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Raising a Sense of Self-Worth: Action Research on Self-Compassion in an English Program

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Raising a Sense of Self-Worth:
Action Research on Self-Compassion in an English Program

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master of Arts in TESOL degree
at the SIT Graduate Institute,
Brattleboro, Vermont.

November 1, 2013

AYMAT Thesis Advisor: Dr. Leslie Turpin

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Abstract

The suicide rate among Japanese youth has been dramatically increasing over the last decade due to the downturn economy and their lack of sense of self-worth. In this qualitative action research, the author introduces the concept of self-compassion to Japanese youth in a content-based English classroom as an attempt to raise their sense of self-worth. The research shows that self-compassion has a possibility of providing Japanese young people with more rational perceptions of themselves, creating an emotionally supportive environment, and allowing them to develop their self-awareness. The author concludes that it is this development of self-awareness that can raise the sense of self-worth, and English classrooms have a possibility of providing a place for this process. Additionally, the research reaffirms that the presence of compassionate others is also important to enhance the sense of self-worth.

Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) Descriptors

Self concept, suicide, English instruction, English curriculum, student experience, altruism, college students.

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1. Introduction: Low Self-Esteem among Japanese Youth

There has been a social problem arising among Japanese youth these days; that is, the growing high rate of depression and suicide cases. The Japanese Cabinet Office (2013a) reports that 3,605 people, aged 15 – 29, committed suicide in 2012 only (p. 5). The suicide rate has been dramatically increasing over the last decade. Moreover, the proportion of suicide in deaths of young people is noticeably high; suicide is the No.1 cause of death among those in their 20's, which indicates that half of all deaths are suicides. Among G7 nations, Japan is the only country where this phenomenon can be observed ("More young people", 2013).

The Cabinet Office (2013b) acknowledges that possible reasons are failures in job-hunting and employment anxiety (pp. 24-25). In addition, low wages or overwork for young new employees is a conceivable factor ("More young people", 2013). Considering this fact, it seems that self-worth is evaluated on a basis of social hierarchy and comparison especially on the single scale of social status and economic power. This paradigm can make a sense of self-worth quite unstable, associating many social problems such as bullying, depression, and suicide ideation. Those who could not "win" on this scale tend to have low self-esteem, as if they were of no value as human beings. The student counseling center at Toyama University reports that many job hunters make

comments like the following: "when one of my job applications is rejected, I feel like everything about me has been rejected" ("More young people", 2013). Those who could not get job positions by their college graduation are often labeled as *Makegumi*, losers, at the age of their early 20's, feeling ashamed of themselves. This internal shame is especially severe because it entails harsh self-criticism, which unconsciously lowers their own sense of self-worth. Furthermore, the victims of this paradigm cannot become, what Paulo Freire (2000) calls fully human, a person who is liberated from his or her internal oppressor. (pp. 43-69).

As a humanistic educator, I am driven by the desire to enhance students' self-esteem in my classroom in order to prevent more Japanese youth from depression and suicide. I try to make them feel good about themselves through the process of their learning.

2. Pitfalls of Raising Self-Esteem

Many psychologists have now begun to cast doubts on enhancing self-esteem (Neff, 2003; Crocker & Park, 2004). While low self-esteem obviously causes negative effects on individuals, high self-esteem can also be problematic because it can be the cause of narcissism, prejudice, ego-defensive aggression, and bullying (Neff, 2012,

p.12). The reason for these negative effects is that self-esteem also stems from social comparison (Neff, 2003, p. 85). Basically, self-esteem is a self-evaluation of worthiness (Neff, 2003, p. 85; Rubio, 2007, pp.4-5). People evaluate themselves positively or negatively based on comparison with others. Therefore, in order to feel good about ourselves and pursue high self-esteem, we may puff ourselves up and put others down (Neff, 2011, p.2). Furthermore, as long as we evaluate ourselves based on social comparison, our sense of self-worth is quite unstable and fluctuating according to performance, contexts (Neff, 2011, p. 3; Rubio, 2007, p. 2; De Andres, 2007, p. 37). Research (Kernis, 2005) suggests that people with unstable self-esteem often evaluate themselves negatively, focusing more on negative events rather than positive ones, which can lead them to depression as well.

Considering these possibilities, raising self-esteem may not be the optimal way of solving the problem that Japanese society faces.

3. Self-Compassion

The Definition of Self-Compassion

As an alternative for self-esteem, Neff (2003) introduces the Buddhist concept of self-compassion into the field of western psychology. What is self-compassion? The

word, compassion “involves being touched by the suffering of others, opening one’s awareness to others’ pain and not avoiding or disconnecting from it” (Neff, 2003, p. 87). It also involves “non-judgmental understanding of others’ failures, considering them as common human imperfection” (Neff, 2003, p. 87). Although compassion is often associated with offering for others in the west, Eastern thinkers, especially Buddhists, do not separate compassion for others, for Buddhism asserts there is no separation between self and others (Neff, 2003; Barnard & Curry, 2011, p. 289). Therefore, self-compassion can be defined as “being touched by and open to one’s own suffering, not avoiding or disconnecting from it, generating the desire to alleviate one’s suffering and heal oneself with kindness, ... offering nonjudgmental understanding to one’s pain, inadequacies, and failures, so that one’s experience is seen as part of the larger human experience” (Neff, 2003, p. 87). Welford (2013) also emphasizes a commitment and actual action to alleviate one’s own suffering, not just having the desire to do so (p. 15).

To define the concept of self-compassion more clearly, Neff (2003) defines self-compassion as being composed of the following three major components:

- (a) Self-kindness—extending kindness and understanding to oneself rather than harsh judgment and self-criticism, (b) common humanity—seeing one’s experiences as part of the larger human experience rather than seeing them as

separating and isolating, and (c) mindfulness—holding one’s painful thoughts and feelings in balanced awareness rather than over-identifying with them.

(Neff, 2003, p. 89)

These three components are interconnected and enhance each other (Neff, 2003; Barnard & Curry, 2011). “Mindful awareness of one’s own inner experience of suffering is a necessary step in the development of compassion towards oneself” (Birnie, Speca, & Carlson, 2010) because we first need to recognize our own suffering (Germer, 2009, p. 89). This definition helps to distinguish self-compassion from other self-constructs such as self-esteem, self-indulgence, and self-pity, which I will discuss in the following sections.

Self-Compassion versus Self-Esteem

Although both self-esteem and self-compassion are “salient source[s] of positive self-regard” (Neff, 2011, p. 6) and can prevent depression, there is a difference between the two. Whereas self-esteem is about evaluation of oneself either positively or negatively, self-compassion “takes the entire self-evaluation process out of the picture, focusing on feelings of compassion toward oneself and the recognition of one’s common humanity rather than making (positive or negative) self-judgments” (Neff,

2003, p. 92). Therefore, self-compassion has nothing to do with downward social comparisons; rather, it is “a way of *relating* to ourselves” with care and love (Neff, 2012, p. 7). “When we’re kind to ourselves, clearly seeing ourselves as part of a larger, interconnected whole, we feel valuable, safe, accepted and secure. Importantly, this stance towards the self does not require inflating our self-image or seeing ourselves as better than others.” (Neff, 2011, p. 6). Therefore, “while self-compassion enhances feelings of safety and interconnectedness, self-esteem positions the self in competition with others and amplifies feelings of distinctness and separation” (Neff, 2012, pp. 14-15). Because of that, self-compassion can provide us with more stable sense of self-worth, unlike self-esteem, which “often fluctuates because self-evaluations are continually changing” (Neff, 2012, p. 13). Neff (2012) concludes that “self-compassionate people are less focused on evaluating themselves, feeling superior to others, worrying about whether or not others are evaluating them, defending their viewpoints, or angrily reacting against those who disagree with them” (p. 14). It is worth noting that some self-esteem advocates also value the primal importance of self-acceptance (Arnold, 2007, p. 15; De Andres, 2007, pp. 38-39). De Andres (2007) is acknowledging that “self-esteem has to do with having a realistic appreciation of who we are” (p. 39). What de Andres defines here was, in fact, mindfulness and

self-compassion rather than self-esteem, even though she uses a different term.

Self-Compassion is Not Self-Pity, nor Self-Indulgence

Many may believe that being kind to ourselves means self-pity or self-indulgence. Neff (2003, p. 88; 2012, p. 5) and Germer (2009, p. 89) clearly distinguish self-compassion from both of them. When individuals are in the state of self-pity, they tend to feel isolated, as if their problems happened only to them, ignoring others' similar issues. "Self-pity emphasizes egocentric feelings of separation and exaggerates the extent of personal distress" (Neff, 2012, p.5). On the contrary, self-compassion can connect people by acknowledging "the universality of suffering among living beings" from a balanced and mindful viewpoint (Germer, 2009, p. 89).

Self-compassion is also different from self-indulgence. Many believe that "self-criticism is necessary to motivate themselves" and being kind to ourselves is as if to "sit around all day watching TV and eating ice-cream" (Neff, 2012, p. 5). This misunderstanding makes them hesitate to be self-compassionate. Self-compassion, in fact, arises from caring for oneself. If we truly care for ourselves, it is obvious sitting around all day watching TV and eating ice-cream are not for our growth and health (Neff, 2012, p. 5). Self-compassion sometimes requires us to be disciplined because we

care for ourselves.

Self-Compassion: An Alternative Reaction

As long as people evaluate themselves based on social comparison, they constantly face the fear of being devalued by placing themselves below the average.

When they face such a danger, they tend to react in three unfortunate ways:

self-criticism, self-isolation, and self-absorption (Germer, 2009, pp. 84). These are “the instinctive response to danger: fight, flight, or freeze” respectively (Germer, 2009, p. 85). These are sensible response when it comes to a physical matter for survival; however, this instinctive response becomes tragic when it comes to mental health because people turn on themselves. (Germer, 2009, p. 85).

Self-compassion, on the contrary, “direct[s] us exactly in the opposite direction: self-kindness, recognizing the common humanity in our experience, and a balanced approach to negative emotions.” (Germer, 2009, p. 84). This is another instinctive response based on mammal’s urge to “tend and befriend” (Germer, 2009, p. 85).

Self-compassion can maintain our sense of self-worth with a healthy response in facing the threatening times of being devalued of human value.

Recent Research on Self-Compassion

A number of studies on self-compassion have recently been conducted in the field of psychology. These indicate that more self-compassionate people can have more academic achievement (Neff, Hseih, & Dejitthirat, 2005), more self-improvement motivation (Breines & Chen, 2012), less submissive behavior (Akin, 2009), and less depression (Allen & Leary, 2010).

Taking these results into consideration, it appears that cultivating self-compassion seems to contribute to a decrease in bullying, depression, and suicide, while increasing academic success and intrinsic motivation, all of which are related to the lives of Japanese youth. However, can the concept of self-compassion be accepted in Japan?

4. Self-Compassion and the Japanese

Although Buddhism has permeated Japan since the 7th century, the concept of self-compassion is rarely seen in today's Japanese society. There can be two possible reasons. The first is the nature of interdependent construal of the self (Kitayama, & Markus, 1991, p.227). Typically, the Japanese construct a sense of self based on one's relationship to specific others and status in the larger social unit; therefore, "the ability

to effectively adjust in the interpersonal domain may form an important basis of self-esteem” (Kitayama, & Markus, 1991, pp.227-228). This cultural factor can hinder Japanese from being self-compassionate, which has nothing to do with social comparison.

In addition to the cultural characteristic of interdependence, the influence of Confucianism can also be a hindrance to Japanese becoming self-compassionate. Research shows that the Japanese have a tendency for self-criticism, (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997), especially among the adolescents (Takata, 2001). Neff, Pisitsungkagarn, & Hsieh (2008) associate this tendency with the influence of Confucianism, which encourages individuals “to become aware of their faults through self-examination so they can correct themselves” (p. 270). They (2008) conclude that “although self-criticism is used to pursue perfect gentleman in Confucian worldview, constant harsh self-criticism as a means of self-improvement comes at a psychological cost” (Neff, Pisitsungkagarn, & Hsieh, 2008, p.281). This view can be associated with high rate of suicide in East Asia such as Japan and South Korea, where Confucianism has a huge influence.

Given these two deep-rooted cultural factors, the concept of self-compassion might not be accepted with open arms in Japanese society.

5. The Research Question

I have a hope that cultivating self-compassion among Japanese can prevent young people from criticizing themselves, and, as a result, prevent more Japanese from committing suicide proactively in the future. With this hope, I was eager to see what would happen when Japanese youth encountered the idea of self-compassion. Would they appreciate or reject it? Would they be willing to practice and internalize it later on? Would their sense of self-worth be affected? If so, how? Would this concept be relevant to their lives in the first place?

