

# Compassion Practices: The “Medicine” We Need for Burnout & Compassion Fatigue



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# Welcome Everyone!

I'm Beth Shekinah Terrence, MS, NCPRSS  
Founder & Facilitator of  
Holistic Recovery Pathways, LLC.

*A few of my hats include...*

- Holistic Health Practitioner
- Trained Shaman
- Meditation & Mindfulness Teacher
- Peer Recovery Specialist & Trainer
- May Is For Metta: Planting Seeds of Lovingkindness & Compassion Facilitator
- Restorative Practices Facilitator & Trainer




## *Compassion Practices We'll Explore Together...*

- Lovingkindness Meditation (LKM)
- Gratitude Practice
- Cultivating Connection

## Program Topics:

- Explore Compassion, Self-Compassion & Resilience
- Review Researched Benefits of Compassion Practices
- Discuss How Compassion Practices Can Help Prevent Compassion Fatigue & Burnout
- Experience Compassion Practices that can support Self-Care & Resilience
- Ways to Integrate Compassion Practices into Self-Care & Resilience Plans



*Settling In Meditation*

WELCOME

COMPASSION

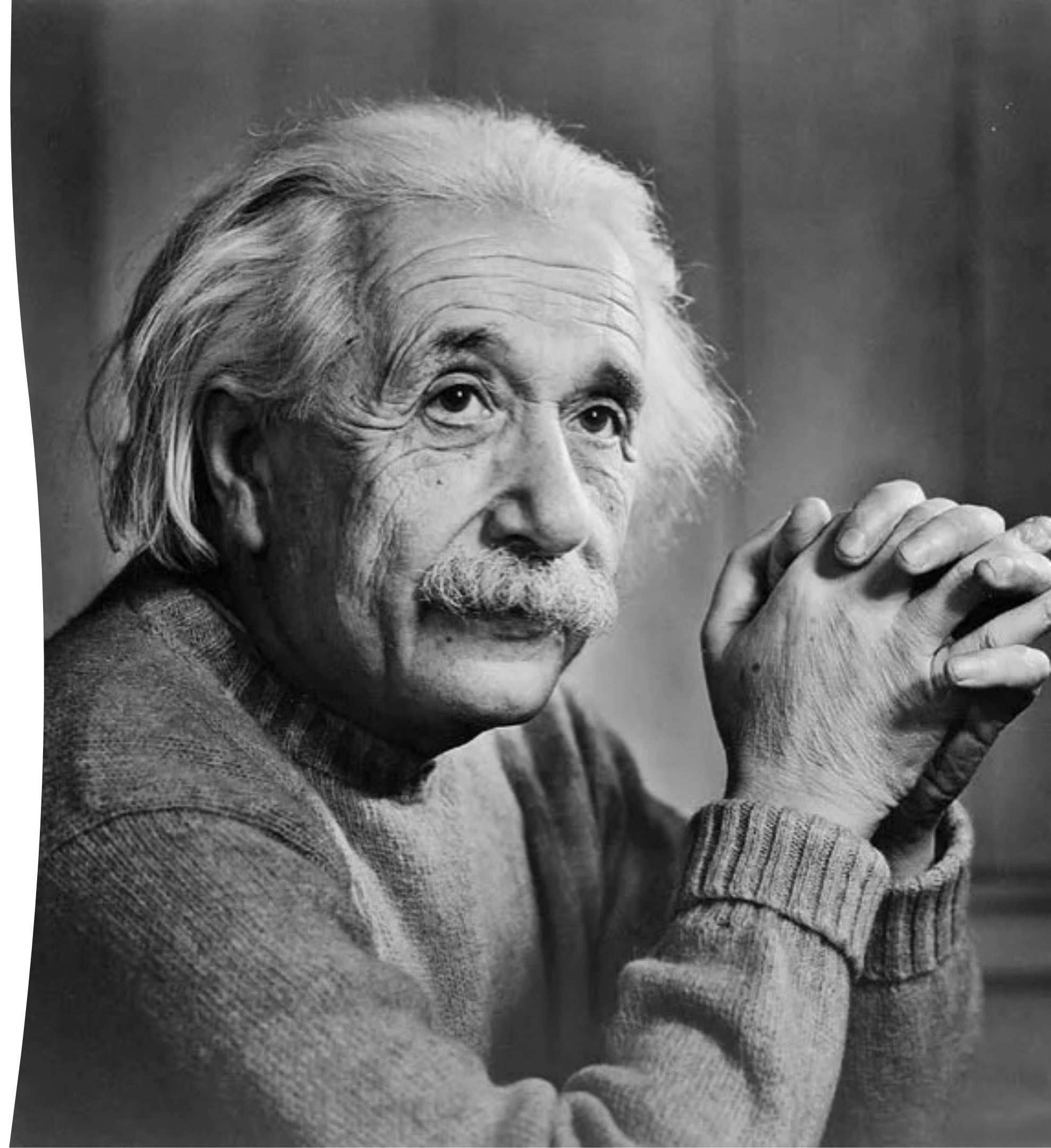


*“A human being is part of a whole, called by us the “Universe,” a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest — a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness.*

*This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest us.*

*Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circles of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.”*

*~ Albert Einstein*





# Defining Compassion

- “to suffer together.” ([greatergood.berkeley.edu](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu))
- “to recognize the suffering of others and then take action to help. Compassion embodies a tangible expression of love for those who are suffering.” ([Compassion.com](http://Compassion.com))
- "sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it." (Merriam Webster Dictionary)
- “the feeling that arises when you are confronted with another’s suffering and feel motivated to relieve that suffering.” (Strauss et al., 2016)
- “concern for the wellbeing of others.” (Cosley, McCoy, & Saslow, 2010)

## Empathy

DEFINING ASPECTS

Feeling for someone,  
"I understand what  
you're going through.  
I've been there."



## Compassion

DEFINING ASPECTS

Feeling for someone  
+ desire to help "I can  
understand your distress  
and I want to help."

## Empathy vs. Compassion

- **Empathy** is our feeling of awareness toward other people's emotions and an attempt to understand how they feel. Empathy is an understanding of our shared humanity.
- **Compassion** is an emotional response to empathy or sympathy and creates a desire to help. Compassion adds another dimension of a desire to help.



