

Be You Virtual Conference Transcript

A culture of compassion – for self and others

Presented by Amanda Kidd and Margaret Ross

Amanda Kidd

(SPEAKS DARUG LANGUAGE)

That's hello, it's good to see you wherever you are from, in Darug language, the local language of where we're meeting you from here in Sydney, New South Wales.

(SPEAKS DARUG LANGUAGE)

That's thank you for joining us, for day two of the virtual conference and this session, A Culture of Compassion for Self and Others. My name is Amanda Kidd, and this is my colleague Margaret Ross. We're Be You consultants at Early Childhood Australia. Hello, Margaret. How are you?

Margaret Ross

Good thanks, Amanda. How are you?

Amanda Kidd

Very good, very happy to be here, and with all of our attendees out there today. We also have a wonderful team of Be You consultants behind the scenes, who will be monitoring our chat box throughout the session. A big hello and thank you to Sammy Wilson, Sandy Clark and Kyle Ratcliffe. And also thank you to the Redback studio team who are also helping behind the scenes. So, we aim for our virtual conference to be an interactive space. So, please feel free to use the chat box, and to ask questions and share your thoughts. This will assist us in creating a space for sharing and learning, with and from each other.

I'd like to start off with an acknowledgement of country. I'd like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the country across Australia, that each one of us is meeting from. I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging. I'd like to acknowledge that we're streaming live from the beautiful country of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, and that I live on the country of the Darramurragal people an area now commonly known as the Guringai area. So, if you do know which country you are joining us on, I invite you to share your own acknowledgement in the chat. So, Margaret, would you like to share where you live, work and play?

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Margaret Ross

Yes, so I live in Dharawal country. So, that's in Southern Sydney, and I'm aware, Amanda, that all of us are on our own reconciliation journey, and some of us may not be aware of the name of the country on which we're on. And you can find that out, either by looking at your council website, but there's also this really great resource, which is the map of Indigenous Australia. And that's available from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. And I think our lovely moderators may be popping a link to that map in the chat for you now.

Amanda Kidd

I think you might be right. So, before we take a deep dive into compassion, I think it's really important that we do a self care message. So, we are going to be talking about mental health during the sessions. So, it is important to practice self-awareness and self-care. If at any time you need to step away from your device, please do so. And if you aren't feeling OK during or after this conversation, please have a yarn with someone and do what you need to do for your own self care. So, there up on the screen, you will see some support numbers, and they should be there in the chat box, should you need them. So, Margaret, would you like to give us a bit of an overview about Be You?

Margaret Ross

I'd love to, Amanda. Thank you. So, Be You is a national mental health initiative for educators. It is led by Be You in partnership with Early Childhood Australia, and that's where Amanda and I are from, as well as Headspace. Be You is completely free and it's available to every educator, every early learning service, every school throughout Australia. And that also includes, Amanda, the pre-service educators who are currently in training. So, Be You is a framework that empowers educators to support children and young people's social and emotional wellbeing, as well as their own mental health. It offers educators online professional learning, fact sheets, online events like today, and a multitude of other resources. And the Be You consultants such as Amanda and myself, we can guide you through using those resources, as well as connect you with other educator networks. So, if you would like some more information about Be You, I really encourage you to check out the website, and I think the moderators may be putting a link in the chat now.

Amanda Kidd

I think you might be right. So, in this two-day Be You virtual conference, you'll hear from a range of experts, including educators, on two key areas. So, yesterday's theme, which was day one, was educator wellbeing, and today is day two, which is inclusion in learning community. So, you're currently at the culture of compassion for self and others, and there are other sessions following us today. So, most of the sessions in this two-day conference are aimed at a learning stage, so, early learning, primary school or secondary school. So, this specific session is relevant to early learning services. So, I think we can sort of get into it, and I might give you all a bit of an outline, of what we are going to be exploring during our session. So, first of all, we will have a look at compassion and self-compassion. What are they? And then we'll take a closer look at the components of self-compassion, and draw from the latest research. And then we'll perhaps talk about some of the strategies that can support self-compassion. So, following that, we'll discuss how self-compassion is a protective factor for your own mental health and that of your learning community. So, Margaret, what is compassion?

Margaret Ross

Amanda, isn't that a great question. Look, compassion can be a difficult concept to grasp, and certainly when we were looking into it, that's what we found. It was quite layered. But the word compassion comes from a Latin word 'compati', which literally means to suffer together. It's an awareness of another person's suffering and a real desire then to relieve that suffering. So, compassion is a natural tendency that a growing body of research is finding that people, and actually animals, are born with.

