Cultivating Self Compassion, Week 4

Self Forgiveness

Home Practice

Formal Practice: Practice the Self Forgiveness meditation at least twice. Practice Mindfulness of Anchor, Savoring, or RAIN for the remaining days.

- Submit the Daily Practice Form at least once this week
- Schedule a 1-1 with me for guidance or support

Informal Practice

- **Recognize** small opportunities for forgiveness **where you notice harshness or blame** arising toward yourself *(being late to an appointment, staying up later than you wanted, judging someone's behavior, etc.)*
- **Tune in to the struggle** that caused this behavior *(not feeling centered, wanting to feel relaxed, wanting to feel safe, etc.)* and see if you can feel the body sensations associated with this struggle *(belly, chest, throat, face, etc.)*
- If possible in this moment, **offer yourself words or gestures of forgiveness** that feel genuine to you *(hand on heart, "It's okay", "I care about this suffering", etc.)*
- If not possible, see if you can allow the **image of an understanding and loving friend**, mentor, therapist, animal, or aspect of nature offer this forgiveness to you

Class Summary

Key Takeaways

1. Self forgiveness means treating ourselves with compassion, embracing our human imperfections, and understanding our vulnerabilities that sometimes drive harmful behaviors.
2. We have all received cultural and familial messaging about our forgive-ability. Once we contact our vulnerabilities, it is normal for hidden emotions to be revealed. We can include these emotions in our practice by recognizing and allowing them with compassion, calling on support from others when we need it.
3. The first step to practice is setting an intention to forgive ourselves, even if we can't forgive in this moment.
4. Self forgiveness is not a one-time event. We practice over and over again, even with the same area of blame. Each time we practice we are letting go a little more.

Definitions

Self forgiveness is the releasing of resistance or resentment about some part of us or some action we've taken. It can also be seen as **accepting ourselves with compassion** or **embracing our imperfections** as humans.

Understanding Self Forgiveness

- **Self forgiveness reveals hurdles to loving and accepting ourselves as we are.** When these hurdles are revealed, we can make them part of our practice and allow them with compassion.
- The understanding of forgiveness is that **when we cause harm, we are coming from a survival-oriented place of suffering**. Therefore, it is wise to see how we are hurting and bring understanding and compassion to that suffering place.
- The path of discipline ("This was bad, I won't do it again") often does not work because it can easily turn into a rejection of parts of ourselves and of things that we've done. **The path of acceptance** allows us to directly contact reality - the reality of what we've done and also the reality of the vulnerability that drove our actions. This **supports true change**.

Obstacles

- **Cultural conditioning** - We may be influenced by a message of being inherently "bad" or "sinful" in some way
- **Familial conditioning** - We may have grown up in a household where our needs were not meant, where there was a lot of criticism, or a lot of judgment
- **Fear of facing vulnerability** - When we let go of blame, there's often difficult emotions hiding underneath that we don't want to feel (fear, shame, grief, emptiness, helplessness)

How to Practice

- The first step is **setting the intention to forgive** (we can't will ourselves to forgive)
- Recognize an area where we're blaming ourselves
- Contact the vulnerability (the wanting or fearing) that is driving the behavior
- Send compassion and acceptance to this vulnerable place
- If we are unable to send this compassion, call on the support of a wise and loving friend

Tips

- Self forgiveness is **not a one-time event.** We practice over and over again, even with the same area of blame. Each time we practice we are letting go a little more.
- The process of **self forgiveness sometimes requires support** from friends, groups, or therapists because it touches on our deep wounds.

Poems

Awakening Now - Danna Faulds

The moment your eyes are open, seize the day.
Would you hold back when the Beloved beckons?
Would you deliver your litany of sins like a child's collection of sea shells, prized and labeled?
"No, I can't step across the threshold," you say, eyes downcast.
"I'm not worthy, I'm afraid, and my motives aren't pure.
I'm not perfect, and surely I haven't practiced nearly enough.
My meditation isn't deep, and my prayers are sometimes insincere.
I still chew my fingernails, and the refrigerator isn't clean."
Do you value your reasons for staying small more than the light shining through the open door?
Forgive yourself.
Now is the only time you have to be whole.
Now is the sole moment that exists to live in the light of your true Self.
Perfection is not a prerequisite for anything but pain.
Please, oh please, don't continue to believe in your disbelief.
This is the day of your awakening.