6. Methodology and Work Plan

In order to explore these questions, I conducted Action Research (AR) in a qualitative way. AR is a “tradition that links processes of inquiry to the lives of people as they come to grips with the problems and stresses that beset them in their day-to-day lives” (Stringer, 1996, p. xv). I chose AR because “the desired end result of AR is always focused on positive change and solutions to benefit all those involved” (James, Slater, & Bucknam, 2011, p. 3) In other words, in AR, the researcher’s “burning desire is to make a difference to the situation as well as measure it” (James, Slater, & Bucknam,

2011, p. 15). My motivation to conduct this research comes from my desire to tackle the social issue of high rate of suicide; therefore, AR is the most suitable methodology.

In my AR, the qualitative method is appropriate because the qualitative approach is “to understand a complex phenomenon”, where one “must consider the multiple ‘realities’ experienced by the participants themselves—the ‘insider’ perspectives” (Suter, 2012, p. 344). In other words, qualitative approach can provide “first-person, *emic* data reflecting the perspectives and insights” of the participants themselves (Todeva & Cenoz, 2009). Given this nature of the qualitative method, I regarded this as appropriate since my research question would require observation and exploration of the process of the participants’ inner experiences.

In terms of the work plan, as a first step, I designed an eight-day content-based English program to teach self-compassion to Japanese youth as a part of my M. A. in TESOL at SIT Graduate Institute, Vermont, USA (See Appendix A). My program was designed to teach the core of self-compassion. Because of the short time, I expected that students could only get to the Encounter or Clarify stage according to the ECRIF (Encounter, Clarify, Remember, Internalize, and Fluent use) framework developed by Joshua Kurzweil and Mary Scholl. (Kurzweil & Scholl, 2008). When it comes to the objective of this program, Awareness-raising was the central objective, rather than

acquiring knowledge, skills or changing attitudes. Volunteer Japanese youth would experience this program to see their response to the concept of self-compassion and examine how their sense of self-worth can be affected throughout the program.

7. English Language as a Means of Teaching Self-Compassion

Why English? Some might assume that it is much easier and more efficient to teach self-compassion in the students' L1, that is, Japanese. However, I expect English language can affect students' learning in a positive manner.

Firstly, English might allow students to detach their emotional self from themselves, so that they can share their difficult experiences with others in a less emotional fashion. In her book on the relationship between emotions and multilingualism, Pavlenko (2005) discusses 'L2 detachment effect,' providing the case of psychotherapy. Immigrant patients appear more calm and can talk about painful memories more dispassionately in L2 than L1 because L1 is strongly connected with their emotional memories (p. 168). Ervin's (1973) experiment in which a Japanese-English bilingual describe pictures in both L1 and L2 indicates that L1 triggers more emotions than L2 (pp. 1-14). Pavlenko (2005) mentions this effect on a neurophysiological level by saying that "Emotion or emotion-related FL words are not

integrated with non-verbal sensory representations or autobiographic memories and do not activate brain structures involved in the generation of emotions” (p. 155). The point here is that there is a possibility that using L2 can enable students to detach their emotions from their memories when sharing their painful experiences, so that the students can share them in a safe place.

Moreover, the Japanese instruction has a possibility to deteriorate self-compassion and enhance self-criticism. Honorific speech is one of the explicit examples to illustrate this phenomenon. Using humble forms deprecate the speakers themselves in order to place the interlocutors on a higher position. There is, of course, a positive aspect of the value of politeness and humbleness; however, the speakers are unconsciously accustomed to self-deprecation by using the humble form of the honorific speech. Also, Japanese language has many self-deprecating expressions. For example, gratitude is often expressed by the word for guilt and apology, *Sumimasen* (I'm sorry.) (Coulmas, 1981, p. 82). This can be appeared in their verbal style.

Ting-Toomey (1999) states that people in the high-context culture such as Japan and South Korea communicate in the self-effacement verbal style, which “emphasizes the importance of humbling oneself via verbal restraints, hesitations, modest-talk and the use of self-deprecation concerning one’s effort or performance.” (P. 107). By using

English, therefore, students would be able to avoid deprecating themselves.

Another possible advantage of the use of English in teaching self-compassion is that an English classroom can become a Third Space for students.

Third Space, or Third Place is a space between students' native culture and target culture (as cited in Kramsch, 2009, p. 244). It is "a symbolic place that is by no means unitary, stable, permanent and homogeneous" (Kramsch, 2009, p. 238). Bhabha (1994) argues that a third space is heterogeneous, and "highly contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation" (pp. 36-37). In this space, students cannot be defined as monolingual and cultural beings. Rather, they can move between the two cultures. Because of the nature of this fluidity and hybridity, students might free themselves from their self-deprecating Japanese culture in this space without losing their identity. Third space might help them build another community of difference from their C1, where students can develop self-compassion without deprecating themselves.

Furthermore, in the third space, students can develop critical consciousness. Kramsch (2009) mentions that the third place of the language learner entails "critical culture" that "encourages reading against the grain, questioning the social categorization of experience as expressed through the L2 vocabulary and grammar, making students aware of the historical resonances of words and their combinations. It actively promotes

comparisons between L1 and L2 categorizations” (pp. 238-239). Cultivating critical consciousness can enable students to see their own culture objectively from a different viewpoint, which is needed to enhance their self-awareness. McMahon (2001) shows her Japanese feminist English class as an example of a third place. She reports that the English classroom became a place where the feminist participants were able to express themselves honestly. “Participants explicitly pinpoint the class itself as a source of critical consciousness of societal gender roles ... which is not always welcomed by their families.” (p. 330). In short, English instruction can create a space, where students can detach their self-deprecating culture from themselves, and can develop students’ critical consciousness, both of which can contribute to enhancing self-compassion.

8. The Context

School

The eight-day Self-Compassion English Program was piloted with six Japanese college students at Kobe City University of Foreign Studies between June 28th and July 21st, 2013. The university is committed to “promoting the study and teaching of foreign languages and cultures.” They offer undergraduate and graduate-degree programs in English, Russian, Chinese and Spanish studies, as well as International Relations to

approximately 2,000 students currently. (Kobe City University of Foreign Studies, n.d.).

I graduated from this university in March 2010, and I chose this university as the subject of the study because as a graduate, I have an extensive network, so I expected that I would be able to conduct my research project with their support. In addition, from my college life experience, I assumed that there are many self-critical students, evaluating themselves negatively, having an enormous pressure from job hunting. Therefore, I was confident that I would find appropriate participants for my research project.

Each 90-minute session was conducted in a spare classroom of the university, which could accommodate around 40 students with a black board, desks and chairs. All desks were pushed back, opening up a wide space. From Day 1 to 4, only seven chairs were arranged in a circle in the space, in order to create a sense of community, but for the rest of the program, the chairs were arranged in a row with desks due to the nature of each activity, which required introspection and privacy.

The program had nothing to do with the university's formal curriculum, so the class was usually conducted at our mutual convenient time such as after school during weekdays or afternoon on Sunday.

Participants

Six participants enrolled in this program voluntarily by reading the advertisement, which articulated that the purpose of this program was to understand oneself more deeply and embrace it just as it is by learning self-compassion. This advertisement also pointed out that desirable applicants were those who saw themselves negatively and often criticized themselves.

Two of them were majoring in English, two in Chinese and one in Spanish. Their age range was 20-23, and all but one were female. Their English level varied from pre-intermediate to advanced. They were informed in advance that each class was conducted in English, but they could also use Japanese when necessary. In the initial interview, all of them reported that they had a tendency to criticize themselves and see themselves negatively for various reasons, so that they could become the subjects of this study. All participants gave permission for tape-recording and using their statements during the interview and each session as long as they are anonymous. In addition, in order to respect their rights, I informed them that they could withdraw from the program whenever they would like.

I expected two challenges in advance in providing the program. One was their English proficiency level. During the individual interview before the course, every

Chinese language student reported that they had little confidence to use and follow the English instruction in the class. In fact, one of them dropped out of the course in the middle of the program. She reported that she could not follow the program and hated English and the situation, where the others understood while she couldn't. Class management was the other expected challenge. Since students came to class voluntarily, the relationship between the teacher and students was also a challenge. I, as the teacher-observer, needed to figure out appropriate distance from students.

9. Data Collection

“Qualitative findings grow out of three kinds of data collection; (1) in-depth, open-ended interviews; (2) direct observation: and (3) written documents” (Patton, 2002, p. 4). In order to satisfy the principle of triangulation and understand the participants' introspective experiences, I collected these three qualitative data.

Open-ended interviews add “depth, detail and meaning at a very personal level of experience” (Patton, 2002, p. 18), enabling researchers “to achieve a holistic understanding of the interviewee's point of view or situation” (Berry, 1999). In my research project, individual interviews are conducted twice before and after the program. The main purposes of the initial interview are to build rapport between me and each

participant, to confirm if they have a tendency to self-criticism and evaluate themselves negatively, and to understand how, when, and why they evaluate themselves so. By understanding these before the program, I can clearly set the starting point of their inner journeys of learning self-compassion. The second interview is conducted after the program in order to understand how self-compassion has affected them, and how they have changed or not changed their perceptions towards themselves through the program. I play a role as an interviewer because this program requires a strong affective connection and deep understanding between the teacher and students in order for them to express themselves freely with the sense of security in a classroom.

The participants' documents entail their works during the class, journals after each class, and the final reflection paper at the end of the program. Students' works are useful sources of data, but what they write might be different from how they actually feel inside. Therefore, I use students' works during the second interview in order to clarify how they are actually feeling when they are making these works in order to understand them better. Journals contain "personal meanings and understandings" (Pratt, 2006, personal documents). Considering the nature of my research topic, they are appropriate sources of data.

Class Observation with field notes is also collected to "satisfy the principle of

triangulation and increase trust in the validity of the study's conclusions" (Suter, 2012, p. 350). Only data from transcribed texts of interviews and written documents has a limitation "to how much can be learned from what people say. To understand the complexities of many situations fully, direct participation in and observation of the phenomenon of interest may be the best research method" (Patton, 2002, p.21). Also, in order to increase in accuracy of the field note, each class is tape-recorded.

10. Data Analysis

Qualitative Data Analysis

According to Miles and Huberman ..., qualitative analysis includes three streams of activity, each deserving sharp focus to evaluate credibility: *data reduction* (simplifying complex data by, for example, extracting recurring themes via coding); *data display* (e.g., matrices, charts, graphs, even stories); and, finally, *drawing conclusions* and verifying them as a means of testing the validity of findings. (as cited in Suter, 2012, p. 363)

I will follow these three streams of activity, using coding, charts, and narrative respectively. Creating charts of the simplified data by coding is quite helpful to follow and understand the "process" of participants' inner experiences itself. In addition, narrative can play an important role since "narrative is 'a primary act of mind'" (as cited in Todeva, & Cenoz, p. 9) and "personal narratives have always been an important meaning-making tool at the core of human experience" (Todeva & Cenoz, 2009, p.9).

Narrative can illustrate the depth of the participants' introspections vividly and meaningfully.

Focus Person

Qualitative data analysis is not intended to generalize to a larger population in the same sense that a statistically analyzed large-scale survey would. The generalization often sought is the *generalization of ideas* so that they can be applied in many contexts. In this sense, ideas generated by a single-person or single-institution case study may be broadly applicable. A single memorable quote in context, as we know from history, can have a powerful influence. (Suter, 2012, p. 353)

Although I collected and analyzed all the data from all participants, I decided on focusing my intensive analysis only on a single participant in this limited space of the paper because this participant, Student A, has some significant characteristics as the subject of this study: having a tendency to self-criticism by social comparisons, being driven by the pressure of job-hunting, and having temptation of suicide in the past. As I state above, the ultimate purpose of this action research is to prevent more Japanese youth from committing suicide proactively. Fortunately, Student A does not currently have suicidal thought, but she can become the appropriate subject of the study in my research context. From this point of view, it is quite meaningful to delve deeply into this single person in this limited space. The findings generated by Student A can be applicable and have an influence on those who suffer from the similar context.

11. The Findings

Student A: Background

Student A is 20 years old, and is in her third-year of study, majoring in Chinese. She has long been a member of the wind orchestra club, serving as captain in junior high, vice captain in high school, and now director in college. She looks calm and composed, speaking politely, and dresses well. During the initial interview, I had the impression that she is rather quiet but can communicate well with others. When I first interviewed her, I thought she had no difficulties, but later I realized that she harbored negative experiences that affected her well-being. She had negative experiences with relationships, not being accepted, and feeling isolated both in school and at home. She has turned her face away from this negative memory for a long time, suppressing it to the depths of her consciousness.

