

## The Territory and the Map

### Episode 3: The Challenges and Rewards of Self-Compassion

**Andi Buchanan:** Hello, and welcome to episode three of The Territory and the Map. Today we're going to be talking about the sometimes surprising difficulty of self-compassion. But first I'd like to tell you a story.

[MUSIC]

During World War II, the Steinway piano company was prohibited from making its famous instruments, due to government restrictions on copper, brass, and other materials needed for the war effort. Instead, a small crew stayed on in the New York factory, making airplane parts for troop transport gliders, and, morbidly, coffins for the National Casket Company.

But in late 1941, everything changed when the Steinway company received word from the War Production Board that the US government needed their specific expertise. Not for help in crafting more airplane parts, or with making weapons: The United States was asking Steinway to build military pianos.

What, exactly, is a military piano? It would have to be a heavy-duty, rugged instrument—not a shiny, long, heavy grand piano, but a compact upright, light enough to be carried by four soldiers, and with no extraneous parts that might be easily loosened or knocked off when being dropped into a theater of war. Because that was what the government wanted to do with these pianos: parachute them into war zones inside a crate filled with nothing more than the piano, a set of tuning tools, instructions, some spare parts, and a few pages of popular sheet music.

So, Steinway began crafting these military pianos, keeping their unusual destinations in mind during the fabrication process. “The instruments were thoroughly “tropicalized” according to one article, “treated with special anti-termite and -insect solution and sealed with water-resistant glue to withstand dampness.” The keys were topped with celluloid instead of ivory, the bass strings covered in soft iron instead of the traditional copper, and rather than the polished, shiny deep brown or black finish of a typical piano, the Victory Verticals, as they were called, were painted in the colors of each of the various armed forces that were to receive them: “three coats of olive drab lacquer, slightly dulled,” for the Army, and blues and greens for the Navy, Marines, Army Air Corps, and Coast Guard.

Eventually, more than 2500 of these verticals were transported to every theater of war, including Asia, Africa, Europe, North America, and the South Pacific.

The question is: Why? Why would anyone waste time shipping pianos to a war zone? Instead of musical instruments, shouldn't it be rations, or supplies, or

something crucial to the war effort? Why would anyone fighting a war need a piano at all?

In a 1943 letter, Private Kenneth Kranes, who was stationed in North Africa, wrote to his mother back in New York. “The wagon contained a light system and a Steinway pianna [sic]. Mom, you would laugh if you were to have seen it, because the Steinway is not at all like Uncle Jake’s. It is smaller and painted olive green, just like the jeep. We all got a kick out of it and sure had fun after meals when we gathered around the pianna to sing. I slept smiling and even today am humming a few of the songs we sang.”

Just a week after writing this, he was killed in battle. But for a moment, just a moment, he got to gather around a piano and sing. He got to go to sleep smiling.

The simple answer to the question of why bring a piano to a battlefield is that these pianos brought joy and music to a place where both are usually silenced.

And so it is with self-compassion. When you’re fighting to survive what feels like unbearable pain; when you’re using all your available energy just to cope and stay alive; it might feel like a waste of time to think about self-compassion. It might feel indulgent. It might feel unnecessary. It might feel as useless as a piano on a battlefield.

But just as those pianos were sent—literally from above, as they parachuted in—to help boost morale, provoke camaraderie, and provide a little comfort in the form of familiar music, entertainment, and a taste of home, self-compassion also offers a crucial respite from the challenges of what we face every day when living with something like a spinal CSF leak.

[MUSIC]

Welcome to the territory and the map. Hi everyone. I'm Andi Buchanan, executive director of the Spinal CSF Leak Foundation and with me is Dr. John Reiman, a trauma therapist who also experienced a spinal CSF leak.

**Dr. John Reiman:** Hi, Andi. Good to be here again with you.

**Andi Buchanan:** Hi John. Thanks for being here. In this podcast we talk about spinal CSF leak in ways we usually aren't able to, moving beyond the map of symptoms and facts and firmly into the territory of lived experience. It's important to note this podcast is educational in nature and not intended to be a substitute for or construed as medical advice or individual therapy.

