

Positive Psychology
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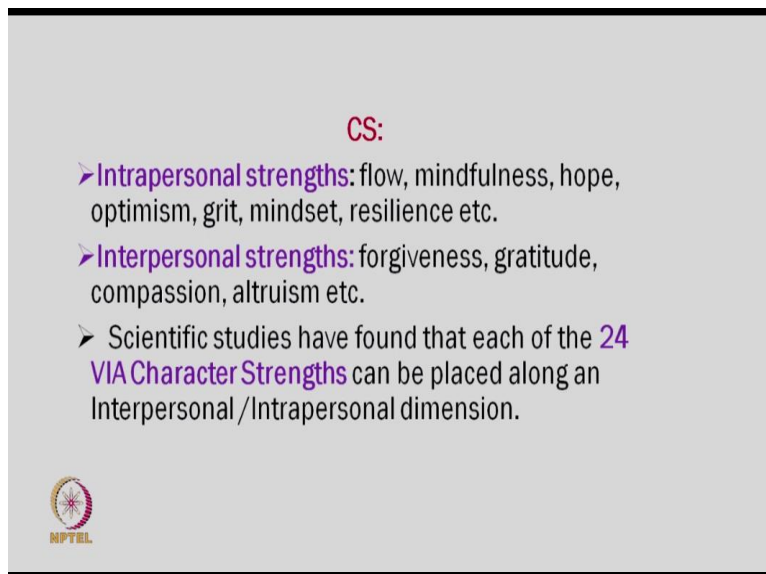
Lecture - 18
Minding and Compassion

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Namashkar. Our this week topic is positive interpersonal strengths. You know we can divide broadly character strengths in intrapersonal and interpersonal strengths as I discussed earlier also.

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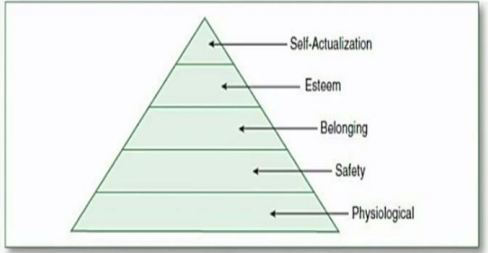


Intra personal strengths like flow, mindfulness, hope, optimism, great mindset, resilience etc which I have discussed in last two weeks. Interpersonal strengths like forgiveness, gratitude,


compassion, altruism and various other interpersonal character strengths I will discuss in this week. Scientific studies have found that each of the 24 value in action character strengths can be placed along an interpersonal and intrapersonal dimension.

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Attachment, Love, and Flourishing Relationships



The Fulfillment of Needs for Love and Belongingness is considered as a Prerequisite for Self-Esteem and Self-Actualization.





So, let us discuss about intrapersonal dimensions. It has been observed that attachment, love are very important for flourishing relationships and these constructs or these concepts have significant impact on our flourishing relationships as it is mentioned in Maslow's theory also. Love, belongingness is the prerequisite of self-esteem and self-actualization and that is why having love and belongingness and positive interpersonal relationship very important for us to have higher level of self-esteem and self-actualization.

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The Makings of Flourishing Relationships

- Attachment is a process that probably starts during the first moment of an infant's life.
- It is the emotional link that forms between a child and a caregiver, and it physically binds people together over time (Ainsworth, Bell, & Stayton, 1992).
- For example, inconsistency in responses (from caregiver) to children is associated with children's frustration and later anxiety.
- On the other hand, consistency in caregivers' responses to children's cues is linked to children's contentment and later development of trust.
- Adaptive and maladaptive parental behaviors lead to the development of an attachment system that regulates the proximity-seeking behaviors connecting infants and caregivers in physical and emotional space.



Studies are showing that childhood experiences are very important to understand childhood attachment versus adult attachment. The making of flourishing relationship attachment is a process that probably starts during the first moment of an infant's life. It is the emotional link that forms between a child and a caregiver and it physically binds people together over time for example, inconsistency in responses.

Inconsistency in responses of caregiver and parents, to children is associated with children's frustration and later anxiety. On the other hand, consistency in caregiver's responses to children's cues is linked to children's contentment and later development of trust. So that is why consistency versus inconsistency in caregivers and parents' responses is very important as they have mentioned that inconsistency leads to frustration and later anxiety in children.

On the other hand, consistency in caregiver's responses is helping to have contentment and later development of trust in their life. Adaptive and maladaptive parental behaviors lead to the development of an attachment system that regulates the proximity seeking behaviors connecting infants and caregivers in physical and emotional space.

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Bartholomew & Horowitz (1991)	Prominent Classification Systems of Adult Attachment Styles (Description)
Secure	It is easy for me to become emotionally close to others. I am comfortable depending on others and having others depend on me. I don't worry about being alone or having others not accept me.
Dismissing	I am comfortable without close emotional relationships. It is very important for me to feel independent and self-sufficient, and I prefer not to depend on others or have others depend on me.

So, that is why what kind of attachment style we have that is very important for us. There are various scholars who have identified various types of attachment styles. I have selected one of them. The prominent classification system of adult attachment style is described in secure, dismissing and some other attachment styles. So, let us understand one by one all these attachment styles.


First one is secure; it means it is easy for me to become emotionally close to others. I am comfortable depending on others and having others depend on me. I do not worry about being alone or having others not accept me. So, that is secure attachment style. On the other hand, another one is dismissing attachment style. I am comfortable without close emotional relationships.

It is very important for me to feel independent and self-sufficient and prefer not to depend on others or have others depend on me, so dismissing interpersonal relationship to some extent.

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Preoccupied	I want to be completely emotionally intimate with others, but I often find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I am uncomfortable being without close relationships, but I sometimes worry that others don't value me as much as I value them.
Fearful	I am uncomfortable getting close to others. I want emotionally close relationships, but I find it difficult to trust others completely, or to depend on them. I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others.

