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Formerly Special Art School

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ASHTAVAKRA JOURNAL CLUB

SESSION 2022-23

B.Ed. Spl. Edu.HI

Date: 31/03/2023

Time: 11:30 AM

Topic- Balancing Self-compassion with Self-advocacy: A New Approach
for Persons with Disabilities Learning to Self-advocate

Author- Susan Stuntzner and Michael Hartley

Name of the Journal (APA)- Stuntzner, S., & Hartley, M. T. (2015). Balancing Self-Compassion with Self-Advocacy: A New Approach for Persons with Disabilities. *Annals of Psychotherapy & Integrative Health*, 12–28.

ABSTRACT

Objective:

- to review the foundation of self-advocacy,
- to explore the relevance of self-advocacy to a disability,
- to discuss the value of self-compassion in relation to self-advocacy,
- to introduce concepts, benefits, and supporting research of self-compassion.

Method: Descriptive research method

Results: Results from this study indicated that people higher in self-compassion reported fewer negative emotions and problems with catastrophizing, as well as higher amounts of positive affect. Overall, these findings show support for self-compassion to help improve adjustment and coping with chronic pain among persons with musculoskeletal conditions.

Persons with disabilities can enhance their self-advocacy skills by learning about their disability, their needs, and relevant information and skills they can apply to numerous situations. Persons who want to become more proficient at self-advocacy can do this when they are provided with opportunities to:

- a) learn as much information as possible about their disability and the ways it affects their lives.
- b) Identify their personal strengths, weaknesses, coping skills, and level of resiliency.

- c) determine which skills have worked well for them in the past and which may be used in relation to self-advocacy.
- d) generate a list of life areas they have difficulty advocating for themselves.
- e) identify personal barriers that hinder them while trying to self-advocate.
- f) strategize the ways they can enhance their ability to self-advocate.
- g) learn about professionals, agencies, or services available to provide them with what they need.
- h) practice, formally or informally, how to self-advocate (i.e., among friends and family, role play).
- i) process their ability to handle challenging situations such as rejection and confrontation emotionally.
- j) assess and reassess personal progress in learning how to effectively self-advocate and
- k) reflect on the acquisition of personal benefits which have been achieved because of self-advocacy.

Conclusion: Conceptualizing how to best address, teach, or learn self-advocacy skills can feel like a full-time job for both persons with disabilities and professionals – let alone the idea of infusing self-compassion into the process of learning to self-advocate. Determining where and how to start this process may appear a bit overwhelming because three tasks are involved:

- i. addressing the need for self-advocacy skills,
- ii. learning about self-compassion, and
- iii. determining how to infuse self-compassion into the self-advocacy process.

Because many of the experiences associated with disability and learning to self-advocate may be fraught with negative thoughts and feelings (Hartley, 2012; Stunzner, 2012), the authors contend that there is an invaluable place for the practice of self-compassion within the self-advocacy process. Having said that, there is much that still needs to be explored and researched regarding the role and impact that self-compassion can have on the lives, coping processes, and learning strategies of persons with disabilities, particularly given the fact that self-compassion and its relationship to persons with disabilities have not been considered (Stunzner, 2014). For all of these reasons, future research on self-compassion and its effect on the lives of persons with disabilities is warranted and sorely needed.

Keywords: self-compassion, self-advocacy, counselling, disability, rehabilitation

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