# How Practicing Compassion Helps

- Unlike empathy, compassion creates emotional distance from the individual and situation. Compassion is the ability to recognize someone's suffering and a desire to want to help them.
- By practicing compassion, we can we become more resilient and improve our overall wellbeing.
- A study from Emory University (2017), found that medical students with stressful and challenging work environments benefited greatly from compassion training. (greatergood.org, 2017)
  - It helped practitioners “stay compassionate toward their patients while maintaining personal well-being.”
  - It also helped to limit their overall stress levels.

# ***Resilience*** *is the ability to...*

- recover and persevere in the face of adversity without being overwhelmed or act in dysfunctional/unhealthy ways
- become strong, healthy and successful again after something difficult or challenging happens.
- recover from setbacks and adapt well to change and crisis.



# Is Your Cup Empty or Full?

- How can you be resilient with an empty cup or one that is running low?
- Taking time to nurture and replenish your whole self – body, mind, emotion and spirit is essential as a helping professional
- That's not always easy! It can be hard to give to ourselves what we so easily and naturally give to others.
- *What's the Key?*





# Self-Compassion is the Key!

“Self-compassion is the ongoing practice of relating to yourself kindly and fairly. It is especially helpful during times of stress and suffering. Self-compassion is not kicking yourself when you’re down, which prolongs stress reactions, creates more suffering, and delays your ability to get back up. Instead, self-compassion is about treating yourself as you would treat a good friend in distress. It is about responding with caring support.”

~ Whitlock, et al., 2021

“Self-compassion is the practice in which we learn to be a good friend to ourselves when we need it most – to become an inner ally rather than an inner enemy.”

~ Neff & Germer, 2018



# Benefits of Self-Compassion

- Increases well-being and resilience to stress and trauma
- Supports practicing healthy behaviors and minimizing unhealthy behaviors (like more exercise and less substance use)
- Improves greater motivation, confidence, and sense of personal responsibility
- Strengthens pro-social or supportive relationship behaviors
- Helps people sustain the act of caring for others

*(Seppala, 2014; Whitlock, 2021)*

# Three Elements of Self-Compassion



## **Mindfulness**

Being aware of the physical, emotional, or mental pain of the moment.