It was a long time ago, but I couldn't be accepted both in school and at home, and I felt inferior at that time, and have criticized myself since then up to now.
(Final Interview, Aug 2, 2013)

Before the Program

Self-Criticism from Her Sense of Inferiority due to Her Introverted Personality and Her Suicidal Thoughts

Student A enrolled in this program because she felt pressured by the prospect of

job hunting for the next year. She stated that she needed to take some action, do something different, and become an active and outgoing person; otherwise, she thought she would not be hired by any corporations (Initial Interview; Document, June 26, July 17, 2013). In the initial interview, she acknowledged that she was highly self-critical, evaluating herself negatively because she regarded her introverted personality as her weak point. She often felt inferior and criticized herself, especially when she compared herself to active persons who go overseas and do something extraordinary, or persons like her older sister who is “*out-going, intelligen[t], has a lot of friends, sporty*” (Document, July 17, 2013). Self-criticism has driven Student A to work hard, but it has also exhausted her.

Aside from her sense of inferiority, I learned that there was another cause of her self-criticism: the temptation to commit suicide. She confessed that she sometimes had suicidal thoughts when she faced difficulty. She assumed that having such thoughts was unacceptable, and once others knew this fact, they would criticize her. This assumption caused her to criticize herself, so she wore a mask all the time, appearing happy and peaceful, to hid the feeling that something was wrong with her; however, the more she pretended, the more exhausted she felt (Final Interview; Document, Aug 2, 2013).

I always feel that I don't know about myself at all, always criticizing myself constantly... I want to see and understand myself through this program.

(Document, July 10, 2013)

During the Program

What would happen when Student A encountered the concept of self-compassion? How would self-compassion affect her sense of self-worth? Here, I would like to show how self-compassion affected her throughout the program.

Self-Kindness as Self-Indulgence

When she first encountered the concept of self-compassion, especially self-kindness, she regarded it as self-indulgence and could not accept it fully. The reasons why she could not were her habit of self-criticism and the pressure of job-hunting:

I have criticized myself for a long time. Even though there are kind words and actions for others, giving them to myself seems like "spoiling" or "weakness" to me, so I had kind of rejection of accepting self-compassion 100 percent.

(Document, Aug 2, 2013)

Well, I can easily say "Take a break" to my friends, but if I say it to myself, I thought "Yet, others are taking actions, doing something. Also, again the job-hunting season is coming soon, and time won't wait for me and if I stop, I would be left behind." (Final Interview, Aug 2, 2013)

Self-Kindness as Self-Care

However, as the program progressed, her understanding of self-compassion was gradually changing, especially when the class discussed the difference between self-compassion and self-indulgence. She was able to recognize that self-compassion is not about spoiling oneself; sometimes caring for oneself requires discipline:

“To care for your happiness.” Not to deny yourself, but alleviate suffering. Indeed, “Tough Love” is not spoiling. (Document, July 17, 2013)

I was able to recognize that “caring for oneself” is not spoiling oneself; rather it is an important action for supporting oneself. (Document, Aug 2, 2013)

Moreover, she realized the importance of caring for herself because she already recognized that constant self-criticism exhausted her. In the past, she hesitated to take a rest since she regarded it as self-indulgence, but she realized that creating some breathing space is an important action:

I have criticized myself and been driven for a long time, but I can now think like it is one option to take a rest. Um... you know, taking a rest is not bad 100 percent. Indeed, time won't wait, but I can now think it is one of my options. (Final Interview, Aug 2013)

Self-Kindness for Opening the Lid on Her Negative Memory

The understanding of self-kindness allowed her to have courage to face her negative experience: *“Well, ‘it’s ok to care about myself.’ This kind of thought helped me to peel at my negative aspect, instead of keeping a lid on it (laughing).”* (Final Interview,

Aug 2, 2013).

When she was courageously able to face her negative experience by self-kindness, the understanding and practicing mindfulness started to work in an emotionally supportive environment.

Mindfulness for Expanding New Possibilities

Mindfulness has given her new perspectives, expanding new possibilities and chances. When she analyzed the habit of self-critical persons in the Participatory Approach (See Appendix A, pp. 64-69), for example, she recognized that she often over-identified a situation (Document, July 3, 2013). She reported, “*by reading [the story] objectively, I thought it is really a waste of possibility. I also felt that I, myself, am missing chances, which I can gain only by living ‘now’*” (Document, July 3, 2013).

Moreover, when another participant asked the benefit of practicing mindfulness, she voluntarily answered, “*Seeing it objectively, ... different chances could emerge, rather than giving up*” (Class Observation, July 17, 2013).

Student A clearly understands that mindfulness can provide her with different perspectives, which allows her to see different possible choices and chances in difficult situations. Moreover, this clear understanding and practicing of mindfulness has

gradually begun to change her perception of herself and her life in new and healthier ways. The following four changes can be observed: 1) reconsidering her negative memory in a more balanced way, 2) having a sense of gratitude by paying attention to her positive memory, 3) beginning to reassure herself that she is all right, and 4) accepting her introverted personality.

Reconsidering Her Negative Memory in a More Balanced Way

She began to reconsider her negative experiences in a more balanced way. For example, when she reflected on her life as objectively as possible and wrote a letter to herself, she mentioned that she was able to see her negative experience from a different perspective:

This time, trying not to criticize, I looked back to my negative experience, which I had always turned my face away from. I had always run away from it because I always judged it as negative and what I hate. But I have found that all of them are not necessarily bad, and I can see that I could have done in different ways at that time. ... I am now able to see what I have turned my face away from, a little bit. (Class Observation, July 21, 2013)

This comment can clearly indicates that she has begun to reconsider her negative memory in a more neutral manner, reconstructing each event from a new perspective.

Having a Sense of Gratitude towards Her Friends

The neutral observation of Student A's life led her to pay attention not only to her negative memory, but also to her positive experiences such as interaction with her best friends. This made her feel a sense of gratitude towards her precious friends.

By facing the negative aspect of my life, I can recognize that I have true happiness, which is to get to know the person at that time. (Final Interview, Aug 2, 2013)

Well, (pause) but because I had the difficult time in my childhood, I am truly able to appreciate those who I met and who encouraged me later in my life. (Final Interview, Aug 2, 2013).

Before learning self-compassion, especially mindfulness, she was strongly drawn by her negative memory when reflecting on her life. However, since she is now able to see both positive and negative experiences in a more balanced way, she has begun to appreciate her life experience, feeling gratitude towards her precious friends.

Beginning to Reassure Herself that She is All Right

Unpacking the negative memory objectively and being able to have a sense of gratitude, she began to reassure herself that she is all right. When I asked her about her perception of herself in the final interview, for example, she reported as follows:

Well, I often feel bad about myself because there are many incompetent stuff about me, but but you know, I think I'm not as bad as I thought. Well, um... I can accept ... I am not that bad, considering my experiences of the club activity

and interacting with my friends. (Final Interview, Aug2, 2013)

She mentioned her positive experiences as a reason to reassure herself that she is fine.

Moreover, she also reassured herself that she is all right with respect to the process of unpacking her negative memory objectively. Here, she used a metaphor, “Dark” or “Black Box” to refer to her negative memory:

Student A (S): *Well, there is a kind of dark box [inside of myself] and I probably want to take out what’s inside the box, and observe it, and say to myself, “it’s not too bad as I thought.”*

Interviewer (I): *How do you feel about yourself when you do that?*

S: *Well, surely it makes me a little bit upset to look inside the box, but I can encourage myself? It’s not spoiling. I can say to myself, “I’m all right.”*

I: *I see. To yourself?*

S: *Yes, to myself.*

I: *So you mean you feel negative or bad about yourself because the black box is full, so when you look inside of the box and realize it is not too bad as you thought, you feel you are all right. Is that right?*

S: *Yes, yes! Calming myself, “It’s ok, it’s ok.”*

I: *Is it related to your sense of self-worth?*

S: *Well, if the “black box” is getting smaller by saying to myself, “I’m all right,” and the space of this big box is shrinking inside of me, I would be glad.*

I: *I see. How does the “black box” affect you inside of you? How does it affect you?*

S: *Well... to me, I have tried not to look at it, it’s usually on the bottom of my [heart] heavily, but I usually turn my face away from it, so it doesn’t open, doesn’t always affect me, but when I reflect on my past, I can see the black one, and I really hate it, so I turn my face away from it. You know, I hope this box, or my negative aspect is getting smaller by looking and saying to myself, “I’m all right.”*

I: *I see. It’s kind of a wired question, but why is it good to make the negative one smaller?*

S: *Well, how can I say? I can expand the space, where I can feel all right about myself. Sorry to answer very abstractly (laughing).*

I: *Why is it good to feel alright about yourself?*

S: *Well... if I criticize myself 100 percent, I couldn't depend on myself, and I can't take a breath. Surely, no one could depend on me. Also, I am not good at asking for help to others, so I want to have some breathing spaces inside of myself (laughing).*

I: *I see.*

S: *Makes sense?*

I: *Makes sense, makes sense. You mean you cannot stand on your own feet if the negative part of yourself is huge, and you feel you're not all right. And you cannot take a breath, feeling exhausted.*

S: *Yes.*

I: *If you can make it smaller or shorter, you can expand a space, where you can say to yourself, "I am all right," inside of yourself, so that you feel like you can depend on yourself.*

S: *Yes, yes.*

(Final Interview, Aug 2, 2013)

Here, it is worth noting that she began to observe her negative experiences just as they are without rejecting or ignoring them, which, in turn, made her negative emotions start to disappear, reassuring herself that she is adequate. The following comment also emphasizes this point:

I reflected on what I had been turned my face away from for ages. Even though I had put a lid on that memory, it is deeply connected with my emotion and myself, so it is really important. Instead of throwing away, I would like to say, "Even though you had gone through the difficult time, now you are all right."
(Document, Aug 2, 2013)

By observing her negative experiences objectively with a clearer perspective, she has begun to reassure herself that she is all right.

Accepting Her Introverted Personality

Aside from her life history, she was able to objectively examine her introversion, which often caused a sense of inferiority, and started to accept her introverted personality:

I often focus on one specific thing [such as] book, language, place, (shop), music... I am just a kind of person, who likes to delve deeply into a single thing rather than to touch a broad range of things superficially. ... I judged being introverted as bad, but it is part of me. ... It is not like "should," but like "I have a choice." "You can have the choice [of being introverted]." Acceptance (?). (Document, July 18, 2013)

In addition, she started to see her introversion in a more positive and assertive manner by discovering two types of introversion for her:

I think there are two types of introversion. One is doing nothing, withdrawing into one's shell. And the other is staying in a domestic area, Japan. Here, the place I am now, I am doing something, but I am not flying around the world proactively, so I would be categorized into the latter one, and I think that's fine. (Final Interview, Aug 2, 2013)

Well, many students at my university go and do some volunteer works overseas, they are very active, and I was thinking I had to become active and do something like them, but it is not necessarily bad to be introverted 100 percent. Indeed, going outside is important, but staying inside is not the same as remaining status quo, or stopping self-improvement. (Final Interview, Aug 2, 2013)

I have not had one year experience of volunteering overseas, but, for example, I am doing this and that in the wind orchestra club and working part-time, and looking back my college life, I cannot say I am inactive. Indeed, there are some, who say that they have many friends around the world through volunteering, but it is more important for me to get to know and have good relationships with my friends here on this campus. (Final Interview, Aug 2, 2013)

I had always thought that I had to become active and want to go outside, and regarded introversion as bad, but I don't have to criticize introversion 100 percent. ... I think I am not bad 100 percent just because I cannot be like them. There are many things that I can do here. (Final Interview, Aug 2, 2013)

She was able to see and accept her introverted personality in a more rational and positive way. In other words, because of the effect of mindfulness, she was able to become a choice-maker of her own personality. This decision-making process empowered her in the way that ethnorelativism claims that people become integrated by the act of defining their identities themselves (Bennett, 1993, pp. 59-60). Her sense of self-worth was raised when she was able to make a choice about her personality. Mindfulness can make this happen, offering multiple choices, which a subjective lens cannot perceive and offer.

In short, by encountering self-compassion, she has begun to reconstruct her negative memory in a more balanced manner, focus on the positive aspects of her life, reassure herself that she is not as bad as she thinks, and accept her weakness as part of her personality.

