

THE CENTER FOR FOSTERING SUCCESS

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WEBINAR SERIES



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PCC TEDx: [What To Do if Your Brain is Whacked-Out](#)



PROMOTING RESILIENCY: UNDERSTANDING THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN SELF-AWARENESS AND SELF-COMPASSION



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Gain deeper understanding into ourselves
- Learn about common forms of cognitive distortion and how they interplay in student interactions
- Become aware of signs that self-care is needed
- Understand self-compassion as a tool to promote resilience



The highest result of education is tolerance.

–Helen Keller

Intrapersonal Development



“Intrapersonal skills are skills that provide a moral and psychological grounding to enable an individual to act with integrity and consistence in any situation.”

Maria P.Aristigueta, M.P. (1997) Strategy and Theory for Intrapersonal Development in Public Administration Education, *Journal of Public Administration Education* Vol. 3, No. 2 (May), pp. 163-176

Intrapersonal Development



Intrapersonal skills are the cornerstone of supporting students with a history in foster care.

SELF-REFLECTION

*My ability to act with consistency and integrity
in my work is impacted by...*

Mental Health: Your Own



- ❖ Those in supportive roles, even if they have extensive education and training, are not immune to mental health challenges.
- ❖ Whether mental health problems are undiagnosed or have been clinically explored, they can impact the work we do with students.
- ❖ Working with integrity and consistency requires that we admit and care for our own mental health needs.

Mental Health: You Are Not Alone



Research surveying counseling psychologists has shown:

- ❖ 62% suffered from at least one episode of clinical depression.¹

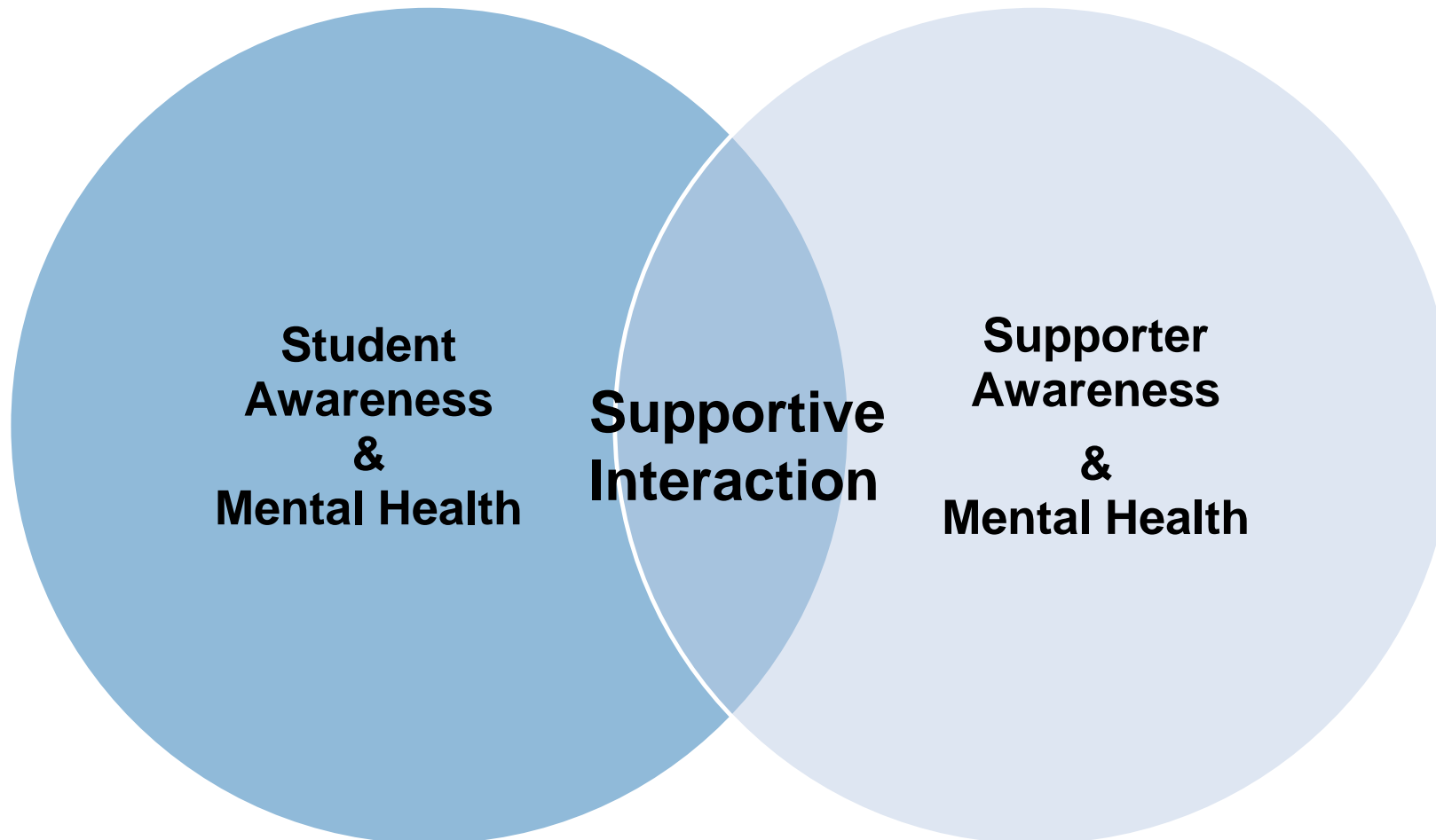
51% of respondents indicated challenge(s) that impacted their professional functioning.²