## **Self-kindness**

Treating ourselves with kindness, considering our own needs.



## **Common Humanity**

Recognizing that these experiences are a normal part of being human.



***“Self-care is never a selfish act—it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer to others.”***

***~ Parker Palmer***



Lovingkindness  
Meditation  
(LKM)

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a string of white prayer beads. The person is wearing a teal-colored garment. In the background, a small Buddha statue is visible, also holding prayer beads. The scene is set on a blue and white checkered mat. The image is partially obscured by a white, torn-paper-like graphic element on the right side.

# Lovingkindness Meditation (LKM)

- Lovingkindness Meditation (LKM) has roots in the Buddhist tradition of Metta meditation and is considered a well-researched secular practice today.
- At the heart of the practice is the concept of cultivating greater compassion for self, others and the world around us.
- It uses words, images, and feelings to evoke a feeling of loving-kindness and compassion.
- With each recitation of the phrases, we are expressing an intention, planting the seeds of kindness over and over. It is a good meditation practice for beginners and experienced practitioners alike.

# Lovingkindness Meditation (LKM)

*Researched benefits of LKM include:*

- Increasing positive emotions
- Growing overall experience wellbeing
- Enhancing emotional processes
- Increasing empathy
- Improving social connection
- Reducing self-criticism
- Increasing compassion towards oneself and others
- Easing PTSD symptoms, depression and other traumas
- Supporting physical health by decreasing inflammation and improving immune function



# Lovingkindness

## The Foundational Practice

- Generating the energy of lovingkindness & compassion
  - Loving Being
  - Circle of Loving Beings
- Offering lovingkindness to ourselves
  - LKM Phrases
- Dedicating Merit in Your Way

