

# **FILLING THE EMPTY CUP:**

## **PREVENTING BURNOUT THROUGH SELF-COMPASSION**

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**When managing BURNOUT,**

**“SELF CARE”**

**feels like another SHOULD**

**It's liking add weight  
when you're already  
exhausted...**



# KEYS TO BURNOUT (inter)vention

Part 1: Completing  
the *Stress Response*

Part 2: Challenging  
*Conditioning*

Part 3: Cultivating  
*Self-compassion*

What's driving the burnout?



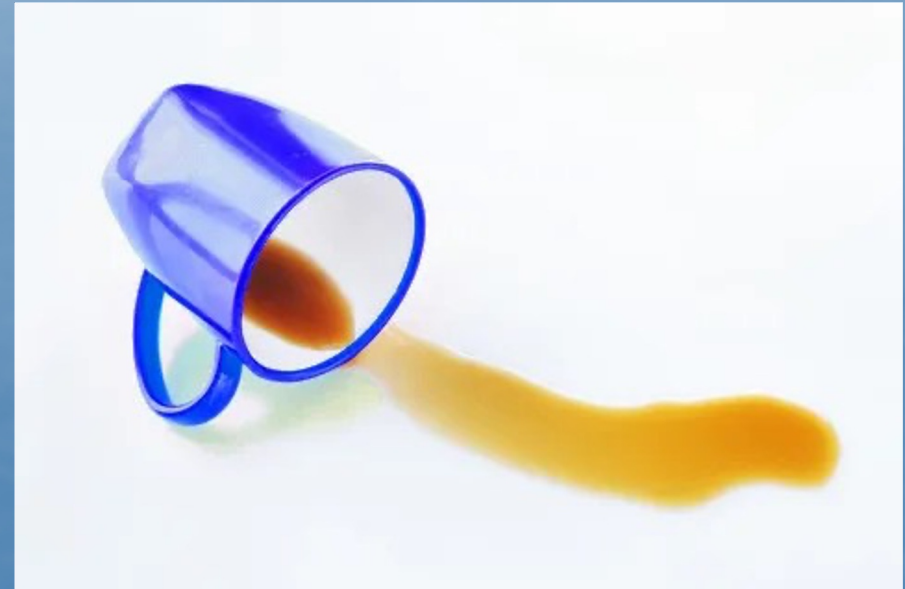
# BURNOUT LOOKS LIKE THIS

Described by the WHO as “**resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed,**” burnout is characterized by “feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion, increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job; and reduced professional efficacy.”



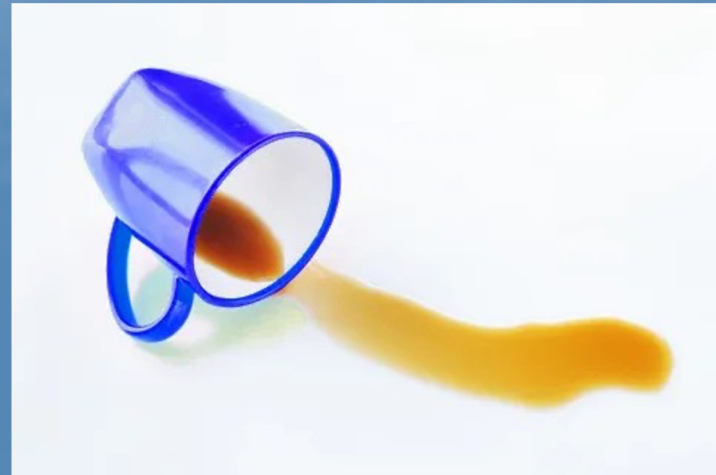
# BURNOUT FEELS LIKE THIS

- Emotional exhaustion  
(that no rest can help)
- Negativity or cynicism
- Depersonalization/Detachment  
(apathy, disinterest)
- Decreased Sense of  
Accomplishment/Inefficiency  
(helplessness/hopelessness)