Amanda Kidd

That's interesting.

Margaret Ross

It is, I wasn't aware of that previously. But the acts of compassion, some of the research has shown, light up pleasure centres in our brain. And that indicates that people receive the same, if not more, pleasure from giving than they do from receiving. So, the tendency then to feel another's pain and then to help alleviate it has also been linked to the evolution of mankind or humankind, as well as to the animal kingdom. So, the research is really quite exciting here. And I was thinking about this a little bit more, Amanda, and you might be able to imagine that in an early community of people that caring for young members, you know, feeling the pain of somebody else being hungry, may have induced compassion for somebody else to share their food. Perhaps if somebody's sick, caring for them as well. And when you think about that a bit more, that would lead to that community flourishing, rather than simply following a practice of, say, that survival of the fittest mode that we're probably more familiar with.

Amanda Kidd

So, like, if we were to put this in, say, like an education and care context, we can actually see how educators practice compassion daily when they engage with children and families. So, I guess an example that I'm thinking of for our attendees out there, I feel like they might be quite familiar with this one, would be when a child is feeling really sad in the morning when they're saying goodbye to their caregiver. So, the educator might identify that the child is feeling really sad and they feel empathy towards that child and they offer that child comfort. So, they might go over and offer them a hug, so some touch therapy, and perhaps some sort of like soothing supportive words. So, I can see you're feeling really sad, I know it's really hard to say goodbye, I'll keep you safe until your caregiver comes back.

Margaret Ross

It's a really good example, Amanda, well done.

Amanda Kidd

I feel like it's a very common one.

Margaret Ross

A very common one, something we're all familiar with as educators. And I guess when you look at that example, you can see that Amanda is feeling or identifying another person's pain and then trying to relieve that pain. You know what, Amanda, I'm wondering if this then, is that a skill we're born with, or is it something that we develop, or is it an attribute, is it an emotion? Amanda, I'm curious to know what our attendees out there are thinking. It's time for our first poll.

Amanda Kidd

Yes, I think so. So, up on your screen you will see the words, "compassion is..." and four options that Margaret sort of discussed briefly there. So, is compassion, A, a skill, B, a quality or attribute, C, an emotion, or, D, all of the above. So, quickly pop in your answers up on your screen. I know that when we were actually discussing this, Margaret, we found that it was quite complex. We had a very robust conversation about it and we've got the results, and it's happening really quickly. So, it's D, all of the above. So, that was the answer we actually came up with as well.

Margaret Ross

Yeah, it was. That's what we felt, that it was made up of all these components. So, we thought, yes, it's definitely a skill that can be developed with practice and definitely an emotion we can feel because the research has showed us it lights up those pleasure centres in our brain. We also look then at what attributes are part of compassion, and that was really quite eye opening for us. We realised that there's empathy involved there, there's also that ability to sense another person's emotions and then also the motivation to care about the other person's emotions. There also has to be an ability to tolerate uncomfortable feelings and to bear with that for a little while. And then the final aspect or attribute was also having a non-judgmental approach. Alright, so all these things, all these elements, come into compassion. Amanda, that's compassion for other people, now look at compassion for ourselves.

Amanda Kidd

Yeah, so the research sort of shows that self-compassion is much the same as compassion. So, they sort of flow and interconnect with one another. So, researcher Christopher Germer says that self-compassion is the inner relationship that we have with our sense of self. So, there will be a link to Germer's work in the chat for everybody if they want to have a look at that further. So, it involves acting the same ways towards yourself when you're having a difficult time or if you're sort of maybe failing at something or if you notice there's something that you may not like about yourself, instead of just ignoring that pain or that suffering with that stiff sort of upper lip mentality that we tend to do sometimes, you actually stop and you tell yourself, you know what, this is really difficult right now. And then you kind of think about, well, how can I comfort and care for myself in this particular moment.

So, compassion researcher Dr Kris Neff says that self-compassion means being gentle, kind and understanding with yourself. Accepting that you're not perfect and understanding that there is potential for learning and growth in every mistake that you make. So, self-compassion, therefore, entails three elements, and you will take them through each one of them with us. But the first one is self-kindness, the second one is common humanity and the third one is mindfulness. So, Margaret, let's go through them, yeah. Yeah, you might provide us with some strategies that we can use to identify and support these in our own lives and in our learning communities.

