



Erasmus + VET Strategic Partnership

IENE 8 - Empowering migrant and refugee families with parenting skills

Bite sized Learning Tool no. 1.5.

SELF COMPASSION

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TITLE: 1.5. SELF COMPASSION (FOR PARENTS AND CAREERS)

This bite-size learning tool will address the importance of self-compassion for both parents and children and support refugee parents and caregivers to be more self-compassionate

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To define self-compassion
2. To describe the components of self-compassion.
3. To understand the importance of self-compassion and its impact on parenting.
4. To identify and use resources provided in order to become more self-compassionate

SELF COMPASSION

Self-compassion has been described as a positive and caring attitude toward ourselves in the face of failures and individual shortcomings and it is considered to be related to psychological well-being.

According to Kristin Neff(2003),self-compassion entails three main components:

1. self-kindness, which means treating ourselves with encouragement, sympathy, patience, and gentleness.
2. a recognition of our common humanity, or –in other words- of the fact that we’re flawed and imperfect human beings
3. mindfulness, which describes the capacity for holding our emotional experience in balanced awareness.

Self compassion is important for both parents and children

Parenting involves caring for another human during the whole day and night and this fact makes parents vulnerable to burnout. Self-compassion may act as a protective factor as it has been found positively associated to well-being and self-improvement motivation and negatively associated to stress in parenting roles. Additionally, individuals with limited self-compassion were found to be more likely to face psychological distress or substance abuse problems.

Mindfulness and self-compassion have been found associated with mindful parenting. The enhanced emotional awareness of mindful parents and the greater sense of common humanity may affect the emotions and thoughts concerning their children. They may be more understanding to their children imperfections and think before reacting automatically in the interactions with them. Parents who are more self-compassionate appear to be less self-critical to their parenting behaviors and competences and to

adopt less authoritarian and permissive parenting styles(Gouveia et al. 2016). The environment in which children are raised and parental attitudes and behaviors affect the way children will treat themselves in adulthood. Self-compassion is a way of treating ourselves that includes many strategies that children could learn from their parents.

Supporting parents to be more self-compassionate

Parents could be encouraged to be more self-compassionate by making available to them resources and exercises such as “imagining how you would support someone else”, “remembering that you are not alone”, and “giving yourself a small act of kindness”. Such resources have been found to make mothers feel more self-compassionate and less stressed and more satisfied with breastfeeding (Abdullah2018).

Additionally, parents’ behavior toward their children has an impact on the internal model children develop for themselves. So, it is important parents to be encouraged,for example, to:

- help children become mindful of their own emotions and reactions and express their sympathy, saying such things as: "It sounds like you are feeling angry." - "Did that make you feel sad?" - "That sounds hard!" "Indeed, this was not fair!"
- point out that their experiences are universal, using such expressions: "It is normal to sad or even angry when you don't get what you want;" "It is human to feel jealous sometimes."
- act in a way that may help their child feel better by offering for example a hug or a smile and by supporting them in planning ahead, learning patience etc
- judge their child’s behavior, not the child
- focus on future actions/behaviours instead of punishing for what is already done (Nixon 2011).

Self-compassion referring to immigrants

Research on self-compassion differences indicates that self-compassion may be perceived and valued differently by people of different cultural backgrounds. The probability that there may be differences in self-compassion concerning its definition, importance, and prevalence should be taken into consideration when caring for people of different cultures.

One of the goals of the IENE 8 project is to make health professionals aware of the importance of encouraging migrant and refugee parents to be more self-compassionate and to raise their children in that way.

KEY POINTS

1. Self-compassion is a positive and caring attitude toward ourselves in the face of failures.
2. It entails three main components: self-kindness, humanity, mindfulness.
3. It has been found positively associated to well-being and self-improvement motivation and negatively associated to stress in parenting roles.
4. Self-compassion is a way of treating ourselves that includes many strategies that children could learn from their parents.
5. Self-compassion may be perceived and valued differently by people of different cultural backgrounds.

ACTIVITY

Which of the following expressions may help children be more self-compassionate?

1. "It was your fault."
2. "It sounds like you are feeling angry."
3. "You should be ashamed to feel jealous of your fellows."
4. "Indeed, this was not fair."
5. "I accept myself as I am."
6. "I'm ashamed of you."

REFLECTION ON ONE ISSUE FROM THIS BITESIZED TOOL

Use this space to write down your answers to the questions of the above activities.

SELF ASSESSMENT

An immigrant girl comes back from school crying because of having been insulted for her reading ability, by peers at school. How parents can support her to be more self-compassionate?

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS IN ACTIVITY SECTION:

Correct answers: 2,4,5

ANSWER FOR SELF ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY:

Parents should be acting in a way that may help their child feel better by offering, for example, a hug or a smile. They should use phrases that express understanding, sympathy and gentleness, as parents' behavior toward their children has an impact on the internal model children develop for themselves. Both children and parents should be supported to recognize their common humanity and understand the fact that we are all flawed and imperfect human beings.