# AT WORK, BURNOUT SHOWS UP LIKE THIS

- Brain Fog: disorganized, unprepared, lack of follow-through, decreased attention
- Detachment/avoidance from work group activities (especially fun activities)
- Resentment of colleagues: with more flexibility/pay or with more manageable work load
- Recalcitrance: refusal to perform duties as directed (can be subtle/passive-aggressive)
- Abnormally reactive to feedback, suggestions, or constructive critique
- Helplessness: complaining/leaking/triangulation (ie not going to the source of the problem)
- Absenteeism: mental health and physical health
- Disengaging: participation in meetings decreases
- Physical evidence of tiredness, anxiety, tearfulness
- Working beyond scheduled hours
- Substance misuse
- Turnover/Quit/Leave job



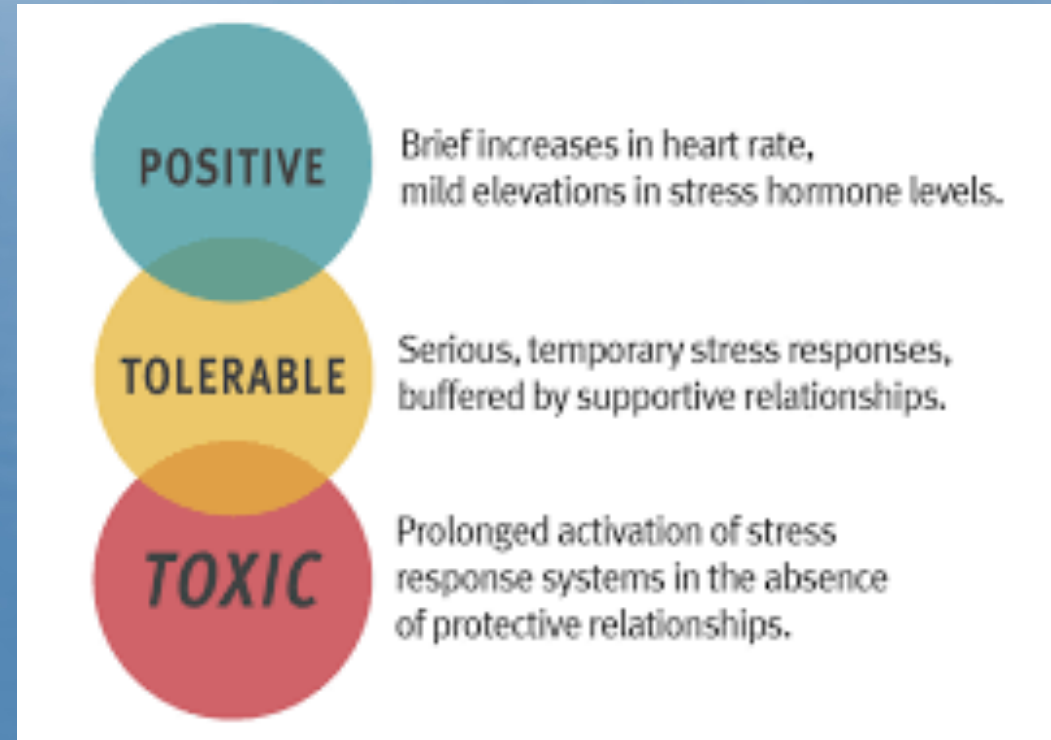
# BURNOUT CAN BE THE RESULT OF:

## Vicarious Trauma:

The stress you may experience due to empathy with others **you see going through trauma**, including physical trauma such as serious injury, illness, or death.

You also may experience secondary traumatic stress through **empathy with others who talk with you** about their traumatic experiences.

## Toxic Stress:



# *WHY BURNOUT IN NONPROFIT EMPLOYEES?*

- Giving/Helping personality type – caring and empathic
- Vicarious/Secondary Trauma (supporting others in crisis can activate trauma response)
- Drawn to the work from past lived experience with challenges and/or trauma
- Lower wages and high stress responsibilities, especially at entry level/direct service positions
- Grant funding regulations and requirements add to stress of service delivery
- Remote work for some but not all
- Lack of investment in employee wellness (discretionary funding needed)



# Part 1: Completing the Stress Response

## SEPARATING THE STRESSOR FROM THE STRESS

### STRESSOR

The event or circumstance that causes a stress response in the brain and/or the body.

