

# Surfing the Waves of Adolescence: Findings from a Mindful Self-Compassion Program for Teens



KAREN BLUTH, PHD  
TORY EISENLOHR-MOUL, PHD  
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# Disclosure

- ▶ I own the intellectual property rights to *Making Friends with Yourself: A Mindful Self-Compassion Program for Teens*, which is the program that I will be discussing.

# Challenges of Adolescence

- ▶ 27% self-report HIGH levels of stress during school year; 13% during summer
- ▶ 14.3% of 13-18 year olds experience a mood disorder
- ▶ 31.9% experience an anxiety disorder
- ▶ 19.1% diagnosed with a behavior disorder
- ▶ 11.4% have a substance use disorder
  
- ▶ Overall, 22.2% have severe impairment or distress

(Merikangas et al., 2010;  
American Psychological Association, 2014)



# Mindfulness

Paying **attention** in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and **nonjudgmentally**

(Kabat-Zinn, 1994)



# Self-compassion

At times of suffering, caring for ourselves the way we would care for a good friend.

(Neff, 2003)





# Mindfulness and Youth

Most improvements with:

- ▶ Psychological symptoms
- ▶ Clinical samples

(Zoogman et al., 2014)

- ▶ Stress resilience
- ▶ Cognitive performance

(Zenner et al., 2014)



# Self-compassion and Youth

## Inverse Associations:

- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Perceived stress
- ▶ Negative affect

## Positive Associations:

- ▶ Life satisfaction
- ▶ Self esteem



Protective effect against stress & challenges of adolescence.

(Barry et al., 2015; Bluth & Blanton, 2014; Neff & McGehee, 2010; Tanaka, et al., 2011; Zeller, Yuval, Nitzan-Assayag, & Bernstein, 2015)



# Mindful Self-Compassion 8-week course:

Lower:

- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Stress

Greater:

- ▶ Life Satisfaction
- ▶ Social connectedness
- ▶ Compassion for others
- ▶ Happiness



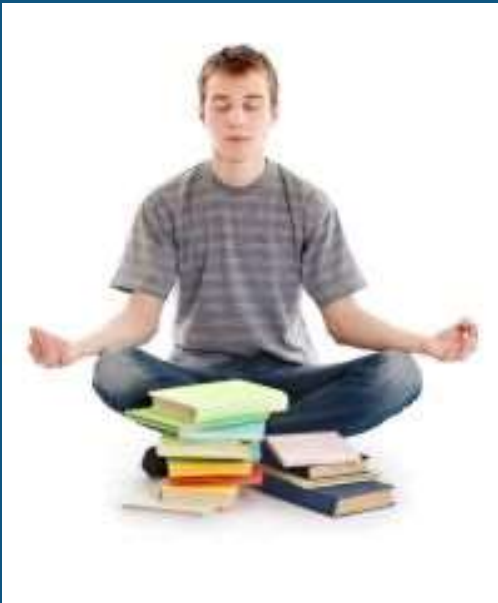
[www.centerformsc.org](http://www.centerformsc.org)

# Making Friends with Yourself: A Mindful Self-Compassion Program for Adolescents

- ▶ Adapted from Neff & Germer adult Mindful Self-Compassion program
- ▶ Weekly for 6 weeks (initially), 1.5 hours per week
- ▶ Included discussion, activities and practices



# Pilot study findings



- ▶ Feasible and acceptable
- ▶ Moderate effect sizes for change in perceived stress, depression, anxiety and negative affect
- ▶ Need for more:
  - ▶ mindfulness
  - ▶ movement
  - ▶ accessibility to practices

# The Present Study



# MFY program

- ▶ 8 weeks, 1.5 hrs/session
- ▶ Mindful art
- ▶ Mindful movement
- ▶ Practices sent to participants in MP3 files



# Hypotheses

1. Participants will improve in:

- ▶ Depressive symptoms
- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Perceived stress
- ▶ Resilience
- ▶ Curiosity & Exploration
- ▶ Gratitude

2. Mindfulness & self-compassion will co-vary with outcomes.



# Participants



- ▶ Age 11-17
- ▶ 53% female, 40% male, 3% unsure at this time
- ▶ 92% Caucasian, 2% African American, 6% other
- ▶ 71% of mothers and 65% of fathers had masters, doctorate, or professional degrees

# Procedure

- ▶ Recruited through electronic fliers in community and listservs
- ▶ Eligibility determined by participation in class
- ▶ Completed assent & consent forms
- ▶ Pre, Post and 6-week follow-up
- ▶ Participants received \$25 gift card for each online survey completed



