

14. building personal resilience



This module explores ways to build resiliency, create wellness plans and practice self-compassion.

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EXIT the module

1. welcome

welcome to
WHERE WE ARE AT
building personal
resilience



Welcome to ***Where We Are At***, a training course for Provincial Peer Support Workers. We're glad you're here! This course is made up of 16 modules, all designed to support your training in peer support work.

The purpose of module **14. building personal resilience** is to talk about building resiliency, creating wellness plans and practicing self-compassion.

Any of the modules in this training can stand alone, but you'll notice they are very interconnected. All of the concepts and core values have many layers, and they will look a little different when you see them through the lens of different topics. For example, self-determination will look a little different when we look at it through the lens of learned helplessness, grief and loss, or goal planning, but the main message will always be the same.

You will get to experience all of those layers and intersections when you move through each module of the training. Feel free to navigate back and forth between modules as you move along since learning never has to be linear. There will be references to other modules intersected throughout.

Thank you for joining us on this educational journey!

2. gratitude



Before we begin this new **learning** journey, we ask that you reflect on the following question:

What am I grateful for today?

We know that taking time to reflect can give us the clarity and strength to do what can sometimes be difficult emotional work.

Download the **reflection journal** below and use it to record your thoughts. Please don't rush. Take all the time you need. This journal will be used for several questions throughout the module.



M14_reflection-journal.pdf
112 KB

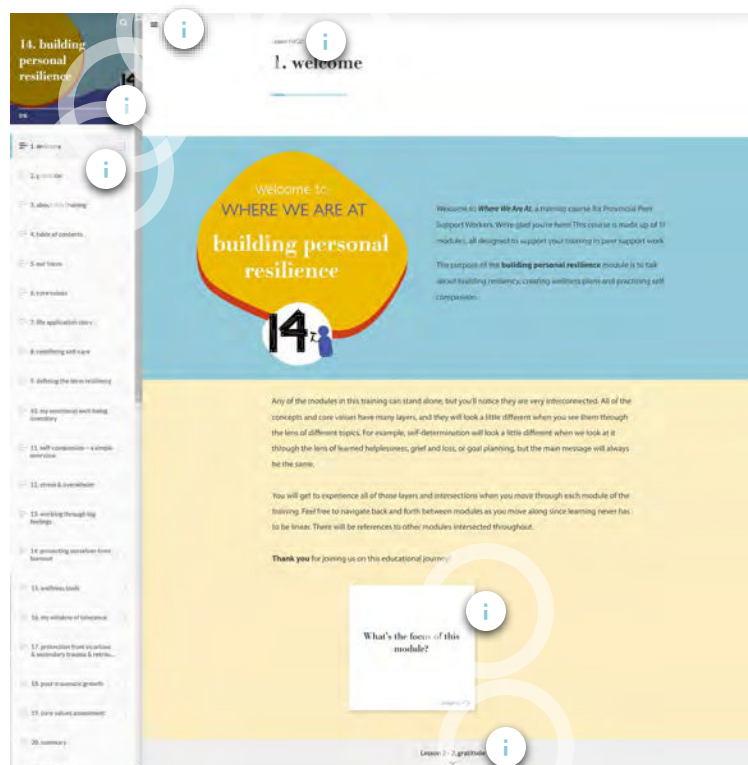


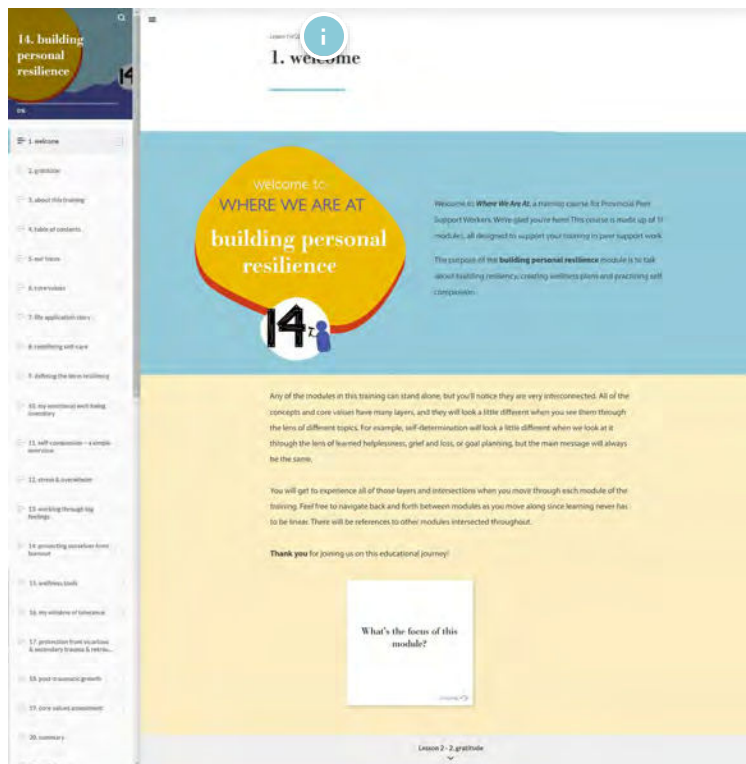
3. about this training

The course content has been guided by consultations that were held with peer support workers. It's with the utmost respect for their experience and wisdom that we share these learnings.

course navigation

You may have questions on how to use this course. We designed an interactive diagram to give you the chance to explore the different functions on the screen. Click the buttons below to learn more.





Lesson titles

Lesson 1 of 22

Above each lesson title, the lesson count is shown.

CONTINUE

reflection journal

As you discovered in the previous section, included in this training is a reflection journal. The journal is designed for you to use throughout the training. It's full of reflective questions related to the topics being explored that will get you engaging in the world around you with curiosity.

Feel free to use the journal in a way that works for you:

- 1 You can print it off and write in it or just use it to support reflective processing.
- 2 You can use the fillable PDF version and complete it online
- 3 You can write in your own journal, using the questions as guides

We encourage you to find a safe, comfortable spot to engage with these questions.

CONTINUE

where we are at

provincial peer support worker training curriculum

The *Where We Are At* educational curriculum includes 16 modules. You'll find a brief description of each below.

1. the foundations —

An overview of all the practices and knowledge that will be transferable to all of the modules in this training.

2. peer support & wholeness

Provides an introduction to peer support work and explores differences between the peer support role and other roles within the mental health and substance use systems.

3. categories & containers: unpacking our biases

Helps you understand how and why we judge.

4. self-determination

Looks at self-determination, the theory of self-determination and how peer support workers can support creating an ecology where people trust their own inner wisdom.

5. cultural humility

Explores how to approach your peer support work through the lens of cultural humility and helps you understand how culture (and the destruction of culture) shapes our lives.

6. understanding boundaries & what it means to co-create them

Examines boundary creation within the context of peer support, grounded in the core value of mutuality.

7. connection & communication —

Focuses on cultivating compassion and empathy, listening deeply to understand, and asking powerful questions to increase reflection and connection.

8. healing-centred connection: principles in trauma-informed care —

Brings together all the learnings from previous modules to support the creation of environments and relationships that are safe and trauma-informed.

9. social determinants of health —

Explores the social determinants of health and how social, economic and other factors lead to better or worse health outcomes.

10. supporting someone who is grieving —

Examines how to understand grief and loss in order to support someone who is grieving, without trying to “fix” or “save” them.

11. substance use & peer support —

Explores the principles and methodologies around the harm reduction approach to substance use disorders and some of the history around the criminalization of substance use.

12. mental health & supporting those in crisis —

Explores the mindset shift necessary to support someone through a crisis.

13. goal planning —

Focuses on how peer support relationships can support the creation and meeting of goals.

14. building personal resilience —

Explores ways to build resiliency, create wellness plans and practice self-compassion.

15. family peer support —

Explores family peer support work and how, by working from a place of shared lived experience, family peer support workers can create positive change for families by building long-term relationships based on trust with those supporting loved ones.

16. working with youth & young adults

Explores the unique application of peer support principles to working with youth and young adults.



4. table of contents

Below you'll find a short overview of the topics you'll find in this module.

As you move through these topics, please remember you can always return to this page to revisit the main ideas being explored in each lesson.



life application story —

A first-hand account of building personal resilience.

redefining self-care —

Describes the meaning of self-care in the context of peer support.

defining the term “resiliency”

—

Explains the meaning of resiliency as it relates to peer support work.

my emotional well-being inventory

—

Gives you an opportunity to reflect on your strengths as well as what causes you stress or anxiety.

self-compassion – a simple overview

—

Looks at the meaning of compassion, self-compassion, self-kindness and self-judgement, as well as the importance of being mindful and creating connections with others.

stress & overwhelm

—

Examines how we can create stress for ourselves by attaching narratives to our feelings.

working through big feelings

—

Describes a six-step process for how to work through overwhelming feelings.

protecting ourselves from burnout

—

Reviews some sections in other modules to help protect you from burnout, as well as how to approach compassion fatigue.

wellness tools —

Suggests tools that can be used to stay well.

my window of tolerance —

Explains the concept of window of tolerance and how it relates to handling stress.

protection from vicarious & secondary trauma & retraumatization —

Describes how to be mindful about avoiding vicarious and secondary trauma as well as retraumatization.

post-traumatic growth —

Explains the meaning of post-traumatic growth and how essential hope is to our healing.

5. our focus

What's the focus of this module?

1 of 1

An important aspect of this work is prioritizing our own self-nourishment. When supporting others, it can be easy to put one's own wellness on the back burner. However, if we don't give our own well-being the attention it deserves, we can find ourselves slipping into burnout.

In this module, we will explore ways to build resiliency, create wellness plans and practice self-compassion.

after reviewing this module, you'll be able to...



Recognize the importance of creating a self-nourishment plan to help manage workplace stress.



Apply principles of wellness through the creation of personal boundaries around work issues.



**Assess your situation and
create wellness plans to
support yourself when you
are struggling.**

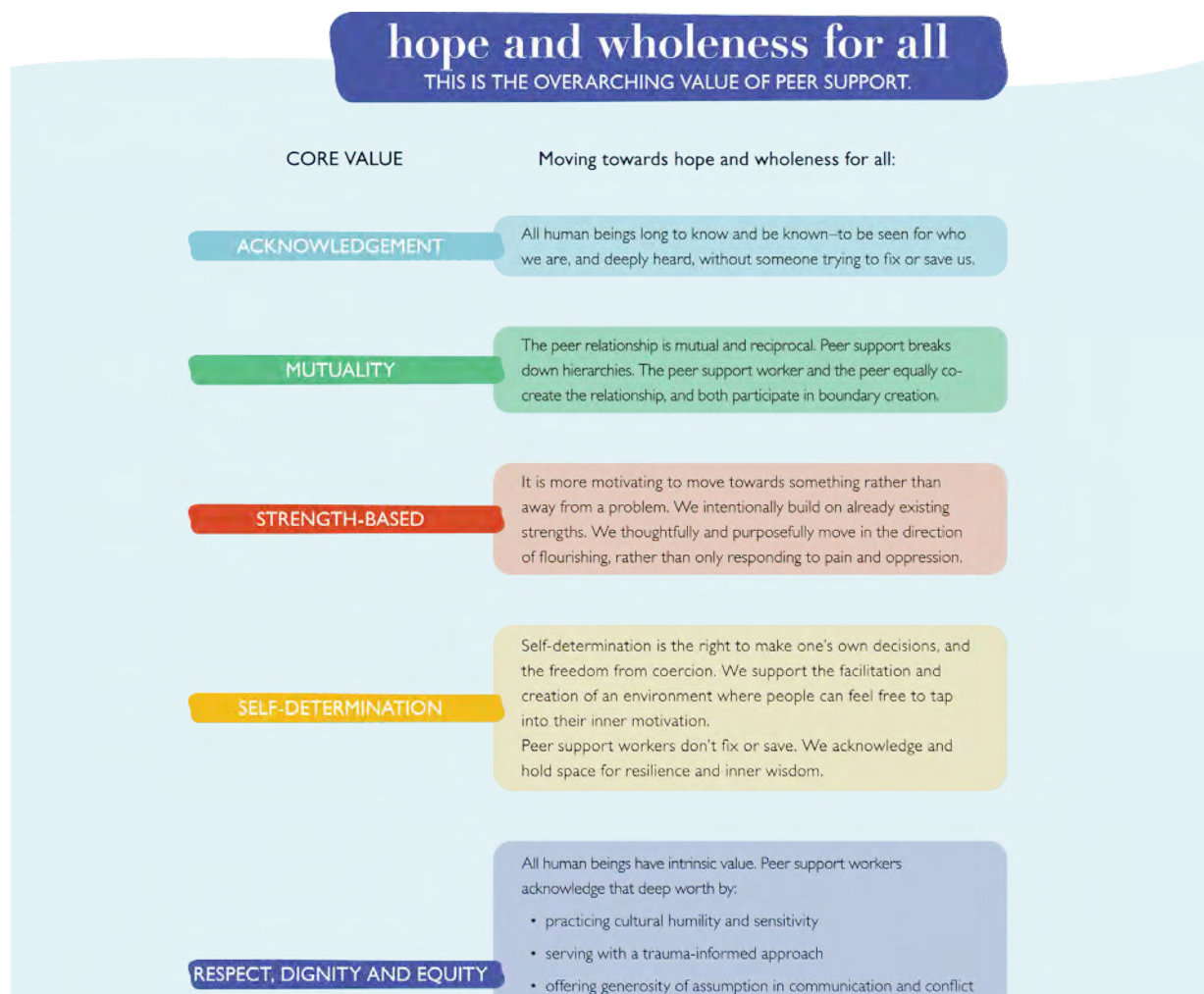


**Learn the concept of self-
compassion and how to use
tools to apply it to your life.**



6. core values

The following core values are essential for peer support work. At the end of this module, you'll be asked to decide which ones are key to this topic.



- mindfully addressing personal biases

Peer support is about meeting people where they are at and serving others with a knowledge of equity.

BELONGING AND COMMUNITY

Peer Support acknowledges that all human beings need to belong and be a part of a community. Peer support recognizes that many people have barriers that keep them from developing community. We actively work towards deconstructing those social blockades that prevent inclusion and acceptance. Peer support workers serve with a social justice mindset, and intentionally practice empathy, compassion & self-compassion.

CURIOSITY

We are always intentional about how curiosity and inquiry support connection, growth, learning and engagement.

This curiosity isn't fueled by personal gain but by a genuine interest in connection. We encourage curiosity while respecting the boundaries and protecting the privacy of the people we support.

We are continually curious, but not invasive, while challenging assumptions and narratives. We ask powerful questions. We offer generosity of assumption to those who think differently than we do. We know that listening and asking questions are more important than providing answers.

