



Self-compassion in the undergraduate medical curriculum... 10 years in the making

Presented By:

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Presenters



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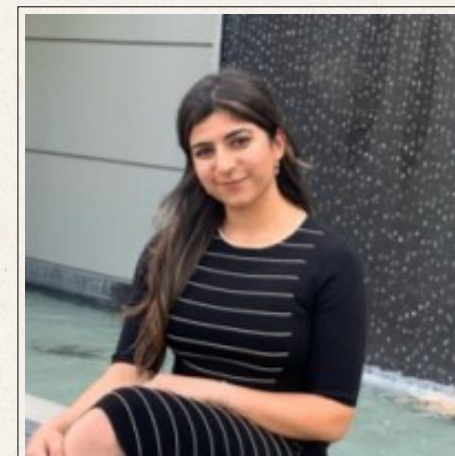
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Mindfulness Chaplain,
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Dr Beth Langton

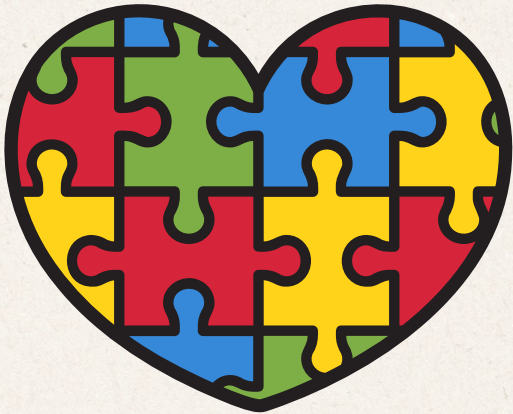
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Agenda



What are compassion and self-compassion?	20mins
Compassion in Edinburgh Medical School	
Barriers and myths about compassion	
Mindfulness for self-compassion	30mins
Practicing teaching techniques to encourage compassion	

Definitions

Sympathy

An emotional reaction
of pity toward the
misfortune of another.

Empathy

An ability to understand
and accurately
acknowledge the
feelings of another,
leading to an attuned
response

Compassion

A deep awareness of
the suffering of
another coupled with
the wish, and steps
taken, to relieve it.