# Outcome Measures

- ▶ Children and Adolescent Mindfulness Measure (Greco et al., 2011)
- ▶ Self-Compassion Scale-short form (Raes et al., 2011)
- ▶ Mood and Feelings Questionnaire-short form (Angold et al., 1995)
- ▶ Spielberger Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger et al., 1983)
- ▶ Perceived Stress Scale – 10 item (Cohen et al., 1983)
- ▶ Gratitude Questionnaire- Youth Version (Froh, et al., 2011)
- ▶ Curiosity & Exploration II (Kashdan et al., 2009)
- ▶ Brief Resilience Questionnaire (Smith et al., 2008)

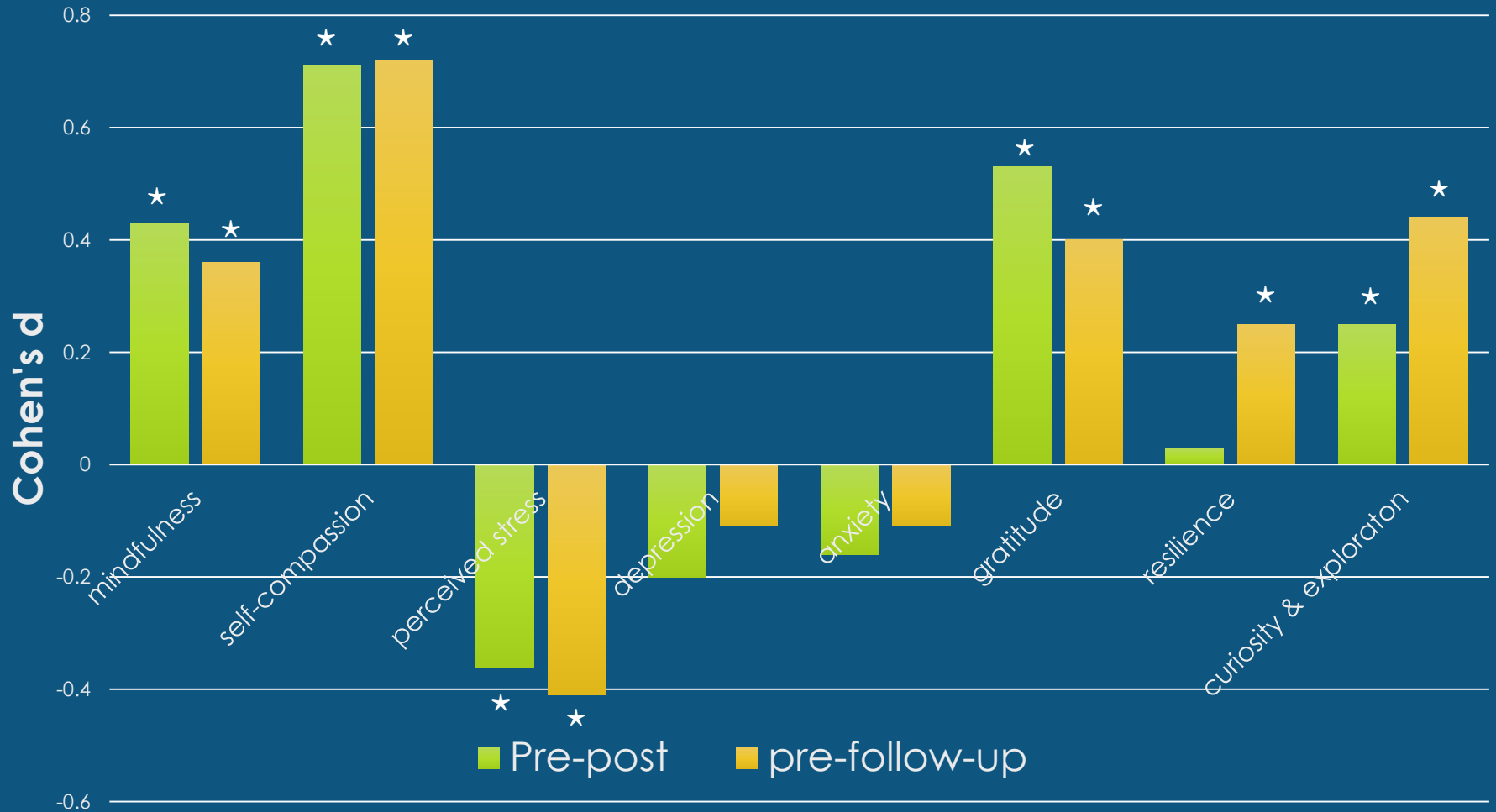
# Class Sessions

- ▶ 1. Discovering Mindful Self-Compassion
- ▶ 2. Mindfulness: Paying Attention On Purpose
- ▶ 3. Lovingkindness
- ▶ 4. Self-Compassion
- ▶ 5. Self-Esteem & Self-Compassion
- ▶ 6. Living Deeply
- ▶ 7. Working with Difficult Emotions
- ▶ 8. Embracing Your Life - Gratitude and Self-Appreciation

An open red envelope is shown from a top-down perspective, revealing its tan-colored interior. A white rectangular label is placed inside the envelope, featuring the text "THE RESULTS ARE IN..." in a bold, blue, serif font. The envelope is set against a plain white background.