**Note on the meaning of the term "generosity of assumption" from the glossary of terms: Assumptions happen when we don't know the whole story, and allow our brains to fill in the blanks. Often we make negative assumptions about people or situations. Generosity of assumption means that we extend someone the most generous interpretation of their intent, actions, or words.*

7. life application story



This personal account comes from Robyn Thomas, a peer support worker from Victoria, B.C.

personal account —

"To me, building personal resilience is directly related to fostering self-compassion. When I struggled in the past, I would beat myself up for struggling. I would tell myself I should be stronger, I should get through this alone, I shouldn't feel this way. I was swimming in a lot of "shoulds and should-nots."

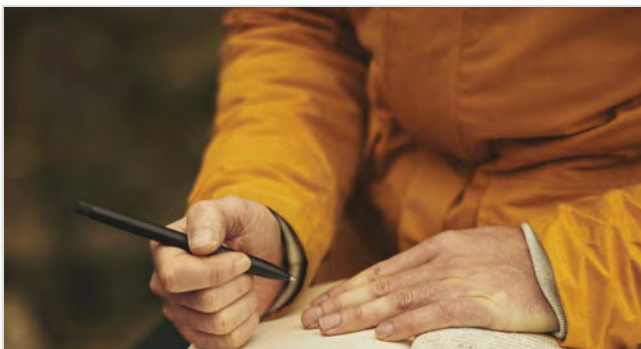
Self-care is a part of developing self-compassion, but it is also deeper than that. It's more than tools and strategies. It's redefining the narrative of what it means to struggle. To understand that going through a hard time is not failure, it is a chance to grow and evolve and find meaning. When I used to look at my story of illness and hospitalization, I saw failure, I felt shame. Now I look at my story and I feel compassion for the person who was in pain. I see her resilience and her strength, as well as her vulnerability. I understand that point in time as struggle that led to deep personal transformation.

What helped me most was not people telling me what I should do. It was the people who shared their own stories of struggle and hope, who admitted to not being perfect. It was the people who saw my wholeness rather than my perceived brokenness, and who trusted that I was going to make it through."

CONTINUE

questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.



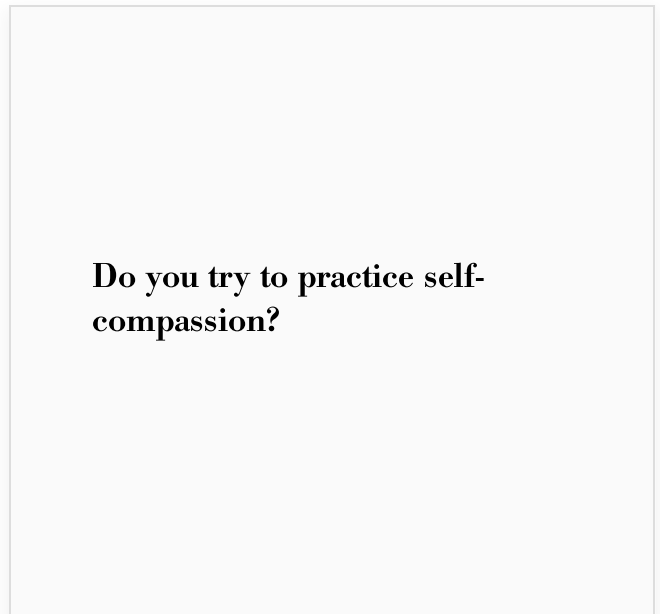
Can you relate to Robyn's feelings?



1 of 3



2 of 3



8. redefining self-care

redefining self-care with a lens of connection & interconnection

Self-care can sometimes sound selfish. When we see so much pain in the world and feel an intense, compassionate desire to alleviate the suffering, taking time out for oneself might feel selfish. However, attending to our own physical and mental needs is anything but selfish. We cannot give fully to others in the long term if we aren't taking care of our own needs as well.

We cover the sympathetic nervous system in module **8. healing-centred connection: principles in trauma-informed care** module. There, we learn that if we constantly tax our bodies and minds without giving them the rest and rejuvenation they need, we slip into a stress-responsive state with stress hormones pumping through our bodies. Over time, this will catch up to us. It will show up in emotional overwhelm, or physical or emotional illness.

As you move into this work, it's important to realize there is a great deal of pain in the world. Since you are here, you are likely motivated to do your part to alleviate it, but you are, after all, just one human.

It's non-negotiable that, when committing to this work, we also need to commit to taking care of our own personal well-being or we won't be able to stay in the game.



interconnection & societal change

This work is like a marathon, not a sprint. Pacing ourselves is essential.

A GLOBAL LENS

A COMMUNITY LENS

AN INDIVIDUAL LENS

This is where big picture advocacy comes in as well as the societal change we all long for.

In the article, "Breaking the Chain: Healing Racial Trauma in the Body," activist, therapist and author Resmaa Menakem says change happens slowly over time, but we need to be persistent and committed. He predicts it will take nine generations to see a big change in systemic racism issues! Systems are big and complicated (think of the Titanic), and changing them means we need to be dedicated, tenacious and persistent. Clearly, this is a long-term commitment.

We share this not to discourage you, but to encourage you to pace yourself when engaging in efforts for huge cultural shifts. Do your part and also take care of your own needs. It's okay to enjoy your life, even if others are suffering. You can't alleviate all suffering. It's impossible. Please take pleasure in the little moments of joy in your life while you also do the important work of creating a better society.

A GLOBAL LENS

A COMMUNITY LENS

AN INDIVIDUAL LENS

Wholeness, wellness and societal change also involve a focus on smaller communities – your workplace, your city/town, any subcultures you are involved in, your family, your friend groups and the people you serve in your role. To experience wellness, it's essential we give to others, and it's equally essential we learn to receive from others. This is about the sharing of energy and resources. It's that big ol' mutuality piece. Not only is mutuality a core value of peer support, but it's also a need for our own personal wellness and the wellness of our communities. When we deny the opportunity for others to support us, we are denying the human need for mutuality in those who want to support us.

Building your own resiliency is what this whole module is about. Well-being for yourselves includes attending to needs, practicing self-compassion and creating boundaries. It's essential that we support ourselves with kindness and compassion, as well as create concrete ways to put these capacities into practice. This module is the tip of the iceberg, but we hope it encourages you to create your own wellness plan.

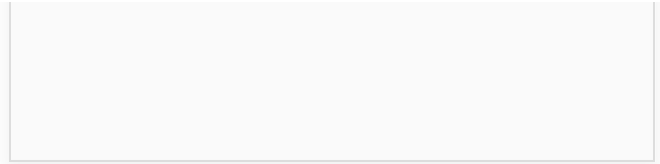
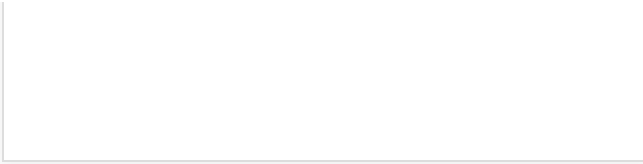
[CONTINUE](#)

questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.

**GLOBAL
CHANGE**

**What are the issues you are
passionate about changing on a
global level?**



1 of 3



Do you have a sense of purpose about these issues? If so, what are you committed to doing?

2 of 3



How will you build the endurance needed to tackle an issue this large?

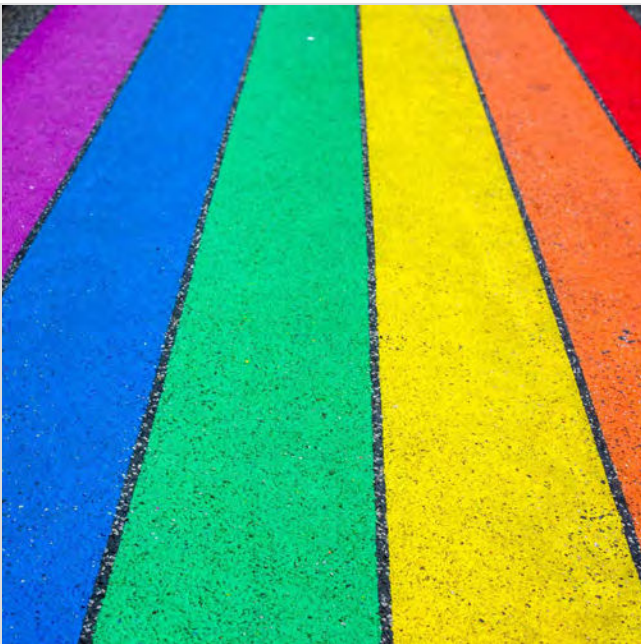
3 of 3

CONTINUE

**COMMUNITY
CHANGE**

**What are the things you are
committed to being involved in
at a community level?**

1 of 5



**What will you choose to do to
support this?**

2 of 5



**Who are the people you are
focused on supporting?**

3 of 5



**Who are your supporters? Who
will you lean on when you are
struggling?**

4 of 5



What are some qualities you look for in a supporter?

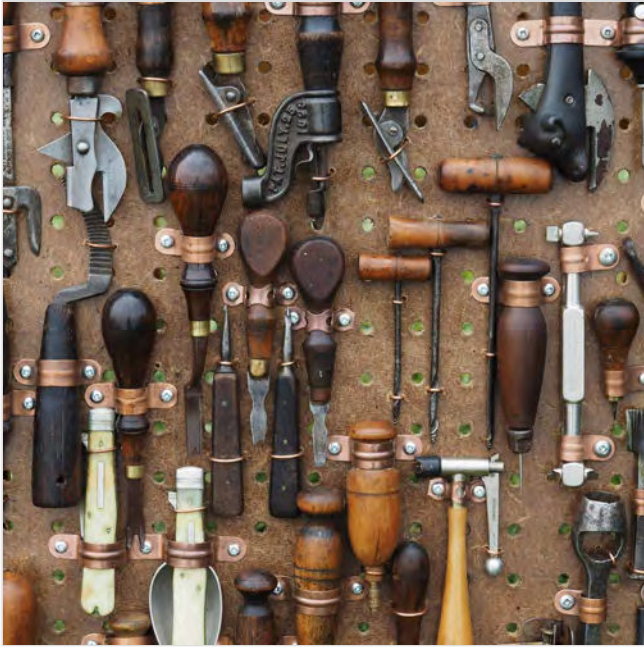
5 of 5

CONTINUE

**WELLNESS FOR
YOURSELF AS
AN INDIVIDUAL**

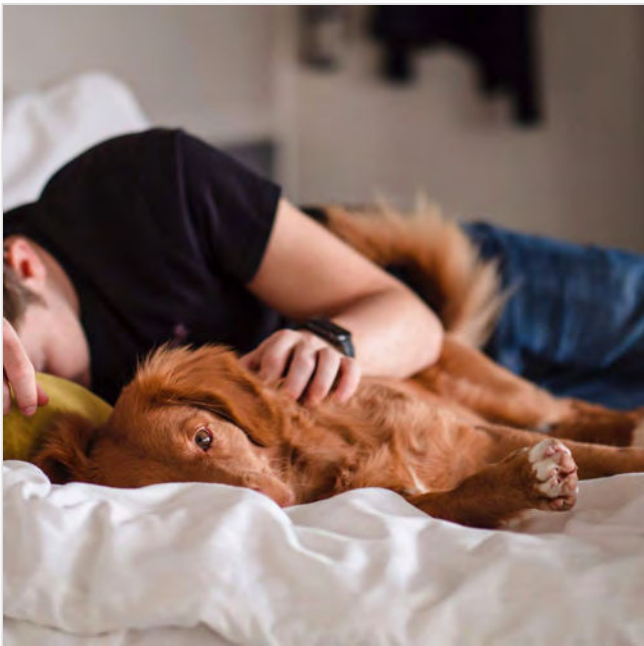
**These are the things that cause
me stress:**

1 of 4



These are the tools I currently use to support myself:

2 of 4



We all have areas we want to work on and grow in. What are some opportunities for growth you want to focus on in your own life?

Examples: clearer boundaries, more sleep, eating better, building a stronger support system, practicing mindfulness or self-compassion

3 of 4



I am committing to do the following as a practice to support my well-being:

4 of 4

CONTINUE

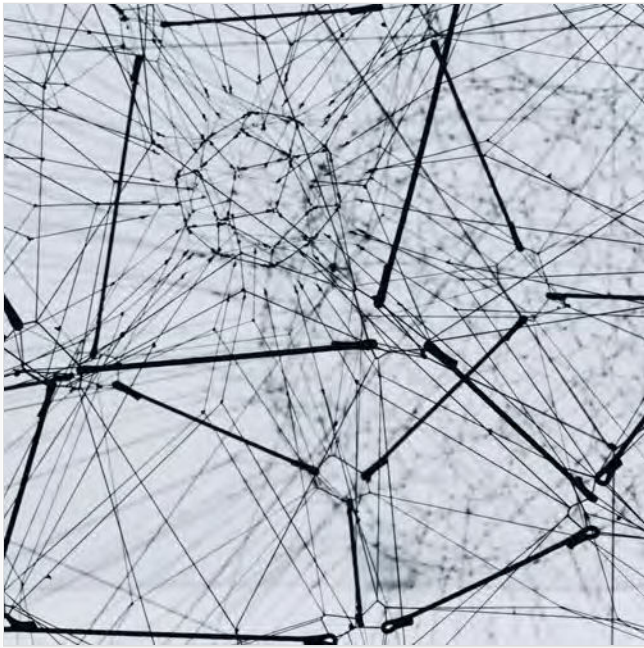
In 1624, John Donne said, "No man is an Island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main."

This is obviously a very old quote. Consider substituting the word "human" for "man," as it applies to all of humanity.

From the [First Nations Pedagogy](#) website:~

Interconnection is a central core of First Nations, Inuit and Metis worldviews and ways of knowing. Some First Nations sum this up with the phrase "All my relations". This mindset reflects people who are aware that everything in the universe is connected. It also reinforces that everyone and everything has a purpose, is worthy of respect and caring, and has a place in the grand scheme of life.

CONTINUE



What is your feeling and understanding about understanding about interconnection?

1 of 3



How does it show up in your life?

2 of 3



**Do you see yourself interconnected
with others in your neighbourhood,
community and workplace?**

3 of 3

let's look at self-care

What if we redefine the word self-care? The term "self-care" in pop culture has begun to mean spa days, yoga, hiking or drinking green smoothies. When we look at our self-care that way, we're really trivializing something that's so essential to our well-being.

Let's create a paradigm shift: instead of the current understanding of "self-care," let's redefine it as

self-care

**supporting our well-being with
compassionate intention**

After all, caring for one's well-being is much more than what we eat and how we move our bodies – though those things are still important. Supporting our well-being includes:

- ☐ Doing hard work around healing
- ☐ Feeling our feelings
- ☐ Sitting with discomfort
- ☐ Setting boundaries
- ☐ Taking personal responsibility
- ☐ Owning our mistakes
- ☐ Offering ourselves grace and self-compassion in our own struggles and sufferings

When we identify our own needs and create an intention to meet them, we're actually supporting others in the process. As mentioned throughout this course, we believe in interconnection; through that lens, when each of us supports our own well-being, we understand that we're ultimately supporting the whole.