### **Lovingkindness Meditation**

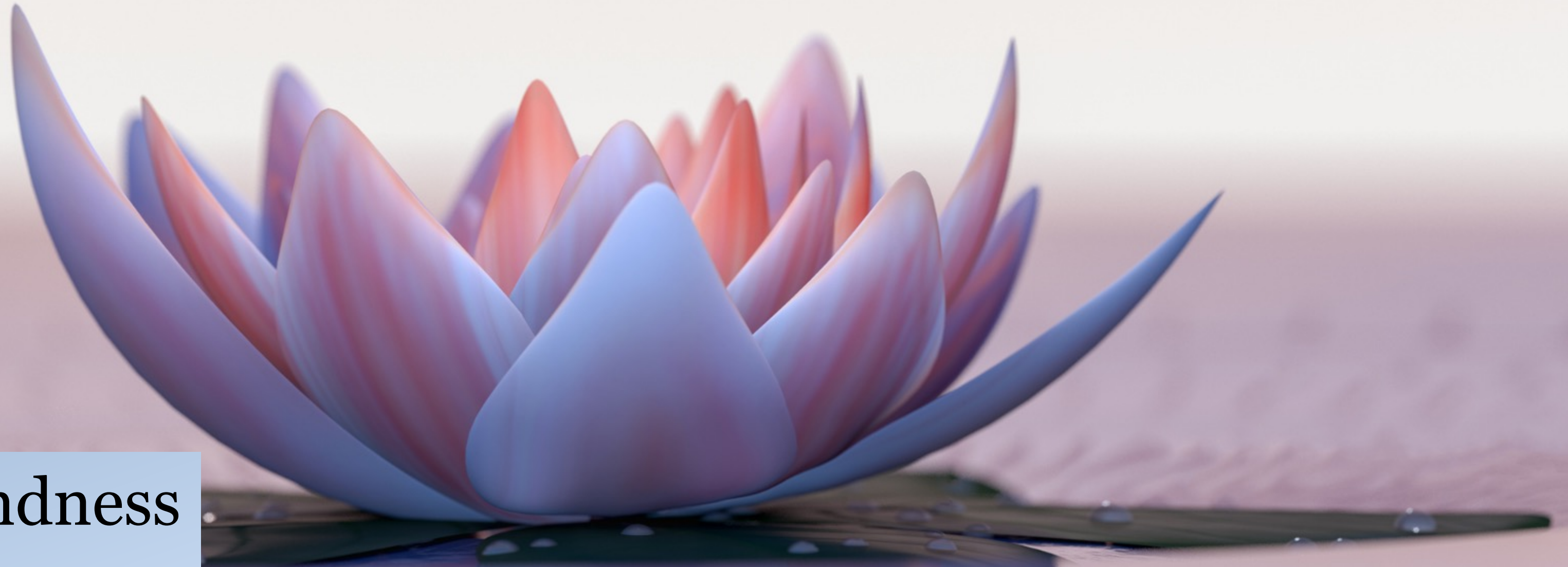
#### **Practice Categories:**

*Self, Benefactor, Beloved,  
Neutral, Difficult, All Beings*



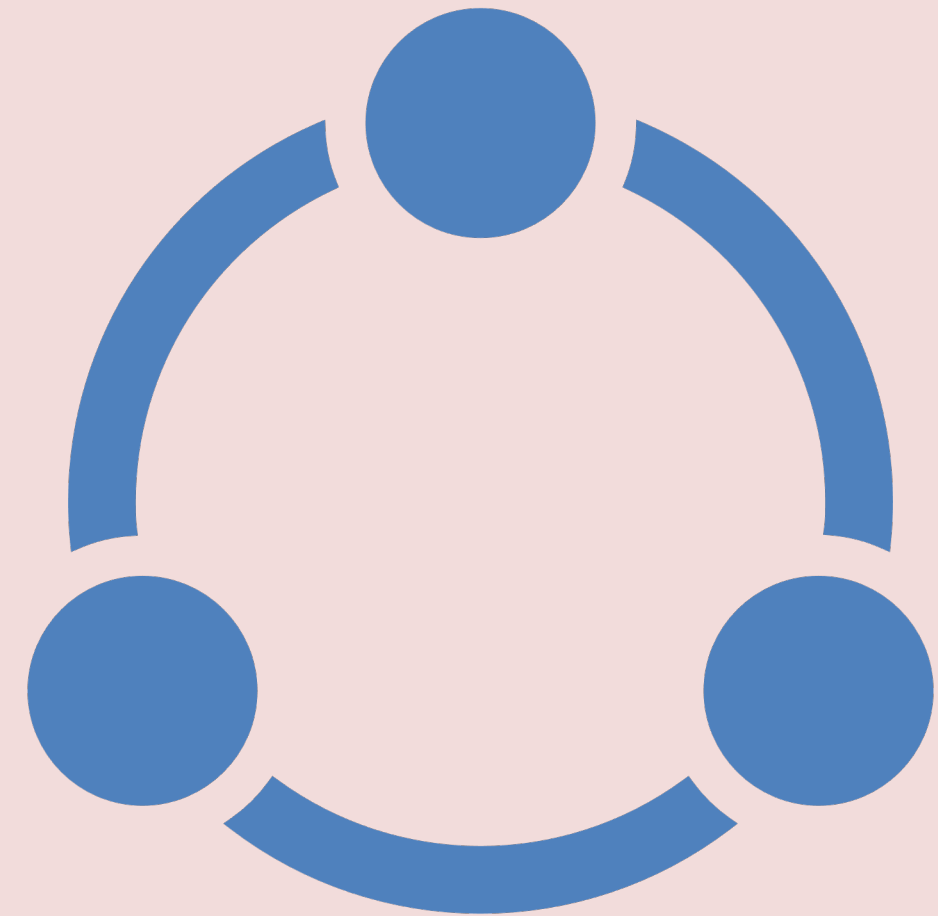
**May I be happy.  
May I be peaceful.  
May I be free of suffering.  
May I have ease of wellbeing..**

Lovingkindness  
Phrases



# Activity: Journaling Reflection on LKM Experience

- Write down who was in your circle of loving beings?
- Is there anyone you would like to add?
- How did it feel to create this space and open to receiving lovingkindness and compassion?
- Did you notice any resistance?
- Any other reflections?