Margaret Ross

Thanks, Amanda. So, alright, so on your screen there you'll be able to see Neff's first element, and that is self-kindness. And Neff compares that with self-judgment to help us get a little bit clearer understanding of this. So, self-kindness then is about being patient, it's about being compassionate and kind to yourself. Whereas self-judgment is that critical, harsh, negative voice that you may have in your heads and it's being negative towards yourself, OK? So, self-kindness then is, you know, gently reminding myself that I am flawed, that I do make mistakes. But you know what? I did the best that I could at that time, yeah. Self-judgment is that negative self talk. You know, you've probably heard that voice, I'm so stupid, I always fail, why do I bother?

Amanda Kidd

I feel like you're reading my mind right now. No. (LAUGHS)

Margaret Ross

So, self-kindness helps me accept myself, it helps me appreciate me in all my uniqueness with all my flaws and all my characters. It enables me to continue working on my goals because the flip side of that, that self-judgment, that can create those feelings of shame, embarrassment. It really, for me, keeps me stuck in that moment and makes me want to withdraw and not participate anymore. And that's when I stop working on my goals because I think I'm gonna fail, so why bother trying? So, Amanda, I thought we would do a little activity here for people to start recognising that self-judgment voice, judgmental voice that they may have. So, what I want people to do wherever you are right now is take out your mobile phone and open up the camera and take a really quick selfie, OK. Gotta be a quick, Amanda, there's no time for filters, for touch ups or pouts. Just take a quick snap of you, right here, right now.

Amanda Kidd

I tell you what, I'm very thankful I don't have my phone here right now. So, good luck to all of you out there.

Margaret Ross

Alright, alright. So now that you've taken your photo, have a little look at that. And I want you to write down or even just notice, what are your first thoughts? So Amanda, I did this at home and my first thoughts were really quite critical. So, some of the things that came up for me were, Oh my goodness, Margaret, you're looking so old. You look really tired. You've got so many wrinkles."

Amanda Kidd

Oh, Margaret. You know what, I don't even think I need a photo to be thinking about all the self-critical words that come to mind just even thinking about looking at a photo of myself.

Margaret Ross

Yeah. I think we've all got that self-judgment, that voice in our heads that's judging us harshly. So, that's what I was referring to earlier. Alright, Amanda. Now, we're going to practice self-kindness, OK?

Amanda Kidd

Yep.

Margaret Ross

So, having a look at your photo now, I want you to imagine that you're not speaking to the photo of yourself but you're speaking to a loved one. So, use the same thoughts, the same frame of mind that you would if that was a close friend or a colleague. What would you say to them? So, if I was looking at my photo and I was thinking about talking to Amanda and looking at Amanda's photo, I'd go, "I actually really like your smile, Amanda. It lights up your face. So, that self-affirming script, then, is to go, I like you, Margaret. You're doing a good job. It's OK. It's great that you're ageing. That's a great thing.

Amanda Kidd

Yeah. It also reminds me sometimes that we're so self-critical that we often miss those opportunities presented to us. So, I was recently introduced to a really lovely resource, which I encourage all of you out there to print and display somewhere in your service, but they're growth mindset permission slips. So, the link will be in the chat for you. But when I read them, it actually reminded me of the learning and growth that occurs when we reframe the way we look at ourselves and our abilities and our experiences, and then we become more aware of our own uniqueness. So, if I give myself permission to make a mistake or to take a risk, be less than perfect, then I become more motivated, more resilient, more content and more kind to myself.

Margaret Ross

Yeah, absolutely well done, Amanda. And that is, really, again, part of that skill element, that practising that self-kindness, and using those cards is a great tool to do that. Yeah. Well done, Amanda. So, now, we look at the next element from Neff's work around self-compassion, and that is common humanity. And she compares that with isolation. So, common humanity is recognising that my emotions and experiences are also common to other peoples. So, to be a human means that while we are all unique and we all share a range of talents, strengths, emerging skills, traits, beliefs, characteristics, just the same as other people, we just all have these in different quantities. So, to be human means that we share feelings of pain, of hurt, disappointment, loss, grief, happiness, joy, love. So, to be human means that we and other people will, at times, struggle in our life.

Amanda Kidd

It's true.

Margaret Ross

But when we get stuck in isolation, in that mode of thinking, that means that we're not really being open to or being aware that other people share these common thoughts and feelings as well. We sort of get stuck and we believe it's only happening to us. So, actually, Amanda, I can think of a common humanity experience that is happening right here, right now, that everybody joining us today is sharing in, and that's our knowledge and passion for early childhood. That's the common humanity that we're sharing here. So, our interest in learning, our joy of education and care.