The Power of Compassion from Others

Aside from self-compassion and mindfulness, it is worth pointing out the power of compassion from others in terms of raising one's sense of self-worth. She

reported that she also felt she is all right when other participants listened to her story of suicidal thoughts nonjudgmentally during the activity called The Way of Council (See Appendix A, pp. 92-94). I observed that when she was telling the story in a hushed voice to other group members, she was looking down, avoiding eye contact, collecting courage from every part of her body. Other members listened to her very sincerely without saying anything. One of them had tears in her eyes when she was listening to Student A. In the final reflection paper, Student A wrote of her deep gratitude towards other participants for listening to her without judgment:

I understand that having a thought of “wanting to end my life.” is “strange” as a living-being, and we mustn’t make this choice and I don’t want any to do this, but inside of myself, I cannot deny this thought 100 percent because I understand the suffering from living and the salvation from this choice. So I can agree with this thought of wanting to “end of my life.” But I also understand that others regard it as something you shouldn’t, or something insane, so I feel scared as if others also denied me and regarded me as insane. So I was wearing the mask and hiding it, but I was choked behind the mask ... Therefore, when I realized there are people who listen to my feeling without judgment, I felt at ease in my heart. I thought I might be strange, but I am not. (Document, Aug 2, 2013)

I feel really gratitude towards them for just listening to me. (Final Interview, Aug 2, 2013)

These statements can clearly indicate that compassion from others can raise one’s sense of self-worth deeply. Student A was reassured that she is all right by other members’ accepting attitudes.

The flow chart below clarifies and summarizes what has happened to Student A through the program (see Figure 1).

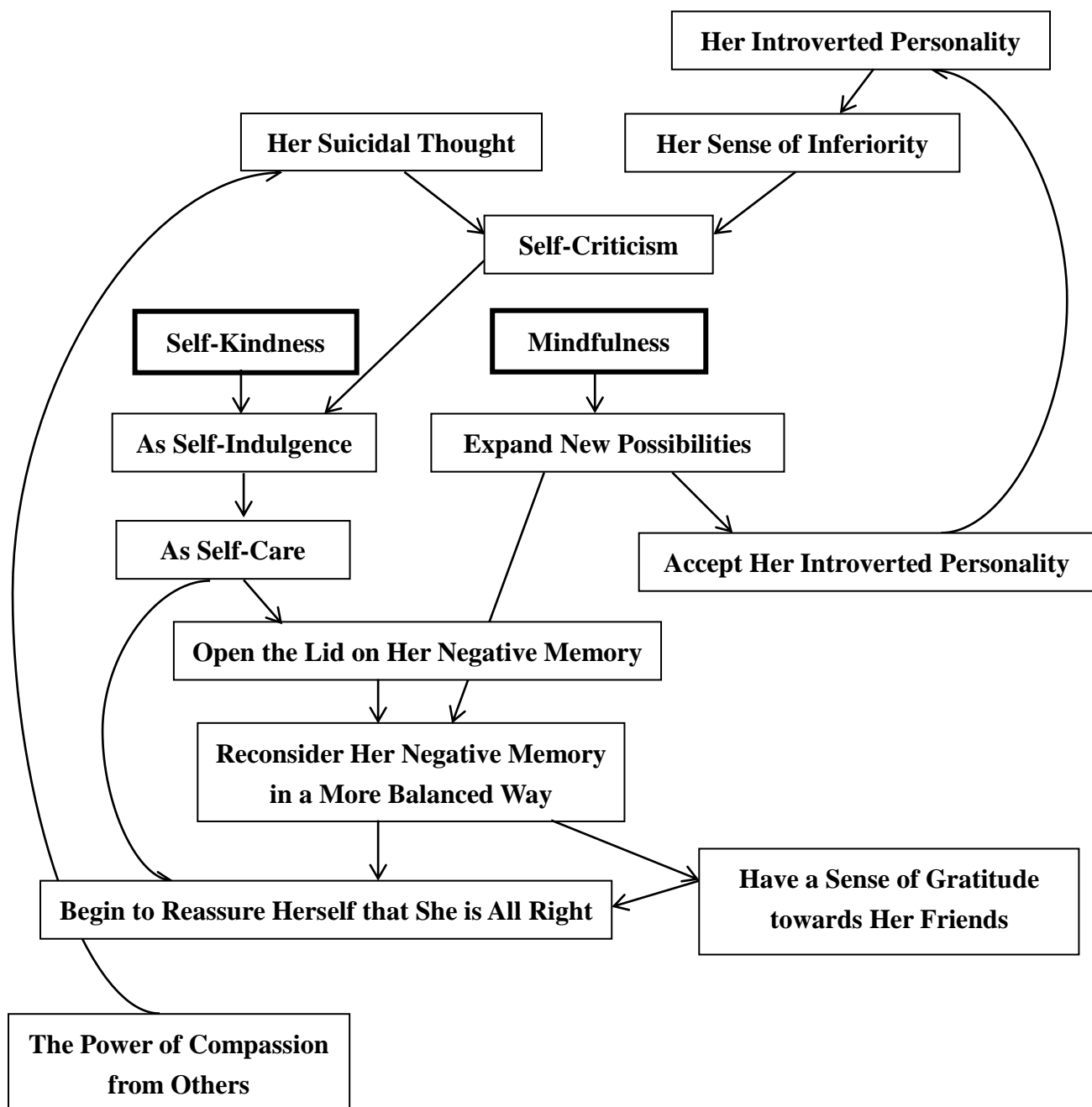


Figure 1. The Flow Chart: What has happened to Student A through the program?

After the Program

Balance between Self-Criticism and Self-Compassion

After finishing the program, she stated that she is willing to internalize self-compassion because she hopes to avoid being quick to judge herself and others, and wants to take care of herself (Document, Aug 2, 2013). However, she also acknowledged the benefit of self-criticism for self-improvement:

I don't think self-criticism is totally bad. ... For example, if I criticize myself like "Oh, I should've done this way," I can avoid the same mistake and prepare for the better action next time. (Final Interview, Aug 2, 2013)

Here, she might be confusing self-criticism and self-reflection. She may be using the word self-criticism to express the act of reflecting and finding drawbacks or mistakes in order to correct them. The following comment confirms this clearly, implying a positive change:

Well, I know self-criticism is motivation, and I also know it is not too good to criticize myself too much. It is difficult to control, but I think I will continue to criticize myself or reflect and find my drawbacks, thinking like "I should've done this," but during this thinking process, I hope I can change my voice from "I should've done this!" to "Let's do this way in the next time!." (Final Interview, Aug 9, 2013)

Even though she showed her willingness to continue to criticize herself verbally, her way of thinking is apparently changing. The following statement beautifully captures her willingness to practice self-compassion in the future:

After taking this program, I can say to myself, "I don't have to rush." Indeed,

time won't stop and there are piles of something to do and something to worry, and I still think I should not stop. But running up all the time causes suffering to me, of course. Giving me some breathing space is not spoiling myself. It is easy to say to 'Take a breath' when others are choking, but I couldn't allow myself to do that. Surely, it is important to work hard, but it is one option to stop for a short time. (Document, Aug 2013)

The Effect of English as a Means of Teaching Self-Compassion

The effect of English as a means of teaching self-compassion should also be evaluated. Student A, whose English level is intermediate, took English positively as a means of learning self-compassion because English enabled her to pause and organize her thoughts and emotions well, helping her to calm down in the middle of the class:

Well... It sounds kind of strange but I could see [what to say and write] more objectively because it was not my mother tongue. ... When I try to write or speak in English, I need to pause and organize my feeling, right? If I use my first language, my emotion comes out in words naturally before I organize a sentence. ... I had to work hard to make English sentences, but that's why I can organize what I am thinking and the reason to think so. ... It's like "Let's calm down a little bit." ... If I do this in Japanese, I doubt if I can calm down. ... I guess the battle among my emotions can happen. (Final Interview, Aug 2, 2013).

This effect of organizing one's thoughts and emotions can be seen in other participants regardless of their English level:

When I speak English, I can take a pause. Words don't come up in my mind quickly. Maybe, I don't know, partly because I am not a fluent speaker, but unlike Japanese, which comes out of my mouth quickly, in English, I can be more attentive to choosing proper words, ... how others perceive what I say to avoid misunderstanding, ... so I can analyze what I am thinking, how I am

feeling, and what I want to explain in English more than in Japanese. I need to think about what my point is since I cannot say it abstractly [unlike Japanese]. (Other participant A, Female, Advanced level, Final Interview, Aug 9, 2013)

Other positive effects reported by other participants included allowing one to become a more attentive listener, to understand the direct meaning without distortion through the filter of translation, to protect oneself from the harshness of self-scrutiny, to break its effect, and so on.

If it had been Japanese, maybe I would have spoiled myself and missed the story, but in English, I really had to listen to understand. ... I feel like I was more attentive. (Other participant B, Male, Intermediate level, Final Interview, Aug 4, 2013)

I can understand the concept itself directly without distortion through the filter of translation, so English is better. (Other participant C, Female, Advanced level, Final Interview, Aug 4, 2013)

English doesn't allow me to express myself fully, so it's like breaking effect. So it's easier to speak [about myself]. (Other participant D, Female, Advanced level, Final Interview, Aug 9, 2013)

If this program is conducted only in Japanese, it would be a little bit heavy, I guess. ... It could be difficult for everyone to apply for [this program] in the first place. ... If you add "English" to the title of the program, I think "I can also study English!" (brightly) but if this program is only studying self-compassion without learning English, well... personally, it would be hard to enroll. (Other participant D, Female, Advanced level, Final Interview, Aug 9, 2013)

Usually, my class is only Chinese, and I seldom use English, so I wanted to be exposed to English. (Other participant B, Male, Intermediate level, Final Interview, Aug 4, 2013)

Well, it is interesting to learn this kind of thing in English. Personally, I can see whatever written in English looks more interesting than in Japanese. ... Maybe, it's because I like English. (Other participant C, Female, Advanced level, Final Interview, Aug 4, 2013)

These participant comments verify that the English language functioned well as a means of teaching self-compassion, especially in terms of handling the participants' emotions.

12. Discussion

The findings indicate that self-compassion has positively affected Student A by enabling her to 1) reconstruct her negative memory in a more rational way, 2) see her positive memory of her friends, generating a sense of gratitude within her, 3) reassure her that she is fine, and 4) accept her introverted personality just as it is. These results can prove that her sense of self-worth has been raised through the program, but why did that happen? She has not gone outside and accomplished extraordinary things as she wished before the program, nor has she gained a job position yet. What exactly raised her sense of self-worth?

Observing and analyzing her process throughout the program, I can say that her sense of self-worth has been raised not just because she learned self-compassion itself, but because she has looked deep inside herself profoundly, and faced her inconvenient

truth courageously, rather than looking outside and comparing with others. Trying not to criticize herself, she confronted her negative views of herself and reconstructed each of these, one at a time, from the memory of her childhood to her personality. In this sense, self-compassion itself has not directly raised her sense of self-worth; rather, it has supported the process of developing her self-awareness, creating an emotionally supportive environment by self-kindness, and providing a more rational perspective by mindfulness. Self-compassion has supported and facilitated her process of development of self-awareness, and it is this development of self-awareness that has raised her sense of self-worth.

Over the last decades, many educators have made attempts to raise a sense of self-worth by developing students' self-awareness (Shor, 1987; Shor 1992; Souto-Manning, 2010). Paulo Freire is one of the good examples. His educational approach is all about raising "conscientização," critical consciousness among the oppressed illiterate in Brazil, in order to raise their sense of self-worth (Freire, 2000). Student A, in this case, was also oppressed by her over-identified negative memory and harsh critical voice inside her mind. With the help of self-compassion, she was able to become more aware of her true self, which, in turn, raised her sense of self-worth. This outcome can reaffirm the importance of developing self-awareness in terms of raising a

sense of self-worth, which is crucial to prevent more people from committing suicide.

Moreover, in addition to self-compassion, this research shows that English language also can support the process of developing self-awareness, especially for the self-critical students. L2 detachment effect can function quite well when participants are dealing with their own emotions in class. English allows them to clarify their feelings and thoughts in a more objective way. This suggests that content-based English teaching has another possibility of raising students' self-awareness without their being overwhelmed by their emotional flooding.

Furthermore, in terms of raising a sense of self-worth, the power of compassion from others also cannot be ignored, as the findings indicate. Having a sense of being accepted by others has a powerful influence on self-critical persons, as Student A describes at the end of the program (Final Interview, Document, Aug 2, 2013). Rogers (2004) states that people become their true selves only in a condition where they experience themselves "as being fully *received*" (p. 130). This finding reconfirms the importance of the presence of accepting others in raising a sense of self-worth.

In short, through this research, I have come to the conclusion that self-compassion is not irrelevant to contemporary Japanese youth; rather, it is strongly related to their lives. Self-compassion has a possibility of offering to Japanese youth a

safe space and new, more balanced perceptions, allowing them to develop their self-awareness, and it is this clearer self-awareness that can raise their sense of self-worth regardless of social comparisons. English classrooms have a possibility of becoming the place to support this process of development, and additionally, the presence of compassionate others can also help them to enhance the sense of self-worth. In order to prevent more Japanese youth from committing suicide in turmoil, I can say that Japanese youth need more time to understand and explore their inner experiences in an emotionally supportive environment with the presence of accepting others.