CONTINUE



What is your preferred way to define self-care?

1 of 3



If the term self-care bothers you, please choose a new name. What would you like to call it?

2 of 3

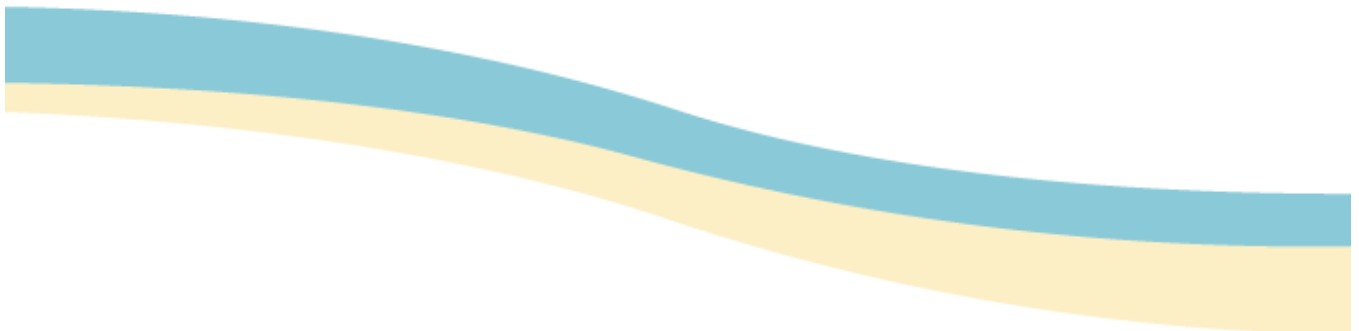


**What do you think your major
needs are right now?**

3 of 3

As we move through this module, our intention is to give you a framework so you can continue to take care of your own needs and also give to others in your role as a peer support worker. If we're constantly giving and not filling up our own cup, we'll become depleted. Not unlike a spending account – if we continually withdraw money without depositing, eventually we'll end up in overdraft.

Let's work together to prevent overdraft. Let's help each other be accountable to the question, "Am I really practicing self-care?"



9. defining the term resiliency

Resiliency is a word that's used often in our work. A common definition of resiliency is:

resiliency

**the ability to spring back to
shape after adversity**

1 of 1

The goal of this training is to support the growth of your personal resiliency AND give you the tools to support the growth of someone else's resiliency.

In the *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* article, "Rethinking Resilience from Indigenous Perspectives" (2011), the authors talk about resiliency from two main perspectives: individual and collective.

Individual resiliency is often framed as an individual trait or process, associated with psychological characteristics such as hardiness, flexibility, problem-solving ability, intelligence, sense of humour and social skills. These individual characteristics are seen as essential for building and maintaining resilience.

A community's collective resiliency depends on strong relationships between family and friends which help them survive and thrive.

Too often only individual resiliency is emphasized. But from an Indigenous perspective, both dimensions are essential.

CONTINUE

Let's look to nature to support a deeper understanding of resiliency. When we think of adversity in nature, it tends to show up as a disturbance to the ecology, such as a fire, storm, flood or other extreme weather event. These events impact the whole ecology, not just one plant or tree.

As we discussed in module **4. self-determination** module, living things have a deep-seated need to flourish and thrive. When impacted by adversity, our resiliency might not be about springing back to "normal" but about adapting and creating something new.



When we consider adversity in the forest, we look at the interconnection of all living things. Nothing in nature exists in isolation. Nature is dynamic, always changing and growing. Even after a devastating wildfire, nature adapts, heals and regrows over time.



Resiliency looks more like this ability to adapt and change in the midst of adversity. For example, when a tree is damaged and loses a large branch, that branch doesn't grow back as it was. The bark seals, and sometimes a new branch is formed.

Consider the similarity of a tree's resiliency to our own emotional resiliency. When we experience extreme adversity, trauma or loss in our own lives, we won't ever be exactly the same as we were before. Our resilience then is not attached to becoming what we were before, but it's about adapting and creating new ways to thrive and grow.

As with the diversity within a forest, it's important for us to consider the value and impact of our loved ones and communities on our adaptability.

Following adversity, we will heal and grow in new ways, but we'll be forever changed. Different. Possibly wiser, and perhaps stronger and more able to face adversity in the future.

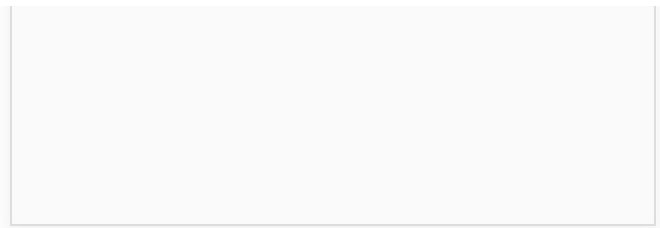
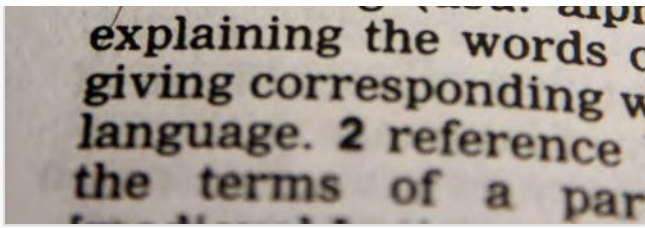
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questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.



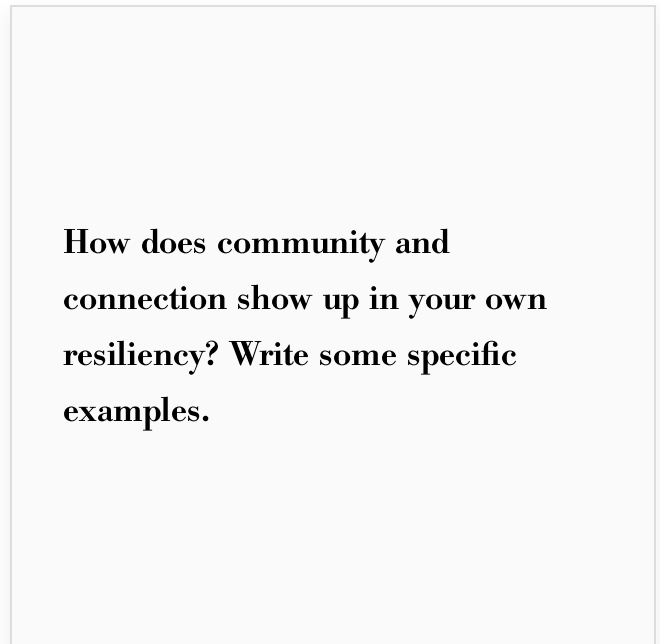
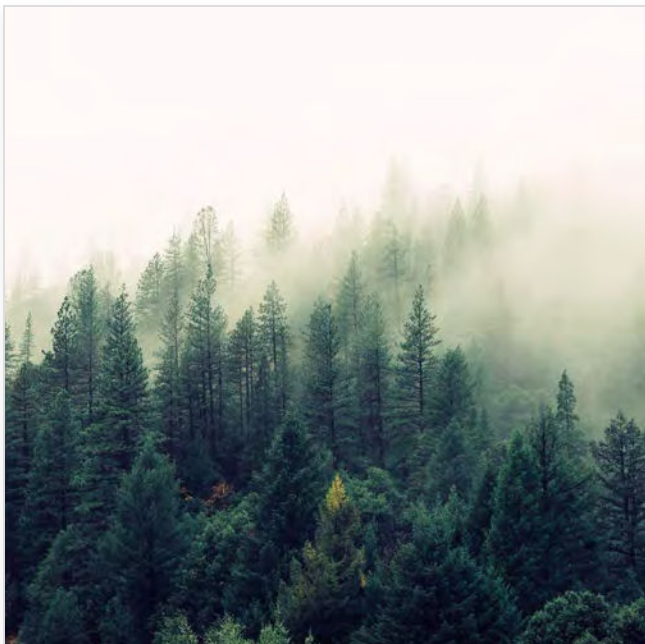
How do you define resiliency?



1 of 4



2 of 4

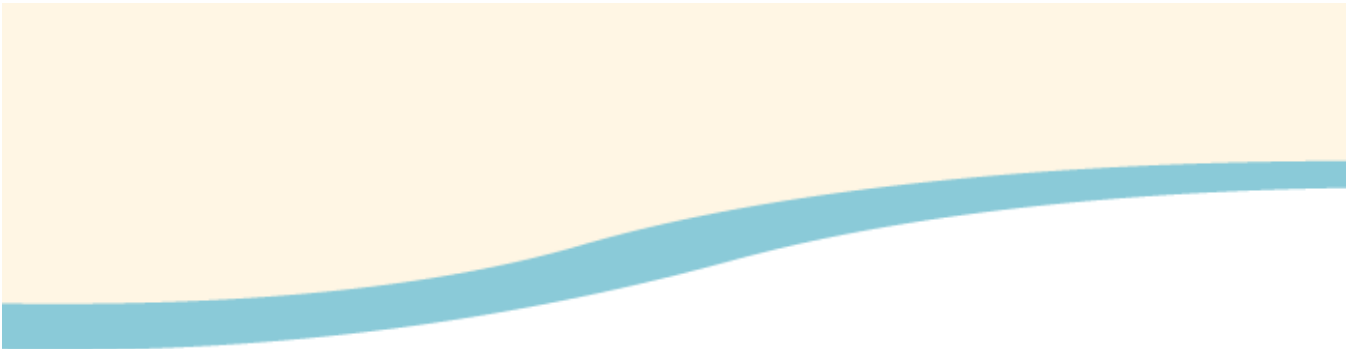


3 of 4



**Draw a picture of what
resiliency in nature means to
you?**

4 of 4



10. my emotional well-being inventory

questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.



This describes me when I'm at my best:

1 of 4



These are my strengths.

**Focus on character strengths,
such as:**

- **I am tenacious**
- **I am calm**
- **I am humourous**

2 of 4



**I know that the following
situations cause me stress or
anxiety:**

3 of 4



This is how stress shows up in my body:

Examples: headaches, pain, intense cravings, rapid thoughts, tight chest

4 of 4

Let's explore some ideas on how you can support yourself when you feel stressed, anxious or overwhelmed.



11. self-compassion – a simple overview

In order to fully understand self-compassion, we must first look at compassion.

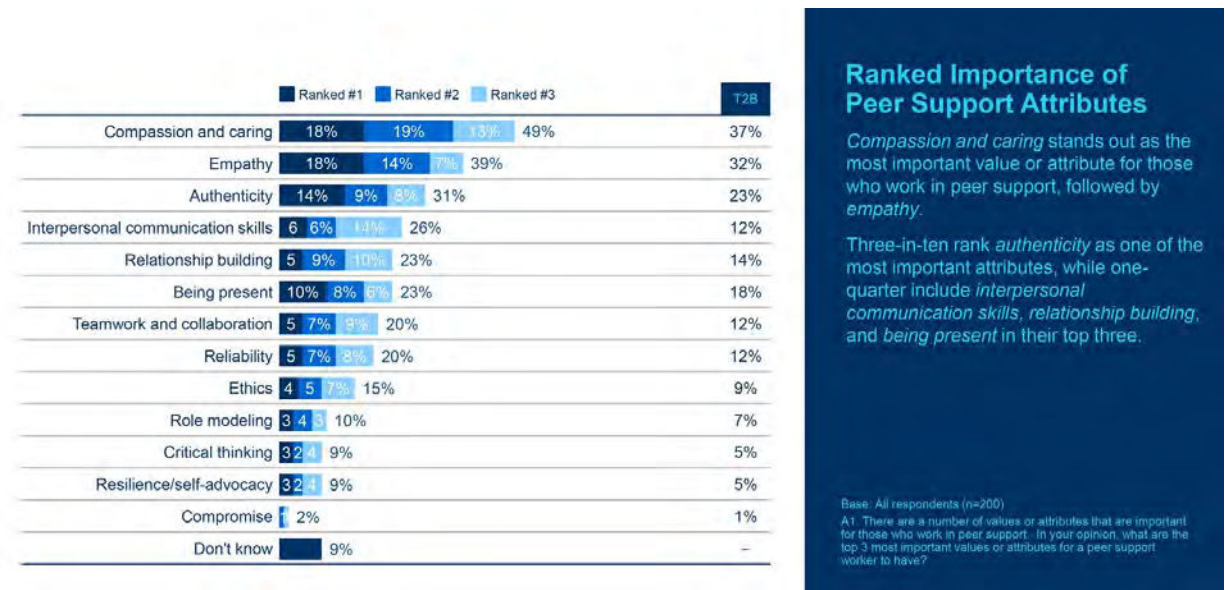
Compassion is about:

compassion

**seeing the suffering of others,
feeling a deep concern and
harnessing the motivation to do
something to alleviate their
suffering.**

Compassion involves action of some kind.

Empathy is feeling with someone, or perspective-taking. Empathy and compassion are intertwined, but they are different. Empathy is often the gateway to compassion, and compassion is what motivates and moves us to take action to make a difference in other people's lives.



A survey was given out to peer support workers in 2019 at the beginning of this project. One of the questions asked was, "What are the desired attributes of a peer support worker?" The highest ranking attribute was compassion/caring.

From that survey, we can presume that most people participating in this training have a strong sense of compassion for others – including you.

CONTINUE

questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.



What are your thoughts about compassion?

1 of 3



How does compassion show up in your life?

2 of 3



What suffering are you most motivated to work towards alleviating?

3 of 3

CONTINUE

“A moment of self-compassion can change your entire day. A string of such moments can change the course of your life.”

Chris Germer,
Ph.D. author of *The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion*

self-compassion

Wikipedia says that self-compassion is:

self-compassion

**extending compassion to one's self
in instances of perceived
inadequacy, failure or general
suffering**

1 of 1

If we turn away from the suffering of others – like a person who has nowhere to live or nothing to eat – then we don't tap into compassion. We aren't motivated to do anything to alleviate their suffering. If most people do this,

that person will continue to suffer.

Likewise, if we do not pay attention to our own suffering, then we won't be able to offer self-compassion to ourselves and we'll continue to be in pain. Over time, a lack of self-compassion will increase our chances of experiencing depression, stress, compassion fatigue, burnout and secondary traumatic stress.

Self-compassion means that we extend ourselves as much kindness as we would offer our best friend, our children or the people we support. It's about noticing when we're having a difficult time. Instead of being harsh and critical with ourselves, telling ourselves, "Pull yourself up by your bootstraps!", we acknowledge the pain of the situation and offer ourselves kindness.