Source: Adapted from Hesse, E. (1999). The Adult Attachment Interview: Historical and current perspectives. In J. Cassidy & P. P. Shaver (Eds.), *Adapted version published in S. J. Lopez & C. R. Snyder (Eds.), Positive psychological assessment: A handbook of models and measures* (pp. 285–299). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.



Third one is preoccupied attachment style. I want to be completely emotionally intimate with others, but I often find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I am uncomfortable being without close relationships, but sometimes worry that others do not value me as much as I value them. So, the person is with preoccupied thoughts. He is not mindful when he is dealing with interpersonal relationships and he has some preoccupied thoughts which are hindering their positive interpersonal relationships.

Fourth one is fearful. I am uncomfortable getting close to others. I want emotionally close relationships, but I find it difficult to trust others completely or to depend on them. I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others. So, person is fearful and that is why he is not able to lead positive interpersonal relationships. So, these are some of the attachment styles which have impact on our interpersonal relationship.

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1. Relationship Connection: The Role of Minding in the Enhancement of Closeness

- Kelley et al. (1983) defined close relationship as “one of strong, frequent, and diverse interdependence [between two people] that lasts over a considerable period of time”.
- Thus, the yin (male) and yang (female) of a close relationship are how to achieve balance between the couple's need for being united on many critical dimensions (love & belongingness) and the autonomy needs of each partner.

e. g. Birds of a Feather Flock Together

or

Opposite Attracts

(e.g. Personality tests or/and kundali milan)



For understanding interpersonal relationship and strengths, there are various topics in positive psychology. Some of them are part of value in action character strengths classification and some others are not part of but very important in positive psychology. So, let us understand one by one all these interpersonal character strengths. Number one, relationship connection, the role of minding in the enhancement of closeness.

So, minding is very important construct to understand interpersonal relationship especially in terms of very close interpersonal relationship. Kelley and his associates in 1983 defined that close relationship is one of strong, frequent and diverse interdependence between two people that lasts over a considerable period of time.

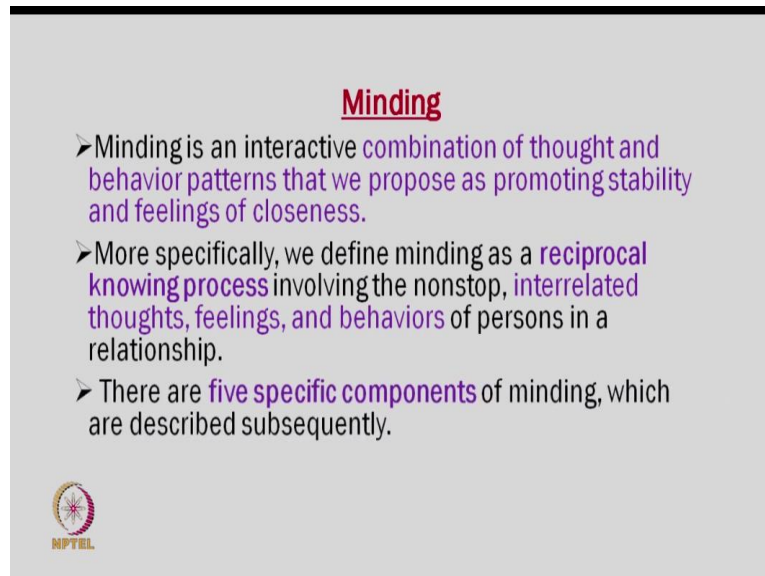
Thus, the yin and yang or male and female of a close relationship are how to achieve balance between the couple's need for being united on many critical dimensions and how they fulfill their need of love and belongingness as well as the autonomy needs of each partner. So, that is why they have to balance both needs. One is love and belongingness and another is autonomy need and they want to balance this need also to have higher level of psychological well-being.

When we talk about interpersonal relationships, then there are importance of various personality factors or traits. Are these similar when we have better interpersonal relationships or are these different when we have better interpersonal relationships. For example, birds of a feather flock together or opposites attract, it means similar type of personality traits attract

each other or opposite attracts and that is why sometimes we use personality tests or in Indian scenario, we have *kundali milan* before marriages.


So, they want to know how many gunas or how many character strengths or how many traits of personality matching with each other so that they could have healthy and happy interpersonal relationships.

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Minding

- Minding is an interactive combination of thought and behavior patterns that we propose as promoting stability and feelings of closeness.
- More specifically, we define minding as a reciprocal knowing process involving the nonstop, interrelated thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of persons in a relationship.
- There are five specific components of minding, which are described subsequently.



Minding is an interactive combination of thought and behavior patterns that we propose as promoting stability and feeling of closeness. More specifically, we defined minding as a reciprocal knowing process, you know me and I am knowing you during this process, involving the non-stop interrelated thoughts, feelings and behaviors of person in a relationship. There are 5 specific components of minding, which are described subsequently one by one.

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Minding Model:

1. Knowing and Being Known

- The first component of minding refers to behaviors aimed at having partners know each other.
- These include questioning your partner about his thoughts, feelings, and past experiences, as well as disclosing appropriately about yourself. Through this search to know a partner, intuition can develop.
- Partners often learn so much about each other that it is relatively easy to discriminate nonverbal cues, and to “read between the lines” about motivations, emotions, and experiences that may be troubling the other.



First component is knowing and being known; it means the first component of minding refers to behaviors aimed at having partners know each other. These include questioning your partner about his thoughts, about his feelings, past experiences as well as disclosing appropriately about yourself. Through this search to know a partner, intuition can develop.

Partners often learn so much about each other that it is relatively easy to discriminate nonverbal cues and to read between the lines about motivations, emotions and experiences that may be troubling the other. So, to some extent we know all the characteristics, positive as well as negative characteristics and we know in depth, our partner.

