



The Research on Self Compassion and Wellbeing

Dr. Kristin Neff

Interviewed by Dr. Laura Markham

Dr. Laura Markham ([00:05](#)):

This summit is brought to you with love by Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids. Welcome. Hello, I'm Dr. Laura Markham, Founder of Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids and organizer of this online summit. Nurturing Hearts, Nurturing Minds: The Neuroscience of Peaceful Parenting. My guest today is the amazing Dr. Kristin Neff. Dr. Neff is an Associate Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Texas at Austin. She's a pioneer in the field of self-compassion research. She conducted the first empirical studies on self-compassion more than 20 years ago. She's the author of the bestselling book, *Self-Compassion, Fierce Self-Compassion*, and along with her colleague, Chris Germer, the *Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook*. And they have a new book called *Mindful Self-Compassion for Burnout*, published just last month.

Dr. Laura Markham ([00:56](#)):

Dr. Kristin Neff runs the Self-Compassion Community, an online learning platform where people can learn the skill of self-compassion. She's been recognized as one of the most influential researchers in psychology worldwide. We're talking with Dr. Neff today about the science of self-compassion and well-being. Dr. Neff, I am so grateful to be able to speak with you today. Welcome.

Dr. Kristin Neff (01:19):

Oh, thank you so much for having me.

Dr. Laura Markham (01:22):

I guess we should start with what is self-compassion?

Dr. Kristin Neff (01:27):

Well, if you just look at the roots of the word compassion, passion means to suffer, com means with. So, it's really how do we show up for suffering? And normally, we think of that as how do we show up for others when they're suffering? Are we kind? Are we warm? Are we supportive? Are we looking down on them? Or is it like, "Hey, I've been there." So, we are more familiar with compassion for others. So, self-compassion is simply how do we show up for ourselves? We're suffering. Again, it could be big suffering, little suffering, but it could be when we're feeling badly about ourselves or when we're just really struggling, do we show up for ourselves in a warm, supportive, caring way?

Dr. Laura Markham (02:06):

And what does the research tell us about why that's a good thing to do?

Dr. Kristin Neff (02:11):

Well, the research is pretty overwhelming at this point. I think there's over 6,000 studies. It's boring because it almost has the same result, which is that self-compassion is strongly linked to well-being. And of course, it makes sense. So, if we're struggling in some way and we shame ourselves, we blame ourselves, we are cold to ourselves, we're unsupportive to ourselves, clearly, we're going to be less strong and less resilient. But when we're struggling and we show up for ourselves and we ask, "What do I need right now to be well? How can I cope with this difficult emotion? I'm there for myself." And when we feel connected to others as opposed to isolated from others, that makes us stronger and more resilient.

Dr. Kristin Neff (02:51):

So, whether it's mental health, things like depression and anxiety, stress are reduced. Whether it's physical health, so we sleep better, our immune system functions better. Whether it seems like motivation, when we're there to encourage ourselves, we're more likely to reach our goals. So really, the list goes on and on. It's really one of the best things we can do for ourselves. And it's not that hard. We have to treat ourselves in a similar way that we treat our good friends and other people we care about.

Dr. Laura Markham ([03:21](#)):

Well, that leads me to the objection that I so often hear when I talk to parents about self-compassion. And that is, well, if I let myself off the hook that I just yelled at my kid, then I'm going to do it again. So, how would you answer that?

Dr. Kristin Neff ([03:36](#)):

Well, so you can ask that parent, "Well, why do you think it's better? Why do you think it's a problem to yell at your kid and call them names?" As a parent, that if your child, let's say misbehaves, the best way to react ideally, we aren't perfect, is to say something like, "Okay." Well, first of all, you acknowledge that your child misbehaved because it wouldn't be compassionate to just let your child do anything, but encouragement, offering good structured guidance. Here's a different way we can do it. What could we learn from that situation? We know intuitively as parents that's going to be more effective than saying, "You're a horrible brat. I hate you." And yet, somehow, we think saying to ourselves, saying, "You're a horrible person. I hate you." because you yelled at your kid, it's going to be more effective.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([04:19](#)):

So again, it's intuitive. We know that, again, we want to acknowledge maybe you yelled at your kids and we all lose it. That's not with my values. That's not how I want to show up as a parent, you acknowledge that, but it is only human. What can I learn from this situation? What were the factors that maybe triggered me? Can I somehow try to avoid those in the future? Or what might I have said that was more productive? Learning from our mistakes with kindness, support and encouragement is a much better road than just shaming ourselves. Because then, we shame ourselves, yeah, we're going to feel badly about it, but that shame just means we're more likely to get triggered again in the future.