Self-compassion

Becoming aware of
and alleviating one's
own suffering



Definitions

Self-compassion

Self-kindness



Common
humanity

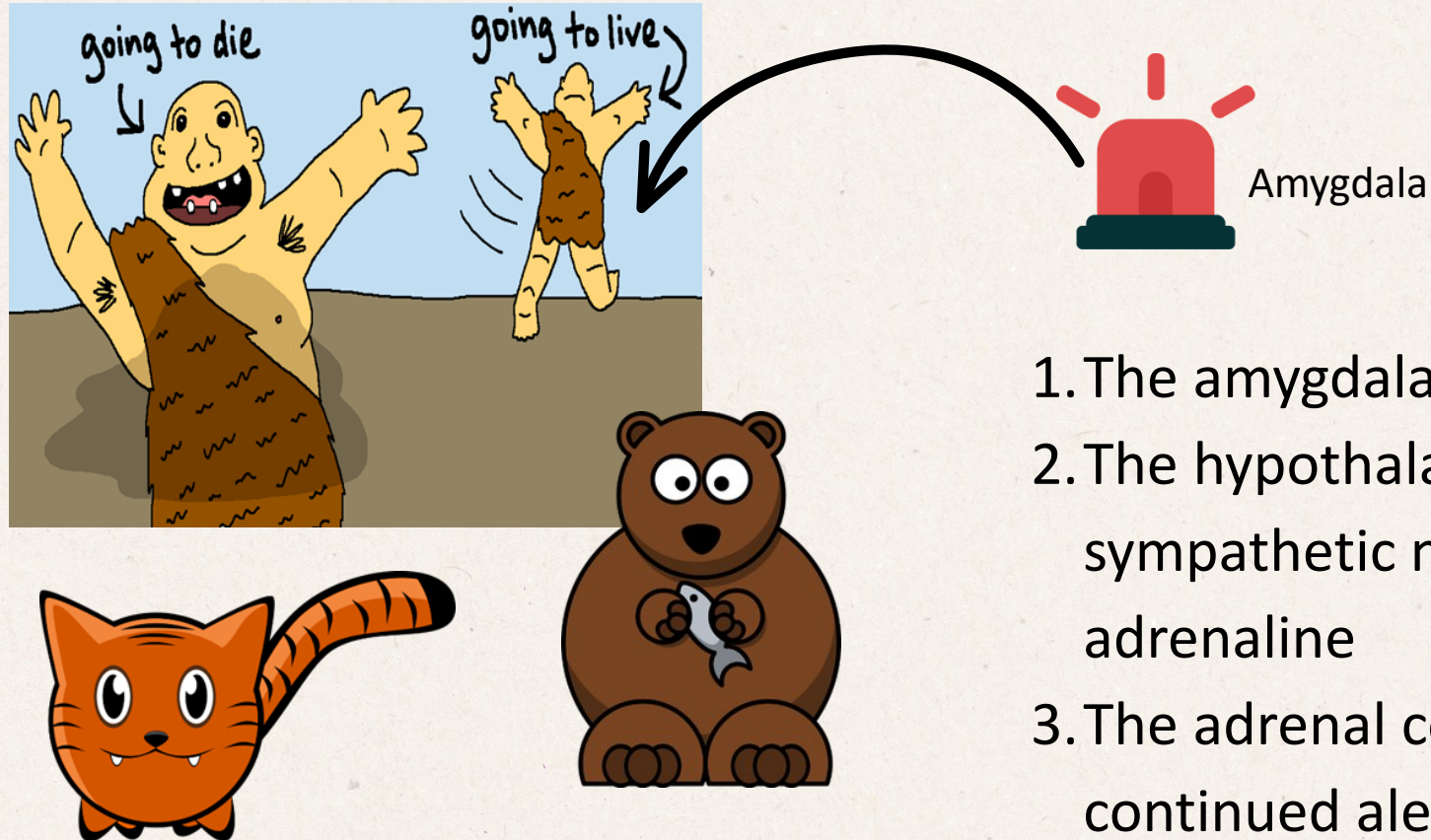


Mindfulness



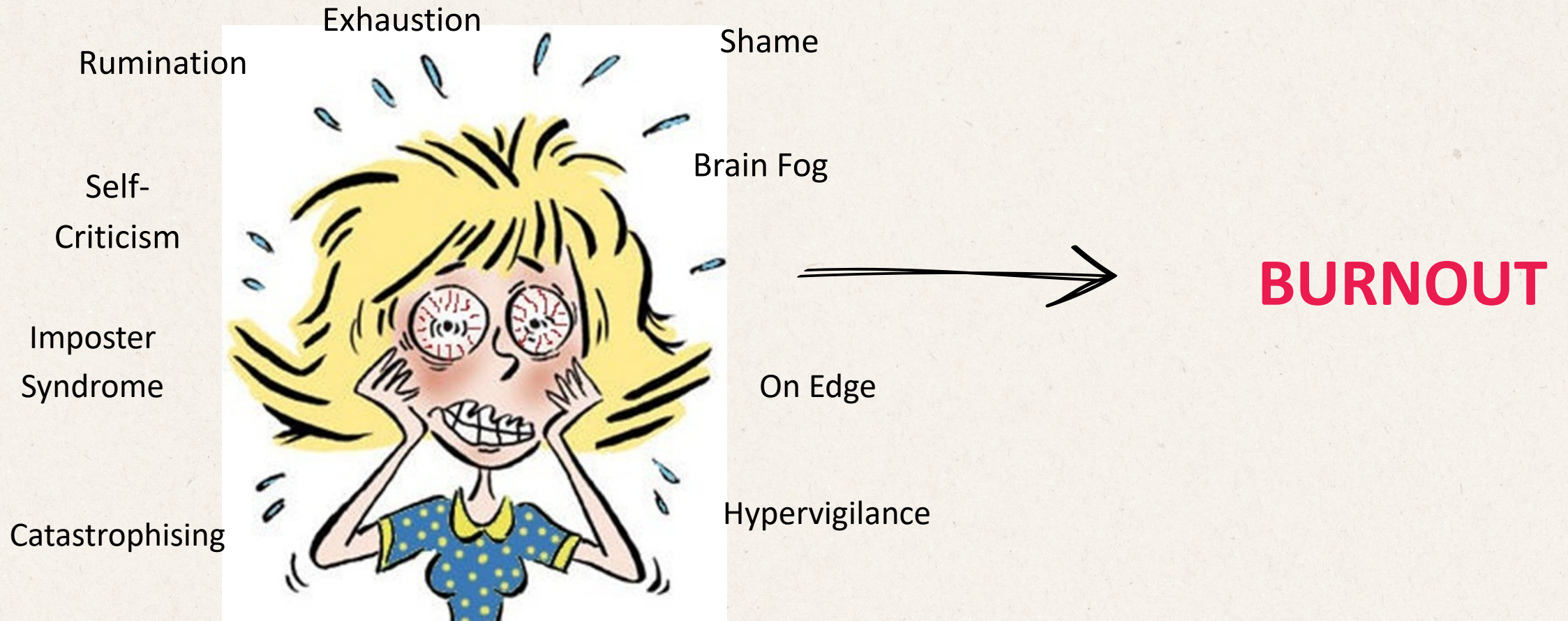
Neff, K. D. (2003)