**Dr. John Reiman:** For those of you listening, your job is to see if anything possibly useful emerges here. Don't take on anything I say before first running it through your gut, your intuition. It's important to practice self-care, so if you find listening to this

discussion too difficult in any way, or too close to home, it's fine to pause, to take a break, or to stop listening altogether.

**Andi Buchanan:** Before we dive into the rich topic of self-compassion, I wanted to first define it, and I'm going to take a stab at it here, and you can let me know whether or not I've got it right.

As far as I can tell, self-compassion is a psychological concept and practice that involves treating oneself with kindness, understanding, and empathy, especially in times of suffering, failure, or difficulty.

It entails being supportive and caring toward oneself rather than self-critical or judgmental. Self-compassion acknowledges that all individuals are imperfect, make mistakes, and face challenges. And it encourages a non-judgmental and nurturing attitude toward oneself, similar to the way one would treat a friend in times of distress. It encompasses kindness, a sense of common humanity and recognizing that suffering is a shared human experience, and mindfulness—that is, maintaining a balanced and present awareness of one's thoughts and feelings. Would you agree with all of that?

**Dr. John Reiman:** I would, Andi. Um, those are indeed the three primary constituent elements, according to Kristen Neff, perhaps the foremost world leader doing pioneering work with self-compassion. I'd extend the definition, Andi, of self-compassion to having grace for oneself.

So "grace," in a religio-spiritual context, refers to receiving the full and unmerited favor of God, the universe, and so forth. I see grace in our context as extending to oneself that full and unmerited favor. I think this can be a challenge in Leakland. Um, feeling so sick with this body-mind, the extension of full and unconditional positive regard to self in the midst of what some would describe as such hell—actually, I would define it that way from my own experience—seems like a steep ask. Getting to self-compassion in the midst of that hell is a steep ask. But, as we're going to unpack a bit here, quite worth it.

**Andi Buchanan:** Yeah, I would have to say, you know, it, it seems like all of those things seem easy to extend to someone else. But when I think about extending those things to myself, even when I was at my worst suffering, I could still feel myself resist that. I think what you said there, that "unmerited favor," right? Maybe that's where my own resistance comes in. I guess I keep thinking, "well, I have to earn self-compassion," but, but you're saying no, you don't have to earn it, you just get it, right?

**Dr. John Reiman:** Yeah, it just comes, uh, essentially, I like to think of it as being built in to the hardware that comes with the standard model. And what we need to do is to get the software to cultivate and develop it. So let's briefly unpack those

three core elements that you mentioned a minute ago, and that Neff has asserted repeatedly, uh, that these three elements define self-compassion.

So, let's start with the first element. And I'm going to present these in the context of contrasts. So, element one is self-kindness, and the contrast point is self-judgment. So, self-kindness versus self-judgment. Neff states so clearly that self-compassion entails being warm and understanding toward ourselves when we suffer or fail or feel inadequate, rather than ignoring our pain or flagellating ourselves with self criticism. Self-compassionate people recognize that being imperfect, failing, and experiencing life difficulties is inevitable, and so they tend to be gentle with themselves when confronted with painful experiences, rather than getting angry when life falls short of ideals.

People can't always be or get exactly what they want. It's just part of, of, of life, of being human. But when this reality is denied or fought against, suffering increases in the form of stress, frustration, and self criticism. When this reality is accepted with sympathy and kindness, greater, uh, equanimity, emotional equanimity can be experienced.

That's element one. Element two, common humanity, and the contrast point here is versus isolation. Frustration at not having things as we want them is often accompanied by kind of an irrational but pretty pervasive sense of isolation. As if I was the only person suffering or making mistakes. But, the fact here is that all humans suffer.