Dr. Laura Markham ([04:59](#)):

Yes. So, shame actually means we're more likely to get triggered again and self-compassion is an antidote to shame. Is that right?

Dr. Kristin Neff ([05:08](#)):

It is. Yeah, absolutely. So, there are three components, at least into the way I define self-compassion. There's kindness, which is most obvious. There's a sense of connectedness. We'll remember that everyone's imperfect. Everyone makes mistakes, everyone struggles. It's part of life. And then, mindfulness is a part of self-compassion. We need to be able to show up for ourselves with clarity. "Oh, I see this is

what's going on," as opposed to either being lost in it or I'm avoiding it. So, shame is the direct opposite. We don't see clearly. We usually exaggerate how horrible things are. We aren't kind to ourselves. We're cruel to ourselves.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([05:51](#)):

And one of the defining features of shame is we feel very isolated. We feel like everyone else in the world is living a normal perfect life, and it's just me who's messed up or done something that I'm ashamed of. And so, there's this research that shows very clearly, when you bring in the three components of self-compassion, we remember we're only human. We remember we aren't alone. We bring mindful clarity and balance to what we're experiencing and we're kind, it unravels shame. And this is one of the powers of self-compassion.

Dr. Laura Markham ([06:22](#)):

So, one of the key components that people might overlook when they think about self-compassion is that we're not alone. It is that common humanity that you talk about because it's the isolation that is so difficult, partly it's the isolation, right?

Dr. Kristin Neff ([06:40](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. And it's confusing because the term is self-compassion, and people think that that means that you're identified with the sense of separate self. It's really the opposite. You might say the sense of self that's receiving the compassion, the part of ourself that feels flawed or inadequate, that part feels separate. But the part of us that's giving the compassion, this is our human self. This is our bigger self, this is our interconnected self. So, it's almost like we're switching out of that small separate self to this larger interconnected self. And so, we remember that this is normal. Anyone in this situation, or at least many people in this situation would probably react in a similar way.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([07:23](#)):

There's nothing wrong with me for making mistakes. To be human means to be imperfect. To be human doesn't mean to be a robot. And so, remembering that makes such a huge difference because when we shame ourselves and we feel all alone, it's like we're kicking ourselves when we're down. Not only have we made a mistake or not only are we hurting, we feel like there's something wrong with us for being that way, and that just makes it so much harder to recover.

Dr. Laura Markham ([07:49](#)):

So, what's happening in the brain and nervous system when we use self-compassion?

Dr. Kristin Neff ([07:55](#)):

Yeah. And so, by the way, I should also say, if you're someone who beat yourself up, don't beat yourself up for beating yourself up, because actually evolutionarily, it's more natural. So, what happens when we make a mistake or something difficult happens is we feel threatened. And so evolutionarily or physiologically, when we feel threatened, we go into the fight, flight or freeze response. And because the threat is inside of ourselves, let's say we've made a mistake, we fight ourselves with harsh criticism. We think somehow by pummeling ourselves, we'll get in line and therefore be safe, or we flee into a sense of isolation. We think that maybe if I just remove myself metaphorically, that other people won't be so angry at me, and then we freeze and we get stuck. We just can't do anything. We were just blinded by, "I can't believe I did that."

Dr. Kristin Neff ([08:48](#)):

Now, by the way, your best friend, when they make a mistake, you aren't so personally threatened. And that's why it's easy with your friend to tap into the other system, which is also natural, but evolved to care for others. And that's the care system. So, parents naturally have the urge to care for their children. In-group members, part of the tribe have the natural desire to care for each other. That's also part of evolution. So, we have to do a little hack with self-compassion. We're tapping in to the system that evolved to care for others to care for ourselves, but our body doesn't know the difference. So, for example, so when we're in fight flight or freeze, when we're feeling the lack of self-compassion, our sympathetic nervous system is activated. Things like cortisol levels are elevated, inflammation goes up.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([09:35](#)):

But when we do this little hack, we treat ourselves like we would treat a friend, we tap into the care system, the parasympathetic nervous system is activated, cortisol goes down, things like heart rate variability increase. And so, there's a study that shows, for instance, putting your own hand on your heart has a similar effect physiologically as if someone puts their hand on your shoulder, our body doesn't really know the difference. This is a nice thing. It's not rocket science. We already know how to be compassionate to others, at least those we care about. So, we just have to give ourselves permission to do this U-turn and start to treat ourselves in a similar way.

