

# Reducing and Preventing Compassion Fatigue in Nurses Through Mindful-Self Compassion Practices

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## Introduction and Background

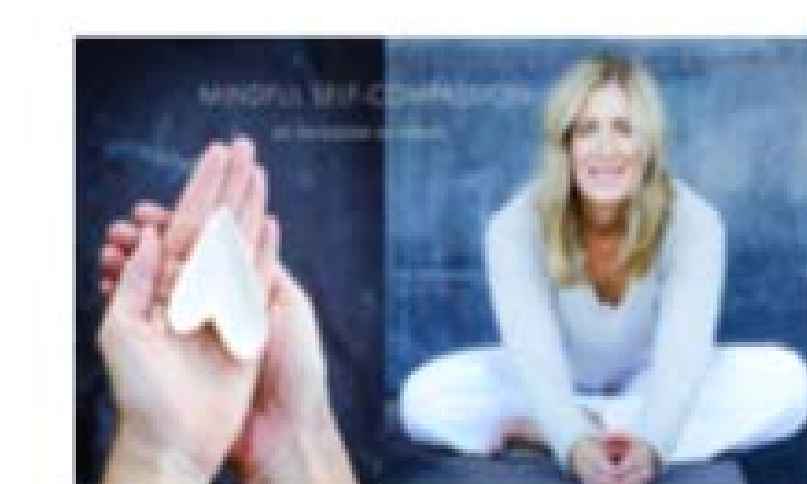
- **Healthy work environments** that support the well-being of nurses have been recognized by the American Nurses Association and the American Association of Critical Care Nurses as an important issue in contemporary nursing<sup>1</sup>.
- Critical care nurses are at increased **risk for compassion fatigue (CF)**, compounded by COVID-19 pandemic<sup>2</sup>.
- Compassion fatigue contributes to **diminished caring behaviors, increased turnover, and impaired coping abilities** among nurses<sup>2</sup>.
- Increased levels of **self-compassion (SC)** and **mindful self-compassion (MSC) training** are associated with **reduced measures of compassion fatigue**<sup>3,4</sup>.
- Nurses working within a **medical-oncology intensive care unit (ICU)** at a large academic medical center during the **COVID-19 pandemic** were identified as being at risk for compassion fatigue.

## Purpose and Aims

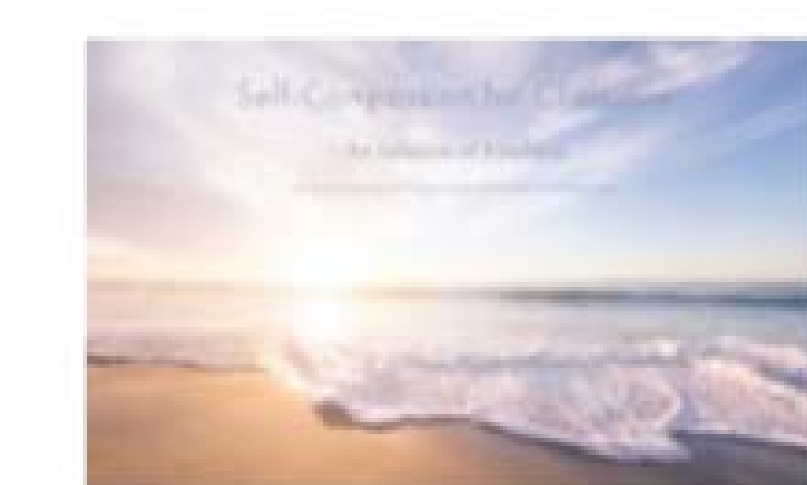
- The purpose of this DNP scholarly project was to **increase measures of SC and reduce levels of CF** among medical-oncology ICU nurses through **brief, unit-based MSC practices** delivered over 30 days.
- **Aim 1:** Increased levels of SC among nurses, as measured by the **Self-Compassion Short Form (SC-SF)**.
- **Aim 2:** Decreased levels of CF among nurses, as measured by **Compassion Fatigue – Short Scale (CF – Short Scale)**.