### THE THING



### STRESS RESPONSE

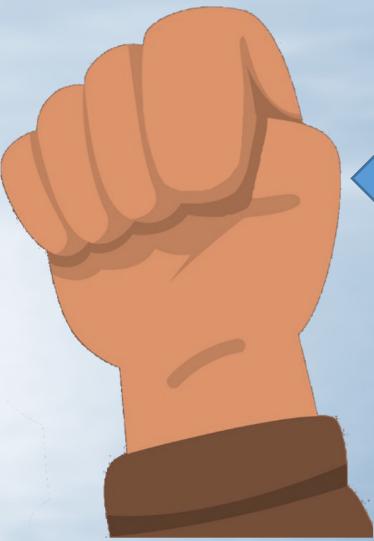
The brain or body's response to a stressful event or circumstance.

### OUR RESPONSE TO THE THING

*You don't have to deal with the stressor directly to deal with the stress itself.*

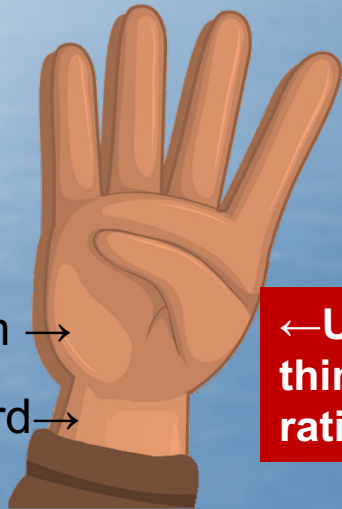
# STRESS RESPONSE IN THE BRAIN

DAN SIEGEL'S HAND BRAIN MODEL



**Prefrontal Cortex: Thinking Brain**  
Rationality/Rational Thinking: Body Control, Play, Empathy, Positive Relationships, Kindness, Compassion, Reflection, Resilience, Regulation, Logic, Consequences, Language, Reasoning, Control “The wise leader!”

**We all need:**  
Felt Safety  
Attachment  
Regulation



**Amygdala: Fear Center**  
Emotionally/Irrational Thinking: Fight, Flight, Freeze, Collapse, Big Emotions, Anger, Fear, Anxiety, Survival, etc.

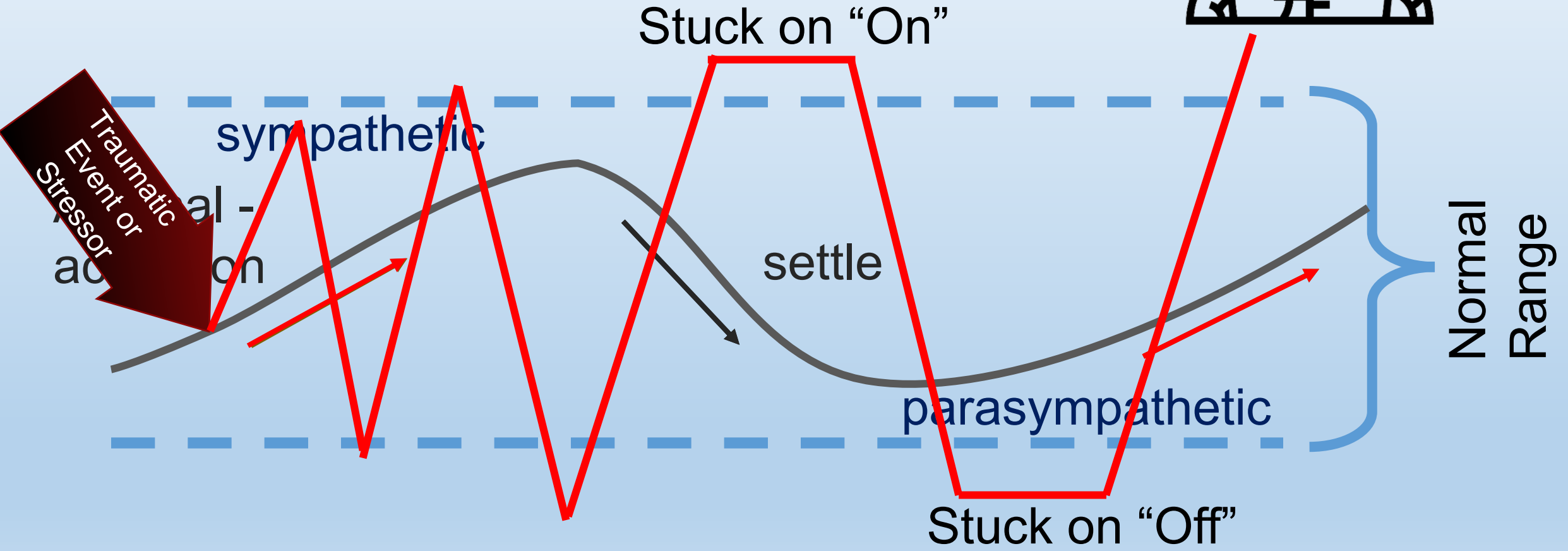
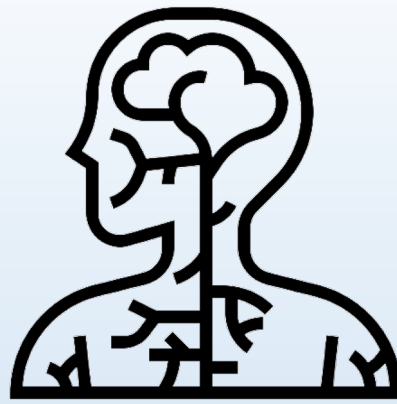
Brain Stem →