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2. Attribution

- The second component is the attributions that individuals make about their partners' behavior.
- Attributions refer to the interpretations or explanations that people make for events in their lives.
- Attribution has been a central concept in the close relationship field for decades.
- Flexibility and willingness to reexamine attributions about one's partner and the relationship, characterize well-minded relationships.
- Rigidity vs. Flexibility in Minding
- --- (Stormy period - first two years of marriage — Developmental Psychologists)



Then, second point is - then we develop certain attributions. The second component is the attributions that individuals make about their partner's behavior. Attributions refer to the

interpretations and explanations that people make for event in their lives. Attribution has been a central concept in the close relationship field for decades. So, attribution means what kind of style for describing your friends or your maybe husband and wife's characteristics.

And in this process, do we have flexibility or willing to re-examine attribution or we are rigid with this attribution and we are having certain way of describing our close relations personality and we are not taking into account flexibility, then that may be problematic. So, flexibility and willingness to reexamine attributions about one's partner's and the relationship, characterize well-minded relationships.

So, if you have well-minded relationships, then you must have flexibility and willingness to re-examining these attributions rather you are rigid or fixed in these relationships. So, rigidity versus flexibility in minding has very important role and if you are flexible, then you have well-minded relationships. On the other hand, if it is rigidity, then you may have some problem in your interpersonal relationships.

As developmental psychologists have observed that starting period in our life like first two years of marriage may be stormy period because during this period you are knowing each other as well as you are developing your attribution and you know whether you would be flexible and willing to re-examining the attributions you would have or rigidity in this process. So, it decides whether you have well-minded relationship or lack of healthy relationships.

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3. Acceptance and Respect

- Acceptance and respect are high on the list of the typical features of love.
- Through the minding process, one finds out a great deal of information about a partner, **sharing innermost thoughts and feelings and revealing the past.**
- We need to accept what we come to know about our close person through this process **and to respect the other based on this knowledge.**
- Gottman has described four factors, he perceives to be **the signs of a relationship headed for failure: persistent criticism, contempt, stonewalling, and defensiveness.**



Third point is acceptance and respect. Acceptance and respect are high on the list of the typical features of love. Through the minding process, one finds out a great deal of information about a partner, sharing innermost thoughts and feelings and revealing the past. So, you know positive as well as negative characteristics of your partner and that is why accepting each and everything and knowing each and everything, respecting the relation is very important.

We need to accept what we come to know about our close person through this process and to respect and the other based on this knowledge is important. Gottman has described 4 factors, he perceived to be the signs of a relationship headed for failure. He said there are certain signs and that is why we have failure in the relationship. First one is persistent criticism, continued criticism you have in your relationship, second contempt, third stonewalling and fourth is defensiveness.

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- He lists four common methods of expressing contempt (disapprove): **insults and name calling; hostile humor directed at each other; mockery of the other; and disrespectful or disgusted body language.**
- **Avoidance or defensive behavior contribute** to relationship breakdown through what Gottman terms **stonewalling.**
- **Stonewalling** is virtually **avoiding communication with a partner, either by physically distancing oneself so that communication is impossible or by emotionally withdrawing until it seems futile for the other partner to try.**
- **To withdraw or avoid contact** with a partner in this way also **signals a lack of respect** for the partner's desire to engage in discussion or social interaction.

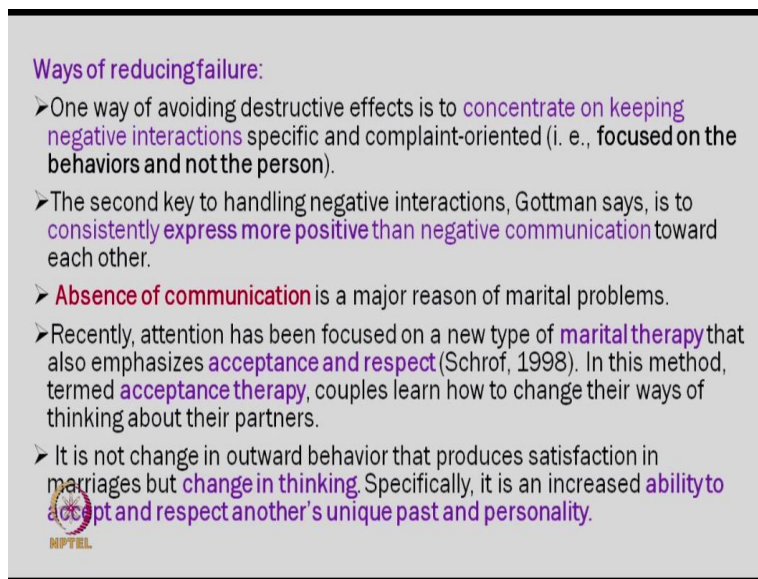
He listed 4 common methods of expressing contempt or disapproval, for example insults and name-calling. You insult your partner and some derogatory names you may have, hostile humor directed at each other, sometimes some people have some hostile humor which is negative and have negative impact on our relationships, mockery of the other and disrespectful or disgusted body language.

These are harming our interpersonal relations. Avoidance or defensive behavior contributes to relationship breakdown through what Gottman terms used stonewalling. What stonewalling is? Stonewalling is virtually avoiding communication with a partner either by

physical distancing oneself so that communication is impossible or by emotionally withdrawing until it seems futile for the other partner to try.

So, you are disconnected and you are not interested to have any communication with your partner and that is cause of negative interpersonal relationship or unhealthy interpersonal relationships. To withdraw or avoid contact with a partner in this way also signals a lack of respect for the partner's desire to engage in discussion or social interaction and that is why it is hindering our positive relationships.

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Ways of reducing failure:

- One way of avoiding destructive effects is to **concentrate on keeping negative interactions** specific and complaint-oriented (i. e., **focused on the behaviors and not the person**).
- The second key to handling negative interactions, Gottman says, is to **consistently express more positive than negative communication** toward each other.
- **Absence of communication** is a major reason of marital problems.
- Recently, attention has been focused on a new type of **marital therapy** that also emphasizes **acceptance and respect** (Schrof, 1998). In this method, termed **acceptance therapy**, couples learn how to change their ways of thinking about their partners.
- It is not change in outward behavior that produces satisfaction in marriages but **change in thinking**. Specifically, it is an increased **ability to accept and respect another's unique past and personality**.