Dr. Laura Markham ([10:17](#)):

I love your description of this as a hack. The care system is already there, but it's going to get ourselves out of the threat response and into the care response by doing that pivot. So, I know you're a parent yourself. As you think about how tough parenting is, can you describe how self-compassion can help us to be the parent we want to show up as more often?

Dr. Kristin Neff ([10:45](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. So, one of the things is you said the parent we want to be, we want to show up as, and you might think about that as your values. I think many of us, especially the type of people who watch your show or listen to you, they don't want to just do what their parents did. They don't want to parent just blindly. People want to parent in a way that's productive, that's in line with their values of being fair and helpful and all those good things. And so, one of the things about self-compassion is it allows you to be authentic. It allows you both to accept your flaws and the fact that you aren't perfect and that's part of authenticity.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([11:26](#)):

But also, part of authenticity is saying, "Well, what's really important to me? What do I want for myself and my relationship with my child?" And it encourages us to act in accord with that. So, if you think about what happens when we aren't acting in accord with our values, maybe we just lose it or become reactive, is we aren't really in touch with our true self in that moment. We're just acting according to old programming, for instance. It happens. It's normal. It is part of the process. The really cool thing about self-compassion is when you make a mistake and you model in front of your child, "Oh wow, I really didn't mean that. I'm so sorry. It happens. I'm only human."

Dr. Kristin Neff ([12:06](#)):

But what can I learn from this situation? How might I do it differently? Then that is actually the best opportunity to teach your kid self-compassion. Here's the good news. If you're a perfect parent, you won't be able to model self-compassion for your child. So, it's fine to make mistakes as long as you actually address them. You acknowledge them with mindfulness. You remember with common humanity, I'm not alone. I'm only human. But then the kindness means, it's not kind to just say, "Oh, well, I made a mistake. Who cares?" That's not kind. Kindness is, "Okay. Again, what can I learn from this? How might I do something better next time because this is really what's important to my heart?"

Dr. Laura Markham ([12:44](#)):

It's almost like you're becoming your own parent.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([12:49](#)):

Yes, you are in a way, that's one way to think about it. You're re-parenting yourself. And by the way, if you were lucky enough to have parents who were really there for you, met your needs, made you feel loved and lovable, it's a little easier to give yourself compassion as an adult. If that wasn't your experience, it can be a little more difficult because you didn't internalize this. But the really good news, and there's a lot of research that shows that is, even if that wasn't modeled for you as a child, you can learn to re-parent yourself. You can learn to treat yourself in the way that you wanted to have been treated and that you want to treat your own kids. It's definitely a learnable skill. It's not instinctual, because remember, the instinct is to go into fight, flight or freeze, but it's not rocket science either.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([13:35](#)):

You just have to remember, and really important, you have to give yourself permission to be kind to yourself. If there's part of you that thinks, "I don't deserve it, I'm not worthy." Well, I mean, think about it. You don't have to achieve or earn the right to compassion the moment you're born. You have the right to, it's like a human right. All you have to be is a flawed human being. That's the bottom line that you have, that's litmus test you have to pass. So, if you're a flawed human being and not a robot, you have full right to self-compassion, and then you can start using it. And it really, again, I can't emphasize enough the research, it will radically change your life. It's a big deal.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([14:16](#)):

Any moment of difficulty or struggle or suffering, if you show up for yourself in a kind, supportive way in those moments, it'll make you stronger. It'll make you more resilient. It will allow you to live in accord with your values, including those difficult moments with your children.

Dr. Laura Markham ([14:32](#)):

Yes. So, you become more the person you want to be by showing up this way.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([14:36](#)):

That's right.

Dr. Laura Markham ([14:37](#)):

So, tell us a little more about the research. I know you've done so much research on resilience and burnout and managing stress, all of that.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([14:46](#)):

Yeah, yeah. So, I actually just came out with a book on Self-Compassion for Burnout, because especially for caregivers, and when you're a parent, you're a caregiver, but you also might be a professional caregiver. Maybe you're a teacher or a therapist or you've got something else like that. What the research shows is that if you turn your compassion inward, in addition to outward, and by the way, it's not selfish. It's not saying, "My needs are more important than those of others." It's just saying, "My needs count too. I need to include myself in the equation." And when you do that, it means that you resource yourself and it gives you the ability to continue to care for others without burning out.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([15:25](#)):