Spinal Cord →

← **Unable to think rationally**

The Amygdala sends waves to the Hypothalamus (command center) which activates the Autonomic Nervous System: Sympathetic (Fight, Flight, freeze, collapse) and Parasympathetic (rest & digest)

# STRESS RESPONSE IN THE NERVOUS SYSTEM



# Stress Response Can Show Up at Work

**FIGHT  
FLIGHT  
FREEZE  
FAWN**

## Trauma Responses



**Fight: Confront the threat.**

anger  
rage  
confrontation  
high energy



**Flight: Run away from the threat.**

anxiety  
panic  
avoidance  
high energy



**Freeze: Shut down to block out the threat.**

dissociation  
numbness  
shutdown  
low energy



**Fawn: Appease the threat.**

people-pleasing  
codependency  
lack of boundaries

# Completing the Stress Response

“Physical activity is what tells your brain that you have successfully survived the threat and now your body is a safe place to live.”

Emily Nagoski, PhD

## Discharge:

- Movement
- Exercise
- Dance
- Emote/Express – Laugh/Cry
- Play
- Shake
- Tapping plus

## Restore:

- Mindfulness/Meditation
- Awareness Cultivation
- Create: music, crafts
- Refocus (from screen to sky)
- Revive (spiritual feeding)
- Hug
- Massage

## *PART 2: CHALLENGING CONDITIONING*

*“The truth will set you free,  
but first it will piss you off.”*

*Gloria Steinem*

# Part 2: Challenging the Conditioning



- Societal
- Cultural
- Familial

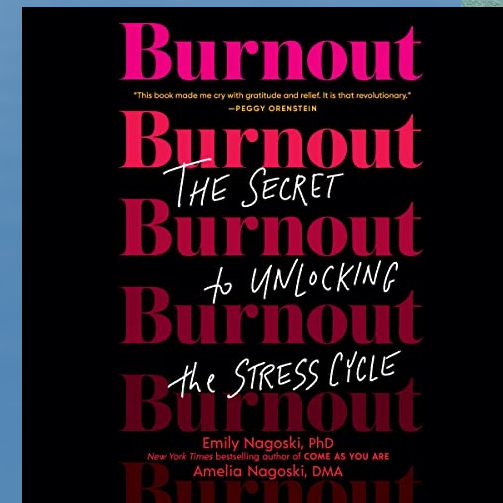
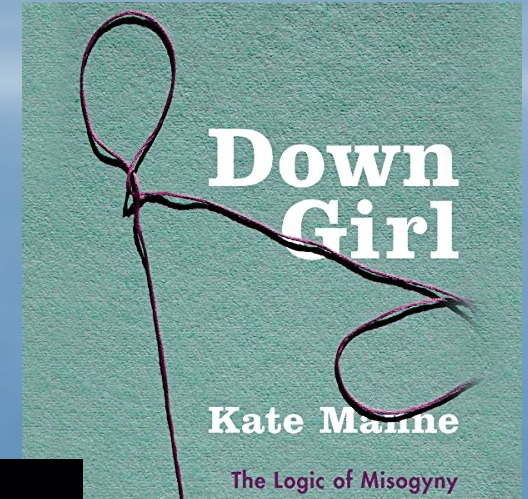
# Challenging the Conditioning

## HUMAN GIVER SYNDROME

Human givers are expected to offer their time, attention, affection, and bodies willingly, placidly, to the other class of people the “human beings”.