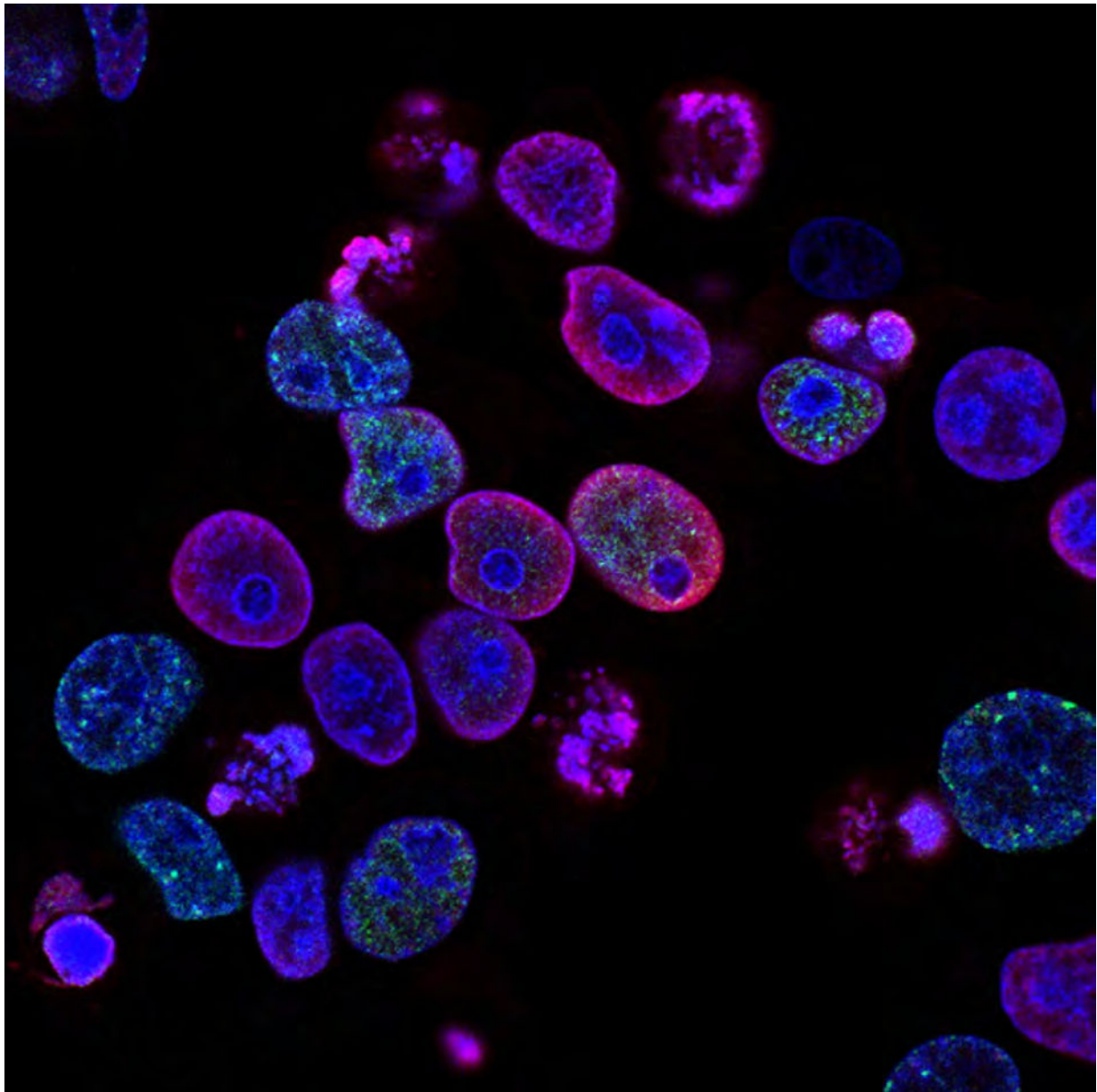
When we build a practice of self-compassion, we become aware when we're beating ourselves up, judging and criticizing ourselves. We learn to pay attention to it and then very consciously shift from judgement to kindness.

Imagine that our favourite young person under the age of 10 comes to us crying. They tell us they failed a test today and other children in the class teased them. How would we react? Would we be harsh and critical? Or would we show compassion, support and understanding?

Our goal must be to treat ourselves with the same level of compassion we show to a vulnerable child.

When we practice self-compassion we say, “This hurts. I’m hurting right now.” And then ask ourselves, “What can I do to support myself right now?”

CONTINUE



We may think the effects of trauma, pain and struggle only live in our minds. However, there is significant research that shows trauma also impacts our bodies, right down to our cells. When we think about how the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems work, it's understandable. Our minds and bodies are interconnected; when we don't process those difficult situations or pay attention to how the feelings are sitting in our bodies, our physical health can be affected. You can read more about the relationship of the nervous system and trauma in module **8. healing-centred connection: principles in trauma informed care.**

A common coping mechanism many people experience after trauma is a disconnection from the body. But, over time, this becomes a big problem as they can feel fragmented and fractured. In fact, many of us can tend to live in our heads and avoid feelings or even an awareness of the body.

The practice of self-compassion encourages us to process such difficult feelings. Most effective trauma therapy involves supporting people to feel emotions and pay more attention to what is happening within their bodies. When we integrate our minds and bodies, we feel whole.

Most of all, we benefit when we receive tenderness and a gentle approach, and the person we need this from the most is ourselves.

Kristin Neff Ph.D., a leading researcher on the topic of self-compassion, author of the book, *Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself*, describes self-compassion as having three components: self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness.

Let's look at these three components from Dr. Neff's research.

CONTINUE

1. self-kindness vs. self-judgement

When we speak to ourselves with judgement and criticizing self-talk, we actually trigger the sympathetic nervous system. This causes our bodies to release stress hormones into our systems and we stay stuck in our pain.

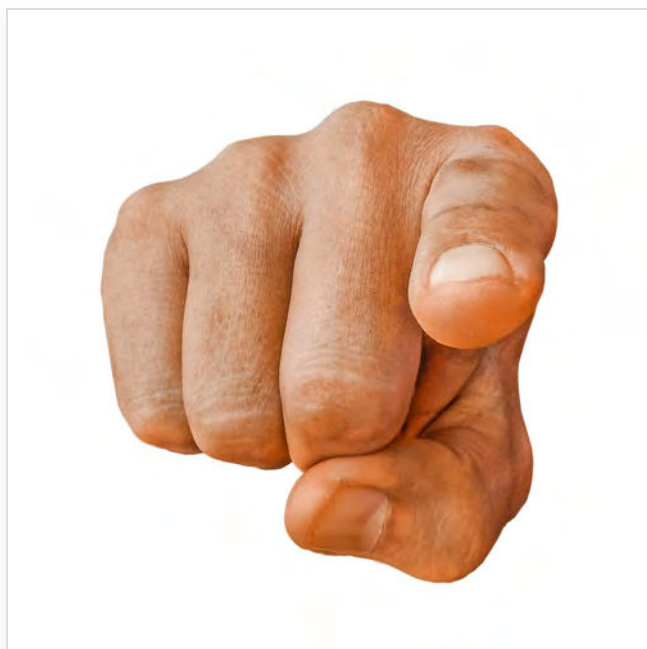
We all have been on the receiving end of negative, critical comments. These comments are remembered by our subconscious, even if our conscious minds forget them. These negative comments can show up in the form of our "Inner Critic"; that voice then fills our heads with critical thoughts when we mess up.

This Inner Critic then rages out on us whenever we make mistakes or when something bad happens. It's like an awful recording that we can't seem to delete.

CONTINUE

questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.

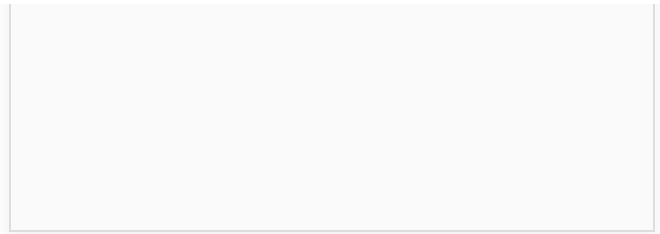


Do you have an Inner Critic?

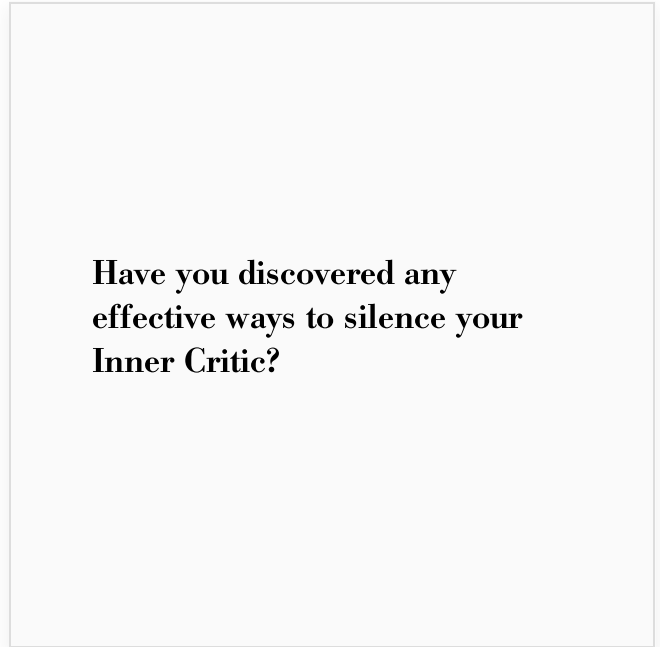
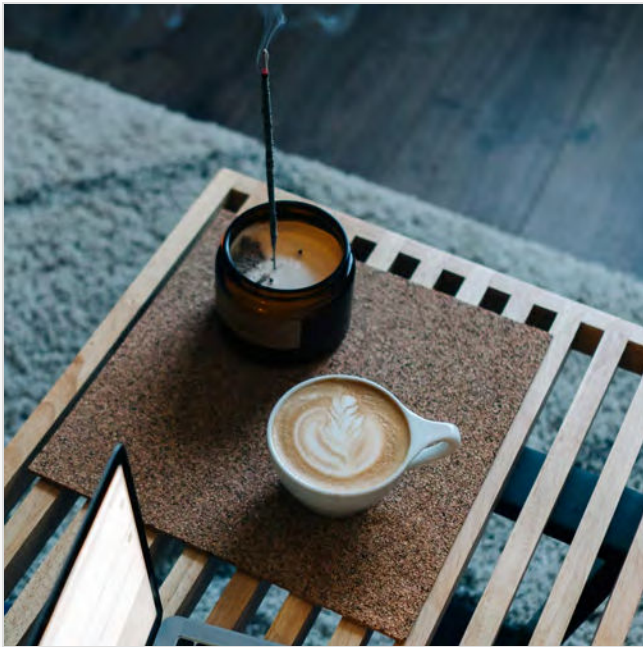
1 of 3



What kinds of messages does your Inner Critic give you?



2 of 3



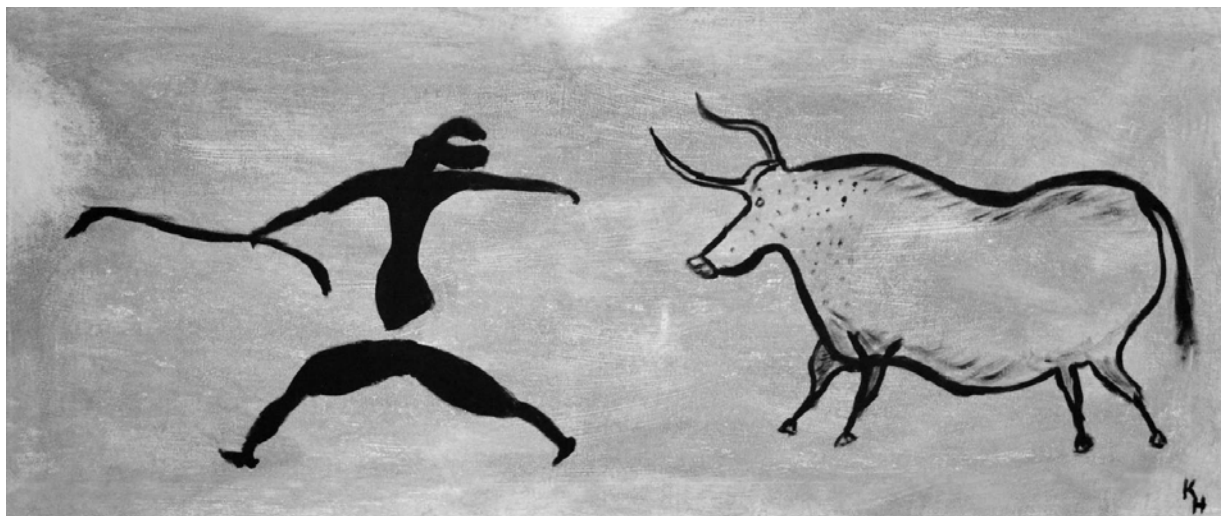
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CONTINUE

Have you ever noticed that, in a given day, several positive things can happen for you? But if you experience one negative situation, or you hear one negative comment directed at you – it sticks.

The negative sticks like Velcro.

As we mentioned in **13. goal setting**, we tend to remember or store criticisms and negative comments as an act of self-protection. Neuroscientist Rick Hanson says, “The brain is like Velcro for negative experiences and Teflon for positives ones.” In his book *Hardwiring Happiness: The New Brain Science of Contentment, Calm, and Confidence*, Dr. Hanson talks about “the negativity bias.” He further defines negativity bias in the article, “Take in the Good,” like this:



Scientists believe that your brain has a built-in “negativity bias.” In other words, as we evolved over millions of years, dodging sticks and chasing carrots, it was a lot more important to notice, react to, and remember sticks than it was for carrots. That’s because – in the tough environments in which our ancestors lived – if they missed out on a carrot, they usually had a shot at another one later on. But if they failed to avoid a stick – a predator, a natural hazard, or aggression from others of their species – WHAM, no more chances to pass on their genes.

Many scientists agree with this theory of negativity bias, and though we now don’t have the same type of predators, our brains still work in similar ways. Today, we may not have a high risk of getting attacked by a wild animal, but we can be bombarded by things that trigger our stress response on a daily basis. These can be things like a negative comment on social media, a contentious interaction at work, a feeling of being overlooked by someone, to name but a few.

CONTINUE

questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.



What are some daily things that cause you to experience stress?

1 of 2



How does stress feel in your body?

2 of 2

CONTINUE

Shifting power away from our Inner Critic means we need to understand the importance of self-protection. We have the power to change our brains because neuroplasticity is a real thing. One key way to do this is through the power of self-compassion. When we practice self-compassion, we learn to approach these critical feelings with self-kindness instead of judgement.