So, if your compassion or your care just goes one way, your cup will eventually run dry, guaranteed. It is like you got to put your own oxygen mask on before helping others. For instance, my child's autistic. Autism poses special challenges, but all kids pose challenges. But remember, when he got diagnosed, thank goodness I had about seven years of solid self-compassion practice under my belt because I knew what I had to do. First of all, acknowledge the difficulty, the challenges of it. I mean, he used to have these horrific tantrums that I just couldn't reach him. And so, what I did is when I couldn't reach my son, let's say he was in an autism tantrum, I would flood myself with compassion. I would say, "This is so hard." I'd be there for myself. And this is a really cool thing.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([16:16](#)):

So, the way the human brain works is we have specialized neurons called mirror neurons, and we resonate with each other's emotions. And so just like when you're resonating with your child when they're having that outrageous tantrum, but they're also resonating with you, it goes both ways. So, I couldn't reach my son directly if he was in the midst of a tantrum. So, I would calm myself down. I would soothe myself down. I would fill my own presence with compassion and kindness and warmth. And that's the way I actually helped him regulate his emotions because he would resonate with me, and all children are this way.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([16:52](#)):

So, when you give yourself compassion, you're actually helping the person you care for because especially in when you're in their physical presence, they benefit from your more compassionate presence. So, it's actually a gift you give to others. It's not selfish at all.

Dr. Laura Markham ([17:09](#)):

And in fact, for children whose all children have nervous systems that are not fully developed, and they depend on the calm parent to be able to regulate.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([17:20](#)):

Yes, yes.

Dr. Laura Markham ([17:20](#)):

So, what you're describing is the perfect storm and empowerment to be able to regulate in that moment.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([17:27](#)):

Absolutely. So, you're helping your child just physiologically by helping them regulate their emotions through their mirror neurons. And then, if you model it out loud as well, this research that shows that, then your children start to internalize. For instance, maybe you're a really compassionate parent, but you drop your grandmother's precious vase and you say, "Oh, I'm such an idiot. I can't believe I did that." Well, what are you modeling for your child that that's the appropriate way to respond? But if you say, "Oh, I love grandmother's vase. I feel so badly about that. Well, you know, it happens. It's only human. Maybe next time I'll put it in a safer location," or something like that.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([18:05](#)):

But if you treat yourself with compassion and respect and encouragement, your child's going to learn that lesson. Well, there's a lot of ways to teach compassion to children. Some colleagues that have actually developed programs with that. But the number one way to teach your children compassion is to practice it yourself. And it will help you be a parent by when you resource yourself, then you'll be able to be more mindful. You're going to be a little less reactive. You're going to be able to see options about, "Maybe I should try responding to my child in another way which may be more productive." So, it sounds like the best thing since sliced bread, and it is, and that's why I've devoted my life to it and it's just common sense.

Dr. Kristin Neff (18:51):

But for a lot of reasons, first of all, because it doesn't come naturally, evolutionarily, and because our society tells us it's going to undermine your motivation, it's selfish. It means you'll be lazy or you'll be lost in self-pity. All those have been completely disproven by research. It's the opposite. It'll make you stronger, more resilient, makes you less selfish, more capable of caring for others. It's much more effective motivator than self-criticism, but we don't know that.

Dr. Laura Markham (19:24):

Right. And yet your book, I remember that when your book first came out and I went through and there were all these studies that supported it, it's actually mind blowing how...

Dr. Kristin Neff (19:37):

And there's 10 times as many studies now then there were when I wrote that book.

Dr. Laura Markham (19:40):

Yes, yes, that one.

Dr. Kristin Neff (19:42):

Yeah.

Dr. Laura Markham (19:42):

So, let's say we have a parent who's watching us have this conversation and who says, "Okay, I'd like to start doing this, but I have no idea where to begin." What are the first steps for them to take?

Dr. Kristin Neff (19:53):

Right. So, people say, "I have no idea how to do this." But the thing is, it's probably not true. You already have a template. You've got the template of how do you show up for the people you care about? How do you show up for your good friends? Friends is the ideal situation because people are too close. Let's face it. Sometimes we can be reactive, but a good friendship is defined by mutual compassion and support. So, you can just think, "Huh, if I had a really good friend who was in the exact same situation that I'm in, the same thing just happened to them, what would I say to my friend? How would I say it? Would I give any physical gestures of support?" And then, you can actually use that as a template for how to relate to yourself. So that's one way to do it.