# Compassion Fatigue & Burnout

- Compassion fatigue is caused by the exposure of traumatic material or what is often referred to as secondary or vicarious trauma.
- Compassion fatigue has a rapid onset and can be felt after the first experience of absorbing one's traumatic material.
- Compassion fatigue is a term that describes the impact of helping others.
  
- Burnout is caused by work-related attributes such as the job, coworkers, one's supervisor and poor work culture.
- Burnout emerges gradually over time as the work-related attributes such as too much paperwork, lack of resources, and long shifts, pile up.
- Burnout is a term that describes the impact of a stressful workplace.

***Compassion fatigue can have a quicker recovery time than burnout, if managed early.***



# Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue & Burnout

## Compassion Fatigue

- Chronic physical ailments such as gastrointestinal problems or colds
- Sadness
- Difficulty concentrating mentally and physically tired
- Insomnia or headaches
- Bottled up emotions
- Isolation or social distancing from others
- Reoccurrence of nightmares and flashbacks to traumatic events
- Substance abuse or compulsive behaviors are used to mask feelings
- Reduced self-care

## Burnout

- Emotional and physical exhaustion
- Overwhelmed by work and life responsibilities
- Reduced vocational productivity
- Reduced personal accomplishment
- Lack of confidence or self-esteem
- Changes in beliefs, values, and view of workplace or world
- Feelings of hopelessness and helplessness
- Personal and work relationships are challenged
- Anxiety and tension focused around job

Activity:  
Discuss with a partner...

*What are some of the ways you've experienced Compassion Fatigue or Burnout?*



Gratitude



# What is Gratitude?

*“The practice of gratitude bestows many benefits... Anger, arrogance, and jealousy melt in its embrace. Fear and defensiveness dissolve. Gratitude diminishes barriers to love and evokes happiness, keeping alive what has meaning for us.” ~ Angeles Arrien*

*“Gratitude is an affirmation of goodness. We affirm that there are good things in the world, gifts and benefits we’ve received. And then we recognize that the sources of this goodness are outside of ourselves. ... We acknowledge that other people—or even higher powers, if you’re of a spiritual mindset—gave us many gifts, big and small, to help us achieve the goodness in our lives.” ~ Robert Emmons*




# Benefits of Gratitude Practice

Research shows many benefits from gratitude practice:

- Feeling happier and more optimistic
- Stronger immune systems
- Reduces anxiety and depression
- Having healthier behaviors and better health maintenance
- Getting more regular exercise
- Eating healthier foods
- Improved mental alertness
- Facilitates better sleep
- Better self-care of physically and mentally
- Coping better with overall stress and specific challenges
- Feeling a greater sense of connection to self, others and the world (Emmons, 20xx, etc.)

G r a t i t u d e  
c h a n g e s  
e v e r y t h i n g



**Ways to  
Practice  
Gratitude**

- Meditation
- Journaling
- Reflection
- Sharing With Friends & Family
- Gratitude Sharing Circle
- On The Spot

A photograph showing a circle of hands of various skin tones (light, medium, and dark brown) holding each other in a supportive grip. The hands are arranged in a circle, with fingers interlocking or resting on each other. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The word "Connection" is written in a bold, black, serif font in the center of the image.

**Connection**

Connection is vital to our personal experience of well-being, as well as our ability to serve and support others.

As we cultivate practices that help us to feel connected, we become better able to access support when we ourselves need it, both inwardly and outwardly.

*Connection is a way we can “fill our cups” and build our resilience.*

**Connection & Well-being**



# Benefits of Social Connection

Research shows that social connection can help to:

- lower anxiety and depression
- regulate our emotions
- lead to higher self-esteem and empathy
- reduce risk of suicide
- improve our immune system functioning

Additionally, as loneliness and isolation are on the rise, a lack of human connection has been shown to be more harmful to your health than obesity, smoking and high blood pressure.  
(Seppala, 2020)

*By neglecting our need to connect, we put our overall health at risk!*





## **Ways to Cultivate Connection**

- Participating in community – local, social, hobbies, spiritual, co-visioning
- Spending time with family, friends and colleagues or explore new relationships
- Access peer support or mentorship
- Connecting with self through meditation, journaling, and self-reflection
- Spiritual practices such as prayer, meditation or contemplation
- Spending time in nature
- Creativity activities or hobbies
- Listening to or playing music
- Journaling or letter writing - to self, others, spiritual source
- Volunteer for a cause you care about
- Eat lunch in a communal space
- Ask someone for help when you need it
- Do a random act of kindness