Practicing self-kindness means we:

- ☐ Notice the self-judgement
- ☐ Choose to stop it
- ☐ Offer self-kindness and understanding instead

Dr. Kristin Neff talks about self-kindness this way:

Self-compassion entails being warm and understanding toward ourselves when we suffer, fail, or feel inadequate, rather than ignoring our pain or agellating ourselves with self-criticism. Self-compassionate people recognize that being imperfect, failing, and experiencing life difficulties is inevitable, so they tend to be gentle with themselves when confronted with painful experiences rather than getting angry when life falls short of set ideals. People cannot always be or get exactly what they want. When this reality is denied or fought against suffering increases in the form of stress, frustration and self-criticism. When this reality is accepted with sympathy and kindness, greater emotional equanimity is experienced.

When we practice self-kindness, we choose to self-soothe. We change the tone of our self-talk.

Instead of speaking like our Inner critic, we choose to speak in the tone of our "Inner Coach."

CONTINUE

questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.



How would your Inner Coach speak to you?

1 of 3



Can you think of some positive, encouraging words others have said to you in the past?



2 of 3



How can you remind yourself to speak with the tone of an Inner Coach instead of the Inner Critic?

3 of 3

CONTINUE

You can also choose to self-soothe by doing something as simple as putting a hand on your arm, having a cup of tea or choosing something that feels comforting to you.



CONTINUE

questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.



What calms you down when you feel like you are judging yourself?



1 of 2



2 of 2

Consider some self-soothing practices that stimulate your senses. Make a list below:

Sight (e.g., spending time in nature, noticing things):

Sound (e.g., listening to music that calms you):

CONTINUE

2. common humanity vs. isolation

When we struggle, we tend to isolate and pull away from others because we feel alone. This feeling of isolation is suffocating and disconnecting. We feel like everyone else has it all together...everyone but us.

But we're not alone. Everyone struggles. It can be a HUGE comfort to remind ourselves that others have struggled the same way we have.

Humans ALL wear a badge that says, “Hello, I am wonderfully imperfect and I will make mistakes and that’s okay.” Being human means that struggle and suffering come with the territory. When we are mindfully aware that we are not alone, the pain stings just a little less.

When we are more accepting and loving towards ourselves when we fail or suffer, we create an opportunity for connection.

And creating connection, while normalizing these big feelings, is what peer support is all about. “I get it. Me too.” These are powerful words that build a sense of connection between you and the people you support.

You aren’t perfect. No one is perfect.

We will all mess up. Even as you start this job as a peer supporter... you will make mistakes. It comes with the territory of starting something new.

When you learn from your mistakes and treat yourself with self-compassion, you’re more likely to take personal responsibility for your life.

You are valuable no matter what!



When we're able to accept the fact that messing up is part of being human, we're more likely to learn from the experience, integrate the learning into our lives and move past it. When we hold onto pain, struggle and shame when we make a mistake, we get stuck. We're more likely to ruminate, become defensive and lost in a "shame cycle." When we recognize we're the same as everyone else, we don't need to defend ourselves when we mess up, and we're more likely to take a humble approach.

There's so much freedom in owning our fallibility, learning from our mistakes and moving on, rather than ruminating or getting defensive. As we've mentioned in previous modules, research says that people who practice self-compassion are better equipped to take personal responsibility. Perhaps this is because we can let go of the need to be "perfect," which can cause us to be defensive or avoid things that are uncomfortable.

So, next time you're in a struggle or are feeling bad about making a mistake, pay attention to how you feel. Know that you aren't alone. Offer yourself some kindness.

CONTINUE

questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.



Have you felt alone when you've struggled?

1 of 5



Have you experienced peer support in the past, either formal or informal?

2 of 5



How does it feel when someone says, “Me too?” If you’re holding onto shame, can you see that letting go of it would help?

3 of 5



Do you beat yourself up when you make a mistake?

4 of 5





What can you do to be kinder to yourself?

5 of 5

CONTINUE

3. mindfulness vs. over-identification

Mindfulness can have many meanings and some people might feel resistance to the word. However, when we're talking about mindfulness in the context of self-compassion, it's about courageous presence. We want to choose to pay attention to what's happening around us – in our thoughts and in our bodies. When we're more aware and mindful, and we pay attention to our emotions, we're able to work with them.



A big part of self-compassion is allowing ourselves to feel pain, sit with it and learn from it before we move on. When we learn to allow ourselves to sit with the discomfort that comes from big feelings, and we choose to feel the pain, we create a space of mindfulness so we can avoid either lashing out in reactivity at others or stuffing down our feelings. With this approach, we look at emotions as weather patterns. They come and go. We don't have to judge them or hold onto them tightly. We HAVE them, but they don't define us.

The next time you feel struggle, pain, disappointment or sadness, try sitting with it. Pay attention to where you are feeling it in your body before you react in a problem-solving way. When we move quickly into problem-solving mode without allowing time to process what's actually happening, we aren't creating space to process and learn from our experiences. That space to process before we jump in and fix it is very important to our mental health.

CONTINUE

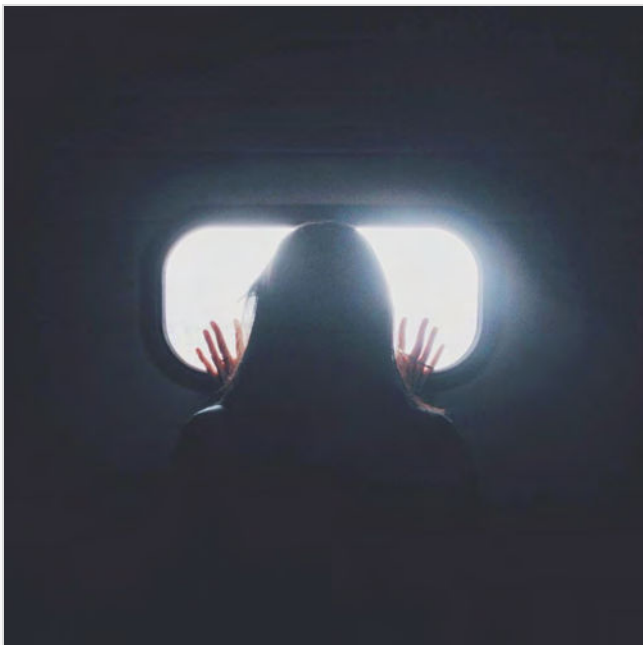
questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.



Do you tend to let yourself feel big feelings? If not, why?

1 of 3



Do you see yourself as a stuffer of emotions, or an avoider?

2 of 3





What can you do to support yourself to sit with and process your big feelings?

3 of 3



12. stress & overwhelm

Emotions and feelings can be so all-encompassing. We can feel weighed down and immobilized by our feelings. When we attach narratives to our feelings, we can get even more stuck.

Let's look at what we mean by attaching narratives to our feelings...

Life experiences form our worldview – the lens through which we see the world. Our lens helps us make sense of the world. The goal is always survival – we're not wired to be objective. We rarely have all the context when something happens to us, but our brains still make up a story to make sense of the situation.

For example:



triggering event —

My boss Tim was just curt and abrasive with me when I said “Hi!”

my mind wants to make sense of the event —

I don’t know anything about Tim’s day, but I’m sure his rudeness has something to with me.

the story I’m telling myself is —

Tim’s rude comment is because I did something wrong. I’m in trouble! I’m sure I’m going to be fired.

rumination seeps in —

For the next two days, I'm on edge and worried, replaying events of the week in my head. I'm scared I'll lose my job.

what I find out —

Later, I came to discover that Tim, my boss, had just received news of a major funding cut right before I saw him. That's why he was stressed out and rude to me – not because I did something wrong.

Our minds fill in the blanks, and, more likely than not, the story is inaccurate.

Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria

Rejection sensitive dysphoria (RSD) is a psychological condition characterized by an intense emotional response to perceived rejection or criticism, even if it's not actually happening. People with RSD often have an overwhelming fear of rejection, which can cause them to avoid social situations or become excessively self-critical. They may also experience physical symptoms such as racing heart, sweating and trembling in response to triggers that evoke feelings of rejection. RSD is commonly associated with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity

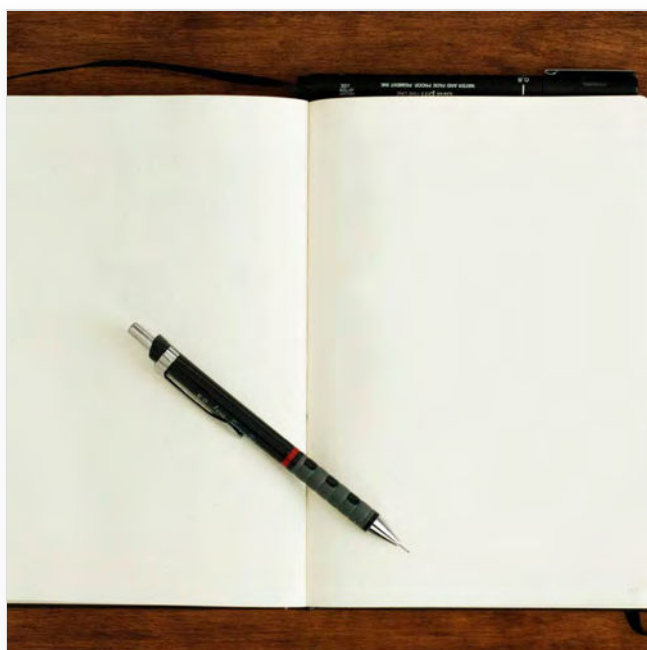
Disorder (ADHD), but it can also occur in individuals without ADHD. Other people may see those with RSD as overly perfectionistic, over-sensitive, or overly reactive to even the mildest types of criticism.”

Since RSD is not a mental health condition in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, it has no set of empirically quantifiable criteria for an official diagnosis. Regardless, it's still a term that experts use in connection with recognized conditions. Understanding RSD can help individuals recognize and manage their emotions, improve relationships and lead a more fulfilling life.

CONTINUE

questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.



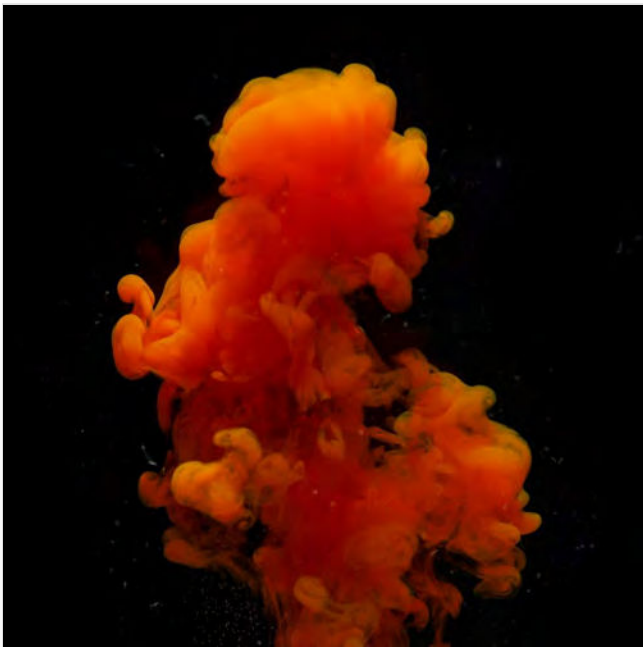
**Can you think of situations
when your mind filled in the
blanks – and the story was
wrong?**

1 of 4



What tools help you stop ruminating on difficult feelings?

2 of 4



What are some of your triggers and stressors?

Feeling prepared ahead of time can really support you to manage these stressors when they arise.

3 of 4



What can you do to support and soothe yourself when you're stressed out?

Consider things that ground you to your senses, such as getting outside, smelling a calming scent or deep breathing.

4 of 4



13. working through big feelings

Sometimes we find ourselves swimming in big feelings, ruminating on a challenging situation or even just stuck in the doldrums. All these places can feel awful and overwhelming, but we can move through it if we are intentional.

The following section is adapted from the web article ["difficult feelings: moving through them, instead of staying stuck,"](#) (Jenn Cusick, 2021):

- 1 **Notice the feeling**
- 2 **Label the feeling**
- 3 **Feel it, without ruminating**
- 4 **Offer kindness to yourself**
- 5 **Deconstruct the feeling**

Let's look at each of these a little closer. Feel free to use this process the next time you feel overwhelmed with big feelings.

CONTINUE

1. noticethefeeling

Often we go through our days without paying attention to our feelings. We might just feel gross or bad, but we don't know why. Take a moment and stop to really notice what you're feeling.

We can also sometimes feel detached from our bodies. Pay attention to each part of your body from your head to your toes. What's happening? Where's the discomfort showing up for you?



How does your emotion feel in your body? Observe the feeling without judging it. Just be okay with whatever is there.

CONTINUE

2. label the feeling

A big piece of moving through a feeling is actually knowing what we're feeling. Give it a name. Be specific. If you're feeling sad, what's underneath the sadness? Is it disappointment, discouragement, grief?

This can be challenging if we've felt detached from our emotions for a long time. If you need support, there are lots of resources online with lists of words that articulate what we might be feeling. We've included one here for you to reference. [It comes from an educator Tom Drummond who made the list to help him identify feelings he observed in children.]