Amanda Kidd

Ah, that's a good one. I know that on our next slide, we actually have a long list of priorities that educators face daily, which I'm sure many of our attendees will identify with. So, I know I did when I was looking at them, but do you want to take us through the list?

Margaret Ross

Yeah. So I was thinking about that common humanity that we share as early childhood educators and I was thinking, oh, what's something that is tangible that we all would have had? And then I thought, ah, look at that job description. So, I've just popped onto the slide just a few of the duties that are required of an educator. I couldn't fit the whole list on, Amanda, it was just way too long.

Amanda Kidd

I was gonna say, I'm not surprised.

Margaret Ross

But when I first became a room leader, I found it really hard to meet all these requirements that were expected as the role of a room leader. So, for example, when I was focusing on building warm relationships with the children and with the families, I often found that I didn't get my compliance tasks completed in the required time frame. You know, if I spent time finding that child's shoes, I didn't contribute to the packing away because I was spending so much time sorting through things trying to find those shoes. And I felt like I was letting my teammates down. I felt like I wasn't meeting all of my duties. And you know what, Amanda, I'm sure you have experiences like this as well as all the educators joining us today. In our efforts to fulfil all those requirements from that list, at times, we get frustrated and dissatisfied that we're not being able to do it all well all of the time.

And I know when I was feeling that way, I was actually in that isolation mode that Neff talks about because I felt I was the only educator that this was happening to. But after some years, I got a position as a consultant and part of that role was to go out and to visit early childhood services, and I'd get to speak to educators in their work environment. And I began to notice, and actually became quite surprised, that just about every service and educator that I talked to had similar stories about not having enough time in the day. And that's when I thought, ah, this is a common experience within early childhood. And over time, I was slowly then able to forgive myself and accept that, oh, this is common to the early childhood profession.

Amanda Kidd

Yeah. Do you know what, when you were talking and thinking back to that list, I actually had similar thoughts when I was in a director's role in a long day-care service. I was very self-critical and I often just thought it was because I just wasn't very good at that role. And, you know, despite having all that support and a really great team around me, I, too, felt quite isolated and also having people sort of saying, Well, it's lonely at the top, didn't help with that either. But like you, when I actually became a consultant and connected in safe spaces to talk about our experiences, I discovered that other people actually shared those experiences and those thoughts and, you know...

Margaret Ross

Strong emotions.

Amanda Kidd

Yeah, those strong emotions and that self critical talk.

Margaret Ross

And you know what, Amanda, I'm wondering now if our colleagues out there today maybe have similar experiences as well and the strong feelings. So, I guess we can take a moment now and to try and embrace that humanity a little bit more. So, I was wondering if you might be able to think of your own workplace and perhaps you could think of an area. Our colleagues out there today may be able to think of an area where they would like to improve and I guess something that causes a strong emotion because I

think I can still feel some strong emotions between us, Amanda, reliving that. But I just want you to hold on to that for a moment and just think about it. Think of something, you know, where you think, I would really love to improve in this. And just now try to embrace that common humanity. So, do you think that perhaps within your own team there might be another educator that is also struggling with that? You know, there is a good chance that perhaps me or Amanda has also struggled with that.

Amanda Kidd

I am sure I have, yeah.

Margaret Ross

And perhaps also that there is maybe one of the other educators who we have never met also struggling with it today when they were joining in with us today. So, while each workplace is unique, I think that many educators would be able to identify with that time poor, and then that daily struggle to meet those expectations. I think that's regardless of whether you are an educator, a team leader, an area manager, director. I think it's a common experience and part of that common humanity of the early childhood profession.

Amanda Kidd

Yeah, definitely.

Margaret Ross

So, within Be You, I have noticed that there is this real strength within Be You and that is that there are all these opportunities created where educators, no matter what stage of their career, can jump online free of charge, Amanda, and join in conversations with other peers who are in similar situations. You can hear stories from colleagues across Australia how they manage their work expectations. Hear that their peers in other states are having similar struggles or opportunities to increase our understanding of that common humanity within early childhood.

Amanda Kidd

Yeah, Margaret. Attending Be You online events or connected communities is a really great strategy to support you to connect with others and sort of to understand that common humanity and recognise that some other options that I was thinking of while you were talking was perhaps like networking with educators in your local area, that's always a good way. It's quite contextual, so they know their local community. Some other ideas is joining sector-specific social media groups or subscribing to sector-specific publications. So, something like the Early Childhood Australia magazines and journals or the online sort of getting from the sector. Perhaps there are other ways that you out there connect with other early childhood professionals. Please feel free to share them in the chat. Yeah, that might spark some ideas and interest with everybody else there. So, we've looked at self kindness and common humanity. So, Margaret, we've got one left. Would you like to take us through the last element, so, mindfulness.

