



The Athena Wellness Podcast
Episode 216 – Reimagining Midlife Wellness, Part III – Self-Compassion
August 9, 2023

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[00:00:05] Kathy Robinson: Welcome to The Athena Wellness Podcast, the show that invites you to take a seat around the community fire and listen to stories that inspire. I'm your host, Kathy Robinson, author, coach and founder of Athena Wellness, a company that's dedicated to supporting you on your journey to live more wholeheartedly.

[00:00:30] Kathy: Hello and welcome friends. Thanks so much for joining me for this shortened Wellness Wednesday episode, a little midweek boost to help keep your Warrior Vibe high.

Today's show is a Walking The Talk vancast, a look behind the scenes into what I'm learning and working through along with a takeaway for you. These portable episodes are informal and casual, recorded on the go from wherever I happen to be at the time. And today, I'm recording this at home on a rainy summer day.

[00:01:03] Today we'll continue with the third installment of our multi-part series on Reimagining Midlife Wellness. This series is focusing on the importance of staying well as we get older, especially in times of transition.



These talks will provide a framework to help you define what matters most to you at this stage of your life and ways to continue to take positive action to be well.

Here's what we've discussed so far:

- **Part I:** We talked about the difference between wellness and well-being, the essential elements of well-being, and what can get in the way of our natural state of wellness. And then we ended with a series of questions for you to explore regarding your current state of well-being and how you're viewing the journey ahead.
- **Part II:** We explored the five Athena Principles, along with tools and practices that you can use to enhance your wellness and well-being. I also provided a free overview of the Principles and an action plan that you can download at [athenawellness.com/action plan](https://athenawellness.com/action-plan). And I'll put a link to that in the show notes.

Today we're going to be exploring the first Athena Principle, which is self-compassion, and that's defined as the care for one's own well-being in the form of self-acceptance and nurturing support. It's the ability to accept our imperfections and be kind and understanding toward ourselves, especially during times of transition.

[00:02:41] The benefits of self-compassion are broad. Research has shown it can improve self worth, motivation, body image, and overall happiness. People who have self-compassion practices develop the ability to administer kindness to themselves as soon as they recognize they're hurting, have more compassion toward others, and increase their resilience in challenging times.



When we enter midlife, self-compassion becomes critically important. We face a new slate of challenges, such as career changes, an empty nest, shifts in relationships, changes to our level of wellness, and confronting our own mortality. This can result in increased levels of self-doubt, anxiety and even depression.

But we can support ourselves by creating a strong support system that includes wellness practices, including ways to mindfully recognize when we're being self-critical and judgmental and then using those experiences as a way to practice self-compassion.

As a wellness tool, self-compassion can help us forgive ourselves for our human shortcomings, feel less alone as we recognize these feelings are shared by others, and become more resilient as we accept our challenges without judgment, making it easier to work through them. And over time, you'll notice increased positivity and optimism, better relationships with yourself and others, and healthier decisions that lead to a more fulfilling life.

[00:04:27] I'll give you a few ideas on how to practice self-compassion and then share an exercise that has been key for me over these last few weeks. First, three general ideas that you can customize to fit your current situation.

1. **Mindful thoughts.** Notice when unconstructive or negative thoughts arise during the day and try to counter them by looking at all aspects of the situation.



2. **Kind self-talk.** When self-criticism begins to overtake your inner talk track, try a more understanding approach and talk to yourself as you would a friend in need.
3. **Supportive action.** When you feel overwhelmed or stressed, boost your self-compassion by doing something kind for yourself, such as taking a walk, spending time in nature, reading, or taking a warm bath.

Self-care practices are like deposits in the bank. They're reserved resources that you can build and draw upon when needed. And it's been said that what you practice grows stronger in your life.

[00:05:43] I'd like to share a recent story that leads to a takeaway for you. Over these last few weeks, our family has been caring for a family member 24/7. Thankfully, there are three of us who are sharing this responsibility. But we're entering a fourth week of care that equates to 24 hours on and 48 hours off for each of us before repeating the cycle.