Vocabulary of Emotions/Feelings

tomdrummond.com

	Happiness	Caring	Depression	Inadequate	Fear	Confusion	Hurt	Anger	Loneliness	Remorse
Strong	Delighted Ebullient Ecstatic Elated Energetic Enthusiastic Euphoric Excited Exhilarated Overjoyed Thrilled Tickled pink Turned on Vibrant Zippy	Adoring Ardent Cherishing Compassionate Crazy about Devoted Doting Fervent Idolizing Infatuated Passionate Wild about Worshipful Zealous	Alienated Barren Beaten Bleak Dejected Depressed Dissolate Despondent Dismal Empty Gloomy Grieved Grim Hopeless In despair Woeful Worried	Blemished Broken Crippled Damaged Feeble Finshed Flawed Helpless Impotent Inferior Invalid Powerless Useless Washed up Whipped Worthless Zero	Appalled Desperate Distressed Frightened Horried Intimidated Paranoid Paralyzed Pettrified Shocked Terrified Terror-stricken Wrecked	Baffled Befuddled Chaotic Confounded Confused Flustered Rattled Reeling Shocked Shook up Speechless Startled Stumped Stunned Taken-aback Thrown Trapped	Abused Aching Anguished Crushed Degraded Destroyed Dowasted Discarded Disgraced Forsaken Humiliated Mocked Furnished Rejected Ridiculed Ruined Scorned	Abandoned Affronted Belligerent Bitter Burned up Enraged Fuming Furious Heated Incensed Infuriated Outraged Provoked Something Storming Truculent Vengeful Vindictive	Abandoned Black Cut off Deserted Destroyed Empty Forsaken Isolated Marooned Neglected Ostracized Outcast Rejected Shunned	Abashed Debased Degraded Delinquent Depraved Disgraced Evil Exposed Humiliated Judged Mortified Shamed Sinful Wicked Wrong
Medium	Aglow Buoyant Cheerful Elevated Gleeful Happy In high spirits Jovial Light-hearted Lively Merry Riding high Sparkling Up	Admiring Affectionate Attached Fond Fond of Huggy Kind Kind-hearted Loving Partial Soft on Sympathetic Tender Trusting Warm-hearted	Awful Blue Crestfallen Demoralized Devalued Discouraged Dispirited Distressed Downcast Downhearted Fed up Lost Melancholy Miserable Regretful Rotten Sorrowful Tearful Upset Weepy	Ailing Defeated Deficient Dopey Feeble Helpless Impaired Imperfect Incapable Incompetent Incomplete Ineffective Inept Insignificant Lacking Lame Overwhelmed Small Substandard Unimportant	Afraid Alarmed Apprehensive Awkward Defensive Fearsful Fidgety Fretful Jumpy Nervous Scared Shaky Skittish Spineless Taut Threatened Troubled Wired	Adrift Ambivalent Bewildered Puzzled Blurred Disconcerted Disordered Disorganized Disquieted Disturbed Dizzy Foggy Frozen Frustrated Misled Mistaken Misunderstood Mixed up Perplexed Troubled	Belittled Cheapened Criticized Damaged Depreciated Devalued Discredited Distressed Impaired Injured Ill-tempered Maligned Marred Miffed Mistreated Resentful Tortured Troubled Wounded	Aggravated Annoyed Antagonistic Crabby Cranky Exasperated Fuming Grouchy Hostile Ill-tempered Indignant Irate Irritated Offended Ratty Resentful Sore Spiteful Testy Ticked off	Alienated Alone Apart Cheerless Companionless Dejected Despondent Estranged Excluded Left out Leftover Lonely Oppressed Uncherished	Apologetic Ashamed Contrite Crestfallen Culpable Demeaned Downhearted Flustered Guilty Penitent Regretful Remorseful Repentant Shamefaced Sorrowful Sorry
Light	Contented Cool Fine Genial Glad Gratified Keen Pleasant Pleased Satisfied Serene Sunny	Appreciative Attentive Considerate Friendly Interested in Kind Like Respecting Thoughtful Tolerant Warm toward Yielding	Blah Disappointed Down Funk Gloom Low Moody Morose Sombre Subdued Uncomfortable Unhappy	Dry Incomplete Meager Puny Tenuous Tiny Uncertain Unconvincing Unsure Weak Wishful	Anxious Careful Cautious Disquieted Goose-bumpy Shy Tense Timid Uneasy Unsure Watchful Worried	Distracted Uncertain Uncomfortable Undecided Unsettled Unsure	Annoyed Let down Minimized Neglected Put away Put down Rueful Tender Touched Unhappy Used	Bugged Chagrined Dismayed Galled Grim Impatient Irrked Petulant Resentful Sullen Uplight	Blue Detached Discouraged Distant Insulated Melancholy Remote Separate Withdrawn	Bashful Blushing Chagrined Chastened Embarrassed Hesitant Humble Meek Sheepish



Emotion-Feelings.pdf

49.2 KB



You can use lists like this one when you're feeling good too. Acknowledging and labeling the good feelings is also very helpful!



What feeling(s) are you noticing?



1 of 1

CONTINUE

3. feel it, without ruminating

Sit with the feeling. Don't run from it, distract or stuff it. Just notice it's there. Don't ruminate on it or slip into self-pity. Just allow the feeling to be there without letting it define you.

We can compare our feelings to the weather. Nothing weather-related is permanent. Weather, like the seasons, is always shifting. When we're in the midst of winter it can feel all-encompassing. But the rule of nature is that winter always gives way to spring. This is the same with our feelings and emotions. Be aware of assigning value to your emotions. Emotions and feelings aren't good or bad. They're just feelings. We can work with them and they can guide us.

In fact, our feelings can offer great wisdom if we take the time to be with them.

In her book *Love Warrior*, Glennon Doyle, an author who writes about her experiences living with a mental health diagnosis and using substances in a harmful way, says:

**Perhaps pain was not a hot potato after
all, but a traveling professor. Maybe**

**instead of slamming the door on pain, I
need to throw open the door wide and
say, Come in. Sit down with me. And
don't leave until you've taught me what I
need to know. (2017)**

What if we can't let go of the feeling? If we reach a point where the negative thoughts become so persistent that we have trouble stopping them, we can consider a few strategies. While each person is different, here are a few suggestions to stop ruminating according to an article in The New York Times called, "How to Stop Ruminating." Click each box to expand the text.

Divert your attention —

One of the most effective actions you can take is to distract yourself. Distraction could come in many forms, including:

- Listening intently to the words or tune of a piece of music
- Talking with a friend
- Playing a game
- Exercising

Avoid your triggers —

If listening to a certain song reminds you of the loss of your partner and starts a cycle of rumination, avoid it and anything similar. If there are movies, restaurants or aspects of social media, for example, that trigger feelings you tend to get fixated on, avoid them as well.

Set a worry timer —

When you're in a place of worry, or if you're in a feedback loop of anxiety about rumination itself, set a timer and allow yourself time to ruminate. This act of giving yourself permission to ruminate for a period of time can help you feel more relaxed."

You might also consider adding a cathartic activity like writing in your journal to help explain your emotions in a clear way and de-escalate.

Immerse yourself in the moment —

If you find yourself stuck in a pattern of thinking about the past and future, try to focus more on the present moment. Take in the experience you are having and fully immerse yourself. Consider the sights, sounds and smells around you. What do you see in your surroundings? What is the temperature in the room? Is there a particular smell in the air?

Note that these are aimed at people whose rumination is on the milder side. Serious rumination – cases when someone's thoughts are pulling them away from important things in their lives – might need therapy.



Write down some thoughts about how this feeling is showing up for you. Describe the feeling.

1 of 1

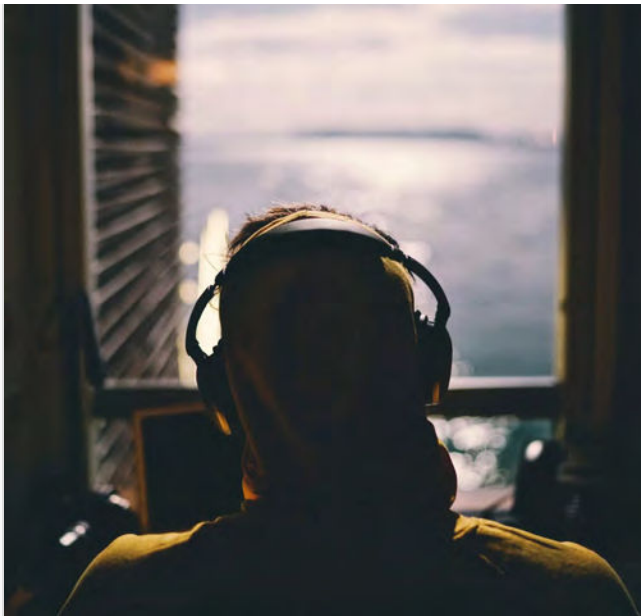
CONTINUE

4. offer kindness to yourself

When we're babies, learning to self-soothe is a major milestone, but as we age, we stop doing this even though it's still a very important part of emotional regulation and emotional intelligence."

A note here that people who are autistic often self-soothe by stimming. As adults, we may have learned mental models for "acceptable" ways to self-soothe. It's important we examine those models and question them. Then, we can allow each other to self-soothe in whatever way is helpful so no one feels shame or stigma."

What can you do to support yourself right now? Do something to self-soothe.



Consider your senses. What can you do to self-soothe in the moment?

1 of 1

CONTINUE

5. deconstruct the feeling

This phase is about getting curious. We know that curiosity can support the calming of the sympathetic nervous system. When we deconstruct our feelings, we ask ourselves questions about them, questions like:

- ☐ What events led to this feeling?
- ☐ Was there a single cause or a combination of events?
- ☐ How is my worldview impacting my feeling?
- ☐ Am I reading more into this than I need to be?

☐

What is the story I am telling myself?

☐

Can I change the story?

☐

What am I missing? Is there something I am not seeing?

☐

Has this happened before? If so, what helped last time?

☐

What can I learn from this?

These are just a few sample questions. There are many more that can be explored.

Trauma expert Dr. Bessel Van Der Kolk, author of *The Body Keeps Score*, says:

**Mindfulness not only makes it possible
to survey our internal landscape with
compassion and curiosity but can also
actively steer us in the right direction for
self-care.**

CONTINUE

6. disrupt

After identifying the feeling, feeling it and sitting with it, it may be good idea to disrupt the feeling, especially if it's an extra sticky feeling and we're ready to move past it. Anything to disrupt our tendency to ruminate is helpful. Inertia means that we continue to move in the direction we are currently moving in.

When we're moving in a direction we aren't wanting to move in, let's disrupt it!

This is very simple. Choose something different. You can choose anything; exercise, getting outside, changing your location. Whatever you choose, do it with the intention to disrupt. Choosing to be mindful of our actions is really helpful.



What are some things you can do to disrupt your feelings of rumination?

1 of 1

CONTINUE

Again, feel free to use this tool anytime you feel overwhelmed or stuck.
Notice what happens for you as you use it.

14. protecting ourselves from burnout

There are so many tools, resources and ideas included in this training that will protect you from burnout.

Let's highlight some key points from a few of the modules:

from the foundations module

We can increase our tolerance for uncertainty.

from the peer support and wholeness module

We can integrate the core values into our work and life.

from the categories & containers: unpacking our biases module

We can work on shifting our biases and judgements by stepping back from our strongly held beliefs and choosing to look from a different perspective.

from the self-determination module

We can support people to find self-determination by remembering:

- We aren't serving them as a means to fix or save them
- If we take on too much, we end up stealing their self-determination

from the understanding boundaries & what it means to co-create them module

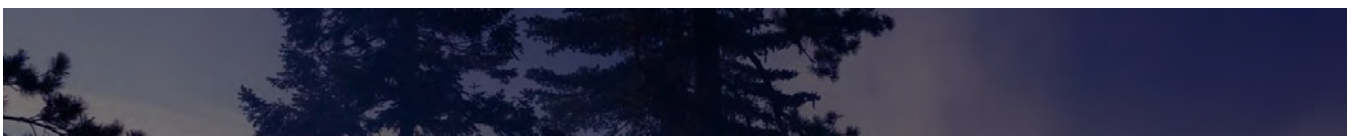
We can be aware of our needs and create clear boundaries that support our well-being. In our relationships with people we support as well as co-workers and managers, we know what's okay for us, and what's not okay.

from the healing-centred connection: principles in trauma-informed care module

We can create trauma-informed environments that encourage healing-centred relationships. We can be aware of our own trauma and do what we need to do to feel safe.

from the goal-planning module

We can consider our own personal vision and goals. We can have clarity about how we want to feel and what we are moving towards.



What have you learned in the other modules that will support you to stay well and avoid burnout?

CONTINUE

compassion fatigue

This is a term that many use in our field.

compassion fatigue

a feeling of being depleted
after working with people who
are struggling for so long

Basically, compassion fatigue means doing our work can deplete our capacity for compassion.

To avoid this, we can practice all of the tools we have mentioned in this module so far. It's also important to take days off and use our vacation time – they are legally allotted for a reason! If we don't take time off, we'll be tired. Tiredness eventually turns into exhaustion. Exhaustion can eventually lead to burnout.

CONTINUE



a self-compassionate approach to compassion fatigue

In his book, *The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion*, Dr. Christopher Germer explains how compassion fatigue happens when we're too attached to an outcome.

The result of extending ourselves too much to others is called "compassion fatigue." The term is actually a misnomer because compassion itself isn't fatiguing. Compassion fatigue is really "attachment fatigue." We wear ourselves out when we're attached to the outcome of our hard work, such as the success or recognition. Sure signs of compassion fatigue are (1) believing that you're indispensable and (2) feeling resentment toward those you're trying to help. Compassion fatigue feels bad, and it's not good for anyone. The antidote to compassion fatigue is self-compassion. When your emotional supplies are depleted, take a break and care for yourself in whatever way you can: physically, mentally, emotionally, relationally, or spiritually.

Another way to manage compassion fatigue is by cultivating equanimity. When you're caught by excessive attachment, see if you can untangle yourself by contemplating: "People are the owners of their deeds. It's their choice how they make themselves happy or free themselves from suffering." This is a traditional Buddhist saying to cultivate equanimity. It may sound like a prescription for indifference, but when you're trapped in compassion fatigue it's your ticket to emotional freedom. (2009)

In a *GreaterGood* UC Berkeley article called "Just One Thing: Be at Peace with the Pain of Others," in regard to supporting others and doing advocacy work within our limitations, author Dr. Rick Hanson says :

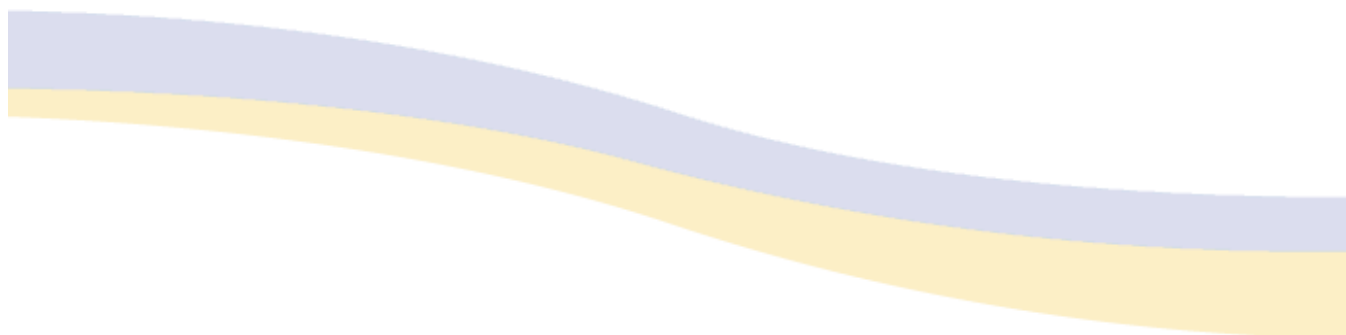
Do what you can—and know that you have done it, which brings a peace. And then, face the facts of your limitations, another source of peace.

He continues:

When you recognize this truth, it is strangely calming. You still care about the other person and you do what you can, but you see that this pain and its causes are a tiny part of a larger and mostly impersonal whole.

This recognition of the whole—the whole of one person's life, of the past emerging into the present, of the natural world, of physical reality altogether—tends to settle down the neural networks in the top middle of the brain that ruminate and agitate. It also tends to activate and strengthen neural networks on the

sides of the brain that support spacious mindfulness, staying in the present, taking life less personally—and with those changes come a growing sense of peace.



15. wellness tools

Many peer support programs in B.C. offer Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) workshops.