Margaret Ross

Absolutely, thanks, Amanda. So, Neff compares mindfulness with over-identification. So, they are the two ends. Mindfulness is where that real non-judgemental aspect needs to come in as well and it is also being in that receptive state of mind. So, a non judgemental state of mind. And that state of mind allows me then to simply observe, identify and accept my thoughts and feelings and then let them pass. So, mindfulness is understanding that my emotions are OK, that my feelings are not wrong. And this is where some of that toxic positivity needs to come. We need to think about it because sometimes that can be about squashing down the emotion or the feeling or sort of saying that feeling is not right, there is something wrong with it. But there is actually nothing wrong with what you are feeling. Your emotions are fine.

Over-identifying, on the other end of that, is when we exaggerate a particular thought or emotion or a belief and attach a lot more meaning or value to that than perhaps is necessary. So, I just want to think about this a little bit more, Amanda, and go back to that example of my day as a team leader or a room leader and not being able to meet all those expectations. So, while I was reflecting on that day as an educator, I might really get stuck thinking on about not meeting those expectations and that may then lead to that self

judgemental voice coming, such as, I didn't get everything done, maybe this job is too much for me. Everybody else here seems to be able to get everything done, Amanda. Oh, maybe I am a bad teacher. Maybe that's it. Maybe I am gonna lose my job. So, you can see it sort of gets... wow.

Amanda Kidd

I feel like you are my conscience.

Margaret Ross

So, over-identifying aspect there and that self-judgemental voice. So, over-identifying also then puts so much emphasis, Amanda, on all those failings, all my flaws, that I actually fail to see the wide range of thoughts, experiences that I had actually experienced that day and I missed that I actually found that child's shoes and I felt good about that and I know the child felt happy about that.

Amanda Kidd

And I am sure the family... That's a win in my book.

Margaret Ross

That's a win, a big win, I thought, and that made everybody happy. So, I can miss over that, I can skip it. I might then also miss that, gee whiz, there were children actually engaged in really meaningful learning today and that was because that I had been able to co-create that environment. So, when I am over-identifying and increasing the significance of all my failings that can also tend to cause me to experience some really strong negative emotions like blame, self-criticism, maybe shame and embarrassment. And when those emotions become so strong I tend to shut down and that shuts down all my emotions, OK.

And that then limits that range of emotions that include joy, satisfaction, achievements. So, you can see that it's not a healthy place to be, Amanda. So, mindfulness then is that it's this awareness and acceptance of myself as a unique person with all my flaws and it allows me to understand that emotions are transient and they will pass, and it allows me to be open to all the perspectives of the day. So, mindfulness also then can create space for me to be kind and have the self-affirming scripts coming through in my head and loving towards myself. So, Amanda, let's now have a little look at how the skill of mindfulness can help create that space. Let's try that.

Amanda Kidd

I think that's a good idea.

Margaret Ross

Alright, so if we are now going to embrace a receptive state of mind, let's go back to that reflection on the day when I didn't get all my duties done and let's look at that in a bit more detail. So, I may be disappointed that I couldn't meet all those expectations of being a teacher today. That does create disappointment, frustration, not happy. But, feel that. Let it pass, and let's see what comes along next. Perhaps next is that I enjoyed how Clara was really excited when she was able to finish that puzzle. She had been working on that this week and she finally got it done. That was exciting. It was a real sense of achievement. Ah, feel that. Let it pass.

Alright, maybe the next thing is that I am disappointed I didn't get to speak to Zainab's speech therapist. I've put that off this week. It's Thursday already. You need to get that done this week. I am gonna put that on the list first thing tomorrow morning to get done. Feel that. Let it pass. Alright, what was the next thing? What else happened today? Ah, there was Natasha when she showed her little brother her box construction that she had made of a car. Ah, it was so exciting, she was so happy. You know what, today there were some happy children achieving their goals, and how great is that. Maybe I am doing a good job because I helped co-create that environment. Maybe I am a success as a teacher.

Amanda Kidd

Definitely.

Margaret Ross

(LAUGHS) Thank you, Amanda.

Amanda Kidd

Yeah, no, well, I mean, it's true. It is celebrating the small things and accepting that.

