SELF-COMPASSION FOR CAREGIVERS – Dr. Kristin Neff

• Please bring to mind someone you are caring for who can exhaust you or frustrate you, or someone who suffers with whom you feel sympathy. For this introductory exercise, please choose someone who is not your child, as this can be a more complicated dynamic. See the person clearly in your mind and feel the struggle in your own body.

• Now please listen carefully to these words, letting them gently roll through your mind:

*Everyone is on his or her own life journey. I am not the cause of this person’s suffering, nor is it entirely within my power to make it go away, even though I wish I could Moments like this are difficult to bear, yet I may still try to help if I can.*

• Now, aware of the stress you are carrying in your body, inhaling fully and deeply, drawing compassion inside your body and filling every cell with compassion. Letting yourself be soothed by inhaling deeply, and by giving yourself the compassion you need when you experience discomfort.

• As you exhale, sending out compassion to the other person who is associated with your discomfort, or exhaling compassion to living beings in general.

• Continue breathing compassion in and out, letting your body gradually find a natural, relaxed breathing rhythm. Breathing in for yourself and out for the other. *One for me, one for you.*

• Occasionally scanning your inner landscape for any distress and respond by inhaling compassion for yourself and exhaling compassion for the person who needs it. If you find that you, or the other person, needs extra compassion, feel free to focus your breath more in that direction.

• Noticing the gentle rocking motion of your body as you breathe, like the tides flowing in and out on an ocean of compassion. A limitless ocean that embraces all suffering.

• And listening to these words once again:

*Everyone is on his or her own life journey. I am not the cause of this person’s suffering, nor is it entirely within my power to make it go away, even though I wish I could Moments like this are difficult to bear, yet I may still try to help if I can.*

• Slowly open your eyes.