Dr. Kristin Neff (20:39):

If you want other help, if you go to my website, selfcompassion.org or just Google self-compassion, you'll find me. I have a of, for instance, free guided practices. You can listen to a little five-minute audio recording of something to help you. I've got books. I've got free introduction to self-compassion sessions you can attend. So, there's a lot of help and resources now, especially compared to what there were 10 or 15 years ago. So, if there's any part of you as a listener that feels like, "This is something that may really help." The resources are there, you just have to, actually, it's a commitment. You've got to commit to trying to be a better friend to yourself. But if you do, the results will be really transformative for you and your child, I got to say that.

Dr. Laura Markham (21:29):

Yes.

Dr. Kristin Neff (21:29):

For you and your child.

Dr. Laura Markham (21:32):

Parents and child. And it doesn't have to be, it could be a half an hour meditation, but it could also be a very short thing where you say something kind to yourself, you remind yourself that you're not alone, that everyone has struggled with this, and where you try to bring yourself mindfully. What's the minimum thing you would do in that moment when you drop the vase or yell at your kid?

Dr. Kristin Neff (21:54):

Yeah. Well, so there's actually a study that just came out of a University of California at Berkeley that found that 20 seconds a day, so some physical touch to change your physiology. And a few words like remembering, "Hey, it's okay. You're only human. You're doing the best if you can. I'm here for you." It doesn't really matter what you say, but 20 seconds of physical touch and some supportive language increases your self-compassion and improves your mental wellbeing. Everyone has at least 20 seconds. By the way, those 20 seconds are done, not necessarily, you can do it the first thing, you wake up in the morning if you like, but the best time to practice it is when things are difficult. When you have that difficult thought or emotion, then you take 20 seconds out, give yourself some touch, can be hands on heart. It can be hug, it can be holding your own hand, anything that feels supportive. And then, some just words of support, encouragement, and kindness.

Dr. Laura Markham ([22:48](#)):

And I know any repeated experience will change the brain.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([22:52](#)):

Yeah.

Dr. Laura Markham ([22:52](#)):

I'm wondering whether that's what happens. As we do this, as we're facing something difficult and we are able to bring that mindfulness to choose this, what happens?

Dr. Kristin Neff ([23:01](#)):

Yeah. So, any mindfulness practice or especially meditation. I mean, my research shows it's not necessary to learn or practice self-compassion, but it's probably one of the most reliable ways to change your brain structure so you can do longer meditations and it helps change your brain. So, what you're really doing is you're rewiring your automatic response. So, for me, after practicing for 25 years, by the way, I'm still a mess. I still make mistakes. I'm still very human. I would like to say that my self-compassion practice means "I never make mistakes. I'm so close to perfect." Not.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([23:39](#)):

So, I still make mistakes. I'm still a mess, but I am a compassionate mess, which means the moment the mess of life occurs or I make a mistake, I very quickly remember to give myself compassion for that and it makes a huge difference. It makes you stronger again, more resilient. You're less likely to be bowled over by these things. By the way, so my son now is 22, and he's learned self-compassion. And now when I make a mistake, "He says, don't be too hard on yourself, Mom. It happens to everyone."

Dr. Laura Markham ([24:10](#)):

I love it.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([24:12](#)):

And so, I can really see how it has helped him as well on this message of self-compassion, just knowing it's okay to make mistakes. It's not just him. It happens to everyone. And the most important thing is how can you be kind and supportive to yourself or encouraging. Again, to make changes, we accept ourselves, but we don't necessarily accept our behavior. If our behavior is harmful to ourselves or others, the

most compassionate thing to do is to try to change it. But not because we're bad people, it's simply because we care about ourselves and others. And that's really when we start to see the more effective change in growth.

Dr. Laura Markham ([24:50](#)):

It seems like you're actually growing your prefrontal cortex by this automatic response of overcoming fight or flight that pivot away from fight or flight, making a different choice.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([25:04](#)):

Yeah, exactly. So, we don't have research showing for sure that it makes your prefrontal cortex bigger, but there are certainly changes in brain function, and it's also very tied to mindfulness. Anytime we do something repeatedly, you can grow a new habit. And so, self-compassion needs to, you have to do it with some intention because remember, evolutionarily, the more natural instinctual response is fight, flight, or freeze to ourselves. So more naturally, it feels more normal to react and be down on ourselves. You do have to counter that.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([25:38](#)):

So, it's not easy in the sense that it's not habitual, but it's also not that difficult because we have the care system. That's the thing. We already have that other template built in. We just have to remember to make a switch. So, just asking yourself the question, "What would I say to a friend?" We're there already. We have the perspective taking. We have a little more space from our own reactions, and we know what to say.