Margaret Ross

There are a lot of big emotions within ourselves across that day. So, you can see then, Amanda, how being mindful and practicing mindfulness sort of creates space in my thoughts to see and acknowledge those painful parts as well as the parts that were great. And not only that it created that space, I was able to think of an action so that I could speak with the speech therapist tomorrow and that then took away some of that pain as well. That allowed me to feel less stressed and I was able then to focus on those goals. There are a lot of things at play there, Amanda. A lot of moving parts happening there.

Amanda Kidd

You know, when you were talking, I was actually thinking about our stop, reflect, act framework and that's available in our planning for well being, mine, yours and ours booklet. Perhaps when you are in that over-identifying mind frame, say you are being quite self-critical or judgemental. To then just reflect on the whole day or the whole situation and accept the parts that are tough and that hurt and knowing that we've talked about a few times that emotion will pass but stopping and then taking that time to reflect and to practice self-compassion. So, maybe focusing on self affirming scripts like some of the examples that you had earlier today. But we do need to move on. We have actually touched on the complex role and expectations that educators face each day and some of the strategies to support them in practicing self compassion. Perhaps we should look at self-compassion now as a protective factor.

Margaret Ross

Alright. So, this is a bit of a tricky concept to grasp as well. Now that we've had a little look at understanding compassion and self-compassion and the elements that make that up, let's see how we can use this as a protective factor for the mental health of ourselves and the other people in your early learning community. Now, on-screen you will see Bronfenbrenner's social-ecological model and that is probably something you are all familiar with, I am sure. And today we really don't have time to delve into this in any detail but I just wanted you to consider that system and we are gonna look at the microsystem here as a way of understanding protective factors and the way it flows from self-compassion, OK. So, in that microsystem, this is the immediate environment and in the centre of that diagram you can put the child or you could put yourself as the educator or you could put any other member of your early learning community, and think about what the risks are to that person's mental health. So, again, due to lack of time, sorry, we are just gonna really think about challenging relationships or difficult relationships as a risk factor.

So, if we think about... Put that child in the centre of that model and we think about the child and any challenging or difficult relationships that that child maybe has with their peers, or perhaps it's with that child and a sibling. Maybe the sibling's at the service or maybe the sibling's at home or at school. So, maybe it's me in that circle and my challenging relationship is with my colleagues or challenging relationships with family members at home or maybe even challenging relationships with other family members who attend the service. Challenging and difficult relationships are actually risks to our mental health and also to the wellbeing and the mental health of other children, educators and family members. There are also other risks that are at a deeper level of relationships.

So, those risk factors around never having your culture reflected or acknowledged or even mentioned in the child care early learning service. In any of the experiences offered throughout the day. Perhaps if there are negative comments around people's abilities, whether or not they are at the service, or being told different mixed messages about different gender roles and stereotypes. So, all those things play into the relationships and can become risk factors. So, when we think about these sort of difficult or challenging relationships that you may have in your service, we need to also hold in our minds those elements of compassion that we discussed way back at the beginning. And they were those attributes that we talked about like empathy.

So, that ability also to sense another person's emotions. Having that motivation to care, whether or not there's a difficult relationship and wanna do something about that. But then, this is the crux for me. It's that ability to tolerate that uncomfortable feeling as well. It's like, alright, there's a difficult relationship. It makes me uncomfortable but I need to tolerate that. I need to understand what's going on there. And then having that non judgemental approach as well. So, there's a whole heap of factors going on there and we really don't have a lot of time to delve in to all of that. But I just wanted to bring that to your forethought and have a little think about, what are some of the difficult relationships in your service and how that may be impacting on other community members' mental health and their well being.

Alright, so, research around self compassion has told us that it actually decreases our stress levels. It reduces our experiences of depression and anxiety and by practicing self compassion, it can really help us self regulate. And there's a link to that in the chat box, to that research. So, what I wanna do now, is think about that. So, if we're practicing self compassion and we've got some tricky relationships going on at the service, how can we flip that around using self compassion, to turn these possible risk factors into hopefully protective factors for all the people in our community. No small task there, Amanda. (LAUGHS)

So, if we practice self compassion, let's have a think then about those tricky relationships. How might your relationship with your co-worker, so, if you're the person in the centre of that Bronfenbrenner model there and you're having a tricky relationship with a co-worker, so, you're practicing now self compassion and hopefully that's helping you self regulate there, Amanda. Do you think now that we have that understanding of that common humanity and understanding that all of us maybe have trouble getting those jobs done each day? Do you think then that you may be more empathetic then, to your colleague then, and perhaps understand a little bit more about where they're coming from? So, I guess I was also thinking about like, if your non dominant culture is never represented within your environment, that could be a real detriment to my mental health. How can we flip that around, so that if we're hearing an acknowledgement of country every day, say, do you think that might become a protective factor, might strengthen how you feel, your sense of belonging there?