Givers are to be attentive to the needs of others, at the expense of their own needs, emotions, desires, ambitions.

Givers are often trapped – shamed and punished (how dare you!) for taking care of themselves.





# Challenging the Conditioning

## NAMING THE INNER CRITIC

What conditioning is driving your burnout?

- Give it a name and persona
- Acknowledge and investigate
- Thank it with love
- Give it a seat – over there.

Without “*insert name here*” – I am/I feel/I can ...

# *Moving from INNER CRITIC to INNER COACH*

- **Where do I want to be? What is my dream situation?**
- **IMAGINE being there now – describe how it feels, what is good about it**
- **What is holding you back? And is it true?**

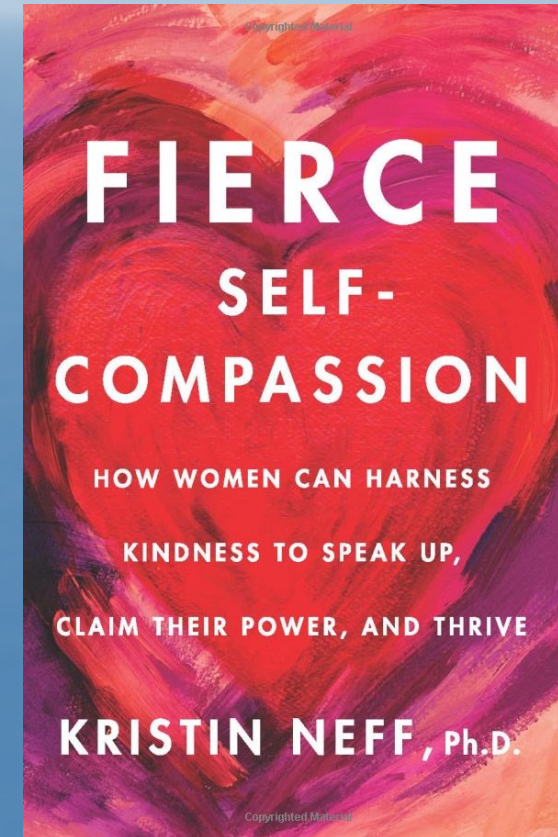
# CONFRONTING TOXIC PERFECTIONISM

*“Instead of mercilessly judging and criticizing yourself for various inadequacies or shortcomings, self-compassion means you are kind and understanding when confronted with personal failings – after all, who ever said you were supposed to be perfect?”*

**Kristin Neff**

# Part 3: Cultivating Self-Compassion

“Self-compassion is a way of emotionally recharging our batteries. Rather than becoming drained by helping others, self-compassion allows us to fill up our internal reserves, so that we have more to give to those who need us.” — [Kristin Neff](#)



# *SELF COMPASSION EXERCISE*

Please take out a sheet of paper and answer the following:

1. First, think about times when a close friend feels really bad about him or herself or is really struggling in some way. How would you respond to your friend in this situation (especially when you're at your best)? Please write down what you typically do, what you say, and note the tone in which you typically talk to your friends.
2. Now think about times when you feel bad about yourself or are struggling. How do you typically respond to yourself in these situations? Please write down what you typically do, what you say, and note the tone in which you talk to yourself.

# THREE COMPONENTS TO CULTIVATING SELF-COMPASSION



1. **Self-Kindness** vs. Self Judgment
2. **Common Humanity** vs. Isolation
3. **Mindfulness** vs. Overidentification

# *“SELF COMPASSION BREAK”:*

Evoked the three aspects of self-compassion in the moment you need it most:

1. This is a moment of suffering
2. Suffering is a part of life
3. May I be kind to myself



# *SELF COMPASSION IS THE KEY TO BURNOUT PREVENTION*

## **Burnout thrives when we are**

- Stuck in a stress response
- Driven by conditioning and negative thinking

## **Well-being thrives when we**

- Calm the stress response
- Step apart from the negative thoughts
- Nurture ourselves as kindly as we would a beloved