HPTTEL

There are various ways of reducing this failure. Number one way of avoiding destructive effect is to concentrating on keeping negative interactions specific and complaint-oriented. So, focus on the behavior and not the person and you should know where you have negative interaction, how you can reduce that one. Second, Gottman says is to consistently express more positive than negative communication toward each other.

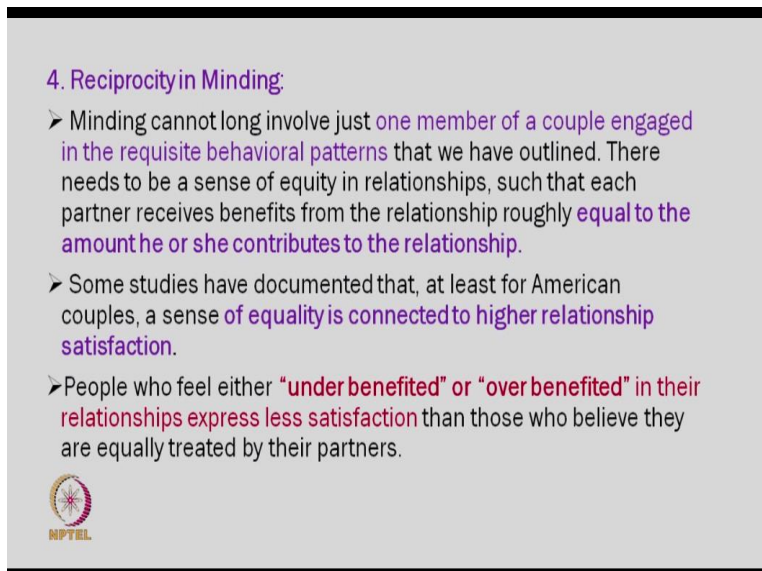
So, you should focus along with negative or if some time it is happening, you should express more positive communications and if it is a negative in some cases, then they should be handled with the solution of it and immediately must be shifted on positive communication along with the way to deal with the problems in your life. Absence of communication is a major reason of marital problems.

And that is why in marital therapy, they have focused on these aspects. Recently, attention has been focused on a new type of marital therapy that also emphasizes acceptance and

respect. So, they are saying that there should be acceptance and respect in relationship to have healthy and happy relationships. In this method, termed acceptance therapy, couples learn how to change their way of thinking about their partners.


And they change their thinking patterns about their partners and try to make happy and healthy interpersonal relationship and for this purpose they have certain sessions. In these sessions, they learn acceptance and respect. It is not change in outward behavior that produces satisfaction in marriage, but change in thinking. Specifically, it is an increased ability to accept and respect another's unique past and personality and that is very important for happy and healthy relationships.

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4. Reciprocity in Minding:

- Minding cannot long involve just one member of a couple engaged in the requisite behavioral patterns that we have outlined. There needs to be a sense of equity in relationships, such that each partner receives benefits from the relationship roughly equal to the amount he or she contributes to the relationship.
- Some studies have documented that, at least for American couples, a sense of equality is connected to higher relationship satisfaction.
- People who feel either "under benefited" or "over benefited" in their relationships express less satisfaction than those who believe they are equally treated by their partners.

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Fourth component is reciprocity in minding. Minding cannot long involve just one member of a couple engaged in the requisite behavior patterns that we have outlined. There needs to be a sense of equality in relationships, such that each partner receives benefits from the relationship roughly equal to the amount he or she contributes to the relationship.


Some studies have documented that at least for American couples, a sense of equality is connected to higher relationship satisfaction. So, whenever you are investing equal level or reciprocal level of respect and acceptance you are getting that in your relationship. People who feel either under benefited or over benefited in their relationships express less satisfaction than those who believe they are equally treated by their partners.

So, equal relationship between partners is a happy and healthy relationship. On the other hand, if one of them is under benefited or maybe over benefited, then in that case that is imbalanced and this imbalance triggers negative relationship or negative interpersonal relationship as studies are showing that.

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“Good communication”

- In minding theory, accurate and frequent communication is important, but the emphasis is on actively **seeking the other’s self-expression or information, rather than pursuing self expression.**
- They should create an atmosphere that allows more open disclosure and “good communication” about **“we” over “me” perspectives.**
- Relationship permits scripts (roles) to be included in a couple’s life




Good communication is very important in happy and healthy relationships. In minding theory, accurate and frequent communication is important, but the emphasis is on actively seeking the others self-expression or information rather than pursuing self-expression. So, both of them express their views rather one of them only. They should create an atmosphere that allows more often disclosure and good communication about ‘we’ over ‘me’ perspective. Relationship permits scripts or roles to be included in the couple's life.

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5. Continuity & Minding

- The close relationship is one of **strong, frequent, and diverse interdependence** that lasts over a considerable period of time.
- Because people and situations change, the knowledge gained about a partner through **minding cannot remain static.**
- This is a point that Kelley (1967) also made about attributions mirroring the data appropriately, accurately reflecting the behavior or situation.
- Each and every person (in minding) represents **an intricate set of experiences, personal qualities, dispositions, hopes, plans, and potential reactions to environmental stimuli.**
- Being and staying close to any person over an extended period requires personal planning and action aimed at **acquiring and updating knowledge on a regular basis.**