[Amanda Kidd](#)

That's a good point.

[Margaret Ross](#)

So, if you practice self compassion and we're getting better and better of not being judgemental about your own flaws and about your own limitations with your own abilities, perhaps then you might think about Zainab and the speech therapist and you might be a bit more inclined to go, You know what, I do need to really make that a priority and speak with that speech therapist, look into that report, maybe learn about visuals or whatever it is that Zainab needs, so that she can better communicate. That creates a protective factor for her because she has an increased ability to communicate.

So, that's increasing her protective factors around her mental health. So, you can see how that self compassion actually starts to flow out in our interactions and in what we do in our work. And there's actually, Paul Gilbert speaks about this. He's a researcher on this, and there's an interactive Flow of Compassion diagram and a link to that's going to be popped into the chat now. But you can actually see how it flows then. With self compassion to compassion within the learning community. Look, Amanda, I do acknowledge it's a tricky concept and I've really just scratched the surface here. But I really encourage people to dive into that research and have a look at how it flows and how with our own development of self compassion, it expands out into the learning community where we work. It's quite interesting.

[Amanda Kidd](#)

Yeah, I was gonna say that really helped me see that natural flow between self compassion and then almost that kindness that we put towards ourselves, we flow it out to others. So, I really think that's a great one to have a look at. And as Margaret did say, it is very complex, I guess, concepts. So, yeah, it is good to have a look at that research there. So, we are going to have a bit of a poll now because we have learnt a lot today, about compassion. And I think we mentioned it already, we've only just touched on a little bit of it, so I think it's great for us to perhaps set an intention to further explore ideas or thoughts or concepts that may have sparked an interest, or something that you might be curious about or, yeah, you might wonder about.

So, we thought that it might be a good idea to have a bit of a poll about what you might explore further after today. So, which one of Neff's three elements of self compassion. So, up on your screen, you'll see the question there. Which one of Neff's three elements of self compassion would you like to explore further after today?

So, A, self kindness. B, common humanity, or C, mindfulness. If there is anything else you'd like to explore, please pop it into the chatbox because that might give a bit of an interest to others. So, I'm just looking at these now. Are the poll results in already? They're coming. It's live, so they're coming through. But I know you're our compassion expert today, Margaret, but after doing all this work, is there anything that you particularly would like to explore further?

Margaret Ross

Yeah, thank you, Amanda. (LAUGHS) Yeah, for me, it's that mindfulness is really like, letting it go. Feeling the emotion, letting the strong emotions be there and not shutting down. And then letting that flow, letting it go, yeah. What about you? What are you gonna explore?

Amanda Kidd

Yeah, mindfulness is like, I know we've gone through this a bit but I think the more that I think about it, the more mindfulness is becoming a stronger feeling for me and that sort of being OK with my emotions and being able to just let them pass. I think we've emphasised that today, and I could tell that all that energy that's created, just talking about previous roles or even preparing for today, it's kind of just letting those, sitting with those emotions and being comfortable with them has been one of them. But I would also really like to go back and explore self-kindness.

So, I think I definitely am my own worst critic and I found myself saying it as we were talking. But I often slip into that toxic self-talk, so I might go back and do that selfie task and just really be quite mindful of that negative self-talk that comes up and just perhaps focusing more on my strengths and more of my uniqueness and my abilities. And I think I will go and print those permission slips now that we've talked about it. And we didn't actually mention it, but I think I would like to do a bit more around, like, love and kindness meditations. I think that would be something I'd like to explore into, you know, my daily routine.

Margaret Ross

Yeah.

Amanda Kidd

Just to start to get those self-affirming scripts back into my day. And then, yeah, 'cause as we sort of discussed, it's that whatever that input is, we're giving that out to other people as well. So, if we're constantly exploring that, I think it'd be a really great place to be, so...

Margaret Ross

Poll results?

Amanda Kidd

Poll results. OK. So, the results are in.

Margaret Ross

Excellent.

Amanda Kidd

Oh, this is really exciting, so we have a little bit...

Margaret Ross

A split field.

Amanda Kidd

A split field. We have 42% want to look at self-kindness.

Margaret Ross

OK. Great.

Amanda Kidd

We have 13% on humanity.