- ❖ Many perceived barriers to seeking support including, lack of time (61%) and minimization or denial of issues (43%).²

¹Gilroy P, Carroll L, Murra J. (2002) A preliminary survey of counseling Psychologists' personal experiences with depression and treatment. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 33: 402–407

²American Psychological Association Survey findings emphasize the importance of self-care for psychologists. (2010) Vol. 3, No. 2 (May), pp. 163-176

IMPROVING SUPPORTIVE INTERACTIONS



Trauma: A Personal Experience



Trauma is a deeply disturbing or distressful experience, or set of experiences, commonly involving physical and/or emotional harm that activates the stress response and produces lasting adverse effects on the individual's sense of well-being.

Trauma Defined



Trauma can be:

- ❖ Primary—happened to you;
- ❖ Complex—multiple or chronic or prolonged developmentally adverse events;
- ❖ Secondary—happened to someone else, but you witnessed or heard graphic details that activated your stress response and caused distress (example, exposure to domestic violence in the home);
- ❖ Re-triggered by encountering associated stimuli or focusing on memories of the event.

Perceptual Processing



- ❖ Perceptions occur due to the firing of sensory receptors (bottom-up processing) and the organization of those sensations by the brain (top-down processing).
- ❖ Our developmental and cultural experiences influence how we top-down process.

COGNITION AND TRAUMA

- ❖ Individuals who have experienced extreme or complex trauma (especially developmental trauma) are primed for survival—they expect bad things to happen—both physiologically and cognitively.



- ❖ This can lead to errors in processing perceptual experiences and non-adaptive thinking patterns such as cognitive distortion.

Cognitive Distortion



- ❖ **Cognitive Distortion** is a tendency to engage thoughts (usually negative) that are inaccurate and do not reflect reality for the given context.
- ❖ These distortions can lead to misunderstandings and maladaptive behavior.
 - ❖ **Example:** having a distorted belief that others cannot be trusted, makes it more likely you will interpret neutral facial cues as negative or threatening.
- ❖ If someone has experienced trauma, this style of thinking can happen almost automatically as a **survival tool**.

5 Common Types of Cognitive Distortion

Cognitive Distortions: Fallacy of Change



Fallacy of Change

- ❖ This thought process may lead us (or others) to believe others will change to suit our expectations if we pressure or beg them to do so.
- ❖ Often we think our happiness or worth is at stake if we do not get them to change, meaning we focus on them, instead of ourselves, to feel complete and fulfilled.
- ❖ In relationships, this kind distortion is often the basis of co-dependency.