13. Future Directions

In this research, the subject of the study was a single person for a limited time. I value a single case study to help me deeply understand the complexity of the introspective phenomenon, and considering the reality that the participants did not have more time for various personal reasons, this study was the best that I could do in this current situation. However, I also acknowledge the shortcoming of this study: the small number of participants and the short length of time for research. Therefore, in order to test my conclusion, I would like to continue to teach self-compassion to more Japanese youth and reexamine this result. Also, by teaching self-compassion, I hope to create an

environment, where students can explore themselves and raise their sense of self-worth in classrooms. As a result, I hope that I can proactively contribute to preventing more Japanese youth from committing suicide.

Moreover, this research result sheds light on the positive effect of integration of humanistic psychology and English education in order to raise student's sense of self-worth. Psychological knowledge and skills have been integrated in the field of SLA such as Community Language Learning or Desuggestopedia (Larsen-Freeman, 2011, pp. 71 - 101). However, the main objective of these approaches is for learning language effectively by borrowing from the effect of psychology. What this study shows points in the opposite direction: raising a sense of self-worth effectively by borrowing the effect of SLA. There are many possibilities to explore in this direction as this research indicates. I would like to continue to conduct research on the integration of humanistic psychology and English education in order to make a difference in the current social problems among youth.

Finally, I would like to show my sincere and deepest gratitude toward every participant of this program for working diligently and letting me enter their inner experiences, which people would not usually like to show. Even though the program for this research has ended, I would like to keep watching over them with a warm heart.

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Appendix A: Self-Compassion English Program

Self-Compassion English Program



An 8-day content-based English program

For Japanese college students

Kobe, Japan

Shinichi Matsuguma

June 28 – July 21, 2013

Objectives

- ✓ Understand yourself at a deeper level
- ✓ Embrace yourself just as you are
- ✓ Express yourself in both English and Japanese



Date

Unit 1: Community Building

Day 1: June 28/ 16:00 – 17:30

Unit 2: Self-Criticism

Day 2: June 30/ 14:00 – 15:30

Day 3: June 30/ 15:30 – 17:00

Day 4: July 04/ 17:30 – 19:00

Unit 3: Self-Compassion

Day 5: July 11/ 17:30 – 19:00

Day 6: July 18/ 17:30 – 19:00

Day 7: July 19/ 19:30 – 21:00

Unit 4: Compassion for Others

Day 8: July 21/ 16:00 – 18:30

Rules

- ✓ Listen and speak from the heart
- ✓ Not think too much about what other participants think of you
- ✓ Not hesitate to use any languages (English/Japanese/Chinese)
- ✓ Communicate each other outside of the class as well
- ✓ Work hard for yourself, not for the teacher
- ✓
- ✓
- ✓

Assignments

- ✓ Journal writing in either English or Japanese (After every class)
- ✓ Reflection Paper (at the end of the program)

Scope and Sequence

Self-compassion consists of three major components: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. These three interconnected components are the basis of the sequence of the content. In addition, since self-awareness enhances self-compassion, self-inquiry activities are included. The program consists of four units: Unit 1: Community building, Unit 2: Self-Criticism, Unit 3: Self-Compassion, and Unit 4: Compassion for Others. Students will examine the negative effects of self-criticism first, and then they will explore self-compassion as an alternative attitude towards themselves. Finally, the students will expand their compassion towards others in the Way of Council. Affective consideration determines the sequence of the content. The program starts with community building. At the beginning of the program, students will examine self-criticism from an outsider point of view first, and then deal with their personal self-critical experiences individually, in pairs, and in a whole group. Students will also learn about self-appreciation at the end of the program in order for them to see their positive sides of themselves.

	Others	Mindfulness	Common Humanity	Self-Kindness	Self-Inquiry	Self-Compassion
Unit 1 Day 1	Opening Setting Intentions Writing (20min)		Community Building Listening Speaking (40 min)		Life History Writing (30 min)	
Unit 2 Day 2		What is Mindfulness? Breathing Meditation Listening (30 min)	Read a story of self-criticism Reading Speaking (30 min)		Life History Writing (30 min)	
Unit 2 Day 3		Breathing Meditation Listening (15 min)	Reading a story of self-criticism Reading Speaking (60 min)		Life History Writing (15 min)	
Unit 2 Day 4		Breathing Description/ Interpretation Listening Writing (30 min)	Analyze self-criticism Reading Speaking (30 min)		Life History Ask “why?” Writing (30 min)	
Unit 2 Day 5		4 Choices Listening (30 min)				Encounter Self-Compassion Listening (60 min)

Unit 2 Day 6				Write A Letter To Myself Writing (20 min)		Tackle Confusions about Self- Compassion (60 min)
Unit 2 Day 7		Mindfulness of emotions in Body Listening (15 min)		Write A Letter to Others Listening Speaking (60 min)		Self-Compassion Motivation Compassionate Coaching Speaking (15 min)
Unit 3 Day 8		Review	Way of Council Listening Speaking (60min)	Review	Write A Letter To My Life Writing (20 min)	The power of Vulnerability Listening Speaking (60 min)



Unit 1: Opening Day 1**|important |items****Community Building****[Purposes]**

For both the teacher and students to get to know each other. For the students to identify their values. For the students to practice listening from the heart.

[Outline]

Each student will bring an item, which is important to him or her. They will mingle and ask each other about the story behind it. Then, the teacher will ask a student why the item is important to another student in a whole group.

Unit 1: Opening Day 1**What Do | Need? What Can | Offer?****Community Building****[Purposes]**

For both the teacher and students to understand what they need from other members in terms of effective learning. For the teacher to create a sense of community. For the students to have a responsibility to collaborate each other to create a sense of community.

[Outline]

The teacher will emphasize the importance of creating a sense of community in the classroom. Students will write their needs for their effective learning, such as needs for non-judgment, respect, confidentiality etc. Also, students will write what they can offer to create a sense of community on a sheet of paper. It could be making a smile, encouraging others to speak etc. They will put them on the wall.

Unit 1: Opening Day 1

Set Intentions and Write a Letter to yourself

Initial Assessment

[Purposes]

For students to make sure their intentions of taking this program. For the teacher to understand their true intentions and motivation.

[Outline]

Students will close their eyes and take a deep breath. The teacher will ask students why they are taking this course. After a few minutes, students will open their eyes and write a letter to themselves.

Unit 2: Self-Criticism Day 2

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness

[Purpose]

For students to understand what mindfulness is. For students to become aware of the importance of mindfulness. For the students to practice mindfulness by meditation.

[Outline]

The teacher will show the video clip, “Moments” first and let them discuss what they notice. Then, the teacher will say, “Life is a series of moment. We tend to miss this precious moment. We need to pay more attention to the moment to moment.” The teacher will share several definitions of mindfulness with students: “Moment-to-moment awareness.” “Knowing what you are experiencing, while you’re experiencing it. - Guy Armstrong.” “Paying

attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally - Jon Kabat-Zinn.” The teacher will show two simple definitions and encourage them to remember them. “1. Pay attention to the present moment,” and “2. See things just as they are nonjudgmentally.” The teacher then will ask students how they can practice and cultivate mindfulness. The students will discuss in pairs, and a whole group. Finally, the teacher will introduce mindfulness meditation. The teacher will provide the vocabulary sheet first for the students to make sure that students understand. They will practice mindfulness meditation in 5 minutes and then, write a reflection and share it in pairs and in a whole group. In the end, the teacher will provide the summary sheet of mindfulness with the students.

[Mindfulness meditation instruction]

Sit in a relaxed comfortable position. Sit straight. Close your eyes. Take three, slow, easy deep breaths, to relax. “Hah” What do you hear? Now, find yourself in the room. Form an image of yourself sitting in the chair. Note your posture as if you were seeing yourself from the outside. Now, bring your attention to your breathing. Pay attention to your breathing. Breath in, breath out. Simply pay attention to the sensation of the air in your nose and in your mouth. When your mind starts to wander, don’t blame yourself, just notice, and return to your breathing. Don’t worry how often your mind wanders. Just notice, and come back to your breathing.

[Resource]

The video clip, Moments:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=jNVPaINZD_I#!

[The Summary Sheet]

Mindfulness



What is Mindfulness?

1. Pay attention to the present moment.
2. See things just as they are nonjudgmentally.

Why is mindfulness important?

- ✓ We tend to miss our precious moment, even though life is a series of moment.
- ✓ We tend not to be aware of what we are doing while we are doing.
- ✓ We tend to judge/evaluate ourselves or other people quickly from our own viewpoints without understanding ourselves or them fully.
- ✓
- ✓
- ✓

How can we practice mindfulness?

We can practice mindfulness by paying attention to one specific thing such as breathing. When we breathe, just pay attention to our breathing, so that we can know what we are doing while we are doing. When our minds start to wander, just observe and notice the fact that our minds are wandering without blaming, and bring our attentions back to our breathing nonjudgmentally. Just see things as they are. Acknowledge the reality just as it is. Be in the present moment, right here, right now.

We can also practice mindfulness in daily life. When we are eating, just pay attention to the act of eating. When we are walking, just pay attention to the act of walking. When you are listening to others, just pay attention to the act of listening nonjudgmentally.

The benefits of living with mindfulness

- ✓ We can fully engage ourselves to our lives.
- ✓ We can fully understand both others and ourselves.

Unit 2: Self-Criticism Day 2, 3**Life History****Self-Inquiry****[Purposes]**

For students to identify their values and identities at a deeper level. For students to become aware of the events that have an influence on their identities.

[Outline]

Students will recall their life experiences and jot down them on the time line. Life experiences entail Significant Emotional Events (S.E.E) or encountering of influential people etc. After completing the life line, students will try to think about why each experience is significant to them, how each experience is related to their values or personalities, who has contributed to them, or whether there are any patterns among the experiences etc.

[Life experience examples]

S.E.E (Significant Emotional Events)

Influential people

Lessons (like/dislike)

Hobbies

Things you were obsessed with

Movement

Love

Persons you like/dislike

Clothes you like/dislike

Favorite movies, books, celebrities

Unit 2: Self-Criticism Day 2, 3*A Story of Self-Criticism**(Participatory Approach)***Common Humanity****[Purposes]**

For students to analyze the nature of self-criticism from an outsider perspective. For students to understand how self-criticism negatively affects people. For students to become aware of their own tendencies or thought patterns objectively.

[Outline]

Students will read a story of self-criticism and discuss it objectively. The lesson will be divided Pre/During/Post Reading sections. They will answer T/F questions for general understanding, 5W1H questions for specific information. Then, they will discuss and analyze the nature of self-criticism. The teacher will facilitate the discussion.

[Procedure]**Pre-Reading**

The teacher will ask students to share their memories of the college entrance ceremony in pairs.

During-Reading**1. General Questions for Gist (Paragraph 1-2)**

Students will read through the story and answer general comprehension questions individually. The questions are as follows: 1) Where is Ichiro now? 2) What kind of event was he talking about? 3) How many people are in this story? 4) Did Ichiro feel good about himself or bad about himself?

2. Check vocabulary

Students will check the vocabulary in pairs.

3. Questions for Specific Information (Participatory Approach Adapted)

Students will answer and discuss the following questions: 1) Paragraph (P) 1, Line (L) 4 “but I don’t believe that... there is something wrong with me.” Why did he

think so? 2) P2, L3, “I am from Kyushu, and at that time had no friends in Osaka.” How was he feeling? Why? 3) P2, L6, how was he feeling? Why? 4) P2, L6, how was she feeling? Why? 5) P2, L9-10, how was he feeling? Why? 6) P2, L11, how was he feeling? What was he thinking? Why? 7) P2, 12-13, Why? 8) P2, L13-14, what is the cause of the problem? (The possible answer is: over-identification, low self-confidence, evaluating himself negatively based on the social comparisons etc.) 9) P2, L15-16, do you think he knows himself? How did he know? 10) P2, L10-11, did he know about the relationship between the man and woman?

4. General Questions for Gist (Paragraph 3-4)

The teacher will provide the second part of the text. Students will read through the story and answer general comprehension questions individually. The questions are as follows: 1) Where was Ichiro? 2) How many people were there in this part? 3) Who started to talk, he or she?

5. Check vocabulary

Students will check the vocabulary in pairs

6. Questions for Specific Information (Participatory Approach adapted)

The students will discuss the following questions: 1) Why did he run away? 2) How did she feel? 3) P4, L1, Why? 4) P4, L3, in order to become outgoing and friendly person, he is working hard. Do you think he can become such kind of person? Why? What is the cause of the problem? 5) P4, L4, What did he mean by successful? 6) Do you sympathize with him?