The very definition of human means that one is mortal, vulnerable, imperfect. So self-compassion involves recognizing that suffering and personal inadequacy is part of the shared human experience, something we all go through, rather than being something that happens to just me alone. What I'm doing here in each of these elements is reading through Neff's definition of these contrasts, and what I particularly appreciate as I read her words, is the degree to which this is drawn from long periods of research.

So, the third element that I'd like to address is mindfulness, and the contrast point here is going to be versus over identification. Okay? And again, Neff's words unpack this beautifully. Self-compassion also requires taking a balanced approach to our negative emotions so that feelings aren't suppressed or exaggerated.

This stance stems from the process of relating personal experiences to those of others who are also suffering. And that puts our own situation into a larger perspective. It also stems from the willingness to observe our negative thoughts and emotions with receptivity, with openness, with clarity, so that they can be held in this mindful awareness.

So mindfulness is a non-judgmental receptive mind state in which one observes thoughts and feelings as they are. without trying to suppress or deny them. We

can't ignore our pain and feel compassion for it at the same time. So, mindfulness requires that we not be over identified with thoughts and feelings, so that we're caught up and swept away by negative reactivity.

Um, for me, the manifestation of this is where I can get so absorbed, I, I was so absorbed into my own pain that I became identified with my pain. In other words, there were times when I felt so consumed by it where that over-identification would have resulted if I had the words for it at the time, "I am my pain."

And this third one, mindfulness, really addresses that. Because at the points in time where my identification with the pain was so strong that I am the pain, I am my pain, then I recede, then I self-isolate, then I withdraw. And that isn't a helpful condition.

**Andi Buchanan:** The, the other point that really stuck out to me is that sentence, "We cannot ignore our pain and feel compassion for it at the same time." You know, you talk about being over identified with pain, but I think another really common thing that you do when you're in pain all the time is you try to push it away, you try to ignore it and it's—I just caught on that sentence when I heard you say it, you know, you can't ignore your pain and feel compassion for it.

There's some pain built into that word compassion, right? You have to feel the pain and feel compassion for it and for yourself. And, um, yeah, ignoring it can seem like the only way to go in the moment or it can seem like a useful tool. But I, I can definitely see how it could be an obstacle towards self-compassion. And, and I guess my, my real question is all of these things sound so reasonable. So why is it so hard to give yourself compassion? I mean, like I said before, even just talking through it, I can feel myself feeling like, well, of course, that's how I would treat somebody else, but certainly not myself. You know, why do you think it is that some people find it so challenging to show themselves the same kindness and understanding they would offer to others?

**Dr. John Reiman:** So, there's a number of misgivings people have about self-compassion that can block access to it. This sort of builds a bit on your question. So, let's, let's just go through several myths and facts, okay?

**Andi Buchanan:** Mm hmm.

**Dr. John Reiman:** The first myth: self-compassion is a poor me pity party. That's the myth. The fact—

**Andi Buchanan:** That's the *myth*. Okay.

**Dr. John Reiman:** [laughter]

**Andi Buchanan:** [laughter]

**Dr. John Reiman:** You know what, it's the way so many of us in Western cultures were brought up, and we're going to go a little later into cultural implications for all of this, or the things that culturally inform all of this. Uh, but the myth, yes, is self-compassion is a poor me pity party. The fact is that it's actually an antidote to self-pity because it involves a doing, and a taking action in a positive direction instead of wallowing in "woe is me."

**Andi Buchanan:** Right.

**Dr. John Reiman:** Myth: self-compassion is for wimps and will make me weak and vulnerable. Fact: self-compassion is born of an inner strength and builds resilience. Myth: Being self-compassionate is selfish and self-centered. It's just me thinking all about me.

**Andi Buchanan:** Mm.

**Dr. John Reiman:** And by the way, before I get to the fact associated with this, I think this is one of the most insidious of all the myths because the operating belief is that to be self-compassionate, is to be self centered, or even narcissistic, or

**Andi Buchanan:** Right.

**Dr. John Reiman:** any one of a number of words. But the fact is that it's the opposite, in that research shows us that people who are self-compassionate extend compassion outwardly in the direction of people that they are in relationships with.