What's interesting for me as I witness myself as a caregiver is how vital Mindful Self-Compassion practices have been over this past month, from using the practice of R.A.I.N. that I've shared in the past to practicing Metta meditation while providing care for my loved one.

But how do caregivers, and those who are experiencing other types of transitions, care for themselves? There's a Mindful Self-Compassion practice that I found very helpful. And it's the practice of asking, "What do I need in this moment?" This



question can help us connect with our own needs and care for ourselves in a compassionate way.

When we ask ourselves the question, “What do I need in this moment?” we’re not judging or criticizing ourselves. Rather, we’re trying to understand what we’re feeling and what will truly soothe us.

The answers will vary depending on your personal situation, but here are some examples. The answer may be to take a break, to talk to somebody, to set boundaries, communicate needs, be patient with yourself, give yourself time to heal, rest, move your body, or do something you find enjoyable.

[00:07:35] While the answer may vary, it’s important to ask the question and then be willing to listen and take action on what you learn. When I came home from my 24-hour caregiving shift yesterday, I did what I usually do – prepare for the next shift. That means doing all the things needed to keep my household and business running smoothly while I’m away.

Midway through the afternoon, I stopped and I asked myself, “What do you need in this moment?” And the answer – to sit in the warm sun. So that’s what I did. And I promptly fell asleep before moving to the shade to contemplate what I needed in the near term.

As a result, I made some adjustments to allow me to focus on the essentials. I cleared my professional calendar as much as possible and made some changes to my physical wellness routine.



I'm usually resolute on what I eat and how I move my body. But it's clear that I need to adjust my expectations to do the best I can during this time. This means replacing my demanding CrossFit routine with a substitute that I call CrossFit at Home, where I can adjust the intensity of my workout to my energy level each time. I'm also eating as healthy as I can without adding additional stress to my daily routines.

Basically, I gave myself permission. I'll do my best each day to not lose ground so I can jump back in when the time is right. I also plan to take a week-long trip in my van when all of this is brought to conclusion, which gives me something to look forward to.

[00:09:24] Now to your takeaway. Here are the steps for you to create your own Mindful Self-Compassion practice around the question, "What do I need in this moment?"

1. Find a quiet place where you'll be undisturbed for about 15 minutes.
2. Sit comfortably with your eyes closed and take a few deep breaths to relax.
3. When you feel ready, bring your attention to your thoughts and emotions.
4. Try to name how you're feeling. Perhaps it's overwhelmed, sad, angry, uncertain, or depleted.
5. With that feeling in mind, ask yourself, "What do I need in this moment?"
6. Make a mental note as things come up for you. Perhaps you need to take a break, treat yourself with more kindness, or let go of an outdated expectation.



7. When an answer resonates with you, spend a few minutes determining what you'll do and how.
8. Take a few deep breaths, open your eyes, and then gift yourself with what you need most in this moment.

[00:10:46] I hope this session helped you see how powerful self-compassion can be and how it can help you cope with the challenges of midlife as you learn to accept yourself as you are, where you are, and treat yourself with the same kindness and understanding that you would treat others.

With Mindful Self-Compassion practices in your wellness toolkit, you'll navigate the midlife territory ahead with grace and relax into the journey of living wholeheartedly.

Thank you for listening to this series. And remember, you can download the *The Athena Principles* overview at athenawellness.com/action_plan to help you chart your unique path.

I'll be back next time with the fourth installment of Reimagining Midlife Wellness. Until then, be well.

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[00:11:41] Kathy: Thank you so much for joining me today. I know there are many ways you can spend your time. Thank you for choosing to spend it with me. Until our paths cross again, be kind to yourself and show your Warrior Spirit some love.



If you know anyone who could benefit from today's episode, please pass it on. And many thanks for supporting the show by subscribing and leaving a review. It means a lot and it helps others find their way to our circle.

If you'd like to access the show notes, have a question you'd like addressed on a future episode, or would like a transcript of this episode, visit www.AthenaWellness.com/podcast.

Until next time, be well!

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[00:12:43] [END OF AUDIO]