# Integration

**Creating time and space for integration is an important aspect of self-compassion, self-care and resilience that supports us on all levels – body, mind, emotion & spirit.**

**Many of the compassion practices we've explored help foster integration.**

Ways to practice integration include:

- Resting
- Moving your body
- Going for a walk
- Spending Time in Nature
- Getting a massage or bodywork or acupuncture
- Sharing your experiences and insights with someone else
- Creative practices such as artwork or collage
- Listening to or playing music



# Activity:

## Closing Connection Circle

Go around the circle giving each person **2 minutes** to share on the questions below. Have a time person.

After each person has completed sharing, while being witnessed, if there is additional time you may open the circle for further dialogue. Use the talking piece on the table to pass around indicating who is the speaker.

- Share your name and where you were born
- 3 Things You are Grateful for Today
- Describe your place of Connection in Nature and how it felt to go there energetically
- Identify 1 -3 ways to practice compassion that you can add to current your self-care or resilience plan or use as a foundation for a new plan

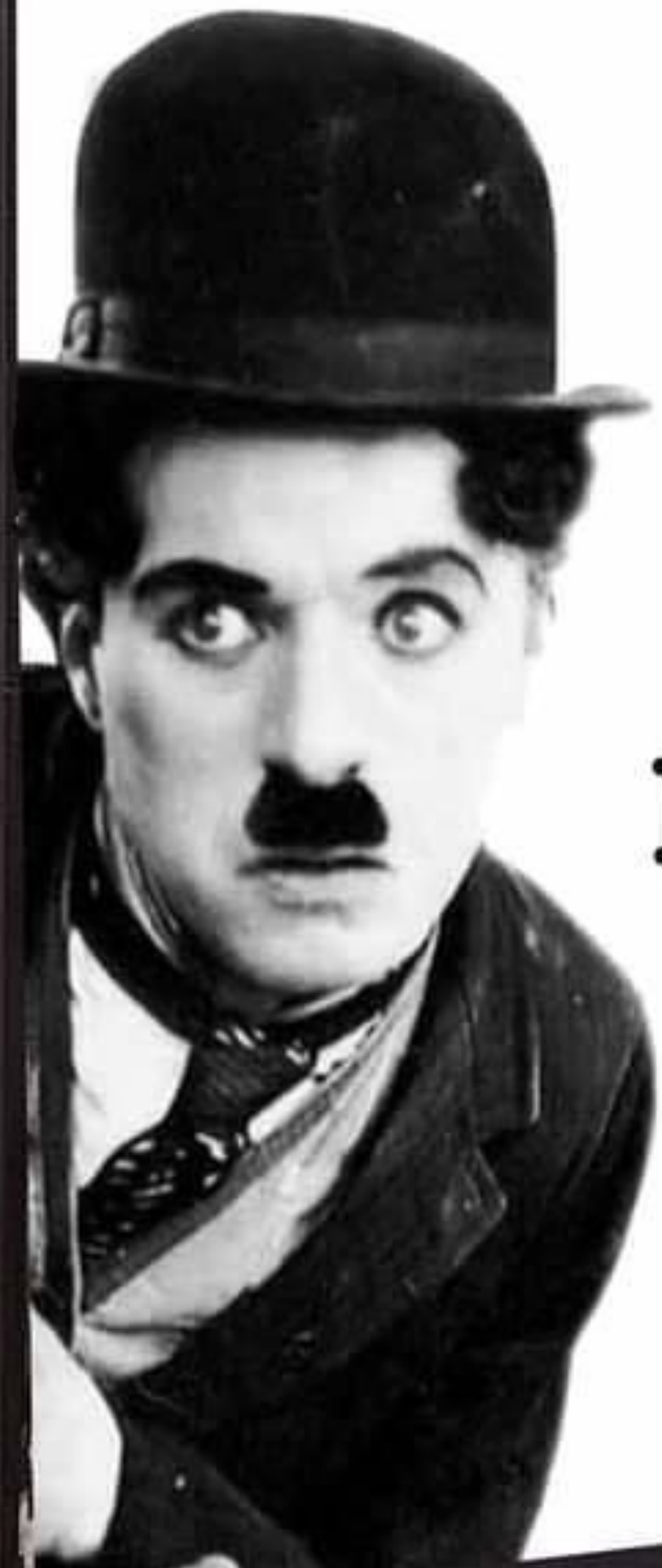
## CIRCLE GUIDELINES

Speak from the heart:  
your truth, your experiences,  
your perspectives

Listen from the heart:  
let go of stories that make it hard  
to hear each other

Trust that you will know what to say:  
no need to rehearse

Say just enough:  
without feeling rushed, be concise and  