**THE RESULTS  
ARE IN...**

# Main Effects on Outcomes



# Co-variation of Mindfulness & Self-Compassion

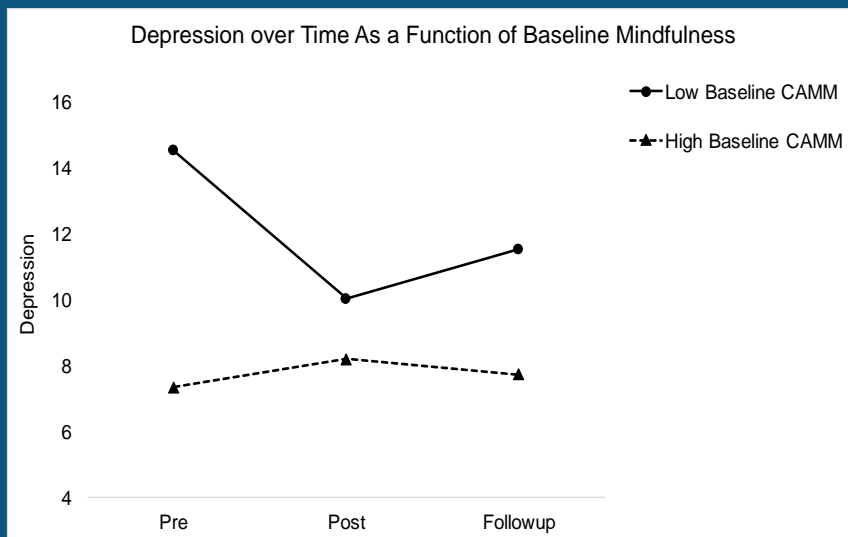
**Mindfulness** co-varied with perceived stress, depressive symptoms, anxiety



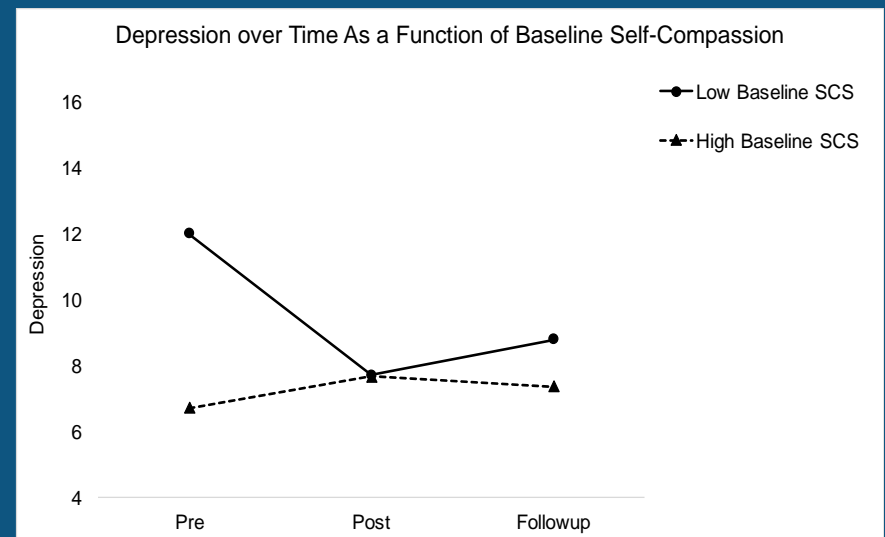
**Self-compassion** co-varied with perceived stress, depressive symptoms, resilience, curiosity & exploration

# Change in Depression as a Function of Baseline Variables

## Baseline mindfulness



## Baseline self-compassion



# Discussion

- ▶ MFY may be effective for:
  - ▶ lowering stress (possibly lowering depression & anxiety)
  - ▶ building resilience
  - ▶ Increasing positive risk-taking
  
- ▶ Likely more effective for those lower in mindfulness & self-compassion at baseline



# Future Directions

- ▶ Active control
- ▶ Larger and more diverse sample
- ▶ Longer follow-up
- ▶ All teens, not just those who self-select into program



- R34: teens with depressive symptoms
- Teens with gender dysphoria
- Teens with eating disorders
- Teens with severe anhedonia via brain scans



# MFY in the world



Thank you!