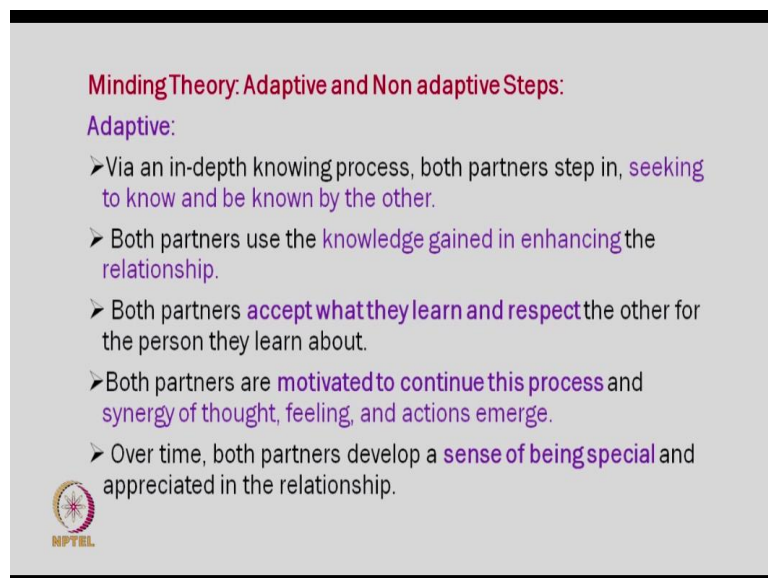


Now, fifth component in this series is continuity and minding. The close relationship is one of the strong, frequent and diverse interdependence that lasts over a considerable period of time because people and situations change, the knowledge gained about a partner through minding cannot remain static. So, every day you should progress in this direction and continuity must be there.

This is the point that Kelley in 1967 also made about attributions, mirroring the data appropriately, accurately reflecting the behavior or situation. Each and every person in minding represents an intricate set of experiences, personal qualities, dispositions, hopes, plans and potential reactions to environmental stimuli.

Being and staying close to any person over an extended period requires personal planning and actions aimed at acquiring and updating knowledge on a regular basis. So, we should have continuity in minding for positive and happy and healthy relationship.


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Minding Theory: Adaptive and Non adaptive Steps:

Adaptive:

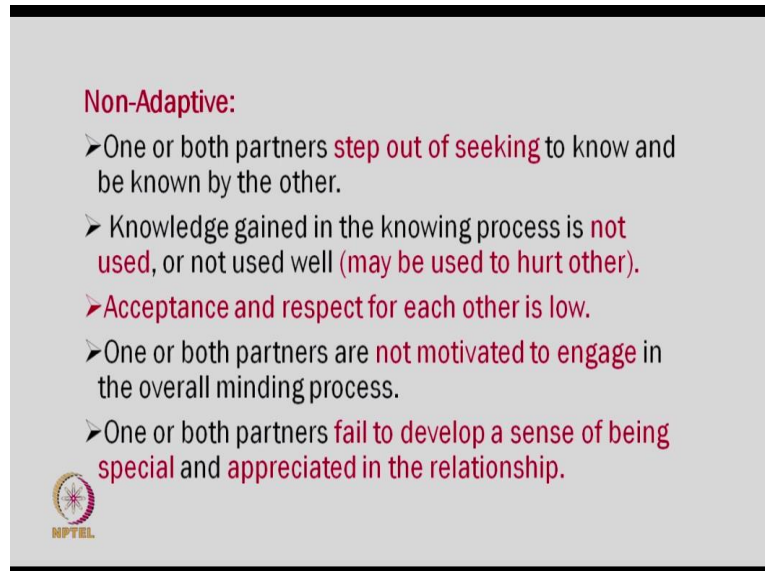
- Via an in-depth knowing process, both partners step in, **seeking to know and be known by the other.**
- Both partners use the **knowledge gained in enhancing the relationship.**
- Both partners **accept what they learn and respect** the other for the person they learn about.
- Both partners are **motivated to continue this process** and **synergy of thought, feeling, and actions emerge.**
- Over time, both partners develop a **sense of being special** and appreciated in the relationship.

 MPTEL

Minding theory talks about adaptive and non-adaptive steps, first let us talk about adaptive steps. Via an in-depth knowing process, both partners step in, seeking to know and be known by the other. Both partners use the knowledge gained in enhancing the relationship. Both partners accept what they learn and respect the other for the person they learn about. Both partners are motivated to contribute to this process and synergy of thought, feeling and actions emerge.


Over time, both partners develop a sense of being special and appreciated in the relationship. So, after adapting all these processes, we can increase, we can improve our interpersonal relationship if we are with these adaptive steps mode.

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Non-Adaptive:

- One or both partners **step out of seeking** to know and be known by the other.
- Knowledge gained in the knowing process is **not used**, or not used well (**may be used to hurt other**).
- **Acceptance and respect for each other is low.**
- One or both partners are **not motivated to engage** in the overall minding process.
- One or both partners **fail to develop a sense of being special and appreciated in the relationship.**

 NPTEL

On the other hand, if we are using non-adaptive, then definitely our relationship would not be good. One or both partners step out of seeking to know and be known by the other. Knowledge gained in the knowing process is not used or not used well, may be used to hurt others. Acceptance and respect for each other is low. One or both partners are not motivated to engage in the overall minding process.

One or both partners fail to develop a sense of being special and appreciate in the relationship.

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Adaptive	Nonadaptive
Both partners use the knowledge gained in enhancing relationship.	Knowledge gained in knowing process is not used or not used well (may be used to hurt other).
Both partners accept what they learn and respect the other for the person they learn about.	Acceptance of what is learned is low, as is respect for the other person.
Both partners motivated to continue this process and do so indefinitely, such that synchrony and synergy of thought, feeling, and action emerge.	One or both partners are not motivated to engage in the overall minding process or do so sporadically; little synchrony and synergy emerge.
Both partners in time develop a sense of being special and appreciated in the relationship.	One or both partners fail to develop a sense of being special and appreciated in the relationship.

Source: From Harvey, J. H., Pauwels, B. G., & Zicklund, S., Relationship connection: The role of minding in the enhancement of closeness, in C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *The handbook of positive psychology*. Copyright © 2002 by Oxford University Press, Inc. Used by permission of Oxford University Press, Inc.

I think you can easily identify adaptive and non-adaptive. These are just two different directions. This is positive direction and this is negative direction and adaptive steps help us to have better relationship. On the other hand, non-adaptive steps hamper or hinder our progress in interpersonal relationship and we have low level of interpersonal relationship.