Notes From the Field

Sometimes I'll be working with a student to get through a big challenge and then they disappear. I'll try connecting again but I usually never get a response. My tendency is to reach out over and over because I care and worry about them. It's important that I figure out how to help. I feel like I have failed at my job when I can't help teach students to overcome their challenges.

Fallacy of Change

Cognitive Distortions: Polarized Thinking



Polarized Thinking

- ❖ Black and white thinking
- ❖ We see ourselves (or others) in extreme ways. We use may use descriptors that are overly negative such as terrible/hopeless/failure.
- ❖ There is no grey or middle ground—it's either all bad or all good.

Notes From the Field

I have a few students that really frustrate me. It's hard not to view them negatively. There are situations where I see their choices and I think that they are never going to get it together. Seriously, there is no way in my mind that they are going to get through school—they're not willing to work, they're rude, and they don't appreciate everything I do to support them. I'm really hard on myself to be productive, I want them to be too.

Polarized Thinking

Cognitive Distortions: Catastrophizing



Catastrophizing

- ❖ The worst possible thing is going to happen.
- ❖ This type of negative lens uses magnifying (making minor or insignificant events very large) or minimizing (downplaying the magnitude of significant or positive events).

Notes From the Field

*It is so hard to help students with some of their problems. Like if a student is having fiscal problems and can't pay rent. If I don't help them, no one else will. Where will they go if they lose their place? On the streets, that's what will happen. People act like there are options out there, but there are no options.
It's so horrible!*

Catastrophizing

Cognitive Distortions: Filtering



Filtering

- ❖ We ignore the positive while focusing on a single or few negative details.
- ❖ An example would be ignoring all the good things a boss discussed in a performance report while focusing on the one comment in the “needs improvement” section.
- ❖ Filtering often works to justify and bolster catastrophizing.

Notes From the Field

I was working with a student a scholarship application. She had thoughtfully completed her essay, but when she came to my office to do her submission online, she started texting a friend. I mentioned it to her as an issue. My concern didn't seem to matter, she just kept texting while she made her submission on my computer. I felt so frustrated that she made texting a priority when I was trying to help her. It will be a surprise if she gets a scholarship.

Filtering

Cognitive Distortions: Fallacy of Change



Control Fallacies

- ❖ The **fallacy of external control** may lead us (or others) to feel like we are a helpless a victim of fate with no power to change what happens to us.
- ❖ The **fallacy of internal control** may make us believe we are responsible for everything that happens, including the emotions and happiness of others.

Notes From the Field

I don't feel like I can end an appointment with a student who is crying. My worry is that they might harm themselves if I don't help them feel better. Often, I'm the only resource they have for finding emotional support. I know that I can make them feel better. Sometimes though, a student will take up so much time that I can't help other students.

Fallacy of Internal Control

Other Cognitive Distortions



Other Distortions

- ❖ **Blaming** = “It’s their fault, not mine! ” (always)
- ❖ **Fallacy of Fairness** = “That’s not fair!”
- ❖ **Overgeneralization** = “They did it one time, so I know they will always do it.”
- ❖ **Jumping to Conclusions** = “It was intentional, I know they did it on purpose.”
- ❖ **Personalization** = “I know they didn’t come because of me.”
- ❖ **Shoulds** = “They shouldn’t do that” or “should”
- ❖ **Global Labeling** = “I am a total loser!”
- ❖ **Always Being Right** = “I don’t care what they say, I know I’m right.”

Triggers



Triggers

- ❖ Triggering occurs when a memory, sight, sound, or smell reminds us of a primary or secondary trauma.
- ❖ Triggers can move us into a highly reactive state in which we engage a survival skill such as fight, flight, or freeze.
- ❖ Our reactions to a trigger can also be more subtle—e.g. cognitive distortion, zoning out, exhaustion, etc.