Mary Ellen Copeland developed WRAP to support her own mental health journey. It's a program that's built on the key concepts of wellness and recovery:

- ☐ Hope
- ☐ Personal responsibility
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Self-advocacy
- ☐ Support

It's offered in a workshop setting, and the goal is for people to create their own wellness plan.

Wellness tools are basically anything and everything we can do or use to stay well. Wellness tools can be simple, safe and free.

Creating intentionality and building wellness tools into our lives shifts us away from the status quo of living on autopilot and toward an intentional life focused on thriving. Think of incorporating wellness tools as a way to shift gears. It's about deliberately choosing to find sunshine on a grey day.

Others have listed these as wellness tools: (click the plus signs in the picture below)





Doing exercise





Doing yoga





Eating healthy





Being creative





Meditating





Enjoying music





Visiting a friend





Breathing deeply





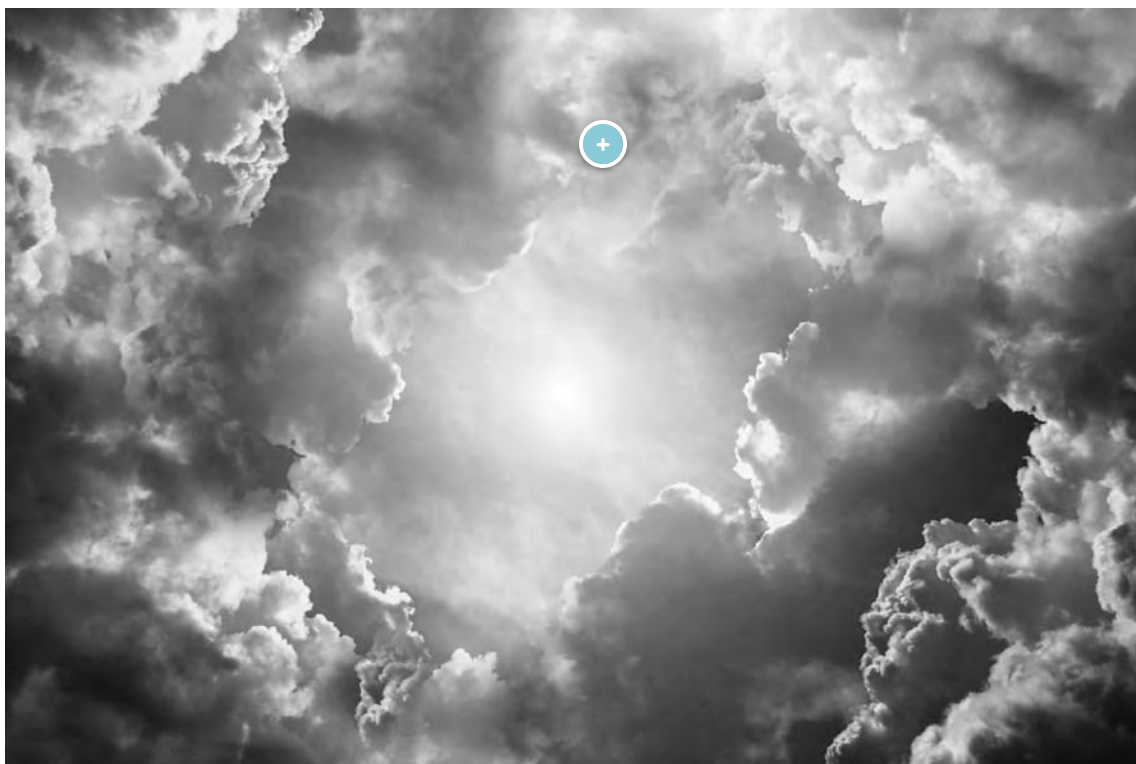
Walking



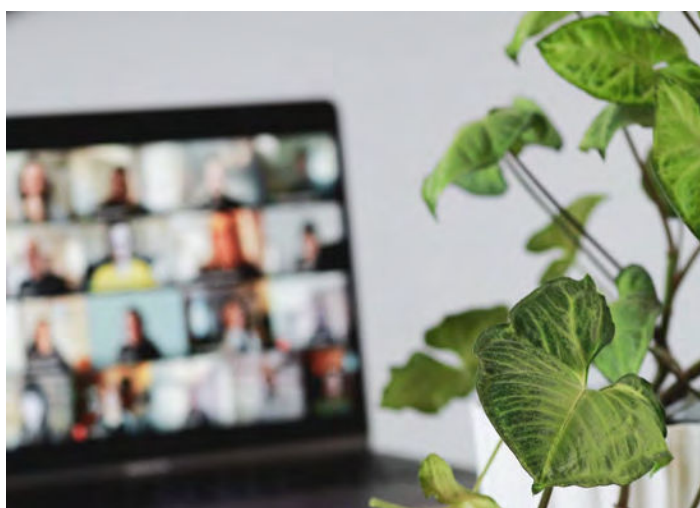


Watching a movie





Joining online communities



These are accessible and can provide support.

CONTINUE

questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.



What are some of your wellness tools?

1 of 3



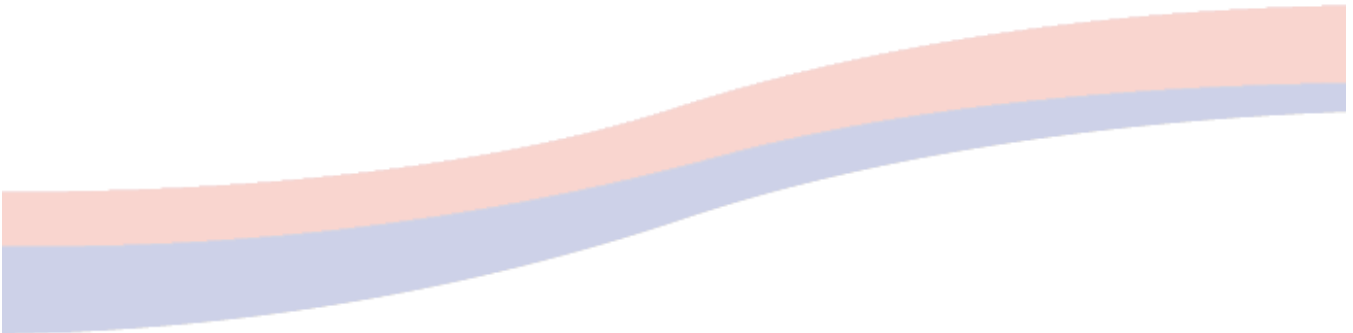
What are some regular practices you will commit to do?

2 of 3



What do you need to do every day to support your well-being?

3 of 3



16. my window of tolerance





Trauma expert Dr. Dan Siegel coined the term “window of tolerance.” It defines the range in our zone of arousal where we’re able to function and cope effectively.

To understand our window of tolerance, we must refer to the learning around the nervous system in module **8. healing-centred connection: principles in trauma-informed care**. When our sympathetic nervous system is activated, our stress hormones are released. If this stress response is engaged for long periods of time, it can negatively affect our health and well-being. When we move outside this zone, we become dysregulated and unable to calm ourselves down.

Actually, stress and stimulation that keeps us within our window of tolerance can be motivating and healthy. When we get used to a little extra activation, we’re able to take more risks and sit with the discomfort that pushes us to grow.

With time and practice, we can even widen our window of tolerance.

You can read more about the window of tolerance by expanding this box:

you can read more about the window of tolerance here —

Window of Tolerance

The zone of tolerance can be described as the perfect window where we aren't over stimulated or overwhelmed and where we aren't under stimulated or underwhelmed.

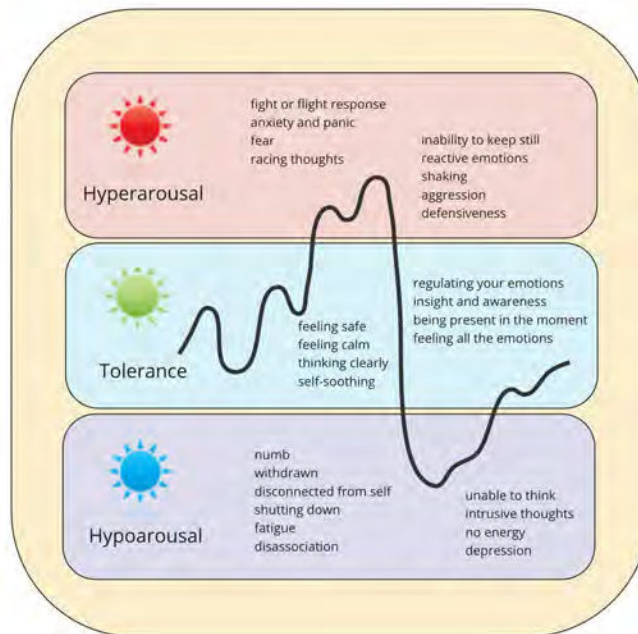
Everyone has their unique zone of tolerance where they can experience different emotions and remain within the zone or a regulated state. Here you can think clearly, process information and do what you need to do, so it's the ideal state to be in.

Windows of Hyperarousal & Hypoarousal

However, when emotions get too much (hyperarousal) or things are getting you down or you feel numb (hypoarousal), it can take you outside of that zone of tolerance and that's when things start happening, e.g. anxiety, fast heart, racing thoughts vs. dissociating, feeling numb or tired.

Neurodivergent individuals often feel emotions more easily and more intensely. While this can be a beautiful thing, experiencing intense joy and excitement over small things, it also means they experience the other, not so fun, emotions intensely too.

*based on Sonny Jane's work at www.livedexperienceeducator.com



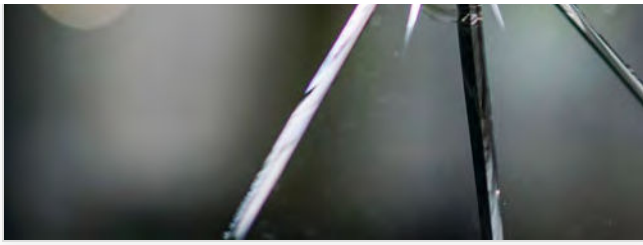
CONTINUE

questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.



What does it feel like when you're outside your window of tolerance?

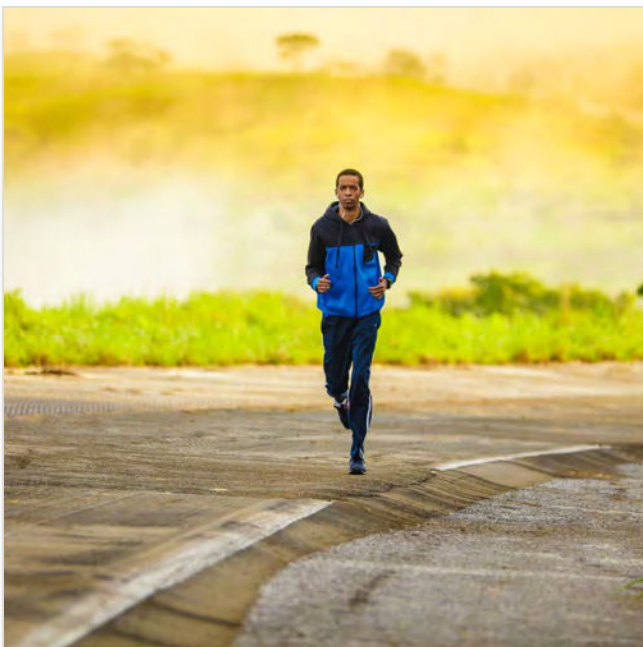


1 of 5



What can you do when you're feeling stressed out but are still within your window of tolerance?

2 of 5



What are some calming practices you can do for yourself when you find your nervous system activated in what feels like an uncontrollable way?

3 of 5



What can you do when you are feeling overwhelmed at work or your workload feels like it's too much to manage?

4 of 5



Who can you go to for support when you need it?

5 of 5



17. protection from vicarious & secondary trauma & retraumatization

Let's review the meaning of a few terms around the subject of trauma. You can read more about this topic in module **8**.

healing-centred connection: principles in trauma-informed care.

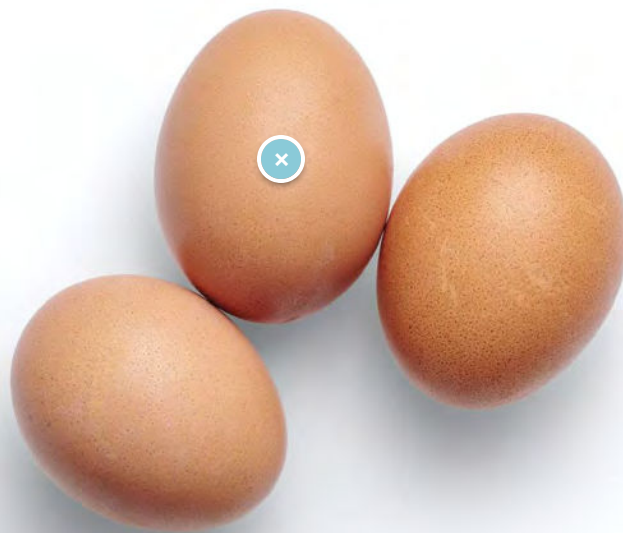


vicarious traumatization

A shift in worldview to one that sees the world through the lens of collective trauma. Happens slowly over time.

secondary trauma

Occurs when someone supports someone who is experiencing a serious trauma. The trauma is not first-hand, although the person can develop PTSD-like (post-traumatic stress disorder) symptoms. Vicarious traumatization happens slowly over time, and secondary trauma happens quickly and unexpectedly.



re-traumatization

Occurs when someone is exposed to a situation that consciously or unconsciously triggers a memory of a previous personal trauma. The body reacts with a stress response that feels as intense as the original trauma.

CONTINUE

As a peer support worker, you have lived experience and you come to the table with your own traumas and stressors. Knowing your own limits when you're supporting someone else is essential. You can retrigger your own trauma when you observe someone going through something similar to what you've also gone through.

We must be aware of our own limits and boundaries around our past trauma. If we get activated beyond our window of tolerance, we'll lose our ability to support someone else. Sometimes respecting and honouring those

limits means stepping away from working with someone and matching them instead with another peer support worker who's not experiencing retraumatization.

When we don't have clearly defined boundaries, it's easy to get lost in resentment. Clear boundaries with the people we work with is important, and it's also important to have boundaries around the role itself. You must know what's okay for you, and what's not okay.

To explore this topic further, visit module **6. understanding boundaries & what it means to co-create them.**



CONTINUE

questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.



Knowing what you know about boundaries and resiliency, what work/life boundaries do you need to put in place to support your well-being?

1 of 2



Why are boundaries important for you?

18. post-traumatic growth

“Remember, we are all affecting the world every moment, whether we mean to or not. Our actions and states of mind matter, because we’re so deeply interconnected with one another. Working on our own consciousness is the most important thing that we are doing at any moment, and being love is the supreme creative act.”