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Future Directions: (Minding)

- Are certain people better minders of their close relationships than others? (as a Trait).
- Harvey and Omarzu (1997, 1999) have speculated that **minding is a skill that can be taught**. It should be a skill that is reflected in individual differences, that can be measured, similar to intimacy motivation in general.
- Minding is a **combination of cognitive, emotional, motivational, and behavioral skill**. Ongoing research (Omarzu, Whalen, & Harvey, 2001) is aimed at developing a **minding scale that would differentiate persons who mind well versus those who do not, by using the above-mentioned factors**.

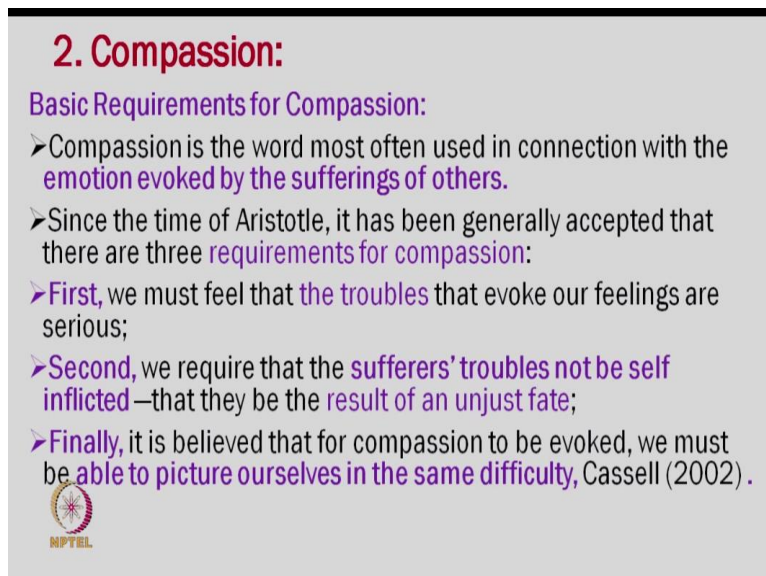
I think you would agree on this point - minding is very important concept to understand close interpersonal relationships that is why I think let us know what are the future directions of minding. There are certain questions like are certain people better minders of their close relationships than others? Or can we count minding as a trait and some of us have certain characteristics and that is why we have higher level of minding as compared to others.

So, that is the question how we should address in terms of trait or maybe in some cases as situational factors. Harvey and his associates have speculated that minding is a skill that can be taught. It should be a skill that is reflected in individual, you know, differences that can be measured, similar to intimacy motivation in general.

So, can we have certain skills or psychological tests or certain other ways so that we can measure or assess someone's minding level. Minding is a combination of cognitive, emotional, motivational and behavioral skills. Ongoing research is aimed at developing minding scale that would differentiate people who mind well versus those who do not by using the above-mentioned factors.

So, once such kind of tests are developed then after that revalidation, cross-cultural studies as well as confirmation of the models which they have included in this minding scale, those type of researchers can lead in this field.


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2. Compassion:

Basic Requirements for Compassion:

- Compassion is the word most often used in connection with the emotion evoked by the sufferings of others.
- Since the time of Aristotle, it has been generally accepted that there are three requirements for compassion:
- **First**, we must feel that the troubles that evoke our feelings are serious;
- **Second**, we require that the sufferers' troubles not be self-inflicted—that they be the result of an unjust fate;
- **Finally**, it is believed that for compassion to be evoked, we must be able to picture ourselves in the same difficulty, Cassell (2002).

 NPTEL

After knowing about minding let us take next concept. This is compassion. Basic requirement for compassion is the word most often used in connection with the emotion evoked by the suffering of others. Since the time of Aristotle, it has been generally accepted that there are 3 requirements for compassion. Number one, we must feel that the troubles that evoke our feelings are serious.

Second, we require that the sufferer's troubles not be self-inflicted, that they be the result of an unjust fate and final one, it is believed that for compassion to be evoked we must be able

to picture ourselves in the same difficulty and for these reasons we have compassion toward another person.

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- It appears to be an **emotion (Social)** that is specifically social or communal, in the same family, perhaps, with the feeling of patriotism or group-specific feeling (community as team spirit).
- Therefore, compassion is a **social emotion** having to do with the relationships of people to each other.
- At its core, compassion is a **process of connecting by identifying with another person.**
- The place of compassion **as a motivation** for individual or societal behavior, and as one of the **foundations for civil society**, is a continual topic of debate (Brown, 1996).



It appears to be an emotion or can say social emotion because it is towards others that is specifically social and communal, in the same family, perhaps, with this feeling of patriotism or group-specific feeling like community as a team spirit we have. Therefore, compassion is a social emotion having to do with the relationships of people to each other. At its core, compassion is a process of connecting by identifying with another person.

The place of compassion as a motivation for individual and societal behavior and as one of the foundations for civil society is a continual topic of debate. So, scholars are trying to understand it as a social emotion as well as motivational factors. Let us discuss certain definitions of compassion.

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Definitions:

- According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word “compassion” stems from the Latin “*compati*”, meaning “to suffer with”.
- Psychologists define compassion as it involves *feeling for a person who is suffering and being motivated to act to help them*, (e.g. Goetz et al., 2010)
- Lazarus (1991) defines compassion as: “*Being moved by another's suffering and wanting to help*” (p. 289).
- Dalai Lama (1995) defines compassion in comparable terms as: “*An openness to the suffering of others with a commitment to relieve it*”.
- Compassion is described as a “*unilateral emotion*” that is directed outward from oneself, (Cassell, 2002, p. 435).

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word compassion stems from the Latin *compati* meaning to suffer with. Psychologists define compassion as it involves feeling for a person who is suffering and being motivated to act to help them. Another definition says being moved by another's suffering and wanting to help. Dalai Lama in 1995 defines compassion in comparable terms as, an openness to the suffering of others with a commitment to relieve it.

On the other hand, Cassell in 2002 described compassion as unilateral emotion that is directed outward from oneself. So, these are certain definitions which help us to understand compassion.