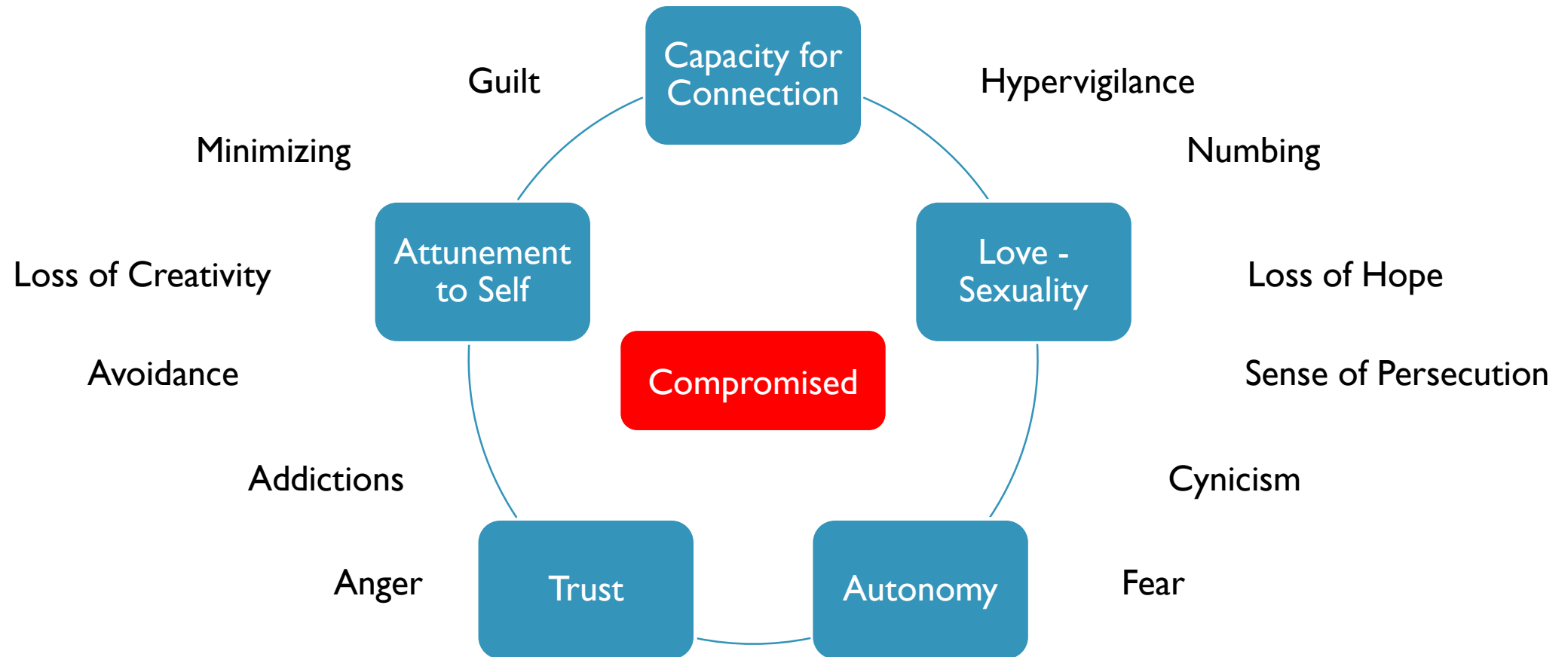
Notes From the Field

One trigger I must be aware of when working with students, is my visceral aversion to manic behaviors. Since I was raised in a home with a parent with bi-polar disorder, I can become quickly exhausted by a student that will not sit down or has pressure of speech, especially if they are expressing agitation. I find myself wanting to disengage or sometimes I listen without actually hearing what they are saying.

SELF-REFLECTION

Where I've had strong feelings/reactions in the moment that seem disproportionate for the situation, I'm able to identify these triggers I need to be aware of...

IMPACTS OF TRAUMA ON THE SELF: READING THE SIGNS



SELF-REFLECTION

My primary or secondary trauma shows up personally and professionally as...

INSIGHT AND BEHAVIORAL CHANGE

- ❖ Individuals may lack insight into their tendency towards cognitive distortion.
- ❖ Survival behaviors resulting from a history of trauma do not change overnight—insight is key, but takes time.
- ❖ Understanding the behavior in ourselves and others can help us engage students with more patience and empathy.