## Methods

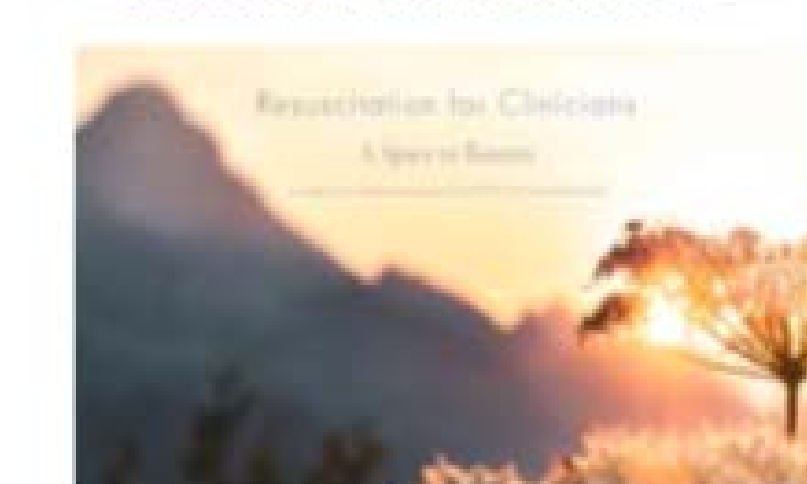
- **Quality-improvement** project with a longitudinal single-group pre/post study design.
- Informed by an **integrative review on the relationship between CF and SC among nurses**.
- **Five-minute audio practices** developed using key concepts from **Neff's Theory of SC and MSC training**, with a **unique emphasis on healthcare experiences**<sup>5</sup>.
- **Mindful self-compassion practices** offered in-person to all staff **during the night and day shift** over 30 days.
- **Flip cards with QR code links** to the practices placed in common staff areas to support sustainable access to the practices.
- **Pre, post, and 30-day post surveys** completed by eligible nurses included SC-SF, CF-Short Scale, and open-ended questions about nurses' experiences.
- Related-samples **Wilcoxon Signed Rank non-parametric test** for statistical analysis of pre/post SC and CF scores.
- **Friedman non-parametric test** for statistical significance of SC and CF scores at all three intervals of measurement.



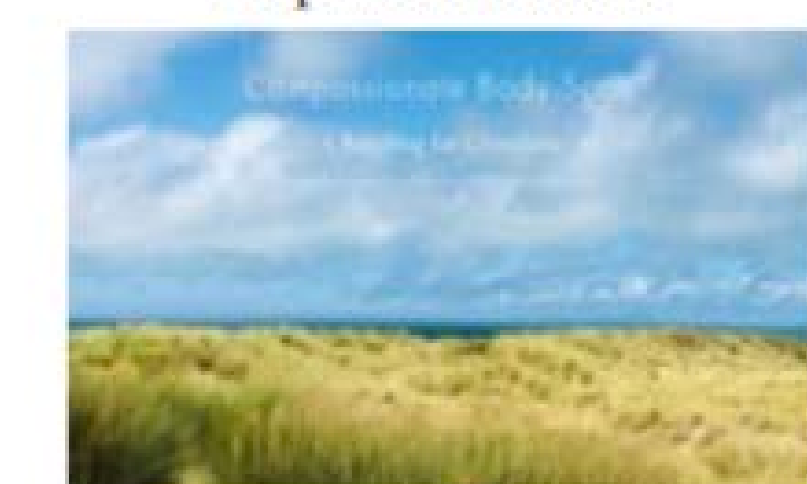
Mindful Self-Compassion Practices Introduction



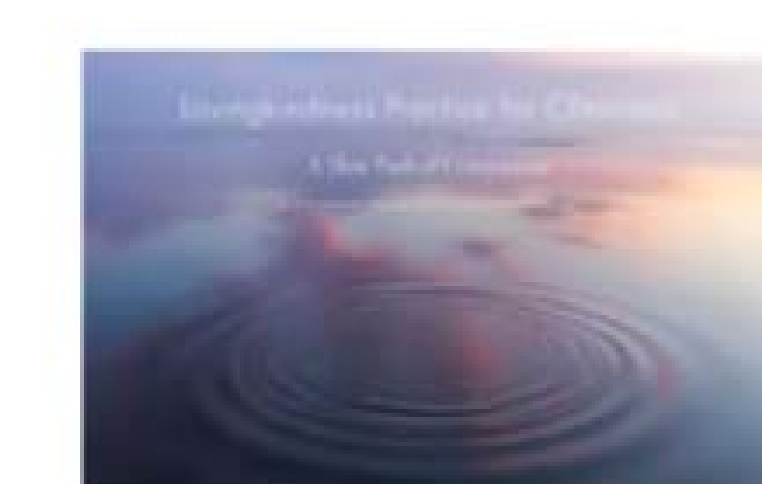
Self-Compassion for Clinicians An Infusion of Kindness



Resuscitation for Clinicians A Space to Restore



A Compassionate Body Scan A Bair Hug for Clinicians



Lovingkindness Practice for Clinicians A Slow Push of Compassion



Embracing the Good Infusing the Moment with Gratitude



Pacing the Heart A Rhythm of Calm



Compassionate Movement A Volume Expander for Clinicians

- 47 pre-survey responses
- 12 paired pre/post responses
- 6 matched responses for all three surveys
- Staff participated in intervention 90 times
- 75% of participants were night shift nurses
- Intervention accessed via QR code 54 times