Myth: self-compassion is just self indulgence. I'll just stay in bed and eat bonbons all day. Well, fact: Opposite again. Self-compassionate people actually engage in healthier behaviors. They exercise, they eat well, they drink less, etc.

Myth: If I'm compassionate to myself, I'm just gonna lollygag around all day, unmotivated.

**Andi Buchanan:** I'm sensing a theme here.

**Dr. John Reiman:** You are correct.

**Andi Buchanan:** Yet it's so easy to, to buy right into it. So what's the fact on this one? I'm, I'm guessing it's the opposite.

**Dr. John Reiman:** Opposite again, Andi. Self-compassion doesn't eliminate self-discipline. In fact, self-discipline can be a very self-nurturing and kind behavior.

Myth: self-compassion will let me get away with it when I mistreat someone else. Harsh self-accountability is necessary to keep me in line. Fact: Self-compassionate

people assume greater, not lesser, responsibility for their actions and behavior and are more likely to actually apologize if they've offended someone.

And, and, you know, going through all of these myths, I took us through them because I think they are so powerful in this culture. And basically, are obstacles to self-compassion, which, as I've mentioned previously, if you look at the research on recovery from trauma, treatment of depression, treatment of anxiety, for years, the number one attribute, quality, that's arisen in the literature and in clinical experience has been self-compassion.

**Andi Buchanan:** And yet these, these myths are so pernicious. I feel like at least in our Western culture, maybe it's, it's so easy to absorb them without anybody actually spelling them out for you. You know, you just kind of, you're soaking in it, right? And um, it is wild to realize just, you know, hearing you go through them like, yeah, I had not thought of self-compassion as not being diagonal to self-discipline, right? I've thought of them as opposites. Um, even when I know, I know the facts versus the myths, and yet it doesn't stop me from that kind of knee-jerk assumption of like, right: if I'm compassionate to myself, I'll be unmotivated. Uh, or it's just, you know, lazy or it's selfish, the "self" in self-compassionate, just that association with selfishness. It's a lot to deconstruct, you know, but important to do so. We're just talking a little bit about this, but how, how much do you think societal or cultural expectations play in making self-compassion difficult for some people?

**Dr. John Reiman:** You know, the question of self-compassion and its relationship to culture has received a good bit of attention in the literature. Uh, we can only really touch on this here in a tiny and ungeneralizable way, but just to share an interesting study that compared self-compassion in the U. S., Thailand, and Taiwan.

In Thailand, life is heavily influenced by Buddhism, which teaches that suffering is an inevitable part of the human experience, and that compassion for self and others is central to a Buddhist worldview, because suffering, failure, and imperfection are natural parts of life.

Taiwan, in contrast, is strongly influenced by Confucianism. And just to be very clear, not making these right or wrong or offering any value related to them. Taiwan, on the other hand, is very influenced by Confucianism, which stresses, and listen to these, the importance of good conduct, proper social relations, humility, and self improvement.

And the key: individuals are encouraged to become aware of their faults through self examination so they can correct themselves. The importance of shame, for example, in Confucianism as a means of self development is pervasive and actually reflected in Taiwanese parenting practices. Because self esteem is largely an American construct that has become deeply integrated into American folk psychology, the researchers expected that self esteem levels would be higher in the U.S. than in Thailand and Taiwan. Well, the research examined lots of cultural influences on self-compassion, and the results indicated that self-compassion is the

highest in Thailand, the lowest in Taiwan, with the U.S. falling in between. You know, I mention this study, Andi, because it highlights, in I think very crisp terms, how multiple societal cultural variables inform the experience of self-compassion.

You asked me about cultural pieces. Even as I read the research and shared what I just have, as a psychotherapist, in addition to cultural differences, I really find so strongly that self-compassion in my adult clients is very powerfully related to an overlay of family of origin values and modeling about self-compassion or the lack of it. This is a huge subject

**Andi Buchanan:** Absolutely.

**Dr. John Reiman:** and one that we could give a great deal of time to. I, the reason I'm highlighting this now is I don't want the listening audience to think that in recognizing self-compassion, you could just switch on a light switch and get it.

