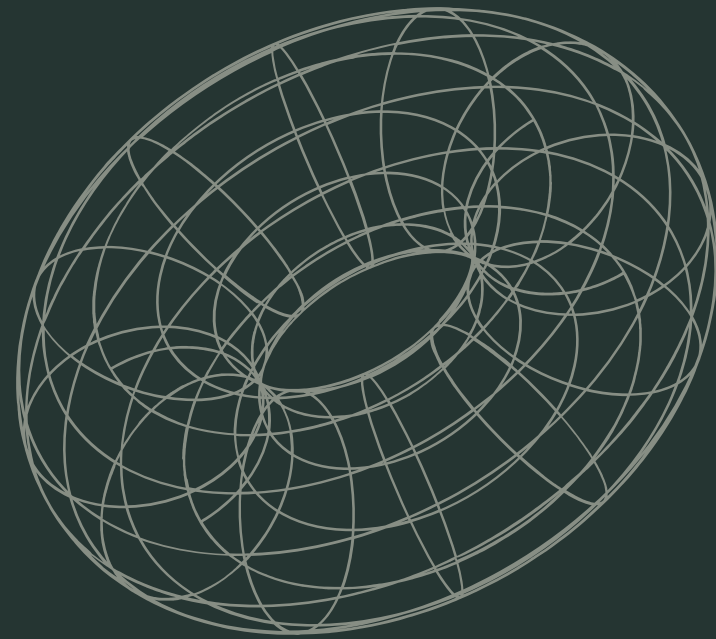




# **MINDFUL SELF-COMPASSION IN DANCE EDUCATION**

Gerald Casel

# Understanding Challenges in Dance Training



In the demanding world of dance training, students face high expectations and self-criticism. This proposal highlights the importance of mindful self-compassion as a means to foster resilience and self-efficacy to support dancers through their journey

In a culture where people are often more compassionate to others than to themselves, this initiative seeks to bridge that gap, promoting self-compassion as a vital component of holistic dance education.

# Gerald Casel (he/they/siya)

**Pilipinx**  
**Short**  
**Brown-skinned**  
**Graying hair**  
**Queer**

**Queer**  
**First generation**  
**Immigrant**  
**Administrator**  
**Lover of travel**

**Dancing  
Around  
Race:  
Whiteness in  
Higher  
Education**



# Systems thinking approach

Circular and interconnected nature of the world

Can be used as a diagnostic tool

Understanding problems more thoroughly before acting

Requires curiosity, clarity, compassion, and courage

Often multiple interventions to a problem

Reinforces mutual understanding

Develops shared aspirations

Continuous communication

Shared measurements to track qualitative and quantitative data

**what can a BFA in Dance do for me?**

**parental pressures**

**climate crisis**

**apathy**

**economy**

**political hellscape**

**why should I even  
go to school?**

**COVID**

**accountability**


**attendance**

**“Our discomfort arises from all of our efforts to put ground under our feet, to realize our dream of constant okayness.”**

**– Pema Chodron (on groundlessness)**



**Buddhist philosophy**  
**Kristen Neff**  
**Christopher Germer**



“Self-compassion is a powerful source of resilience that encourages us to face challenges with grace and understanding, fostering growth within ourselves and our communities.”

Kristin Neff

# FOUR IMMEASURABLES

Loving Kindness

Compassion

Sympathetic Joy

Equanimity

# Self-Compassion

01

**Self-Kindness** encourages dancers to adopt a gentle perspective rather than harsh self-criticism.

02

**Mindfulness** techniques help dancers stay present, avoiding negative thought patterns that hinder performance.

03

**Common Humanity** fosters a sense of connectedness, combating feelings of isolation within the dance community.

# WHAT'S THE OPPOSITE OF SELF- COMPASSION?



**Self-Kindness (vs. Self-Criticism)**



**Mindfulness (vs. Rumination)**



**Common Humanity (vs. Isolation)**

# SELF-KINDNESS IN DANCE TRAINING

## Replace Self-Criticism

Encouraging dancers to replace harsh self-judgment with a gentle and understanding attitude

## Embrace Mindfulness

Teaching mindfulness techniques to stay present and avoid becoming entangled in negative thought patterns

## Foster Common Humanity

Fostering a sense of connectedness and shared experience, combating feelings of isolation.

# MINDFULNESS TECHNIQUES FOR DANCERS

Exploring ways to stay present and focused in training.

## **Breathing Exercises**

Fostering relaxation and awareness through controlled breathing.

## **Integrating Somatics**

Promoting connections to somatic practices to enhance self-awareness. Bartenieff, BMC, Klein, Alexander Technique, Open Source Forms, Tai Chi, etc.

## **Movement Meditation**

Integrating mindfulness into dance practice for greater presence. Contemplative Dance Practice. Viewpoints, Somatics (moving slowly enough to feel mind and body integrating).



# FOSTERING CONNECTION IN DANCE

Building a supportive community  
through shared experiences

## Shared Experiences


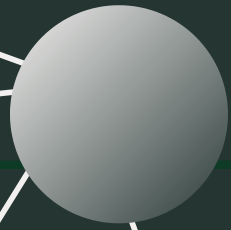
Encouraging dancers to connect through their common struggles and journeys.

## Reducing Isolation

Promoting a sense of belonging to combat feelings of loneliness.

## Supportive Environment

Creating a nurturing space where dancers feel valued and understood.



# CONTAINER BUILDING

**What do you need to fully show up?**

**What gets in the way?**

**What does support look like?**



thichnhathanh 



“When we stop to breathe, we’re not wasting time. Western capitalist civilization says “Time is money” and that we should use our time to make money. We can’t afford to stop and breathe or enjoy a walk or marvel at the setting sun. We cannot afford to lose time. But time is more precious than money. Time is life. Coming back to our breathing and becoming aware that we have a wonderful body— this is life.

**Thich Nhat Hanh**, *The Art of Living*  
[@thichnhathanh](#)