## Results

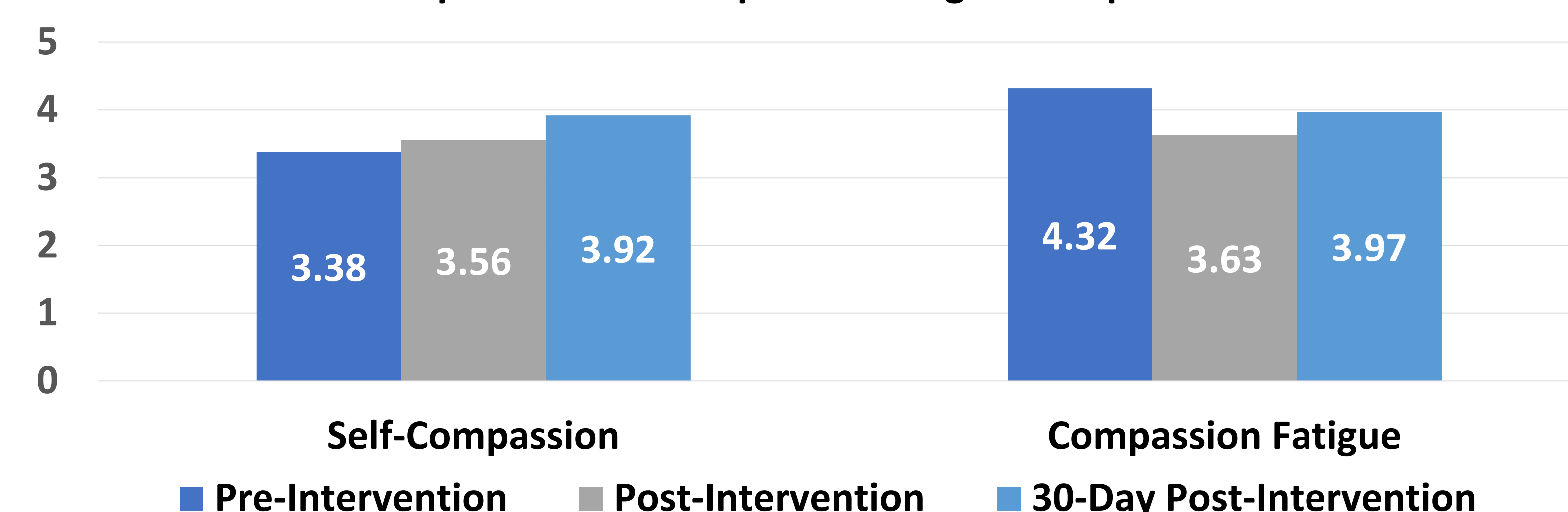
### Aim 1: Self-Compassion

- Decrease in SC-SF scores among paired pre/post test respondents (N=12) with pre-intervention mean score of 3.24 and post-intervention mean score of 3.10 (p = .969); related to outlier scores for two survey participants with little or no participation in the intervention.
- **Sustained increase in SC-SF scores for matched responses at all three periods of measurement** (N=6) with pre-intervention mean score of 3.38, post-intervention mean score of 3.56, and 30-day post-intervention mean score of 3.92 (p = .115).

