

EXCLUSIVE WEBINAR PRESENTATION

Shifting Our Clients' Focus from Weight to Wellbeing

The Essential Role of Self-Compassion

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PRESENTED BY
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Learning Objectives

- 1 Define **three reasons** self-compassion is an essential component of the wellbeing over weight approach.
- 2 Identify the **three components** of self-compassion.
- 3 Decipher between **self-compassion and self-esteem**.
- 4 Convert **self-critical statements** into self-compassionate declarations.

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Our Agenda

- Evidence for a paradigm shift: from weight-normative to weight-inclusive
- What this means for us as dietitians
- What this means for our clients
- The essential role of self-compassion
 - What it is, and what it is not
 - Evidence from the literature
 - Barriers to self-compassion
- Practical self-compassion tools for you and your clients

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Who Am I?

- Nutrition therapist
- Meditation teacher
- Author
- An excellent example of the need for self-compassion



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Evidence for a Paradigm Shift

From Weight-Normative to Weight-Inclusive

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The Weight-Normative Approach Doesn't Work

- Period.
- Full stop.
- End of story.



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Why the Weight-Normative Approach Doesn't Work

- It **wrongly** assumes that weight and disease are related in a linear fashion
- It **overestimates** the amount of personal responsibility we have for our body weight
- Attempts at intentional weight loss are **not sustainable** for most people
- Intentional weight loss is the **best predictor** of long-term weight gain due to weight cycling
- **Weight cycling** and **weight stigma** independently cause negative health consequences

Tylka et al. J. Obes. 2014; Article ID 983495; Emmer et al. Obes Rev. 2019; 1-13; Brownell and Rodin. Arch Intern Med. 1994; 154(12):1323-30; Wellman et al. Stigma Health. 2018; 3(1):136-94.

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A Weight-Inclusive Approach...


- Is not against weight loss – it's against focusing on the **outcome** of weight loss
- Acknowledges and respects **body diversity**
- Elevates the individual to the level of **expert**
- Emphasizes health-promoting **behaviors** like
 - Eating nutritious foods
 - Becoming attuned to the body's sensations of hunger and fullness
 - Being physically active
 - Engaging in preventive medical care
 - Sleeping and drinking enough water
 - Managing stress
- Although some of these might affect body weight, **weight itself is not a behavior**¹

1. Association for Size Diversity and Health (ASDAH). Health at Every Size (HAES) Principles, 2019 <https://sizediversityandhealth.org/content.asp?id=152>

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Data Supporting the Weight-Inclusive Approach

- Bacon and Aphramor reviewed 6 randomized controlled trials:
 - Statistically and clinically significant improvements on physiological measures (e.g., blood pressure), health practices (e.g., increased physical activity), and psychological measures (e.g., self-esteem and disordered eating).
 - Greater impact of HAES[®] studies on these outcomes than weight-normative approaches
 - HAES[®] studies also had reduced dropout and no adverse effects
- Linardon and Mitchell found:
 - Intuitive Eating compared with rigid dietary control predicted lower levels of disordered eating (mediated by less dichotomous thinking) and body image concerns (mediated by greater body appreciation).
 - Flexible control predicted higher levels of body image concerns and lower levels of disordered eating only when rigid dietary control was accounted for.



Bacon and Aphramor. Nutrition Journal. 2011; 10:9; Linardon and Mitchell. Eat Behav. 2017; 26:16-22.

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The Weight-Inclusive Approach
What It Means For Us As Dietitians

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What If We've Caused Harm?

"Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better."
Maya Angelou

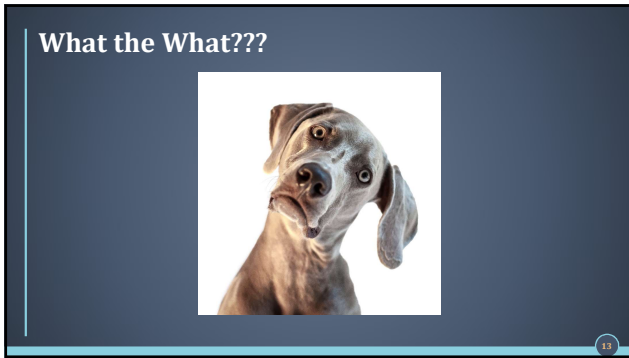
"The curious paradox of life is that when I can accept myself just as I am, then I can change."
Carl Rogers



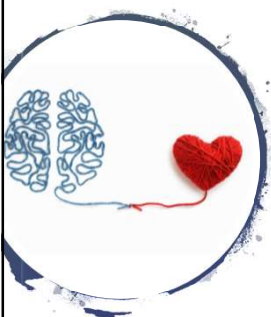
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The Weight-Inclusive Approach
What It Means For Our Clients

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How Our Clients Might Respond

- Anger about the misinformation they've been programmed to believe
- Grief and mourning over "the thin ideal" and dichotomous thinking of diets
- Confusion due to conflicts with long-held beliefs
- Fear about the ability to self-regulate
- Doubt about compatibility with wellness
- Helplessness at the lack of certainty
- Overwhelm at not knowing where to begin

Also potentially:

- Relief at not having to fight with one's body
- Hopefulness at the new possibilities

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The Essential Role of Self-Compassion

It May Not Be What You Think

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What Is Self-Compassion?




Noun: offering one's self the same caring and gentleness one would offer a loved one

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3 Components of Self-Compassion

- Self-kindness over self-judgment
- Common humanity over isolation
- Mindfulness rather than over-identification



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What Self-Compassion Is NOT

- Self-indulgence
- Self-pity
- Self-esteem



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Self-Compassion vs. Self-Esteem

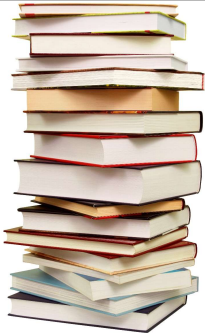
- Self-esteem suggests
 - Someone is “above average”
 - One person is better than another
 - One is only as good as their most recent accomplishment
- Self-compassion is
 - Based on concept of Buddha nature or basic goodness
 - Honest, objective, and balanced
 - Non-judgmental



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Evidence in the Literature



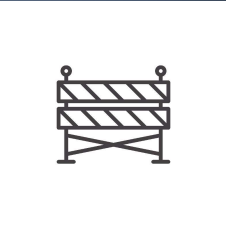
- All six self-compassion scale (SCS) components - self-kindness, reduced self-judgment, common humanity, reduced isolation, mindfulness, reduced over-identification - were predictive of positive body image
- A systematic review of 28 studies showed:
 - Self-compassion was a protective factor against poor body image and eating pathology
 - Directly decreased ED outcomes through the prevention, interaction, and disruption of maladaptive eating behaviors throughout the cycle
- A 3-week self-compassion meditation with waiting list control found:
 - Significantly greater reductions in body dissatisfaction, body shame, and contingent self-worth based on appearance
 - Greater gains in self-compassion and body appreciation
 - Improvements were maintained when assessed 3 months later

Neff et al. Self Identity. 2018;17(6):627-645; Warren et al. Curr Psychiatr. 2016;15(12); Albersson et al. Mindfulness. 2014;6: 103-107; Gierke et al. J Clin Psychol. 2013; 69(8): 856-867; Braun et al. Body Image. 2016;17:117-31.

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Barriers to Self-Compassion

- Shame
- Trauma
- Fear
- Feelings of unworthiness
- Untreated mental illness
- Persistent misunderstandings about self-compassion



Geller et al. Eat Behav. 2019;35:101334.

