Abstract

In this dissertation, self-compassion and its significance to us are explored from the bifocal perspective of contemporary Western psychotherapy and Buddhist wisdom traditions containing philosophical, spiritual and psychological teachings. The dissertation explores the dialogue and synthesis that have been transpiring for the last few decades between Buddhist and Western psychological systems as proposed and practised by Buddhist and Western psychotherapists, psychiatrists and teachers on compassion and self-compassion. My personal orientation and experience of both Buddhism and the practice of Western psychotherapy serve to promote here a rich, meaningful integration and application of self-compassion in the arenas of education and human service, including schooling and mental health.

Chapter 1 is a discussion of the context for my inspiration to study and research self-compassion as a Buddhist practitioner and psychotherapist. In chapter 2, I examine the Buddhist concept of self, as it is integral to the understanding of self-compassion. The different perspectives and conceptualizations of the primary contributors to the burgeoning field of self-compassion are presented. Topics of particular relevance are explored: mindfulness, Buddhist view of reality, wisdom, altruism and loving-kindness practice. In chapter 3, ancient Buddhist texts from both classical and ongoing traditional forms enrich the study; these provide a sacred historical authenticity to the discussion of compassion and honour the Buddhist foundational influences and practices.

Self-compassion is the significant practice and skill involved in the topic of chapter 4, emotion regulation. Emotional regulation, as it relates to cultivating positive emotions such as compassion and loving-kindness, has become integrated into affective contemplative practices. Chapter 5 presents scientific research relevant to compassion and self-compassion.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 present modalities for the development of self-compassion in group settings. Chapter 6 presents three major group therapy curricula used today by pioneers in the field of self-compassion: Compassion-Focused Therapy, Compassion
Cultivation Training, and the Mindful Compassion Program. For chapter 7, I create a specialized self-compassion therapeutic application for Buddhist practitioners using a Tibetan Buddhist practice of *Avalokiteshvara*, the Buddha of compassion. Chapter 8 discusses my secular group psychotherapy curriculum for self-compassion. The appendix includes an in-depth nine-session guide for facilitators of that curriculum.