**Andi Buchanan:** Right?

**Dr. John Reiman:** The reality here is that individual wiring, cultural expectations, family of origin, psychological structuring... There are so many variables that go into it. I think if I were to look for a take-away from all of this for someone, it might just be, oh yeah, wow, self-compassion, pretty important. And pretty challenging in a number of ways. So, I think I'll give myself some self-compassion around my lack or shortage of it.

**Andi Buchanan:** Yeah. I have to say, in terms of unlearning those family of origin values around self-compassion, I mean, parenting has been a process for me of trying to instill those kinds of values in my kids. So the self-compassion that I struggle with myself comes so much easier for them because I've worked on trying to model it for them or at least give them tools to think about it in a different way than maybe I did when I was growing up, but it's still a little bit more challenging for me than it is for my kids, you know?

**Dr. John Reiman:** Yeah.

**Andi Buchanan:** I wonder, are there specific situations or circumstances where you find it especially hard to practice self-compassion? And what makes those situations challenging for you?

**Dr. John Reiman:** For me, I can speak to my own experience. You know, I've personally found in my own leak land experience that extending compassion to myself was most difficult when my pain was either the most intense or continuous over a long period of time. Um, I wrestled in circumstances with the intense pain or pain continuously.



I wrestled, and I on occasion experienced during my 14 months of dismantled life anger, actually toward myself. What I told myself, not terribly self-compassionately, was, I'm better than this. I'm better than this because I have, uh, you know, I'm a senior citizen. I've been around for a while, I have graduate degrees, I have clinical experience. Somehow, my actual day to day, moment to moment experience was such that, um, I wrestled with it. And this would be the opposite of self-compassion. Now, when that resistance or anger gets me nowhere, I invariably return to self-compassion, uh, sometimes taking the long road to get there.

**Andi Buchanan:** Yeah, it can be so challenging when you're leaking. I wrote about this in my book, but when I was leaking, I started experiencing night terrors. And a lot of it was just, you know, the kind of stuff when you wake up and you're like, Oh, gosh, what the heck is going on in my brain?

Because it was always, you know, the ceiling was caving in or aliens were destroying the world. Or, you know, something, something awful and terrible and frightening and, and the theme of all of them, whether or not they seemed ridiculous when I woke up, was that there was something that I should have done that I forgot to do that I didn't do and now everybody was going to be hurt because of it. And I kept going back to thinking about kind of the core of those stories because it felt like whatever was happening in my brain, my painful brain in the middle of the night, it was working on something or trying to work something out. And, and I tried a number of things. I tried rewriting my leak story.

Um, as I would fall asleep, I would kind of recount the day, you know, the day's events of the time when I got my leak and change it so that I didn't get my leak and see how that felt when I went to sleep. Or change the script, what I had in my head around the circumstances surrounding my leak. And I'd even leave myself little notes saying like, "this isn't real," or, "you're having a dream," so that when I would wake up in my night terror, I would see it and bring it back to reality. And I tried all these various kinds of things to reconfigure this terror that I was grappling with every night.

And the main thing that I kept telling myself was kind of like a reassurance or, or a forgiveness. Like, you did everything you could. Right? And that message felt really powerful. I did everything I could, I, I prepared as best as I could. You know, the theme of these dreams is always that I'd forgotten to do something important. And so I kept reminding myself, "you did everything you could, you did everything right." But I was still wrestling with things until I realized that what I needed was not just that forgiveness piece.

What I needed was that little bit of self-compassion.

And for me, that involved changing it from "you did everything you could" to: "there's nothing you could have done." And it's a small change, but for me, that opened me up to this, I guess, allowing myself to feel a little bit of compassion and let myself off the hook, you know?