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Other Ways to Increase Self-Compassion

- Meditation practice
- Mindful eating practice
- Other embodied practices and activities
- Journaling about the experience of shifting focus
- Changing the balance of information “consumed” via social and traditional media¹
- Finding community

1. Stater et al. Body Image. 2017;22: 87-96.



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Meditation and Compassion: *The Connection*

- In a 2013 study, people who had completed a meditation intervention were **five times more likely** to act in a way to relieve the suffering of another individual
- Some evidence suggests that **decreased activation** of the default mode network in the brain decreases attachment to the idea of a “separate self” (i.e., our personal dramas)
- Increased brain mass in the PFC, decreased mass in the amygdala, and decreased connectivity between these regions might also decrease perception of “threat,” **allowing more pro-social behavior**

Shapiro et al. Mindfulness 2018;9:1693. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-018-0957-5>; Condon et al. Psychol Sci. 2013; Brewer et al. Front Hum Neurosci. 2013; <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2013.00647>

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Practical Self-Compassion Tools

For You and Your Clients

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Cultivating Patience

Key events that happened in my childhood that contributed to my magical eating and body thoughts include:

Magical eating beliefs I still hold based on these events include:

These events happened ____ years ago.

Key events that happened in my adolescence that contributed to my magical eating and body thoughts include:

Magical eating beliefs I still hold based on these events include:

These events happened ____ years ago.

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To Change the "Tone" of the Internal Soundtrack

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Creating a Self-Compassionate Soundtrack

Self-Compassionate
SOUNDTRACK EXERCISE

A first step toward becoming more self-compassionate is recognizing the ways in which we speak to ourselves. Many of us have internalized a voice that tells us when we have been good or bad. A voice that criticizes our bodies, shames us for eating certain foods, or berates us for not achieving an impossible ideal. This

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Creating a Self-compassionate Soundtrack

Explore your personal internal soundtrack.

The top five lines from my personal soundtrack are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

When I say soundtrack statement #1 to myself, the words that come to mind include:

My body feels:

My heart feels:

As a result, I treat myself:

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Creating a Self-compassionate Soundtrack

See if you can reframe each soundtrack statement in neutral terms. Notice how you feel in your body and heart when you read aloud the neutral versions.

For example, "My stomach rolls are disgusting" could become "This is a human stomach, it's white/pink/brown/black and soft and round."

Soundtrack statement #1: _____

Neutral version: _____

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Creating a Self-compassionate Soundtrack

Try to again reframe neutral statements to be compassionate. Notice how you feel in your body and heart when you read aloud the self-compassionate versions. This is a human stomach may eventually transform into This is my stomach, it is so much more than rolls of fat. It houses my internal organs, runs on its own, and adapts to countless changes, including growing another human being. My stomach is a part of my body that deserves care and acceptance simply because it exists.

Neutral statement #1: _____

Compassionate version: _____

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1-2-3 Punch

1. Normalization
2. Self-compassion
3. Take the next step

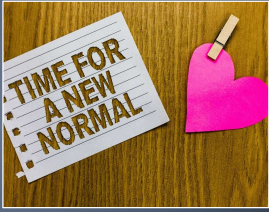


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1. Normalize

- Reality check:
 - Truth of suffering vs. preference for pleasure
 - Truth of impermanence vs. desire for stability
 - Truth of ego-lessness vs. us/them thinking
- Handy phrases
 - "Whatever you're feeling is completely fine and totally normal"
 - "That makes sense, doesn't it?"
 - "Of course you just want to feel ok"
 - "It won't always feel like this"




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2. Rouse Self-Compassion

- Assess self-compassion using the tools
- Gain perspective through the magical eating lineage exercise
- Transform self-aggressive statements into self-compassionate declarations using the soundtrack exercise




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3. Take the Next Step

- Meet physical needs consistently
- Center satisfaction
- Make “noticing” a central focus to help connect the dots
- Continually work with obstacles (which are not problems) to fine tune process



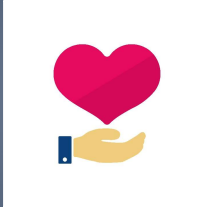
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Resources Available to You

- Sign up to receive:
 - A 10-minute meditation video with full instruction
 - *The Magical Eating Lineage* worksheet
 - *The Self-Compassionate Soundtrack* worksheet

<http://bit.ly/jennahollenstein>



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Questions?

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