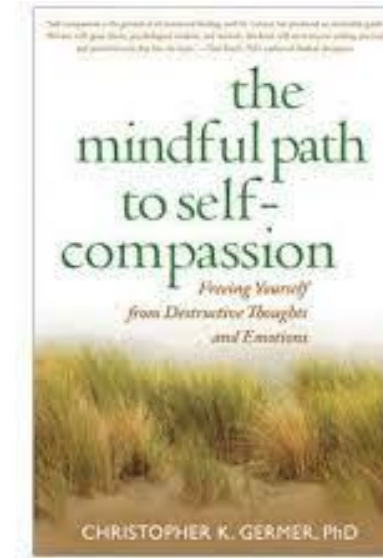
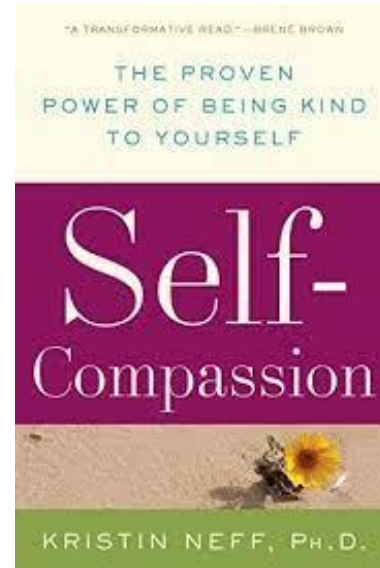
"**W**hen you _____ **I** feel _____ **I Need** _____"

CONSIDERATIONS

- Right place, right person, right time
- High risk vs low risk
- Tone of voice
- Be direct, be specific
- Prepare ahead of time
- Be aware of body language
- Use of "and" instead of "but"
- Anticipate barriers

Website: Self-compassion.org

Further Resources for Self-Compassion



OPTIONAL NEXT STEPS (COMMUNICATION)

- Practice the Strategies discussed today
- Access these Online Resources

TAPMI Communication Module:

[Communication Principles | Toronto Academic Pain Medicine Institute \(TAPMI\)](#)

- Power over Pain Webinars:

Navigating Healthcare: Communicate with Confidence

<https://vimeo.com/1096047867?fl=pl&fe=sh>

Pain Speak: Empowering Voices in Chronic Pain

<https://vimeo.com/1096047914?fl=pl&fe=sh>

Let's Talk About Chronic Pain: Communication & Chronic Pain

<https://vimeo.com/917294048?fl=pl&fe=sh>

- Request individual referral

Optional Next Steps (Self-Compassion)

- **Resources through the Manitoba Pain Program:**
- ***Self-Compassion for Chronic Pain Group (referral required)**
- ***ACTing on Persistent Pain workshop**
- **Resources through the Power Over Pain:**
- ***Healthy Minds Program**
- **Recorded Webinars:**
- ***The Brain's power over pain: How Mindfulness can Help (September 9/25)**
- ***Mindfulness and Self-Compassion for Chronic Pain (January 28, 2025)**

Questions

