

Fostering a Culture of Support: Encouraging Self-Compassion

By Orlana Bourgoïn, Workplace Mental Wellness Practitioner



As a healthcare community, we are responsible for nurturing psychological well-being and fostering a culture of support. Continuing the conversation from our previous blog on Moral Distress, it is essential to openly acknowledge the prevalence of moral distress and its significant impact on our psychological health. By bringing this issue to light, we pave the way for constructive dialogue and proactive interventions that can make a real difference in our workplace.

“Self-compassion is a practice of goodwill, not good feelings... With self-compassion, we mindfully accept that the moment is painful, and embrace ourselves with kindness and care in response, remembering that imperfection is part of the shared human experience.” – Neff, 2019

Embracing self-compassion and supportive practices

In our last discussion, we explored how moral distress can lead to feelings of frustration, helplessness, and emotional exhaustion. To counter these effects, it's crucial to integrate self-compassion and supportive practices into our daily routines. Encouraging practices such as debriefing sessions, peer support networks, and access to counselling services can provide invaluable avenues for processing moral distress and mitigating its effects. Additionally, integrating mindfulness-based approaches and self-compassion training into our professional development programs equips us with the tools to navigate the complexities of healthcare with grace and resilience.

Recognizing the Psychological Challenges

In the pursuit of providing exceptional care to our patients, let us not overlook the importance of caring for ourselves. By understanding the nuances of moral distress and embracing self-compassion as a guiding principle, we empower ourselves to navigate the inherent challenges of healthcare with compassion, resilience, and integrity.

Remember, you are not alone in this journey. Reach out for support when needed, prioritize self-care, and treat yourself with the same kindness and compassion you extend to others.

Practical Tips to Foster Support

- 1. Debriefing sessions for frontline healthcare providers:** Regularly participate in debriefing sessions after challenging situations to share experiences and support one another. This can be through Hot Debriefs, Code White Debriefs

Contact Information

Orlana Bourgoïn, M.Ed., RSSW (She/Her)

Workplace Mental Wellness Practitioner, OHSW

Phone: (613) 549-6666 x 6784 | Email: orlana.bourgoïn@kingstonhsc.ca

Kingston Health
Sciences Centre

Centre des sciences de
la santé de Kingston



Hôpital
Hotel Dieu
Hospital



Hôpital Général de
Kingston General
Hospital

and/or Emotional Defusing sessions. These sessions provide a safe space for staff to process their emotions and learn from each other.

- 2. Peer support networks:** Build and maintain both formal and informal peer support networks where colleagues can lean on each other for emotional and professional support. While colleagues can be a great source of assistance, be mindful of the potential for "sliming." For more information and tips on this, [click here](#). Resources available for KHSC staff include our Peer Partners Program, which connects staff with trained peers for confidential support.
- 3. Access to counselling services:** Encourage using available counselling services to address and manage stress and emotional well-being. This includes resources such as LifeSpeak, Homewood Health's Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP), which offers counselling, educational materials, and support for various mental health concerns, and private counselling providers that may be covered under extended healthcare benefits.
- 4. Mindfulness practices:** Incorporate mindfulness exercises into your daily routine to stay grounded and present. Practices such as deep breathing, meditation, and mindful walking can help reduce stress and enhance emotional regulation.
- 5. Self-compassion exercises:** Engage in self-compassion practices, such as guided meditations and reflective journaling, to build resilience and self-awareness. These exercises can help you treat yourself with the same kindness and care you offer others, fostering a healthier self-image and greater emotional stability.

Valuable resources for your journey

Here are some resources that may support your journey:

- *The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook* by Dr. Kristin Neff and Dr. Christopher Germer
- [Self-Compassion with Dr. Kristin Neff](#): this website provides everything from defining what self-compassion is to guided practices, resources and more.
- [Join the Practicing Self-Compassion Community](#). Dr. Kristin Neff offers a virtual community of practice to support the development of skills and techniques for daily practice.
- Practice journaling and self-reflection. Bring awareness to your body's responses and automatic thoughts to a situation. Challenge these thoughts by recording your self-compassionate response to your negative thoughts. Check out this template from [Psychology Tools](#) to get you started.
- Check out these in-depth resources and comprehensive PDF self-compassion workbook developed by [the Government of Western Australia's Centre for Clinical Interventions](#). The workbook consists of seven target modules with practical tips and exercises on *Self-Compassionate Thinking*, *Self-Compassionate Behaviour*, and *Self-Compassionate Living*.