Margaret Ross

Yeah.

Amanda Kidd

And 44% on mindfulness.

Margaret Ross

Oh, OK. So, it's sort of along the lines of us.

Amanda Kidd

Yes, isn't that really interesting? So, there was this... For us, I think we decided that common humanity was probably an area that we felt a little less confident in, but I think now that we've put those examples up it's kind of like, we do know, we share those experiences...

Margaret Ross

It's sort of given us a greater awareness.

Amanda Kidd

Yeah, definitely. I think so. So, it sounds like there's people out there who wanna share in our... (LAUGHS) who have a common humanity in sharing...

Margaret Ross

Oh, OK.

Amanda Kidd

..self kindness and mindfulness after today, so yeah.

Margaret Ross

Alright. Now, that we know what our colleagues are gonna be working on, let's have a think about how our colleagues who are joining us out there may be able to share your learnings from what we've discussed today in your work at your early learning service.

Amanda Kidd

That's a really good point, Margaret, cause I think it's really important that when we are learning about something it's nice to share it, I feel like it almost...

Margaret Ross

Yeah, to take a step, so it becomes real. Yeah. So, I wonder, Amanda, what are people going to do? Are they going to embrace their uniqueness with all their failings as well as all their strength, and wonderful characters?

Amanda Kidd

Maybe.

Margaret Ross

So, we've heard that they will be practicing that skill of self-kindness.

Amanda Kidd

Yeah.

Margaret Ross

And, but how can you share that in your early learning service with the colleagues, with the families and with the children? Perhaps it will be saying out loud those self-affirming scripts because they I wonder when we were preparing this, Amanda, I wonder what the voices are with the children. Do they have that self-judgment voice there as well? And what in our work can we do to help alleviate that?

Amanda Kidd

I was gonna say, that's actually a really good point, I wonder if you could do those self-affirming scripts in the classroom with the children as well, and maybe even create some in like a staff meeting with your colleagues...

Margaret Ross

Oh, good idea.

Amanda Kidd

..as well, and perhaps like going into exploring strengths of your community. Yeah, of yourself, and then of your community, I think that's a really great one. I did actually have an educator join an online community who did talk about daily affirming scripts that they have with the children. So, and I was really amazed that this was such a complex, I guess, you know, a complex idea, but they were actually using them with the children, and they came together as a team to recognise what the children or the community needed in that moment. And they actually went and created these self-affirming scripts, almost like a mantra, and they did it with the children.

Margaret Ross

Isn't that beautiful?

Amanda Kidd

It was really nice, yeah.

Margaret Ross

And that's also one of the benefits of joining into one of the Be You communities there, Amanda...

Amanda Kidd

Yeah, that's it.

Margaret Ross

Great ideas. Yeah. You know, Amanda, there's also a self-compassion test, and I must admit, this is how I knew I needed to work on mindfulness cause I did it, and you can find it online. And hopefully our moderators will pop that into the chat for you as well, but you can also take personality tests as well, cause they better help understand yourself. And then, you can work out where you might wanna do some more work, which will then hopefully flow through to your work with children and other adults as well. You know what, you may even decide to work at it from that Bronfenbrenner socio-ecological model as well, just to

embrace your learning community's uniqueness, like what you were talking about, Amanda, you know, maybe you wanna explore cultural diversity or gender biases or look for ways to include adults with varying abilities and just really look at those risk factors and see how using compassion you might be able to turn them to be protective factors in your learning community.

[Amanda Kidd](#)

Yeah, that's actually a really great point. If you do want to learn more about risk and protective factors, or perhaps, you know, building and supporting a mentally healthy learning community or just even to learn more about Be You, and going ahead and exploring the free tools and the resources, make sure you do visit our website at www.beyou.org.au. Here you'll be able to register your learning community to get connected with our team of consultants and also to join those online learning communities and events. And so, for the latest on Be You news and upcoming events and activities, you can follow us on Facebook and on Twitter. All the links will be in the chat there, and I think we're sort of wrapping it up...

[Margaret Ross](#)

Amanda, it has been a great chat.

[Amanda Kidd](#)

Hasn't it? So, I'd just like to say a big thank you for everyone out there for joining us today and contributing to the conversation. Thank you so much, Margaret, for being here.

[Margaret Ross](#)

Thank you, Amanda, it has been a great opportunity.

[Amanda Kidd](#)

Hasn't it? So, we hope you enjoy the rest of the conference, and, yeah, enjoy and take care. Thank you.

[Margaret Ross](#)

Thank you.