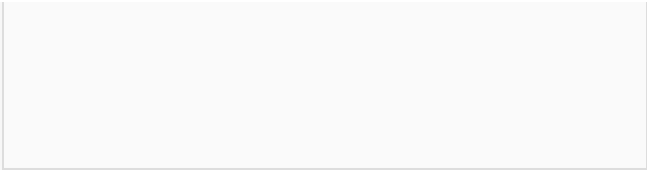
Ram Dass



Post-traumatic growth refers to the positive adaptability and transformation we experience following a trauma. Rich Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun coined the term “post-traumatic growth” in 1995. They describe it as follows:

post-traumatic growth

the possibility and hope of a full transformation after trauma. It’s a radical transformation that includes a shift in worldview, new beliefs, and a new lease on life.



1 of 1

As we've shared throughout this curriculum, hope plays an essential role in healing. Integrating hope into our well-being supports post-traumatic growth, especially following a crisis.

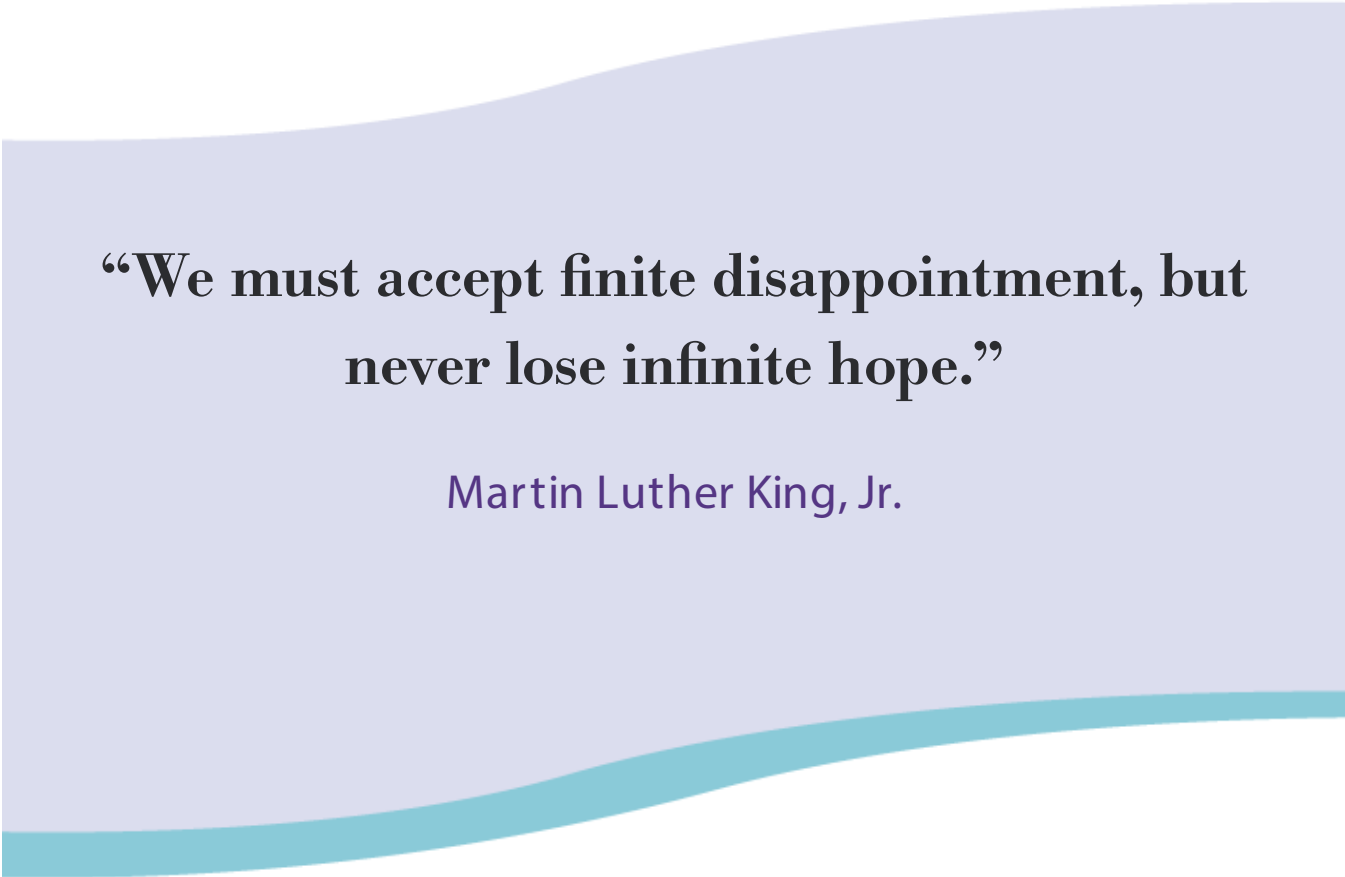
covid-19



The COVID-19 pandemic has been a global crisis that has impacted people physically, emotionally and financially. Despite the challenges, however, some individuals have reported experiencing post-traumatic growth in the wake of the pandemic. This growth has manifested as:

- Increased resilience
- Greater appreciation for life
- Sense of personal growth and development
- Deeper social connections

While the pandemic has been a difficult experience for many, it has also provided an opportunity for some individuals to find strength and meaning in the face of adversity.



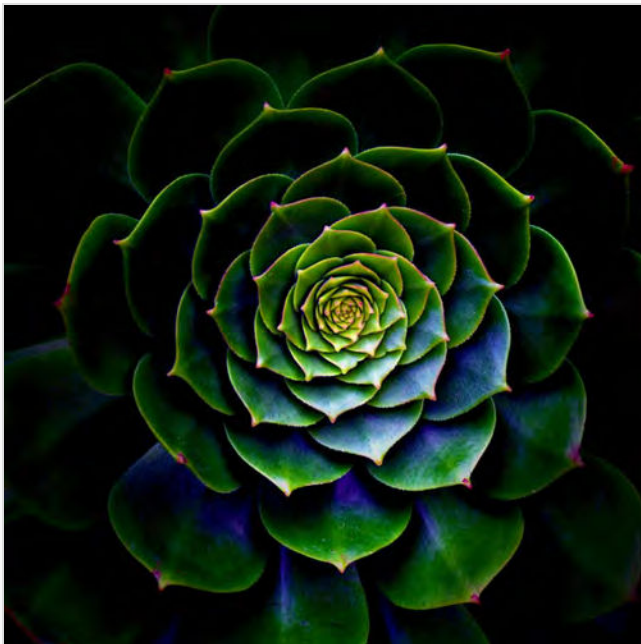
**“We must accept finite disappointment, but
never lose infinite hope.”**

Martin Luther King, Jr.

19. core values assessment

question for reflection

Answer this question in your reflection journal.



In what ways have the core values (see list below) intersected with the topic of self-care?

CONTINUE

core peer support values

acknowledgement —

All human beings deserve to be seen for who they are.

IN ACTION: Peer support strives to acknowledge – and deeply hear – people where they are in their journey.

PSWs SUGGEST: Asking open-ended questions and actively listening to the PSW to see if they feel comfortable sharing their experience. Ask: “What do you think about that situation?” “Is there a coping strategy that you have used in a previous similar experience that worked for you?”

mutuality —

All healthy relationships are mutual and reciprocal.

IN ACTION: Peer support relationships are co-created, with all parties participating in boundary creation.

PSWs SUGGEST: Having a conversation about what is and isn’t okay to discuss with the PSW.

“...Even though I am a PSW, it’s painful for me to make eye contact with people. Hopefully, clients will see that if I’m looking away that it actually means that I am deeply listening to them. Being vulnerable and open seems to allow the other person to do their version of the same, building trust and respect and co-creating the relationship.”

strength-based —

Every human being has strengths.

IN ACTION: Peer support intentionally builds on existing strengths. It thoughtfully and purposefully moves in the direction of flourishing, rather than only responding to pain and oppression.

PSWs SUGGEST: Finding things that the PSW feels really confident about and expanding on those areas or delving into those areas and supporting their choices.

self-determination —

Motivation works best when it's driven from within.

IN ACTION: Peer support encourages self-determination and acknowledges and holds space for resilience and inner wisdom.

PSWs SUGGEST: Support the PSW in making decisions and doing things on their own – based on their wants, needs and goals.

respect, dignity & equity —

All human beings have intrinsic value.

IN ACTION: Peer support honours human value by

- Practicing cultural humility and sensitivity
- Serving with a trauma-informed approach
- Offering generosity of assumption
- Addressing personal biases mindfully
- Meeting people where they are
- Serving with a knowledge of equity

PSWs SUGGEST: Treat PSWs as you would like to be treated and expect to be treated. Learn about them on a personal level and treat them as equals.

belonging & community —

All human beings need to belong and be a part of a community.

IN ACTION: Peer support recognizes that many people have barriers that keep them from developing community and it actively works towards deconstructing those social blockades that prevent inclusion and acceptance. Peer support encourages a social justice mindset, and intentionally promotes empathy, compassion and self-compassion.

PSWs SUGGEST: Help PSWs feel wanted and cared about. Help them find resources that foster a sense of community and belonging.

“My quality of life improves immensely when I am surrounded by one or a community of people who understand me. I don’t feel alone. I can be myself among people who I know understand me on a deeper level. When I feel like I can be myself, I feel more confident and able to take positive risks, thus improving the quality of my life. The root of this is connection and being able to be seen for who I truly am. Peers can help people be seen in a real way.”

curiosity —

Curiosity and inquiry support connection, growth, learning and engagement.

IN ACTION: Peer support

- Is continually curious
- Challenges assumptions and narratives
- Asks powerful questions
- Offers generosity of assumption to those who think differently
- Knows that listening and asking questions is more important than providing answers

PSWs SUGGEST: Ask questions and be engaged in learning about your PSWs. Find out about their culture and explore with them.



20. summary

Let's review some of the key concepts covered in this module.

☐

Self-care – the attending to our own physical and mental well-being in a compassionate way – is anything but selfish. We cannot give fully to others in the long term if we are not taking care of our own needs as well.

☐

Resiliency, the ability to spring back to shape after adversity, is an attribute with both individual and collective dimensions.

☐

Following adversity, we heal and grow in new ways, perhaps becoming wiser, stronger and more able to face challenging situations. But we will be forever changed.

☐

Self-compassion means to extend compassion to one's self in instances of perceived inadequacy, failure or general suffering. Over time, a lack of self-compassion will increase our chances of experiencing depression, stress, compassion fatigue, burnout and secondary traumatic stress.

☐

Self-compassion has three components: self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness.

☐

When we find ourselves swimming in big feelings, we can take steps to move past them. These include: noticing the feelings; labeling them; feeling them; offering kindness to yourself; deconstructing the feelings; then disrupting them.

☐

Compassion fatigue, the feeling of being depleted after working with people who are struggling, can be avoided by using the many wellness tools mentioned in this module.

☐

A window of tolerance is the range in our zone of arousal where we're able to function and cope effectively.



Post-traumatic growth is the possibility and hope of a full transformation after trauma. It's a radical transformation that includes a shift in worldview, new beliefs and a new lease on life.



21. next steps

We want to thank you for taking the time to walk alongside peer support workers on a shared path of learning from lived experience.

You are now ready to visit another module of the Peer Support Worker training curriculum!

Please head home to <https://peerconnectbc.ca> where you will find the individual training modules and facilitation guides. You will also find a [resource page](#) at that site to continue your learning about peer support work and the issues surrounding it.

A Project of BCcampus, Funded by B.C. Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions

Released July 2021

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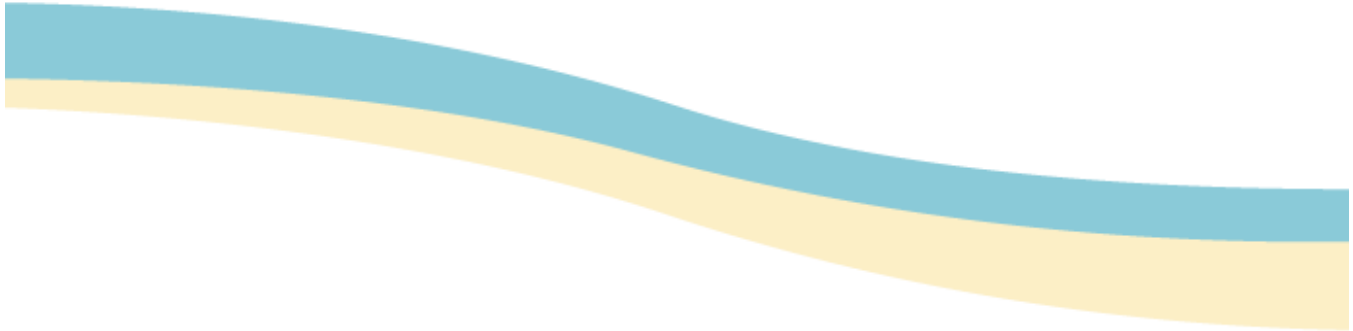
Life Application Story Writer: *Robyn Thomas*

Editor: *Annie Brandner*

Graphic Designer: *Jeseye Tanner*

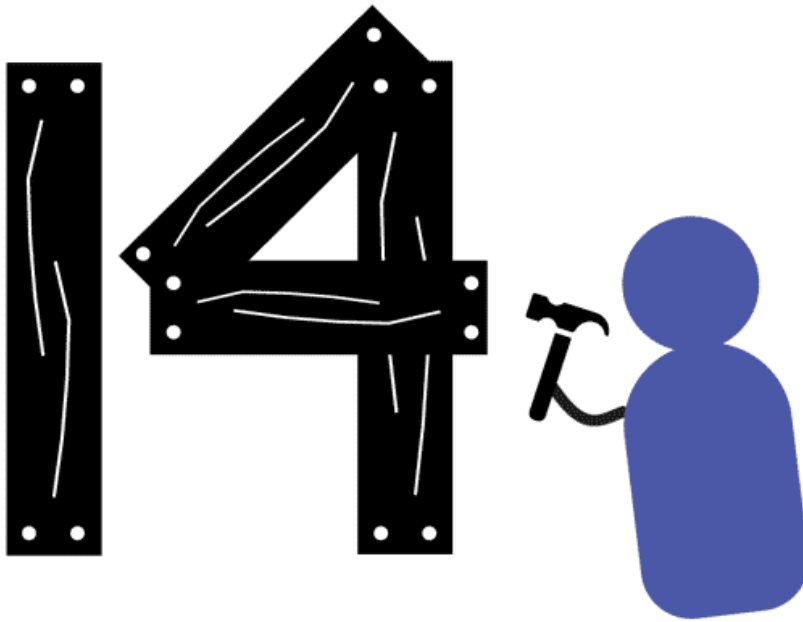
Peer Portraits: *Jesse Winters Photography*

Instructional Design & Development: *PathWise Solutions Inc.*



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for this module:



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