7. General Questions for Gist (Paragraph 5-6)

The teacher will provide the paragraph 5 of the story, and students will read and answer the following questions: 1) how many people were in this part? 2) Did he enjoy conversation with her?

8. Check vocabulary

Students will check the vocabulary in pairs.

9. Questions for Specific Information (Participatory Approach adapted)

The students will discuss the following questions: 1) P5, L7, how did he feel? Why? 2) P6, L5, why did he think “it was just a coincidence... it will never happen

again”?

[Post-Reading]**Draw his emotional line**

Students will draw Ichiro's emotional line during the paragraph 5-6 in pairs. Then, they will add how many people were there at each point under the line. The teacher will ask what they learn from this line.

Text of a Story of Self-Criticism

[1] My name is Ichiro, 18 years old. I am a first-year college student, living in Osaka. I go to college Monday to Friday and on weekend, well..., nothing special. I don't skip class, and my academics are not too bad compared with other classmates. Many people think that I am a nice and intelligent person, but I don't believe that. In fact, I always feel that there is something wrong with me.

[2] One day in the beginning of the school year, there was a welcoming party for new students. I attended the party by myself. I am from Kyushu, and at that time had no friends in Osaka. I chose the table and sat next to a girl, who spoke a strong Kansai dialect. There was no one except me and the girl at that table. After a few minutes of silence, I collected my courage and broke the uncomfortable atmosphere. I started to talk to her, asking about her name, where she was from, and well... just general questions. She answered my

questions briefly without any emotions on her face, and once she finished answering she looked away, leaving me alone. The strange, uncomfortable, awkward silence returned back between me and the girl. Then, another boy came close to her, asking something. I saw her smile, chatting with that boy. They continued to talk, talk, talk with bright joy, leaving me alone. My eye brow fell down, feeling upset. Inside my mind, I said to myself, "I am boring." "I cannot entertain other people." "Nobody is interested in me." ... I know I am not an interesting person. I am shy. I am quiet. My conversation is boring. I know myself... There is something wrong with me...

[3] A week later, in a dining hall, while I was eating lunch by myself, one girl came close and sat next to me. I had not seen her before. She also looked like a freshman. She opened a bento box and started to eat. In a few minutes, she started to talk to me, asking about my name, my class, my hometown. But suddenly, once I finished answering these questions, I stood up, and said "nice meeting" to her gently, and left the place as if running away. I don't know why I did it... Looking back, maybe, I was afraid of the situation, where she did not enjoy my company...

[4] I always put some distance to other people, being too polite and nice. I feel like I cannot have many friends, or true friends. I wish I were a more outgoing and friendly person. I should work hard to become such kind of person. Otherwise, I cannot be liked. I cannot be accepted. I cannot be successful...

[5] One day, when I was sitting and eating lunch by myself in a dining hall, a girl came close and sat next to me. Her name is Keiko. She was one of my classmates, but I had never talked with her. She asked me about our last class, which began the conversation. We had a very deep conversation about the class. Then, our topic shifted to more personal stuff such as the reason why we chose this college, where we lived, and so on. We talked for more than an hour, sitting at the same place. I really enjoyed the conversation with her, and she looked like she was enjoying it, too.

[6] Then, she left, saying "see you later" to me. I felt a sense of joy. I really enjoyed her accompany, and found myself smiling. But suddenly, I noticed something strange or even wrong with me... Wait! Why did I enjoy the

conversation? I know I am a boring person. Why did she enjoy the conversation with me? Well.... maybe, it was just a coincidence. Maybe, it will never happen again. I know I am a boring person and I have nothing interesting to talk about. I cannot entertain other people. Everyone is not interested in me. I wish I were a funny, interesting person. If so, I would be accepted. I would be liked. I would be successful... I sighed again...

Unit 2: Self-Criticism Day 4

Analyze Self-Criticism (after a story of self-criticism)

Common Humanity

[Purposes]

For students to understand the reason why people criticize themselves from an outsider perspective. For students to analyze their tendencies to self-criticism objectively.

[Outline]

The teacher provides his/her note of the students' response to the story of self-criticism from the last class, and shares the note with them, asking what they will notice. The teacher asks what theme can emerge here. Then, the teacher asks why people criticize themselves in a whole group. Students might answer from their own experiences. The possible answers would be: to protect themselves, to motivate themselves for self-improvement etc.

Unit 2: Self-Criticism Day 4

Description/Interpretation

Mindfulness

[Purposes]

For students to develop mindfulness. For students to identify the difference between description and interpretation, and understand how description is connected with mindfulness.

[Outline]

The teacher will put two pictures on the wall and ask students to go and write two sentences about each picture on their notebook. Students will share their sentences in pairs and a whole group. The teacher will identify which is description or interpretation and ask students “What is the difference?” Students will notice that description is: what is actually happening and everyone has a common place; whereas, interpretation entails personal judgment from his/her perspective. The teacher will ask which is related to mindfulness (Description).

[Example]



Unit 3: Self-Compassion Day 5

Four Choices

Mindfulness

[Purposes]

For students to become aware of the four choices that they can make in facing a difficult time. For students to be able to connect mindfulness with ceasing the habit of self-criticism. For students to consolidate their knowledge about the difference between interpretation and description.

[Outline]

The teacher will show the diagram of the four choices below and explain about each choice with an example. The teacher will put an emphasis on the difference between interpretation and description, which is the key when it comes to making a choice in a difficult moment. In the end, students will make sure of each choice with the example of Ichiro's story individually and in pairs.

[Procedure]

As a warm-up, in pairs, students will discuss the recent time when they criticize themselves. The teacher (T) will tell the students "We have four choices in terms of how to respond to every difficult time." T will draw a diagram (below) on the black board. T will show the first choice, self-criticism, by saying "When something bad happens, you can criticize yourself such as 'I am bad, I am boring, I am inadequate.' You judge yourself negatively." Then, T will show the second choice, criticize others by saying "Or you can also criticize others 'He is bad, she is wrong, he is rude.' You judge others negatively." T will ask to the students that "Can you be happy if you respond in both ways in every situation?" T will explain how interpretation connects these two choices. "These responses are based on interpretation because you judge and evaluate the situation from your perspective, subjectively." Then, T will show the other two choices. "Fortunately, we have two more choices, which are based on observation, description." T will explain about self-empathy and empathy for others. "One is self-empathy, and the other is empathy for others." T will ask about the meaning of empathy to the students. "Empathy is true understanding. Empathy for others is to understand others truly. How is he/she feeling? Why is he/she feeling in that way? Self-empathy is to understand myself truly, how am I feeling? Why am I feeling in such a way? I am feeling painful...

because I think I am looked down on. I think I am rejected. You try to understand yourself truly with curiosity in a nonjudgmental way. You try to see yourself just as you are.” T will show an example from the previous story. “Here is an example from Ichiro’s story. In the welcoming party, the girl looked away when Ichiro was talking to her. He made the first choice, self-criticism. If he had made the second choice, criticizing others, his response could have been like ‘She is rude!’ If he had made the fourth choice, it would have been like ‘Wow, she looked away. How is she feeling now? Is she upset? Is she bored? Is she sad? How is she feeling? Why did she look away? I want to know!’ If Ichiro would have made the third choice, it would have been like ‘Oh, she looked away! How am I feeling? I am feeling painful. It hurts. Why am I feeling painful?’” T will add to this. “Just try to understand my feeling just as it is – no more or no less.” T will give a handout (see the second diagram below) to the students to make sure they understand each choice. Then, the teacher will ask if they can see the connection between mindfulness and the four choices. “In order to change the habit of self-criticism, we need to practice mindfulness as a first step. Just notice our own feeling. Understand our own feelings just as they are.” Then, T will move on to the next lesson on self-compassion.

[The Four Choices Matrix]

	Self	Others
Interpretation	Choice 1	Choice 2
	Self-Criticism	Criticism of others
<i>Subjective</i>	“I am bad!”	“She is bad!”
Observation (Description)	Choice 3	Choice 4
	Self-Empathy	Empathy for others
	(Self-understanding)	(Understanding others)
<i>Mindfulness</i>	“How am I feeling?”	“How is she feeling?”
<i>Objective</i>	“Why am I feeling in this way?”	“Why is she feeling in that way?”

The Chart of Four Choices

Context (Concrete Description of an Experience)

There was no one except me and the girl at that table. After a few minutes of silence, I collected my courage and broke the uncomfortable atmosphere. I started to talk to her, asking about her name, where she was from. She answered my questions briefly without any emotions on her face, and once she finished answering she looked away, leaving me alone. The strange, uncomfortable, awkward silence returned back between me and the girl.

	Self	Others
Interpretation	Self-Criticism	Criticism of others
<i>Subjective</i>	<i>Oh, Shit!</i> <i>I am so boring!</i> <i>I cannot entertain people...</i> <i>I am so boring!!</i>	<i>Hey! What a rude woman she is!</i> <i>She is really rude!!</i>
Observation (Description)	Self-Empathy (Self-understanding)	Empathy for others (Understanding others)
<i>Objective</i>	<i>Gosh! She looked away!</i> <i>How am I feeling now?</i> <i>Well, I am feeling very painful.</i> <i>It hurts.</i>	<i>Wow, she looked away!</i> <i>How is she feeling now?</i> <i>Is she feeling sad?</i> <i>Is she feeling bored?</i> <i>I don't know.</i> <i>What happened to her?</i> <i>I want to know.</i>

Unit 3: Self-Compassion Day 5

Encounter Self-Compassion

Self-Compassion

[Purposes]

For students to become aware of the concept of self-compassion. For students to be able to identify the three components of self-compassion: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. For students to understand how self-criticism affects them negatively and self-compassion can be alternative in a positive way.

[Outline]

The teacher (T) will explain about the concept of self-compassion by contrasting with the characteristics of self-criticism. T will introduce three major components of self-compassion one by one. T will use physiology to support the idea of self-compassion scientifically. In the end, T will provide students with a column sheet (below) to show the example of self-compassion from the story of self-criticism, which students already read before.

[Procedure]

1) The Concept of Self-Compassion: Three components

This lesson will be carried out right after the Four Choice lesson. First, T will mention the need to shift from self-criticism to self-empathy, and will emphasize the importance of mindfulness in order to understand our own feelings and notice the fact that we are suffering. Then, T will introduce the concept of self-compassion. “Now, we notice we are suffering. We need to alleviate suffering. That is where self-compassion comes in.” T will explain about mindfulness first, then common humanity, and finally self-kindness. The following chart is the main points that T must articulate:

Self-Compassion	Self-Criticism
<u>Mindfulness</u> ✓ Need to understand our own feelings “This is the moment of suffering.” ✓ Need to understand the situation just as it is without making melodrama	<u>Over-identification</u> ✓ Tend to over-identify the situation, making melodrama “Why only me?” ✓ Tend to judge ourselves very quickly

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Common Humanity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Realize to be human is to be imperfect ✓ Imperfection is a shared human experience ✓ “Suffering is a part of life.” ✓ Feel connected ✓ How am I the same as the others? 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Isolation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Feel isolated, separated from others ✓ Feel lonely ✓ Psychologically damaging
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Self-Kindness</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Treat ourselves kindly as you do to your best friend. ✓ Mammalian Caregiving System Create emotionally safe environment ✓ Kind and befriend response ✓ Motivator ✓ (Example: Caring parents) ✓ “How can I support you?” ✓ “What is good for me now?” ✓ “May I be kind to myself?” 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Harsh Self-judgment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The reason why we criticize ourselves Motivation, protection etc. ✓ Threat Defense System Actually tries to protect us but... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cause harm - Make us depressed - Lose self-confidence ✓ Fight or flight response ✓ De-motivator (Example: Critical parents) ✓ “Am I good enough?”

2) The Gesture of Self-Compassion

T will show the gesture of self-compassion for students to remember this concept easily.

1. Students will make a fist holding tightly in front of their chests. This is a gesture of self-criticism.
2. Students will open their hands and see them just as they are and say “This is the moment of suffering.” This is a gesture of mindfulness.
3. Students will move their arms forward as if they are trying to accept others and say “Suffering is a part of life.” This is a gesture of common humanity.
4. Students will put their hands on their heart and say “May I be kind to myself? What is good for me now? How can I support myself?” This is a gesture of self-kindness.