Dr. Laura Markham ([26:05](#)):

I love that you said a compassionate mess. Because if we're, I mean, we're all human and we all have growing edges, and growth is messy. Growth isn't like a straight line. We all know from watching our kids, it's up and down...

Dr. Kristin Neff ([26:18](#)):

Right.

Dr. Laura Markham ([26:18](#)):

It's two steps back. So, mess is going to happen. That's human life. But if we can nurture ourselves through it the way we would nurture our kids through, it seems like more growing can happen and more love can happen.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([26:34](#)):

Absolutely. Well, and here's the really interesting thing is, after a while more important than what's happening in terms of what's my situation or what am I thinking or feeling, it's like what's more important becomes how am I relating to what's happening? Is my heart open or not? And that could be toward what's happening with me or what's happening with my child, and that starts to be your goal. What I'm saying is the goal of practice is to be a compassionate mess.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([27:02](#)):

Again, your goal isn't to be a mess, but your goal is to bring compassion. And then, when your heart is open and you feel connected and you're present, that's actually what we want. That's where true happiness lies in this loving, connected presence that's generated by compassion, both for self and others, of course. And the nice thing is it is an achievable goal. Being perfect is not an achievable goal for most of us, maybe some people, but it is an achievable goal to open your heart when that mess of life occurs. And there's so much satisfaction and a peace in that.

Dr. Laura Markham ([27:40](#)):

I wonder if being compassionate to yourself actually makes you more compassionate to other people.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([27:45](#)):

Yeah. So, the research is interesting. If you just do a correlation like you just do, do they go hand in hand or do you need to be self-compassionate first? The answer is no, because most people are much more compassionate to others than themselves. So, they don't necessarily go in hand in hand. But we have research showing that when you train in self-compassion, when you learn to be more self-compassionate, what it does is it increases your ability to be compassionate to others without burning out. And it also does increase your compassion for others.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([28:16](#)):

So, just for instance, we did a study at a children's hospital where we trained the doctors and nurses and staff to be more self-compassionate when they're dealing with things like kids with cancer, really tough stuff. And they were already pretty compassionate people. But what we found is that it increased their compassion for others, it increased their compassion satisfaction, which meant that satisfaction that they got out of their jobs doing the work they did. And really importantly, it did

decrease their burnout. So, it allows you to keep your heart open. You don't have to shut it down as long as you turn the compassion inward as well as outward.

Dr. Laura Markham ([28:57](#)):

I know your book is out right now, right? Your book, the Burnout book. So, it isn't that the practice is different. What you're saying in this new book is burnout is when you close down your heart because it's just too much, but self-compassion allows you to keep it open.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([29:13](#)):

Yeah, exactly. So, the practices are adapted by, we have something called the Mindful Self Compassion Workbook, which are just the general practices, but we've tailored them specifically for the experience of burnout including... So, the last few years, I've been talking about something called fierce self-compassion, which is... So, compassion has two faces. One is about acceptance. We accept ourselves and the imperfection of life. But then, one is about taking action, which is changing what we can, changing behaviors if they're harmful or changing situations when they're harmful. And so, the fierce self-compassion means perhaps I'm saying no, drawing boundaries, protecting ourselves, providing for our own needs, doing what it takes to make sure that we're taking care of as well, and then also motivating change.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([30:02](#)):

And then, so with burnout, some of it's about ourselves. We don't want to judge and shame ourselves for being burned out, but then sometimes it's about the situation needs to be changed. Maybe you need to start saying no a little more often. Maybe you're a people pleaser and you're just saying yes to everyone and you don't have the energy, right? Or maybe you're in a situation that's unfair. Maybe you need to change jobs. I mean, sometimes change is necessary to decrease burnout as well. So, we emphasize both aspects of self-compassion in the book.

Dr. Laura Markham ([30:33](#)):

Okay. Well, I can't wait to get my hands on your new book. And I want to thank you Dr. Neff for being here with us today. Your work is such a gift to humanity, and I'm thinking a gift to our children because every parent who's able to do this, changes him or herself, and everything changes for their kids.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([30:54](#)):

Yeah, it is the best gift you can give your kid if they grow up understanding self-compassion as a type of inner strength and a good thing to practice. It'll help you and your kid.

Dr. Laura Markham ([31:08](#)):

Thank you.

Dr. Kristin Neff ([31:09](#)):

Thank you.