considerate of the time of others



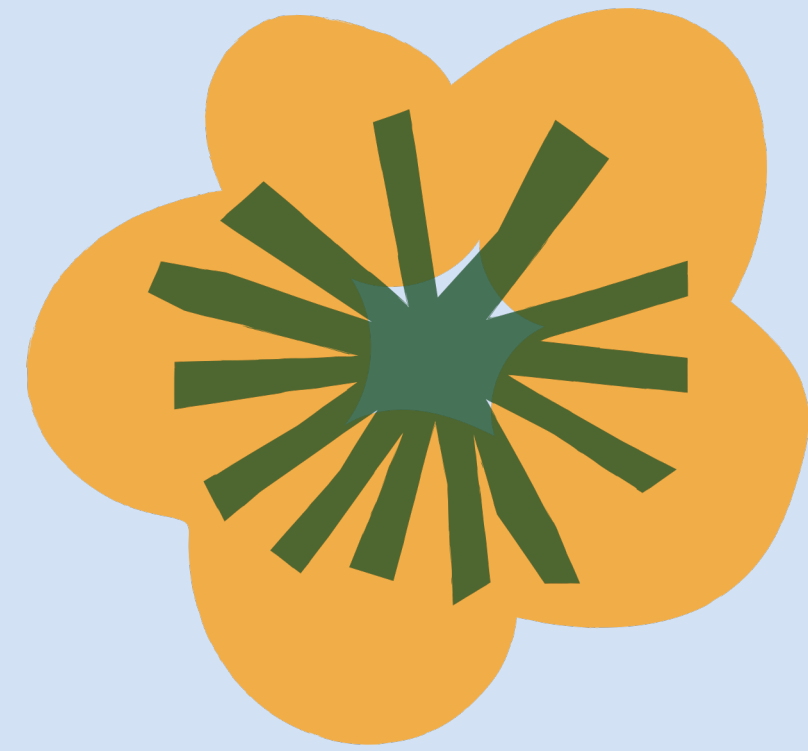
We think too much and  
feel too little.  
More than machinery, we  
need humanity.  
More than cleverness, we  
need kindness and  
gentleness.

- Charlie Chaplin

Quotelosophy

build

# Compassion Resources



Greater Good In Action ~ <https://greatergood.com>

May Is For Metta (LKM Meditation) ~ <https://bethshekinah.com/mayisformetta>

Happiness & Wellness -Karen Salmansohn ~ [notsalmon.com](https://notsalmon.com)

Science of Health & Happiness/Dr. Emma Seppala ~ <https://emmaseppala.com>

Self-Compassion/Dr. Kristen Neff ~ <https://self-compassion.org/category/exercises>

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# Presenter Info

Beth Shekinah Terrence, MS is the founder and facilitator of Holistic Recovery Pathways, LLC. She is a trained shaman, holistic practitioner, and restorative facilitator. She is a nationally certified peer recovery specialist (NCPRSS). She holds a Masters of Science degree in Restorative Practices through the International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP).

Beth Shekinah's vision is to help create a healthier and more nurturing world by supporting individuals, families, and communities in finding hope, healing, and a deeper sense of connection and belonging. She is known for her engaging and experiential programming, which includes holistic workshops, wellness retreats and trainings. She is strongly committed to supporting organizations and systems in building cultures of health, well-being, and inclusivity.



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