3) Recent Studies on Self-Compassion

T will show the recent studies on self-compassion to students such as having more academic achievement, more self-improvement motivation, more emotional resilience, more life satisfaction, better human relationship, less depression, less anxiety, less stress, less perfectionism and less social comparison

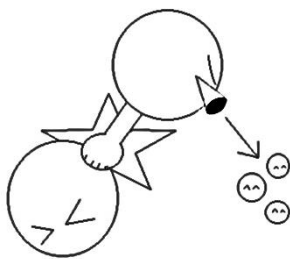
4) Self-Compassionate people compare less with others.

T will explain about the reason why self-compassionate people compare less with others by using the following distinction: The self-critical always compare with others and evaluate or judge themselves positively or negatively. If they judge themselves negatively, they criticize themselves (see the picture below). On the other hand, self-compassionate people care about their happiness and health, which is nothing to do with social comparison (see the picture below). Self-compassion is a way of relating to yourself kindly.

Picture: Self-Compassion



Picture: Self-Criticism

**5) Example of Self-Compassion from the story of self-criticism**

T will provide the following chart to show an example of self-compassion from the story of self-criticism. T will make sure students understand the concept or not.

Example of Self-Compassion

From a story of self-criticism

Context (Concrete Description of an Experience)

There was no one except me and the girl at that table. After a few minutes of silence, I collected my courage and broke the uncomfortable atmosphere. I started to talk to her, asking about her name, where she was from. She answered my questions briefly without any emotions on her face, and once she finished answering she looked away, leaving me alone. The strange, uncomfortable, awkward silence returned back between me and the girl.

Self-Compassion	Self-Criticism
Mindfulness <i>Wow, she looked away... How am I feeling now? I am feeling painful. It hurts...</i>	Over-identification <i>Gosh, she looked away! I am so boring! No one is interested in me...</i>
Common Humanity <i>Maybe, it is not only me who had this kind of experience... Everyone has the similar experience.</i>	Isolation <i>Well, why am I so boring? Why? I feel lonely... I feel distance from other people.</i>
Self-Kindness <i>Now, Ichiro, I know you are feeling painful. But don't beat yourself up. I am always with you. What is good for you now? How can I support you?</i>	Harsh Self-Judgment <i>I am boring! I am hopeless. I should be funnier. I should be more interesting. I should work hard.</i>

Unit 3: Self-Compassion Day 6*Quiz of Self-Compassion***Self-Compassion****[Purposes]**

For students to review and check their comprehension of self-compassion. For the teacher to identify who understands self-compassion to a what degree.

[Outline]

Students will answer these following three questions individually, and check the answers in pairs and a whole group. The teacher will emphasize that this is for checking how much students understand self-compassion at an intellectual level, not for testing them.

[Questions]

Q1. Self-compassion consists of three components. What are these components?

(Hints: self-criticism has a tendency of over-identification, isolation, and harsh self-judgment.)

Q2. Human beings have two types of system which make you keep safe. One is Threat Defense System and the other is Caregiving System. Explain about these systems briefly.

Unit 3: Self-Compassion Day 6*Articulating Confusions about Self-Compassion***Self-Compassion****[Purposes]**

For students to understand the true meaning of self-compassion at the intellectual level. For students to distinguish self-compassion from other concepts such as self-indulgence, selfishness, self-pity, making excuses etc.

[Outline]

First, students will write their questions about self-compassion on the black board. Then, the teacher and students will tackle their questions together in order for both to understand self-compassion more accurately and clearly.

The possible confusions and questions are as follows:

[Possible questions]**1. Is it self-indulgence?**

No. self-compassion comes from care for oneself. Care for one's happiness and health. Self-indulgence does not care for you. For example, eating ice-cream is good to comfort you, but eating too much ice-cream is not good for your health. Self-compassion requires you to be disciplined in some situations.

2. Is it the act of selfishness?

Show the picture of air mask on the airplane. Parents wear masks for themselves first and then, help their children. We cannot help others truly unless you are satisfied with yourself mentally. Research shows that self-compassionate people have more willingness to help others than the self-critical because they cultivate caregiving system, which works for both others and themselves.

3. Is it self-pity?

No. self-pity makes you feel isolated, but self-compassion makes you feel connected because of the beauty of imperfection.

4. How do you see identity?

It depends on your definition on identity. In Buddhist philosophy, there is no "I." So discussing identity itself is out of question. However, my view is that there is an identity, which makes us different from one another. In this sense, social comparisons are inevitable to distinguish us from others. The thing is that the following self-evaluation after social comparisons is a problem for me. We tend to evaluate ourselves positively or negatively based on the social comparison. You can compare with others to identify who you are, but after comparing, I encourage you not to judge yourself but to hold yourself kindly no matter who you are.

5. Is it making an excuse?

No. Self-compassion again comes from care for oneself. Self-compassion can create an emotionally supportive environment, where you can see your problem and issue more easily. Research shows that self-compassionate people can admit their own mistakes more often than the self-critical because they can see their mistakes just as they are.

6. How can we be self-compassionate in this competitive society?

Because it is the competitive society, self-compassion is important. You will face many difficulties and uncontrollable reality in your life. Facing the reality itself is really tough and hard. Self-criticism adds more difficulties on you, which means you have double suffering, one from the reality, and the other from self-criticism. Self-compassion does not add more suffering; rather, it can alleviate suffering from the reality, so that you can continue to stand up and keep walking until you achieve your goal.

7. If I stop self-criticism, I feel that I would stop improving myself. If I accept myself just as I am, I feel that I would stop improving myself to become a better person.

Self-criticism is de-motivator because it makes you depressed and loses your self-confidence. Self-compassion again comes from care for your happiness and health. You can see yourself just as you are in a supportive environment and realize that which aspect of yourself is needed to change for your happiness and which aspect is not needed. Self-compassion can allow you to see what matters to you the most. In order to do so, you need to accept yourself just as you are. Then, you can improve yourself because you care about yourself.

Unit 3: Self-Compassion Day 6**Mindfulness of emotion in the Body****Mindfulness****[Purposes]**

For students to become aware of the moment when they are suffering at the physical

level. For students to practice self-compassion at an actual level.

[Outline]

Students will close their eyes and think about one issue they have that tends to cause stress to them. Students will try to notice which part they feel the stress the most in their body and once they find it, they will put their hand on that part to soothe their pain.

[Instruction]

Please find a comfortable position, close your eyes, and take three relaxing breaths. Place your hand on your heart for a few moments to remind yourself that you are in the room, and to bring kindness to yourself. Now expand your awareness to your body as a whole. Recall the difficult situation and scan your body for where you feel it the most. In your mind's eyes, sweep your body from head to toe, stopping where you can sense a little tension or discomfort. Now choose a single location in your body where the feeling expresses itself most strongly, perhaps as a point of muscle tension or an achy feeling, like a headache. In your mind, incline gently toward that spot.

Unit 3: Self-Compassion Day 6

Activating Your Compassion Within Self-Kindness

[Purposes]

For students to activate compassion within in order to get ready for giving compassion to themselves. For students to become aware that each has caregiving system in a brain.

[Outline]

The teacher will make students close their eyes and relaxed, letting them take several deep breaths. First, students will imagine one friend in their minds, whom they care about. Then, they will imagine the situation he or she is suffering for some reasons. Finally, students will think of the way to respond to his or her suffering. A few minutes

later, students will open their eyes. The teacher will ask to students about what to do to alleviate their friends' suffering.

Unit 3: Self-Compassion Day 6

Write a Letter to Myself

Self-Kindness

[Purposes]

For students to learn self-compassion at an experimental level. For students to see their negative aspects of themselves from a different point of view.

[Outline]

Students will close their eyes in a comfortable position. Students will choose one issue which tends to make them feel bad about themselves. Then, they will open their eyes and write the issue and emotions, which well up inside of themselves. Then, they will close their eyes and imagine one person who cares for them. Students will open their eyes gently and write a letter to themselves from the caring person's perspective, imagining what this person would say to the issue.

[Instruction]

Q1. Try writing about an issue you have that tends to make your feel inadequate or bad about yourself (physical appearance, work or relationship issues...). Not a heavy one. Just something that bothers you. What emotions come up for you when you think about this aspect of yourself? This is just between you and the paper, so please try to be as emotionally honest as possible and to avoid repressing any feelings, while at the same time not being overly melodramatic. Try to just feel your emotions exactly as they are – no more, no less –and then write about them.

Q2. Write a letter to yourself from the perspective of this person (your best friend, one of your family member, your partner etc.). What would this person say to you about

your issue? This person knows all your strengths and all your weaknesses, and accepts you just as you are with the warm and deep compassion. This person really tries to support, comfort, understand, and encourage you because he/she cares about your health and happiness. Use your imagination fully.

Unit 3: Self-Compassion Day 7

Self-Compassionate Motivation

Self-Compassion

[Purposes]

For students to learn how to motivate themselves by self-compassion instead of self-criticism. For students to understand what self-compassion is at an actual level.

[Outline]

Students will think of one thing about themselves that they want to work on or change. They will also make sure if they really need to change this aspect for their happiness and health by reading a text below. They will write it down as concretely as possible. Then, they will write two ways of motivating themselves on the columns below. One is from the self-critical perspective; the other is from the self-compassionate perspective. After writing both, they will write how they feel and share in pairs and a whole group.

Self-Compassionate Motivation

Q1. Write down one thing about yourself that you want to change or work on daringly. Write it down as concretely as possible.

Q2. Motivate yourself both from the self-critical and self-compassionate perspectives. If it is difficult for you, imagine either a judgmental or caring person in your mind. What would they say to motivate you?

Self-criticism	Self-compassion

Q3. How do you feel now? What did you notice?

(Example)**Self-Compassionate Motivation**

Q1. Write down one thing about yourself that you want to change or work on daringly. Write it down as concretely as possible.

I want to improve my empathetic listening skill in order to serve others to become who they truly are, because I believe that this is my vocation.

Q2. Motivate yourself both from the self-critical and self-compassionate perspectives. If it is difficult for you, imagine either a judgmental or caring person in your mind. What would they say to motivate you?

Self-criticism	Self-compassion
<p><i>Hey, again. I did not listen empathetically. I talked a lot, man! Damn! How many times should I say to myself, "listen"!!! I like to talk, right? As long as I don't change my attitude, I cannot become a person who I want to be.</i></p>	<p><i>Hey again, I did not listen empathetically. I talked a lot... Damn...</i></p> <p><i>Well... I am feeling shameful.</i></p> <p><i>Well... but I always talked a lot in my life as a captain, so it is natural to take time to change my habit. It is ok to take time. It is a process. Process. Process.</i></p> <p><i>How can I do differently in the next time?</i></p>

Q3. How do you feel now? What did you notice?

I have noticed that it is very natural to take time to change habits, but when I criticize myself as motivation, I always expected the quick result. I didn't see things objectively. When I tried to motivate myself from self-compassionate perspective, I have noticed that I am kind of looking forward to the process of change itself.

Self-Compassionate Motivation

Wait a Sec!

Do you really need to change this aspect of yourself? Are you seeing yourself just as you are objectively? If we see ourselves just as we are in an emotionally supportive environment, we will gradually realize what matters to us the most because we care for our happiness and health. We will gradually realize which aspect of ourselves needs to be changed, and which aspect does not need to be changed for our happiness and health. Remember Ichiro's story? He tried to work hard to become a different person. Did you think it was effective? Did Ichiro realize what mattered to him the most at the time?

What we need to do first is to see ourselves just as we are, and accept both our lights and darkness with care and love. Then, you can improve yourself because you care about yourself, your future and happiness.

Unit 3: Self-Compassion Day 7

Writing a Letter to Others who Have the Same Issue as Mine Self-Kindness

[Purposes]

For students to practice self-kindness by using their own compassion for others. For students to become aware that it is ok to be compassionate with themselves just as they do to others.

[Outline]

Students will close their eyes in a comfortable position. Students will choose one issue which tends to make them feel bad about themselves. Then, they will imagine one person whom they care for. Then, they will imagine that this person has the same issue as they do. They will imagine that this person is struggling with this issue. Students will open their eyes gently and write a letter to this person to alleviate the suffering. After finish writing, students will read it for themselves.

[Instruction]

Write a letter to the person in order to alleviate his or her suffering. What would you say to him or her? Activate your compassion within fully in order to support, motivate, and encourage him or her for the sake of his or her happiness and health.

Unit 3: Self-Compassion Day 7

Compassionate Coaching

Self-Kindness

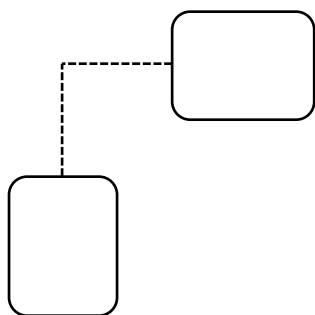
[Purposes]

For students to be able to see themselves from a compassionate perspective. For students to become aware that they can encourage themselves in a different way from self-critical one.