### Aim 2: Compassion Fatigue

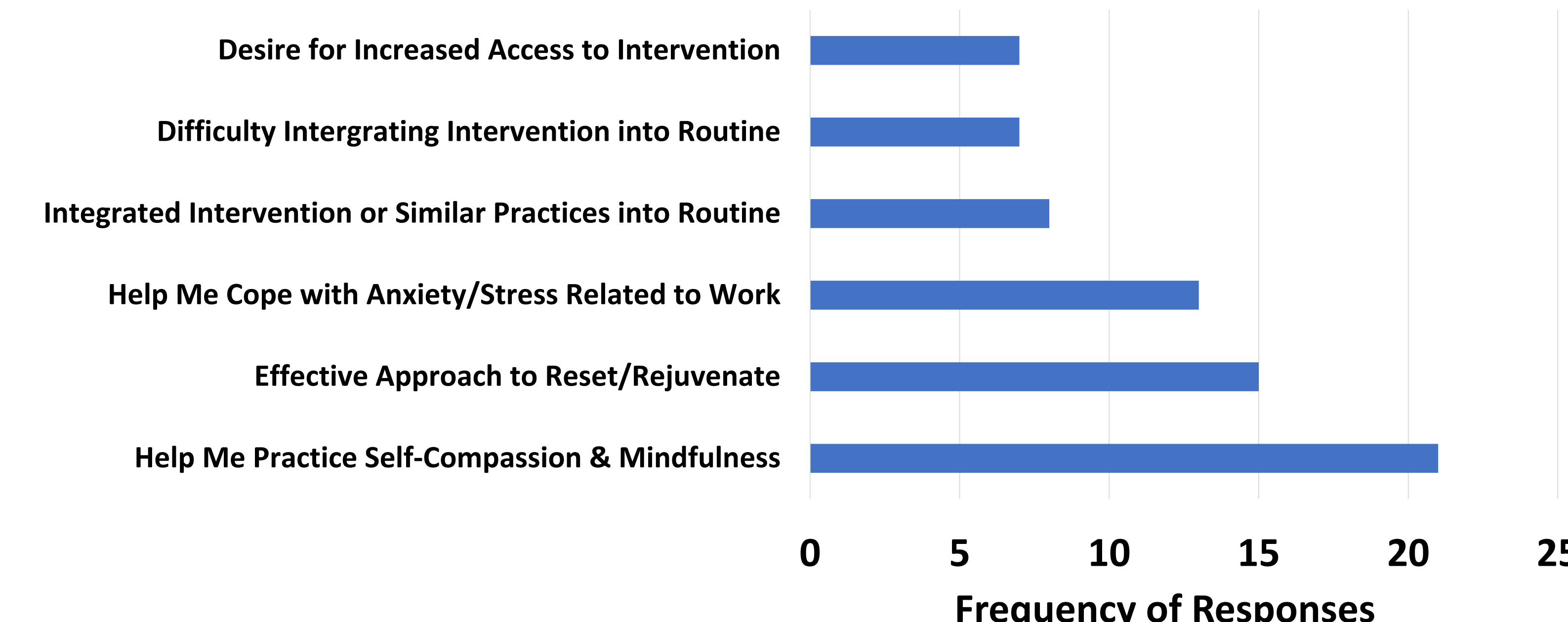
- Decrease in CF-Short Scale scores among paired pre/post test responses (N=12) with pre-intervention mean score of 4.96 and post-intervention mean score of 4.44 (p = .126).
- **Sustained decrease in CF from pre to 30-day post intervention for matched responses at all three periods of measurement** (N=6) with pre-intervention mean score of 4.32, post-intervention mean score of 3.63, and 30-day post-intervention mean score of 3.97 (p = .135).

Self-Compassion and Compassion Fatigue Group Mean Scores



Note: Data shown for matched responses at all three periods of measurement (N=6).

### Nurses' Impressions and Experiences of Mindful Self-Compassion Practice Intervention



### Selected Responses from Nurses: Impact of the the MSC Practice Intervention

- "They are a nice way to slow down and breath during my shifts"
- "They allowed me to take a deep breath and step away from work for a minute to care for myself lovingly."
- "They reminded me to slow down and take time for myself ...instead of powering through and putting my patients' needs always before my own."
- "They really help to decrease my stress level and reset, especially during a tough shift."

## Demographics

Pre/Post Survey Participants	(N = 12)
Age Category, n (%)	5 (42)
18-29 years	4 (33)
30-39 years	2 (17)
40-49 years	1 (8)
50-64 years	
Gender Identity, n (%)	3 (25.0)
Male	9 (75.0)
Female	
Hispanic/Latino Ethnicity, n (%)	2 (17)
Yes	10 (83)
No	
Race, n (%)	2 (17)
Asian, Asian-American	10 (83)
White, Caucasian	

## Conclusions

- Clinical leaders and healthcare organizations may find brief MSC practices to be an **ideal approach to reducing CF and supporting the wellbeing of caregivers**.
- **Further research is necessary to determine the minimum amount of MSC practice required** to produce a significant impact on levels of CF and SC among nurses
- Future QI initiatives should ensure the MSC intervention is delivered with a **focus on feasibility and accessibility** to support nurses' participation.
- **Try it** : Scan the QR code and experience 5 minutes of mindful self-compassion practice



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## Dissemination

- This QI project was selected for poster presentation at the National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists (NACNS) annual conference in 2021.
- This project will be submitted for poster presentation at the American Association of Critical Care Nurses (AACN) National Teaching Institute (NTI) 2022 conference.
- This project may be published within a peer-reviewed journal.

## Citations

1. American Nurses Association. (2021). Well-being initiative. <https://www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/work-environment/health-safety/disaster-preparedness/coronavirus/what-you-need-to-know/the-well-being-initiative/>
2. Alharbi, Jackson, & Usher (2020). The potential for COVID-19 to contribute to compassion fatigue in critical care nurses. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 29 (15-16), 1-3. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.15314>
3. Delaney, M. C. (2018). Caring for the caregivers: Evaluation of the effect of an eight-week pilot mindful self-compassion (MSC) training program on nurses' compassion fatigue and resilience. *PLoS One*, 13(11). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0207261>
4. Regan, T. A. (2017). Effect of mindfulness and self-compassion training on stress and compassion fatigue in nurses [Doctoral dissertation, Saybrook University] ProQuest LLC.
5. Germer, C., & Neff, K. (2019). *Teaching the mindful self-compassion program: A guide for professionals*. The Guilford Press.