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Compassion: Religious explanations

- The idea of compassion has originated from *both Western and Eastern philosophies*.
- Within the Western tradition, *Aristotle is noted for his early writings on the concept of compassion*. Similarly, compassion can be traced to the Eastern traditions of various religions.
- For example, the Buddha often is described as “*perfectly enlightened, and boundlessly compassionate*” (Sangharakshita, 1991, p. 3). As such, the *idea of compassion, or karuna*, also is woven throughout Buddhism as a virtue on the path toward transcendence.
- In Buddhist teachings, the attainment of compassion means being able to “*transcend preoccupation with the centrality of self*”, (Cassell, p. 438) *to focus on others rather than merely on ourselves*.

Second important point here is as we know compassion has been borrowed from religious literature. So, let us see how a religious literature explained compassion. The idea of compassion has originated from both Western and Eastern philosophies. Within the Western tradition, Aristotle is noted for his early writings on the concept of compassion. Similarly, compassion can be traced to the Eastern traditions of various religions.

For example, the Buddha often is described as perfectly enlightened and boundlessly compassionate. As such the idea of compassion, or *karuna*, also is woven throughout Buddhism as a virtue on the path toward transcendence. In Buddhist teachings, the attainment of compassion means being able to transcend preoccupation with the centrality of self, as Cassell has mentioned to focus on others rather than merely on ourselves is main motto of compassion.

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- In fact, **transcendental compassion is said** to be the most significant of the four universal virtues, and it is often called **Great Compassion (mahakaruna)** to distinguish it from the more applied *karuna* (Sangharakshita, 1991).
- Finally, within the Hindu tradition, **compassion is called for in good actions toward others, which will direct followers upon the path that will not require them to return to Earth after death (Moksha prapti)**.
- Compassion also may come more naturally to the person from a **collectivist culture than to someone from an individualist culture**. On this point, researchers have argued that a collectivist culture may breed a sense of compassion in the form of its members' prosocial behaviors (Batson, 1991; Batson, Ahmad, Lishner, & Tsang, 2002).
- **Therefore, when a group identity has been formed**, the natural choice may be group benefits over individual ones.

In fact, transcendental compassion is said to be the most significant of the four universal virtues, and it is often called great compassion or *mahakaruna* to distinguish it from the more applied *karuna* which we usually used in day-to-day life. Finally, within the Hindu tradition, compassion is called for good actions toward others, which will direct followers upon the path that will not require them to return to Earth after death.

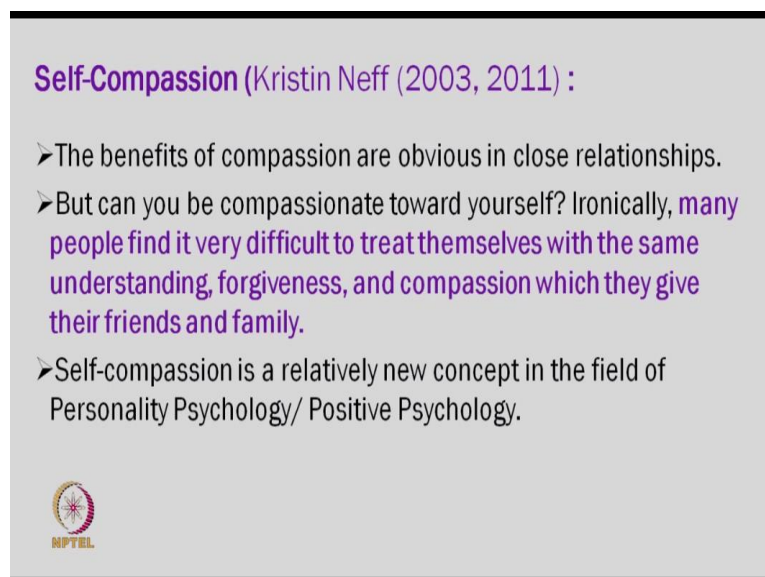
So, to some extent you can say *Moksha prapti* if we follow such kind of routes. Compassion also may come more naturally to the person from a collectivistic culture than to someone from an individualistic culture. On this point, researchers have argued that a collectivistic

culture may breed a sense of compassion in the form of its member's prosocial behavior because in collectivistic cultures we are more connected with others.

And that is why we may have higher level of as compared to individualistic cultures. Therefore, when a group identity has been formed, the natural choice may be group benefits over individual benefits. So, such kind of explanations help us to understand cultural factors in terms of say collectivistic versus individualistic cultures and that maybe research question. Do we have different level of compassion in individualistic and collectivistic cultures?


To some extent, hypothetical message may be - it might be higher in collectivistic cultures compared to individualistic cultures but still need to explore such kind of factors in detail further.

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Self-Compassion (Kristin Neff (2003, 2011) :

- The benefits of compassion are obvious in close relationships.
- But can you be compassionate toward yourself? Ironically, **many people find it very difficult to treat themselves with the same understanding, forgiveness, and compassion which they give their friends and family.**
- Self-compassion is a relatively new concept in the field of Personality Psychology/ Positive Psychology.



After knowing compassion, very interesting concept in this direction is which is highlighted by Kristin Neff. She stated that the benefits of compassion are obvious in close relationships but can you be compassionate toward yourself? Ironically, many people find it very difficult to treat themselves with the same understanding, forgiveness and compassion which they give their friends and family.

So, that is why she explored you know self-compassion as well as benefits of this construct in our life. Self-compassion is a relatively new concept in the field of personality psychology or positive psychology.

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- Neff (2003a) describes self-compassion as “being open to and moved by one’s own suffering,
 - experiencing feelings of caring and kindness toward oneself, taking an understanding,
 - non-judgmental attitude toward one’s inadequacies and failures,
 - and recognizing that one’s experience is part of the common human experience”.
- Studying self-compassion, Kristin Neff (2003, 2011) found that being kind toward oneself is a better way to change one’s behavior than through self-criticism.
- For instance, one study indicated that women who were more self-compassionate were able to eat healthier and stay with healthy dieting (Adams & Leary, 2007).