THE THERAPEUTIC TRIAD

Which one do you see as the most relevant for this person's (your) situation?

Which one is most important for positive coping and personal healing?

Forgiveness

Is there one approach over another that the person (you) seems more open to?

How can work in one of these areas become a portal to the other two?

Self-Compassion

Resilience

What beliefs or practices does the person (do you) have and do that can aid this exploration?

Stuntzner, S., Dalton, J., & MacDonald, A. (2017, April). *The Therapeutic Triad of Disability: Forgiveness, Self-compassion, and Resilience*. Educational Session Presentation at the American Counseling Association Conference, San Francisco, CA

SELF-REFLECTION

When I apply the therapeutic triad in my own life, the area of focus I most need to work on today is...

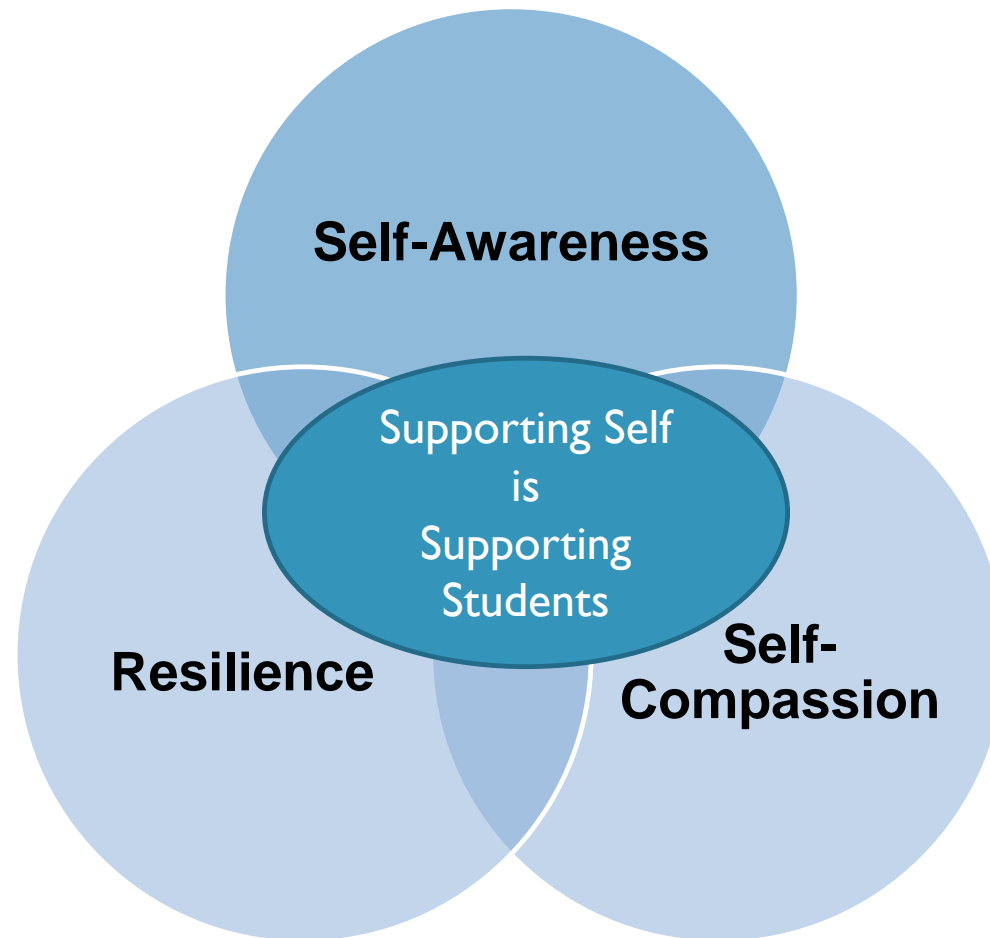
VISUALIZING & RECOGNIZING THE COMPASSIONATE PERSON EXERCISE

- ❖ **Think about someone you admire or whom would describe as compassionate.**
- ❖ **What personal qualities stand out about this person? How would you describe this person?**
- ❖ **What are some other qualities or traits a self-compassionate person might have?**
- ❖ **Reflect on a situation in which you have experienced compassion for yourself or others...**

CAN YOU BE THAT PERSON FOR YOURSELF EVERY SINGLE DAY?

