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Self-Compassion

is an Imperative in Teen and Adult
ADHD Support



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Abstract

Self-compassion is increasingly recognized as a clinically relevant construct in behavioral health, yet it remains underutilized in applied behavior analysis practice particularly with adolescent and adult clients presenting with ADHD. This presentation applies a behavior-analytic framework to self-compassion, drawing on Neff's three-component model (self-kindness, recognition of common humanity, and mindfulness). Participants will examine how repeated behavioral failures, elevated rates of negative social feedback, and shame-driven avoidance create cycles that undermine treatment engagement and self-efficacy in individuals with ADHD. Practical clinical strategies like values-based habit contextualization and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) processes will be illustrated through case examples. Attendees will leave with a conceptually systematic and practically applicable rationale for embedding self-compassion into behavior-analytic services for teens and adults with ADHD and other neurodevelopment disorders.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this training, participants will:

1. Define self-compassion using behavioral terminology, identifying the functional roles of self-kindness, recognition of common humanity, and mindfulness in reducing aversive emotional states and increasing adaptive repertoires.
2. Describe how ADHD-related symptoms contribute to repeated failure experiences and high rates of negative social feedback, which sets the occasion for increased self-critical verbal behavior and decreases treatment engagement.
3. Identify at least two clinical strategies for promoting self-compassionate verbal behavior in adolescent or adult clients with ADHD, consistent with principles of ACT and behavior-analytic practice.



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What is self-compassionate behavior?

Word bank:

Supportive, nurturing, recognition of humanity, shared experience, acceptance, without avoidance, understanding, reflective, validating

Why is self-compassion important?



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What is self-critical behavior?

Word bank:

Carried away, fixated on what's wrong, tough on myself, feeling alone, cold-hearted, inadequate, flawed, disapproving, judgmental, intolerant, impatient, down on

What are some examples of self-compassion skills?

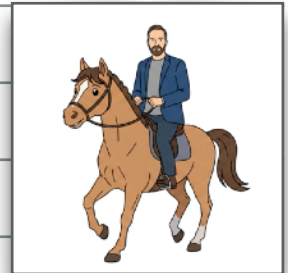


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What are the 6 core processes of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy?



How can you increase opportunities for your clients to engage in self-compassionate behavior?



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References

Friedman, Z. L., & El-Roy, D. (2024). Exploring Interprofessional and Self-Compassion Competencies for Applied Behavior Analysis Professionals: A Qualitative Study.

Melton, B., O'Connell-Sussman, E., Lord, J., & Weiss, M. J. (2023). Empathy and Compassion as the Radical Behaviorist Views it: A Conceptual Analysis. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*.

Suarez, V. D., Moon, E. I., & Najdowski, A. C. (2022). Systematic Review of Acceptance and Commitment Training Components in the Behavioral Intervention of Individuals with Autism and Developmental Disorders. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*.

Resources

Neff, K. D. (n.d.). *Self-compassion test*. Self-Compassion. <https://self-compassion.org/self-compassion-test/>

Neff, K., & Germer, C. (2018). *The mindful self-compassion workbook: A proven way to accept yourself, build inner strength, and thrive*. Guilford Press.

Upcoming Trainings

If you enjoyed this training and want to say goodbye to boring webinars like this one, join me on my website for

4.5 CEUs — Breakthrough ADHD Training for Behavior Analysts: Using the Roadmap

<https://www.appliedbehavioral.health/breakthrough-adhd>

Saturdays May 17th & 24th, 10 AM to 11:30 AM Pacific

Saturdays May 24th & 31st, 12 PM to 1:30 PM Pacific

Mondays May 11th & 18th, 2:00 PM to 3:30 PM Pacific

New cohort dates and times are posted regularly, so subscribe for updates and follow me on social media.



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Free Meditations for Teens and Adults with ADHD

Based on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

<https://www.getadhd.care/just-act-on-it>



GUIDED ADHD MEDITATIONS



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Present Moment: Arriving

Where am I showing up from right now?

What's the loudest thing in my head right now?

Check in — what do you notice in your body right now?

Self-as-Context: Stepping Back

What story is my mind telling about me based on this week?

Can I notice that as a story, not a verdict? What does the observer in me see?

Defusion: Naming the Thought Storm

Which thought patterns showed up for you this week? Select all that apply.

Acceptance: Making Room for the Mess

What feeling comes up when you hold something that didn't happen?

One thing that DID happen — even imperfectly — that I can let count?

Values: The Compass Under the Calendar

What actually matters to you right now? Select what resonates.

Is anything on my list driven by fear or obligation rather than values?

Committed Action: Choosing What's Next

Which obstacle is most likely to get in your way?

Name one action this week that moves toward what matters — not just the loudest thing.