Contact Information

Orlana Bourgoin, M.Ed., RSSW (She/Her)

Workplace Mental Wellness Practitioner, OHSW

Phone: (613) 549-6666 x 6784 | Email: orlana.bourgoin@kingstonhsc.ca

Kingston Health
Sciences Centre

Centre des sciences de
la santé de Kingston



Hôpital
Hotel Dieu
Hospital



Hôpital Général de
Kingston General
Hospital

We can create a healthier, more resilient healthcare community at KHSC by fostering a culture of support and self-compassion. Together, we can face the challenges of our profession with strength and empathy.

Join the Conversation

We want to hear from you! Share your thoughts, experiences, and ideas on how we can continue to improve our work environment. Together, we can make a positive difference for ourselves, our teams, and our patients.

I'm excited to share two important questions to spark your curiosity and encourage active participation. I'm genuinely eager to hear your thoughts and insights. Please take a moment to respond to these questions by [clicking here](#) or scan the QR Code below to join our collective effort:

- 1. Reflecting on Self-Compassion:** *How have/can you integrated self-compassion into your daily routine, and what impact has it had/could have on your well-being and professional life? Share your experiences and tips with your colleagues!*
- 2. Navigating Moral Distress:** *Can you think of a moment when you faced moral distress at work? What strategies or resources helped you manage it, and how can we, as a team, better support each other in similar situations?*



Thank you for your dedication and commitment to providing excellent care to our patients. Let's continue to support each other and prioritize our psychological health and safety.

Join me in fostering a positive work environment by sharing your uplifting experiences and shining moments at KHSC. Whether it is a colleague's supportive gesture or a heartwarming encounter with a stranger, let's spread positivity by celebrating the good in our daily lives. Share your stories by [clicking here](#).

Prepare for daily doses of mental wellness inspiration with Actions for Happiness, weekly shout-outs to your colleagues, empowering quotes, and engaging discussions to start your day on a positive note! Let's celebrate every accomplishment, no matter how small because it's often the little things that have the biggest impact. Look for daily inspiration on [KHSC Now Staff Central](#) and explore more content, tips, and resources on Mindful Moments.

Thank you for your commitment to cultivating a workplace that prioritizes every staff member's mental health and well-being. Together, we can continue to make KHSC a place where everyone thrives.

Contact Information

Orlana Bourgoin, M.Ed., RSSW (She/Her)

Workplace Mental Wellness Practitioner, OHSW

Phone: (613) 549-6666 x 6784 | Email: orlana.bourgoin@kingstonhsc.ca

Kingston Health
Sciences Centre

Centre des sciences de
la santé de Kingston



Hôpital
Hotel Dieu
Hospital



Hôpital Général de
Kingston General
Hospital

References:

- Hashem, Z., Zeinoun, P. Self-Compassion Explains Less Burnout Among Healthcare Professionals. *Mindfulness* **11**, 2542–2551 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-020-01469-5>
- Irons, C., & Heriot-Maitland, C. (2021). Compassionate Mind Training: An 8-week group for the general public. *Psychology and psychotherapy*, *94*(3), 443–463. <https://doi.org/10.1111/papt.12320>
- Jeremy Sutton, Ph. D. (2024, February 28). *What is resilience and why is it important to bounce back?*. PositivePsychology.com. <https://positivepsychology.com/what-is-resilience/#what-is-resilience>
- Leboeuf, I., Andreotti, E., Irons, C., Beaumont, E., & Antoine, P. (2022). A randomized controlled study of a French compassionate mind training. *Mindfulness*, *13*(11), 2891-2903.
- Neff, K., & Germer, C. (2018). *The mindful self-compassion workbook: A proven way to accept yourself, build inner strength, and thrive*. Guilford Press.
- Pike AW. Moral outrage and moral discourse in nurse-physician collaboration. *J Prof Nurs*. 1991; 7 (6): 351 – 362.
- Savari, Y., Mohagheghi, H., & Petrocchi, N. (2021). A preliminary investigation on the effectiveness of compassionate mind training for students with major depressive disorder: A randomized controlled trial. *Mindfulness*, *12*(5), 1159-1172.
- Steen, M., Othman, S. M. E., Briley, A., Vernon, R., Hutchinson, S., & Dyer, S. (2022). Self-compassion Education for Health Professionals (Nurses and Midwives): Protocol for a Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Study. *JMIR research protocols*, *11*(1), e34372. <https://doi.org/10.2196/34372>

Contact Information

Orlana Bourgoin, M.Ed., RSSW (She/Her)

Workplace Mental Wellness Practitioner, OHSW

Phone: (613) 549-6666 x 6784 | Email: orlana.bourgoin@kingstonhsc.ca

Kingston Health
Sciences Centre

Centre des sciences de
la santé de Kingston



Hôpital
Hotel Dieu
Hospital



Hôpital Général de
Kingston General
Hospital