Neurophysiology of Stress



1. The amygdala reacts to a threat
2. The hypothalamus activates the sympathetic nervous system and releases adrenaline
3. The adrenal cortex releases cortisol for continued alertness

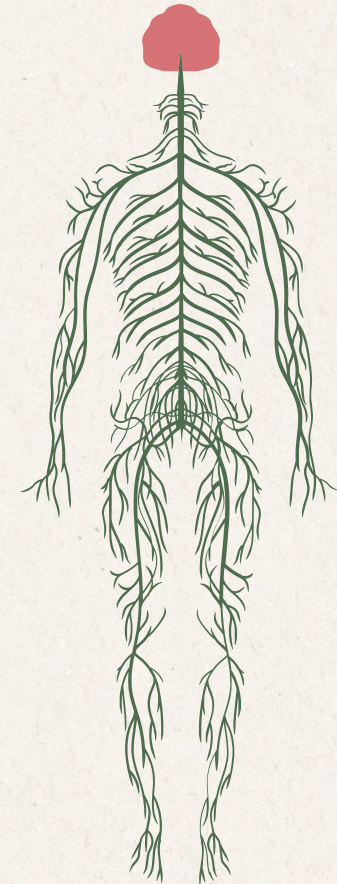
Neurophysiology of Continued Stress

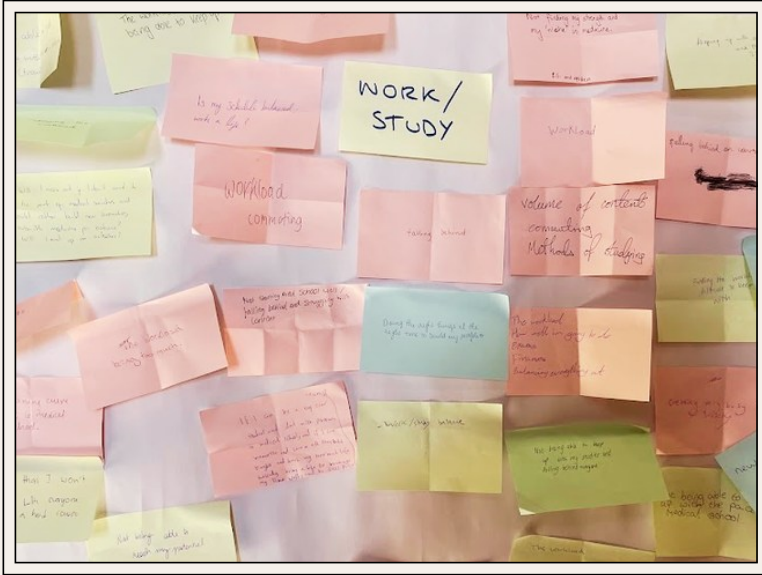


Neurophysiology of Compassion

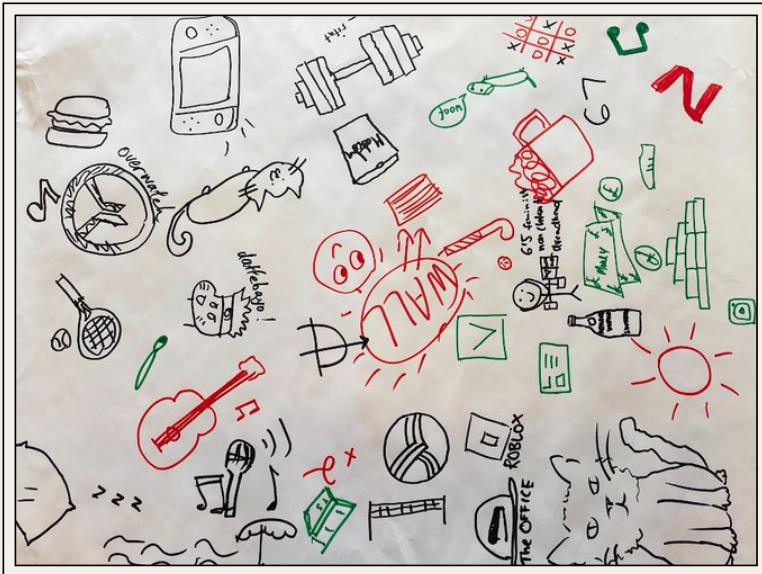
Compassion activates the parasympathetic nervous system which:

- Reduces threat sensitivity
- Reduces alarm bell (amygdala) activation
- Changes the brain over time, protecting from burnout



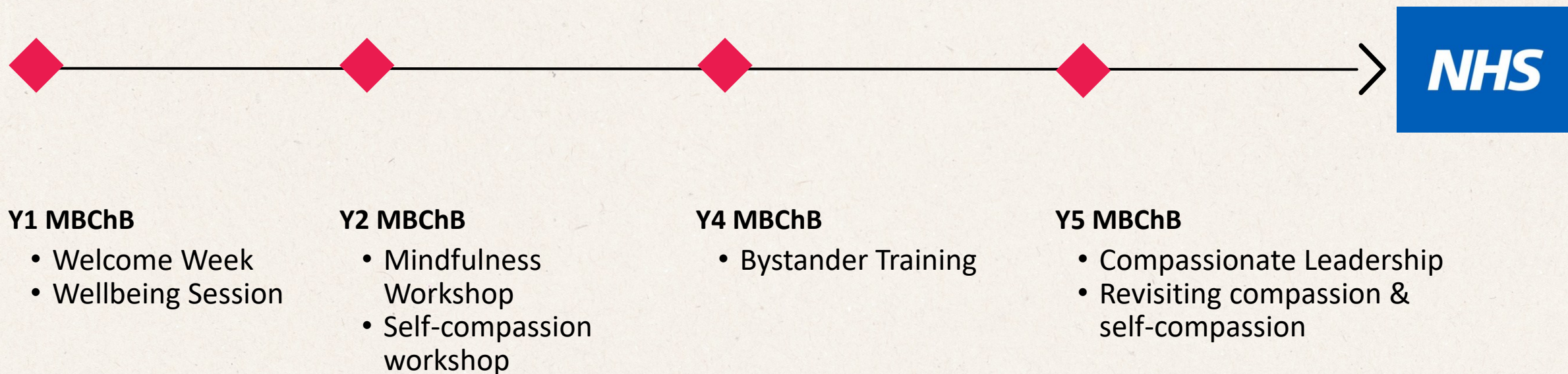


Compassion in the undergraduate medical curriculum



Compassion Teaching

Across the undergraduate medical program





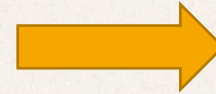
Reflections on self-compassion teaching from a student and teacher



**What barriers do you think stop
students from engaging with self-
compassion?**

Common barriers to engaging with self-compassion

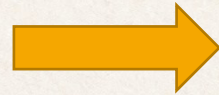
“It doesn’t make any difference”
“It’s not scientific, it has no
impact”



Promotes social sustainability
and connectedness (Gilbert
2013; Neff 2021)

Common barriers to engaging with self-compassion

“It takes too much time”



Reduced illness length, quicker surgery recovery (Rakel et al, 2009; Pereira et al, 2016)