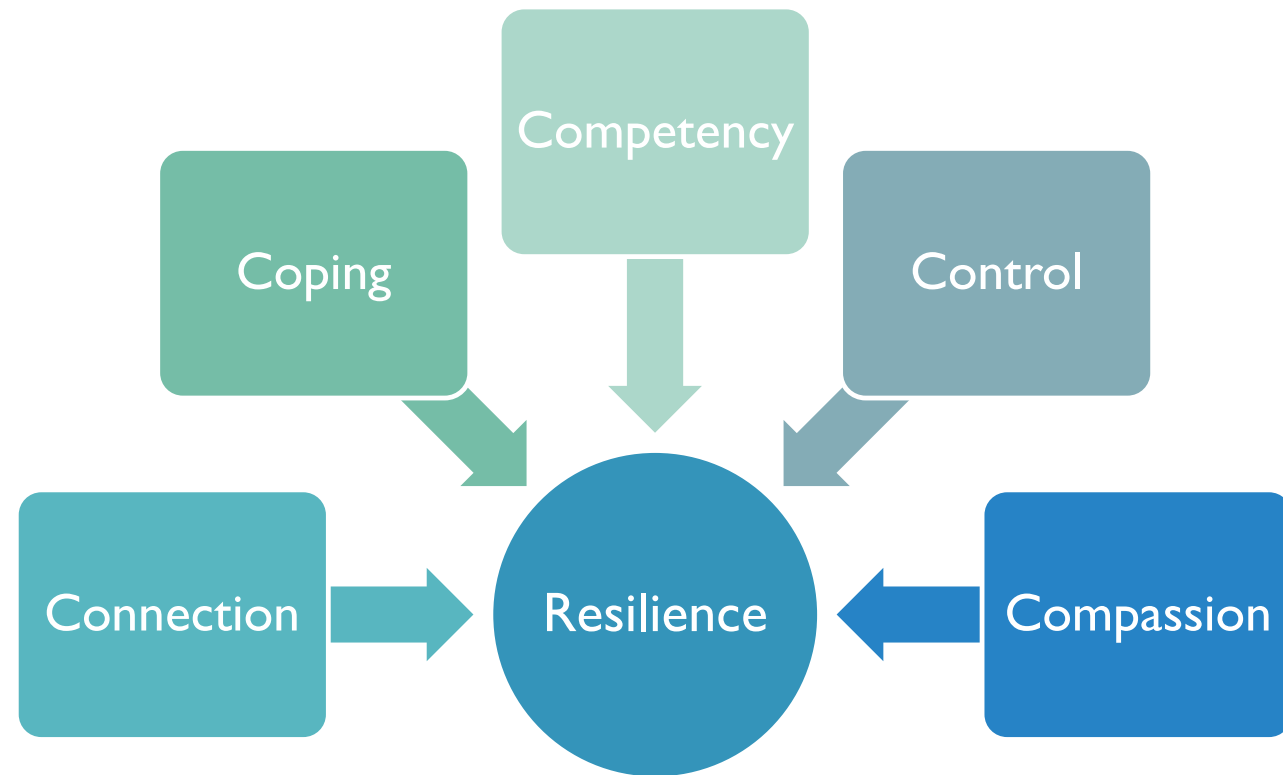
(Adapted from Germer & Neff, 2013 by Stuntzner & Hartley, 2014b, pp. 78-79)

THE SELF AND OTHERS



PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION PROMOTE ASSETS & AWARENESS

- ❖ **Engage relationship skills** such as empathy, communication, conflict management
- ❖ **Engage coping skills** such as breathing techniques, mindfulness, and self-reflection activities
- ❖ **Engage healthy exploration** of strengths and opportunities for growth
- ❖ **Increase awareness** of control and letting go of control
- ❖ **Engage compassion** towards self and others



Q & A



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THANKS FOR JOINING US!



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