So rather than, I've scrambled around, I've prepared as best I could, to prevent whatever: No. There is *nothing* I could have done. It goes kind of back to that “unmerited favor” that you were talking about. There's nothing I could have done, and it's okay because there's no way I could have prevented it. So, for me, that was a huge kind of reframing that led me into a more self-compassionate place. I just kind of, I made up these exercises for myself or ways to rethink about the thing that I was wrestling with, but do you have particular practices or exercises that people can do to help us cultivate some self-compassion?

**Dr. John Reiman:** Yeah, great, great. We've been talking a lot conceptually and somewhat abstractly about it all, but let's get really granular about it and get into an actual exercise whereby maybe utilizing Neff's three points, we can build some self-compassion when perhaps there isn't any, or we're short on some.

So, I'm going to use as an example something, if I think back on my own leak experience, a belief that I had with some frequency when the pain and the suffering was at its worst, where my self-messaging was, I cannot stand this. I can't tolerate it. I can't do this.

As you're listening to the exercise, think of your own. Pick something that isn't overwhelming, but that is a bit difficult, that creates a slight tension or noticeable sensation in the body. So, the self-referencing belief, or what I told myself at multiple points, is I can't do this. This is too much. And I'd like to go through now a series of phrases designed to help us remember the three aspects of self-compassion that we unpacked earlier.

The first phrase is, "this is a moment of suffering." So I'm thinking to myself, "this is too much." And this exercise involves my meeting that, the first phrase, this is a moment of suffering. So, what I'm doing there is bringing forward a mindful awareness that suffering is present. So this first phrase is noticing the thought. This is a moment of suffering.

**Andi Buchanan:** Like you're identifying it, which takes you out of it for a minute.

**Dr. John Reiman:** Yes, you're naming it. Thank you. There's the exit ramp. Right. So, finding some language that speaks to you, like, I'm having a really hard time with this right now. Or, I'm really stressed out about this. Or, this hurts. We want to look straight at it and name the suffering.

So, the second phrase is, “Suffering is a part of life.” Here, we're reminding ourselves of our common humanity. You know, suffering is and has forever been a part of human life. Find some kind of language that speaks to you, like, it's not abnormal at all to feel this way, or people everywhere are going through similar situations, or I'm not alone, or everyone experiences stuff like this. The details might change, but suffering is inextricably interwoven into being human.

And then the third phrase, “may I be kind to myself in this moment,” or, “may I give myself what I need.” So, to support and bring this kindness to life, and I did this and I've done this with quite a number of my patients over the years with trauma, you might put your hand, one or both, on your heart or some place on your body that feels soothing and comforting. Some people put one or two hands over their heart. Some cup a hand over a fist over the heart. I like that one myself. Some place a hand or hands on the belly or cheeks. Some cradle the face in hands. And, and the hands generate, for many of us, warmth.

And that gentle touch, that intention to let that caring, calming stream come through the fingers can be so helpful. The words, again, may I be kind to myself: maybe find some other language that you'd use in speaking to a beloved family member or friend going through a same situation or something similar.

Like maybe, “I'm here for you.” Now, really, I'm going to say to myself with my on my heart, “I'm here for you”? Even as I do it now, as I'm speaking it, I notice just how strong that is. And it's interesting that self-compassion is being expressed here from a part of me to another part of me. It's not coming from outside. “I'm here for you. It's going to be okay. I care about you. I'm sorry, John, this is so difficult for you.” So I invite you, who are listening, to find anything that expresses your deep wish to be well and free from suffering. And just notice after you've done these, made these phrases, on how the body feels, if there's any different.

Allowing whatever is going on to, for the moment, being exactly as it is, leaves space that resisting and pushing back against it all doesn't. So allowing what is, just to be as it is. Allowing yourself just to be as you are in the moment.

**Andi Buchanan:** I really like that those are three small sentences that have a huge effect. And I particularly like that second phrase, reminding yourself that suffering is a part of life. I feel like sometimes that can be said in a very dismissive way, like, “get used to it, suffering is a part of life, suck it up,” you know? But what you're saying here is actually the opposite of dismissive; what you're talking about is, this suffering actually connects me to everyone else who is alive or whoever has been alive, you know, it, it takes me out of the isolation of my own pain and connects me to a human experience.