Common barriers to engaging with self-compassion

“Allowing softness into
situations that need
toughness”
“I should be
competitive”



Improved productivity, more
meaningful relationships, better
physical health (Balaam and
Harris, 2021)



Activities to foster self-compassion

Mindfulness for Year 2s MBChB

- Cohort of 300, universal intervention
- Taught in groups of 75 across 4 days
- Live adaptation in response to reception
- Original design
- Key adaptations: Buy-in and interaction

Today's workshop

- Outline of cognitive framework of wellbeing and low mood
- How mindfulness or 'being mode' is an effective response to stress
- Protective, 'buffer' function of wellbeing and self-care practices
- Practice 1) 'Soles of the Feet'
- Practice 2) Mindfulness of body and breath

COMFORT BREAK

- Practice 3) Grounding OR Gratitude practice
- Stress 'First Response' worksheet
- Further resources

Adaptation 1: Buy-in

- UoE Critical Care MOOC vignette
- Prize-winning medical training
- 'Reality dose' for students

UoE Critical Care team, March 2020...

...curated and launched a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on Critical Care, in a record time of 10 days from start to finish. Over 53,000 learners enrolled on this course from across the globe



Adaptation 2: Interaction & learning

- Horizontal vs. vertical inquiry
- 'Ultra-horizontal' inquiry

...it was three o'clock in the morning. I was standing in the middle of the intensive care unit. There were two patients in ICU who needed urgent life-saving attention. There were three patients on the way to ICU, one coming from Stirling, one from the operating theatre, and another from the acute receiving unit. So, all five patients were needing senior input. The buck stopped with me, and it was a headless chicken kind of thing. I was standing in the middle of the unit and I stopped. I didn't realise what I was doing at the time, but it was the soles of the feet exercise...Stop. Pause. Breathe deeply and slowly. Feel your feet grounded... (Dr Graham Nimmo)

'Soles of the Feet'

- UoE Critical Care Lead
- Intensive Care Unit vignette

Evaluation



Student feedback

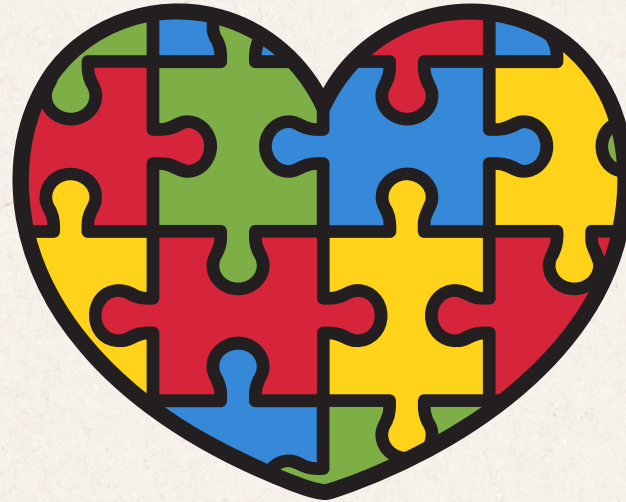
- Wide range. Recurring themes were asking for a shorter session, or for it to be optional
- Liked/disliked being asked to put down their phones
- 'Great techniques to destress/relax/detach and “sense”'
- 'In all honesty I gained nothing from this session'

Barriers

- Attention span
- Maturity/readiness for self-reflection
- Competitive peer environment
- Vulnerability

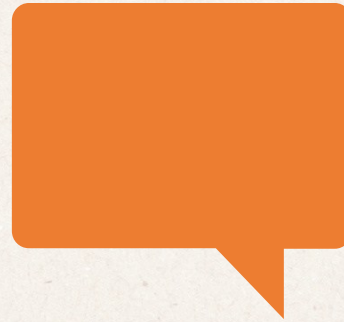
Considerations for future provision: shorter session, change of room, different pre-briefing

Self-compassion techniques





How are you feeling right now?





How did you find that?

Student Feedback

"That all of us worry about similar things and we are in this together"

"The shared worries on posted notes was great, I realised that many of my peers experience similar things."

"People opening up about coping mechanisms together was really helpful"

"Well-being is as important as studies for productivity"



What refuels your battery?
(5mins)

Thank you



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The Guest House

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
As an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

- Rumi