[Outline]

The teacher will prepare two chairs for each student. Student will sit in a chair and close their eyes. They will choose one issue they have that tends to make them feel bad about themselves. Once they choose, they will open their eyes and start to talk about the issue and their emotion by themselves. Then, students will stand up and move to the other chair. They will again close their eyes and imagine any compassionate figure, who is always accepting and generous. Also this figure cares about your happiness and growth and knows to be human is to be imperfect. After imagining such a figure, they will open their eyes and give an encouraging comment toward the empty chair as if they would encourage self-critical-selves. Then, students will again move back to the previous chair and respond to what the compassionate-selves have just said. Then, students will switch the chair to the compassionate one and respond to what self-critical selves have just said. They will continue to do this activity. After the dialogue finishes, students will reflect upon what has just happened in order to see if they have any new insights into how they treat themselves.

[Chair Arrangement]



Unit 4: Compassion for Others Day 8

Nuts and Bolts: Self-Compassion

Mindfulness, Common Humanity, and Self-Kindness

[Purposes]

For students to understand self-compassion again at an intellectual level after practicing self-compassion at an actual level. .

[Outline]

T will distribute the following summary sheet of self-compassion to students, and they will read it individually first, and check the meaning in pairs, a whole group.

[The content of the summary sheet]

1. Self-Compassion

Support and care for yourself in a difficult moment as you do to your best friend.

2. Self-Kindness

Use your own kind, caring, supportive, encouraging, motivating, or comforting voice to yourself as if you gave to your best friend. The point is you can support, care, encourage, comfort, and motivate yourself by yourself, using this kind voice in your mind and heart. (If it is difficult, imagine what your best friend would say to you at the difficult moment. Borrow his/her kind and encouraging words until you get used to it.)

3. Common Humanity

When you face difficulty, and start to criticize yourself, notice and say to yourself, "Suffering is a part of life. It is a shared human experience." "No one's perfect."

4. Mindfulness

Be sensitive to your body sensations because it tells you when you are suffering and when you need to give compassion to yourself.

"Be" with your negative aspects without attacking, rejecting, or suppressing. Just

“be” with your negativity without being overwhelmed by your emotional flooding. Observe your negative aspects just as they are.

Pain × Rejection = suffering

Pain × 0 =

5. Motivation

When you give compassion to yourself, you can see your negative aspect of yourself just as it is, surrounded by the emotionally supportive environment, so that you can gradually realize whether you want to improve this aspect of yourself or not in an objective way. Once you decide to change and improve this aspect, the genuine motivation will arise from within, not from outside.

The way of motivation varies person to person. There are two points: 1) What is your intention? Is your intention coming from your true care for your happiness and health as you do to your best friend? 2) Motivate in the same way you motivate your best friend. What words would you say to your best friend? Do the same thing to yourself.

6. Self-compassion is not positive thinking, it's sometimes positive but not always.

Because you need to see your issue just as it is, you are very realistic. Positive thinking is like when you feel bad about yourself, think about yourself positively such as “I am good!” The self-compassionate way is to try to see yourself objectively, and support and encourage yourself from the realistic standpoint.

Unit 4: Compassion for Others Day 8

Write a Letter to Myself, Being in My Compassion

Self-Kindness

[Purposes]

For students to practice giving compassion to themselves, using their own voice. For students to practice seeing their negative aspects objectively. For students to embrace

themselves just as they are.

[Outline]

Students will look at their life history again, and close their eyes and take several deep and relaxing breaths. Then, they will reflect on their lives, including both positive and negative emotional events in their minds. The teacher will then say that “Everyone has a story. No one is perfect. Each one of us has some issues. But I also know that some parts of you are very kind, caring, and encouraging. You know yourself. You are a human being. You have caregiving system in your mind. You have compassion in the heart. Very simple, please include yourself in the circle of your compassion. Don’t exclude yourself in your compassion. Include yourself in your compassion. Embrace yourself. Then, they will open their eyes and write a letter to themselves.

[Instruction]

Try writing a letter to yourself. How do you see your life now? What words do you want to give yourself to support and encourage yourself? Don’t exclude yourself from the circle of your compassion. Include yourself in your compassion. You are a human being. I am also a human being. We are same humans. So please don’t exclude only yourself from your compassion. You have a right to be in your compassion as I do. Give yourself a permission to be in your compassion. Give yourself a permission to give your kind, caring, supportive, encouraging, motivating, or comforting voice to yourself.

Unit 4: Compassion for Others Day 8**The Power of Vulnerability****TED Talk by Brene Brown****Common Humanity****[Purposes]**

For students to become aware of the importance of vulnerability, courage, and compassion in order to free from shame. For students to get ready for the Way of

Council.

[Outline]

The teacher will introduce Brene Brown to students. The teacher will encourage them to define the word, Shame, Courage, and Wholehearted persons in pairs and a whole group. The teacher will share what Brene Brown define these words by the extract of her TED talk with them.

[Resource]

The Power of Vulnerability

http://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability.html

Unit 4: Compassion for Others Day 8

The Way of Council

Common Humanity

[Purposes]

For students to become aware of common humanity by sharing their light and shadow with others in order to connect each other. For students to practice vulnerability, which becoming compassionate towards others.

[What is Council?]

Council is a practice of speaking and listening from the heart. Through compassionate, heartfelt expression and empathic listening, council inspires a non-hierarchical form of deep communication that reveals a group's vision and purpose. Council offers effective means of working with conflicts and for discovering the deeper, often unexpressed needs of individuals and organizations. Council provides a comprehensive means for co-visioning and making decisions in a group context. Council is about our personal and collective story.

(Extracted from The Ojai Foundation, Website: <http://www.ojaifoundation.org/Council>)

[Outline]

Students and the teacher will sit in a circle. The teacher will make sure the rule of the council first, and put fire on the candle at the center. The teacher will pose a prompt and pick up the talking piece. The teacher will start to tell the story according to the prompt and after finishing it, he/she will pass the talking piece to the person sitting on the left. Once the first round is finished, the teacher will pose the second prompt: "What struck you in the first round?" Then, the second round will start. The teacher will encourage students to think of what theme emerges. Then, they will conduct the last round: "What gift do you take away from this circle?" In order to close the council, teacher put off the fire, and clap their hands each other.

[Rules of the Council]

1. Listening from the heart.
Drop off your assumption/ Try to be him or her.
2. Speaking from the heart.
Bring your true self, taking some risks.
3. Speak only when you are holding a talking piece
4. Be Spontaneous.
Don't prepare/ Be allowed to pass the talking piece.
5. Speak in a way you serve yourself and circle.
Don't regret what you said about later.

[Prompts]

1. What is your happy news?
2. Tell the story about one thing about yourself when you drop off your mask.
3. What struck you in the previous round?
4. What quality of yourself do you really like?

[Guidelines for Leading a Council]

1. Create a center piece (intentional or sacred space). Include a talking piece in the center.
2. Call people to be present and prepared energetically, e.g., take a deep breath, moment of silence, etc.
3. Invite people to offer dedications.
4. Pose the Council question or prompt.
5. Choose a talking piece.

6. Council leader begins by responding to the question, then passes in the 'sun' direction (to the left; clockwise).
7. Second round (response round). What's present in you from the stories you heard in the first round (insights, resonances, wonderings, further stories). Or any additions to what you said in the first round.
8. Open response round. Popcorn (no particular order). What struck you about what has been said in the circle so far? What is alive in you right at this moment vis-avis the initial questions and people's responses?
9. Check-out round. Share one gift that you're taking from this council together.
10. Closing – bring the council to an end: hold hands, sing a song, take a deep breath together, or some other way to bring the council to an end.

(Extracted from the SIT Graduate Institute Fall 2012, The Way of Council taught by Paul LeVasseur)



Listen from the Heart
Speak from the Heart

Assessment plan

Due to the nature of the content of this program, which is all about students' inner experiences and their perceptions of themselves, every assessment will focus on the progress toward a goal, becoming self-compassionate.

Initial Needs Assessment

|nítial |ndívíduál |ntervíews

[Purposes]

For the teacher to understand students' reasons to take this program. For the teacher to build rapport between him/her and each student. For the teacher to see if they have a tendency to self-criticism and evaluate themselves negatively. For the teacher to understand how, when, and why they evaluate themselves so.

[Outline]

Each student will have an interview with the teacher outside of the classroom before the program begins. Because it is a first meeting, the interview will start with the teacher's brief self-introduction. Then, the teacher will ask both closed-and open-ended questions: 1) Tell me about your brief background. 2) Why do you want to join this program? 3) List three each strengths and weaknesses about yourself. Why? 4) Do you often blame/criticize yourself? When or what situations do you often do it? 5) In general, do you feel good/bad about yourself? Why? 6) Do you have any concerns about English? 7) Do you have any other concerns about this program?

Ongoing Assessment

Learning Log and Dialogue Journal Writing

[Purposes]

For teachers to assess students' progress in learning, and understand their introspective experiences.

[Outline]

After every class, students will write journals. They need to answer the following questions in their journals: 1) What did you learn from today's lesson? 2) What helped your learning? 3) What did not help your learning? The teacher will respond to every journal.

Summative Assessment

Respond to Your First Letter

[Purposes]

For students to identify their own development through the program. For the teacher to understand what has happened to each student in encountering self-compassion.

[Outline]

Students will respond to the letters, which they wrote to themselves in the beginning of the program (Day 1). The letters must include their expectations about the program. Students can identify their development of their self-awareness. They are allowed to use either Japanese or English, or both. However, they need to justify the reason for either.

Summative Assessment

Final Reflection Paper

[Purposes]

For students to reflect on what they have done through the program/ For the teacher to become more aware of how they have changed or have not changed their perceptions of themselves in terms of self-criticism and self-compassion. For students to think about how

they can adapt what they have learned through the program to their daily lives. For the teacher to gain a deep understanding of their introspective experiences in encountering self-compassion.

[Outline]

Students will write a two-page reflection paper in response to the following questions:

1) What did you learn? What are 3-5 key moments for you and your learning from this course? Why? 2) What has happened to you when you encountered this concept? 3) What are the most important things you have learned about self-compassion? Why? What questions/ puzzlements do you have now? 4) What are the most important things you have learned from and about yourself in this program? Why? 5) What are the most important things that you have learned from and about other people (other participants, the teacher) in regards to self-compassion? 6) Do you want to internalize this concept by continuing practice? If so, why? If not, why not?

Summative Assessment

Final Interview

[Purposes]

For students to reflect on their experiences of this program through verbal communication with the teacher. For the teacher to understand what has happened to them during the each activity. For the teacher to understand students' introspective experiences in encountering self-compassion. For the teacher to understand how students have changed or not changed their perceptions of themselves. For the teacher to understand the effect of English language as a means of teaching self-compassion.

[Outline]

Each student will have a two-hour interview with the teacher after the program is over. The teacher will ask open-ended questions about their experiences of the program with the students' documents.

Appendix B

Human Informed Consent Form

Student Researcher: Shinichiro Matsuguma

Title of Project: Raising a sense of self-worth: Action research on self-compassion in an English program

I am asking for your voluntary participation in my science fair project. Please read the following information about the project. If you would like to participate, please sign in the appropriate box below.

Purpose of the project: To examine what is going to happen to Japanese college students when they encounter the concept of self-compassion; to understand how their sense of self-worth is affected through an 8-days self-compassion English program.

If you participate, you will be asked to: Talk about your background, your perception of yourself, and your introspective experience throughout the course; write a journal and reflection paper about what you learn and how you feel after each lesson.

Time required for participation: Approximately 16 hours.

Potential Risks of Study: You might disclose yourself to other participants during the class.

Benefits: You can understand yourself at a deeper level, and embrace yourself just as you are through the program.

How confidentiality will be maintained: All participants are anonymous on the paper.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate there will not be any negative consequences. Please be aware that if you decide to participate, you may stop participating at any time and you may decide not to answer any specific question.

By signing this form I am attesting that I have read and understand the information above and I freely give my consent/assent to participate.

Adult Informed Consent or Minor Assent

Printed Name of Research Participant:

Date Reviewed & Signed: _____

Signature:

Human Informed Consent Form

Student Researcher: Shinichiro Matsuguma

Title of Project: Raising a sense of self-worth: Action research on self-compassion in an English classroom.

By signing this form I am attesting that I allow the researcher to cite all my statements on the paper. I also acknowledge that all my statements that the researcher cites on the paper are true, and his conclusion and interpretation are exactly what I have experienced throughout the course.

**Adult Informed Consent
or Minor Assent**

Date Reviewed & Signed: _____

Printed Name of Research Participant:

Signature: _____