**Dr. John Reiman:** Yeah.

**Andi Buchanan:** And I really like that because I feel like it's something that I think we forget about, you know, we want to be happy all the time we want to be well all the time, you know, and of course, it's not like that. But rather than that being something that diminishes what we're experiencing, it's actually a crucial part of being human.

**Dr. John Reiman:** Right, yeah, yeah. I, um, kind of wish across the 14 months of Leakland hell for me that somebody, anybody, would have messaged to me the

importance of self-compassion. If in the um, diagnostic procedures, if anywhere along the line somebody might have said to me, "Yeah, you're having a really hard time right now, and having a really hard time is a part of life. Is there a way where you could give yourself some kindness?" I never heard that, and if I had a wish, it would be that this whole notion of self-compassion could be infused into the, into the entire process.

**Andi Buchanan:** Absolutely. I mean, I feel like with so many things in spinal CSF leak, this is a piece that we as patients have to figure out ourselves. It would be wonderful to have a provider or practitioner be able to help us. Sometimes even just having a doctor believe us can give us that little feeling of validation. But having someone to remind us, like, this is difficult and it is okay and you're allowed to feel terrible.

Uh, I, I will say that I think one of the really incredible experiences that I came away from with having gone through a leak was just the wonderful community that I found of people online experiencing the same thing. I know there are many social media groups, the Foundation also has an Inspire group online, and often it's other patients, other people who are going through the same thing that you are that really help us see what's happening to us more clearly and allow us to be more compassionate to ourselves.

**Dr. John Reiman:** Well said.

**Andi Buchanan:** And now it's time for the part of the show we like to call, okay, now what? So we talked about how challenging self-compassion can be, and Dr. Reiman went through some of these big myths that we all kind of have to combat when we find ourselves resisting self-compassion. And the overarching theme seems to be that all of the myths are somehow about self-compassion being some form of self-indulgence and all of the facts are actually about self-compassion being really a sign of strength and resilience. We also talked about societal and cultural expectations and the challenges of working against perhaps your own upbringing or the values from your family of origin. And then, finally, these three sentences, uh, these three phrases that you can say to yourself in a moment of suffering to help you survive it.

We'll also have the research that Dr. Reiman cited in our show notes. But I think probably one of the most important things that you said here today, Dr. Reiman, is about having self-compassion for ourselves around, perhaps, our lack of self-compassion. Um, I think that's an important thing to take away here: that we can take baby steps towards self-compassion and begin to accept ourselves, begin to forgive ourselves, begin to wish ourselves kindness.

**Dr. John Reiman:** One last point for me, the one thing that for caregivers or family members with whom I interact, I try to tell them that the person leaking needs reminders about self-compassion, that it's okay to be self-compassionate. Because

the reminders are just not woven into the fabric of daily life, given all the reasons we spoke about earlier.

**Andi Buchanan:** One last thing—remember those war time pianos? One final note (see what I did there?): Production of the Victory Verticals continued after the war, all the way up to 1953. After that, the notion of battlefield pianos faded into history, though in 1961, a Steinway upright was included on board the nuclear-powered submarine USS Thomas A. Edison, in the crew’s mess area, for entertainment purposes. It stayed there until the sub was decommissioned in 1983 and now can be seen at the Navy Historical Center in Washington DC. As for the original military pianos, many of them fared poorly in the tropics and other less hospitable locations, but there are a few restored Victory Verticals still around today.

[MUSIC FADES IN]

In this clip you’re hearing now, pianist Artis Wodehouse plays a restored 1943 Victory piano, sharing a tune that soldiers back then might have gathered around to hear someone play after discovering it amongst the sheet music that was delivered along with the piano. A little moment of joy from back home.

Thanks for listening to us today. On our next episode, Dr. Reiman and I will talk about being self-asserting in leakland.

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