

Self-criticism benefits psychiatrists, too

Congratulations to Ricks Warren, PhD, ABPP, Elke Smeets, PhD, and Kristen Neff, MD, the authors of “Self-criticism and self-compassion: Risk and resilience,” (Evidence-Based Reviews, CURRENT PSYCHIATRY, December 2016, p. 18-21,24-28,32). I believe the application of the innovative and scholarly message of self-compassion will not only be a boon to patients and the public but also to psychiatrists and mental health clinicians. *Why?* We, psychiatrists, seem to be experiencing a rising and epidemic rate of burnout, and self-compassion can help us to stop blaming ourselves for being unable to do our best when the system inhibits us. In turn, if we help our own well-being, we will be better able to help our patients.

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Dr. Warren responds

We couldn't agree more with Dr. Moffic's perspective that psychiatrists and other

mental health clinicians likely would benefit from self-compassion during our clinical work in a complex, demanding, and rapidly changing mental health environment. Fortunately, attention to the importance of self-compassion for caregivers has been advocated, and recent studies of self-compassion in health care professionals have reported promising results. Because the neuroticism and self-criticism personality traits are most associated with depression and burnout in physicians, interventions that promote self-compassion are likely to lead to improved mental health in psychiatrists and other health care professionals. Recent research has found that self-compassion in health care providers is associated with less burnout and compassion fatigue, increased resilience, adaptive emotion regulation, and reduced sleep disturbance.¹

The time is now right for clinical trials of self-compassion interventions in psychiatrists and other caregivers. Neff and Germer's mindful self-compassion intervention,² discussed in our article, could be easily adapted for psychiatrists and other mental health professionals. As Mills and



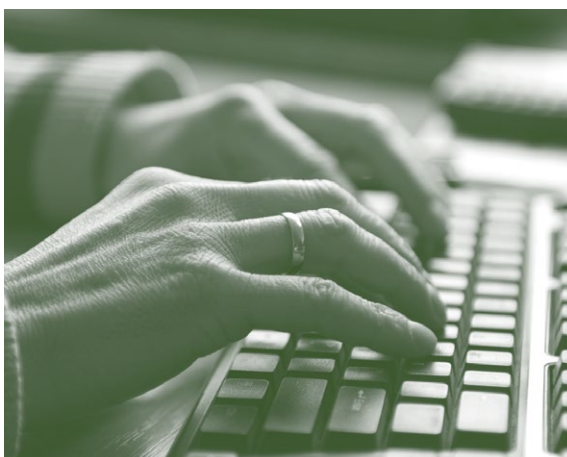
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Chapman,³ stated, “While being self-critical and perfectionistic may be common among doctors, being kind to oneself is not a luxury: it is a necessity. Self-care is, in a sense, a sine qua non for giving care for patients.”

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3. Mills J, Chapman M. Compassion and self-compassion in medicine: self-care for the caregiver. *AMJ.* 2016;9(5):87-91.



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