Let us understand what it means. Neff in 2003 described self-compassion as being open to and moved by one’s own suffering, experiencing feeling of caring and kindness toward oneself, taking an understanding, non-judgmental attitude toward one's inadequacy and failure and recognizing that one’s experience is part of the common human experience. So, studying self-compassion she found that being kind toward oneself is better way to change one's behavior than through self-criticism.

For instance, one study indicated that women who had high score on self-compassion were able to eat healthier and stay with healthy dieting. So, there are various recent studies showing that self-compassion is positively correlated with various positive, you know, characteristics as well as positively with quality of life constructs.

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- According to Neff (2003a, b), self-compassion consists of three interacting components:
- **Self-kindness** (the tendency to treat oneself with understanding and care rather than with harsh self-judgment),
 - **A sense of common humanity** (the ability to recognize that all humans fail at times, rather than feeling cut off from others by one’s own failures),
 - And **mindfulness** (being aware of present-moment in a balanced way rather than over-identifying with one’s emotions).
 - Self-compassion involves maintaining equanimity in the face of unpleasant experiences, opening up to life as it is in the present moment.
 - This response stands in contrast to a self-critical approach in which one judges or blames oneself for not being good enough or for not coping well enough with life challenges.

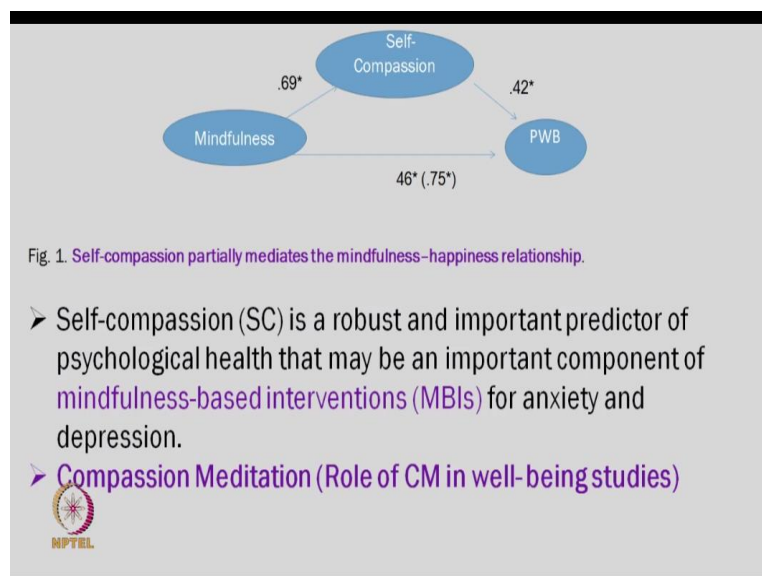
According to her, self-compassion consists of 3 interacting components; number one, self-kindness, the tendency to treat oneself with understanding and care rather than with harsh self-judgment. A sense of common humanity is the second factor. The ability to recognize that all humans fail at times rather than feeling cut off from others by one's own failures. Third construct or third sub-factor under self-compassion she has counted as mindfulness.

Being aware of present-moment in the balanced way rather than over-identifying with one's emotions. According to her self-compassion involves maintaining equanimity in the face of unpleasant experiences, opening up to life as it is in the present moment. This research stands in contrast to self-critical approach in which one judges or blames oneself for not being good enough or for not coping well enough with life's challenge.

So, broadly we can understand here two concepts; one self-compassion and its opposite maybe self-critical approach or self-criticism. So, if we have high score on self-compassion, which is contributed by self-kindness, a sense of common humanity and mindfulness, then it is highly correlated with psychological well-being and other positive psychological constructs.

On the other hand, if it is self-critical, then we may have feeling of anxiety, tension, stress and not able to cope up with a challenge in our life.

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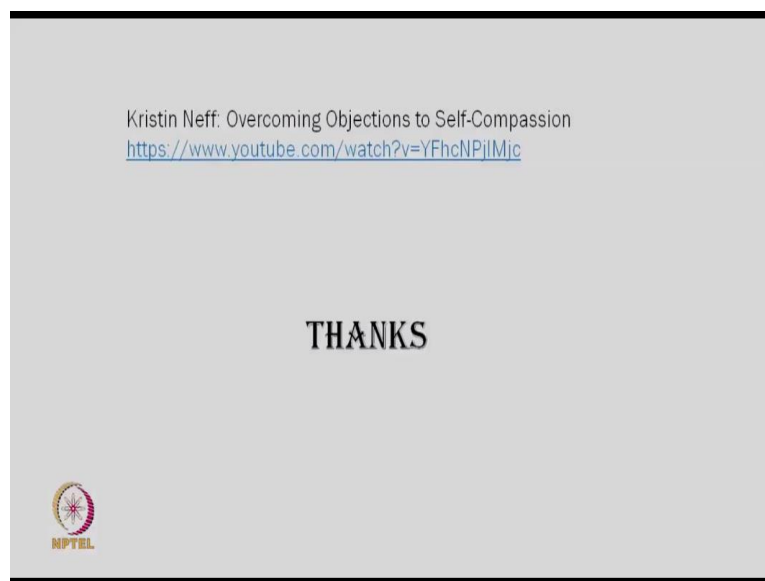


She also reported connections between mindfulness, self-compassion and psychological well-being. Self-compassion is a robust and important predictor of psychological health that may

be an important component of mindful-based interventions for anxiety and depression. So, such kind of studies help us to understand why we should have higher level of self-compassion.

And we should understand such kind of constructs to facilitate them in intervention programs so that we can learn to have higher level of self-compassion, which could positively contribute to our psychological well-being. Similarly, you must be knowing about compassion meditation. So, such kind of meditations helps us to have higher level of well-being as well as, you know, better quality of life.

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At the end of this lecture, let us listen to this talk by Kristin Neff on overcoming objections to self-compassion to know more about self-compassion. Thank you very much for today's class.