

Professional Reading Program

Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program



Self-Compassion by Kristin Neff, Ph.D.

Why Read *Self-Compassion*?

“Many people are resistant to the idea of self-compassion, however. Isn’t it really just a form of self-pity? Or a dressed-up word for self-indulgence? I will show throughout this book that these assumptions are false and run directly counter to the actual meaning of self-compassion.”

“Somewhere along the lines we get the message that strong individuals should be stoic and silent toward their own suffering – like John Wayne in a western. Unfortunately, these attitudes rob us of one of our most powerful coping mechanisms when dealing with the difficulties of life.”

Some of the primary goals of leadership development are the betterment of the self and others. In order to see these outcomes as leaders, we need to take care of ourselves so we can lead others well. Leadership can be a challenging endeavor, and our ability to lead others often hinges on our own ability to meet that challenge. The tools and ideas found in this book make excellent additions to the leaders toolkit, and go a long way toward developing resiliency and leadership skills that all leaders and followers need to be successful.

***Note: physical and mental health are serious topics, and the opinions and ideas in the book and this discussion guide are **not** substitutes for a physician’s advice about physical or mental concerns. If you have questions, ask a professional!*

There are several videos and other resources related to the book and featuring the author available online. Find some of them at the links below, or by using an internet search engine.

- **The Space Between Self-Esteem and Self Compassion: Kristin Neff at TEDxCentennialParkWomen (19 minutes):**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IvtZBUSplr4>
- **The Science of Self-Compassion | Kristin Neff | Talks at Google (42 minutes):**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y0gtnOXAp-U>

For more leadership ideas and to dig deeper, check out the Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program (WFLDP) blog, Facebook page, Professional Reading Program, and more at the links below:

Blog: <http://wildlandfireleadership.blogspot.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/WFLDP>

Professional Reading Program: <https://www.nwcf.gov/wfldp/toolbox/prp>

Main WFLDP page: <https://www.fireleadership.gov>

Self-Compassion Discussion Questions

Part One: Why Self-Compassion

What is your opinion of the idea of self-compassion after this section? Did any of the examples or exercises resonate with you? Why or why not? Have you seen any instances of self-criticism through your experience in wildland fire? What effect do you think being overly self-critical can or has had in the wildland fire community?

Part Two: The Core Components of Self-Compassion

After reading this section, what do you think about the three ingredients of self-compassion? How do the concepts of mindfulness interact or overlay with the ideas of self-compassion? How might you use self-kindness, mindfulness and an awareness of human connectivity to be a better leader or follower in your team, crew, or organization? Have you tried any mindfulness activities in the past? What was your experience if you have? How might the practice of mindfulness as described in this chapter make you a better leader, firefighter, or person?

Part Three: The Benefits of Self-Compassion

Have you experienced “negativity bias?” How might that bias be both helpful and hurtful as a fire leader or follower? What do you think of the idea that self-compassion and emotional intelligence are linked? What do you think about the author’s ideas on self-esteem? How do, or don’t those align with your own ideas? How does self-esteem compare to self-compassion, self-worth, and confidence as a leader? What do you think about self-compassion versus self-criticism as a motivator, especially as it relates to failure?

Part Four: Self-Compassion in Relation to Others

After reading this section, what are your thoughts on compassion toward others? Toward your team and coworkers? Your friends? Family? Were there any ideas or practices that will prove valuable for you?

Part Five: The Joy of Self-Compassion

What do you think of the examples in this final section? Can you see yourself making similar changes in certain situations? Why or why not? What do you think of the practice of being appreciative of what’s good in your life?