

An Autism-Informed Approach to Mindfulness

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AutismONTARIO

camh | Azrieli Adult
Neurodevelopmental Centre

Introductions Sue Hutton

Why I'm here?

Why mindfulness
for neurodiversity?



Introductions Lee Steel

Why I'm here?

Why mindfulness
for caregivers?



Who's Here Today

Poll #1: Who are you?

1. Autistic adult
2. Caregivers/Family
3. Helping Professional

Poll #2: Mindfulness experience

1. None – all new to me!
2. A little – tried it a couple times
3. Medium - I've done some courses
4. Lots – Meditated many years



What We'll Do Together



- Experience some Accessible Mindfulness Practices – for caregivers, staff, autistic adults
- Talk about Making Mindfulness Accessible
- Talk about our Mindfulness Research at CAMH
- Q & A



Let's Arrive in the Present Moment Together



What is Mindfulness!?

Mindfulness is Many Things

- A path of present moment awareness
- Sound – ocean breathing
- Thought watching – getting distance from challenging thoughts
- Movement – lotus breath/figure 8 breath
- Art – move pen with breath
- Walking/Moving – book on head
- Belly – Hand or object on the belly rising and falling
- Flashlight on Sensation – feeling direct body sensations
- Palm Breathing – exhale on palm



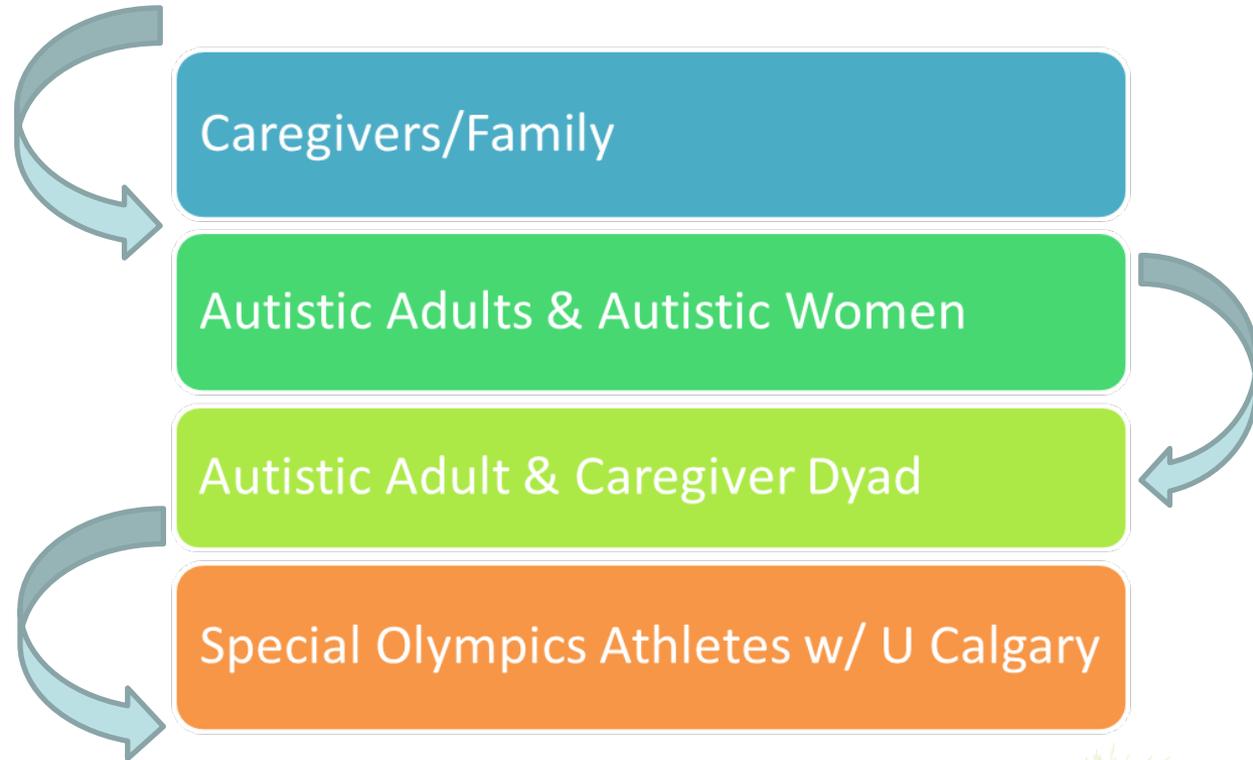
How our Research Began

It all started with the caregivers - 2016
Dr. Yona Lunsky and the CAMH Azrieli Adult
Neurodevelopmental Centre



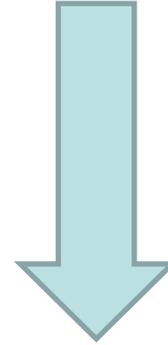
Mindfulness Research Groups at Azrieli

**Our CAMH Azrieli
Mindfulness
Research Groups
that keep building**

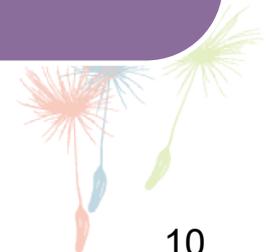


Building Capacity for More to Offer Groups

**Now working
to support
clinical staff
to cultivate
skills and
offer groups**



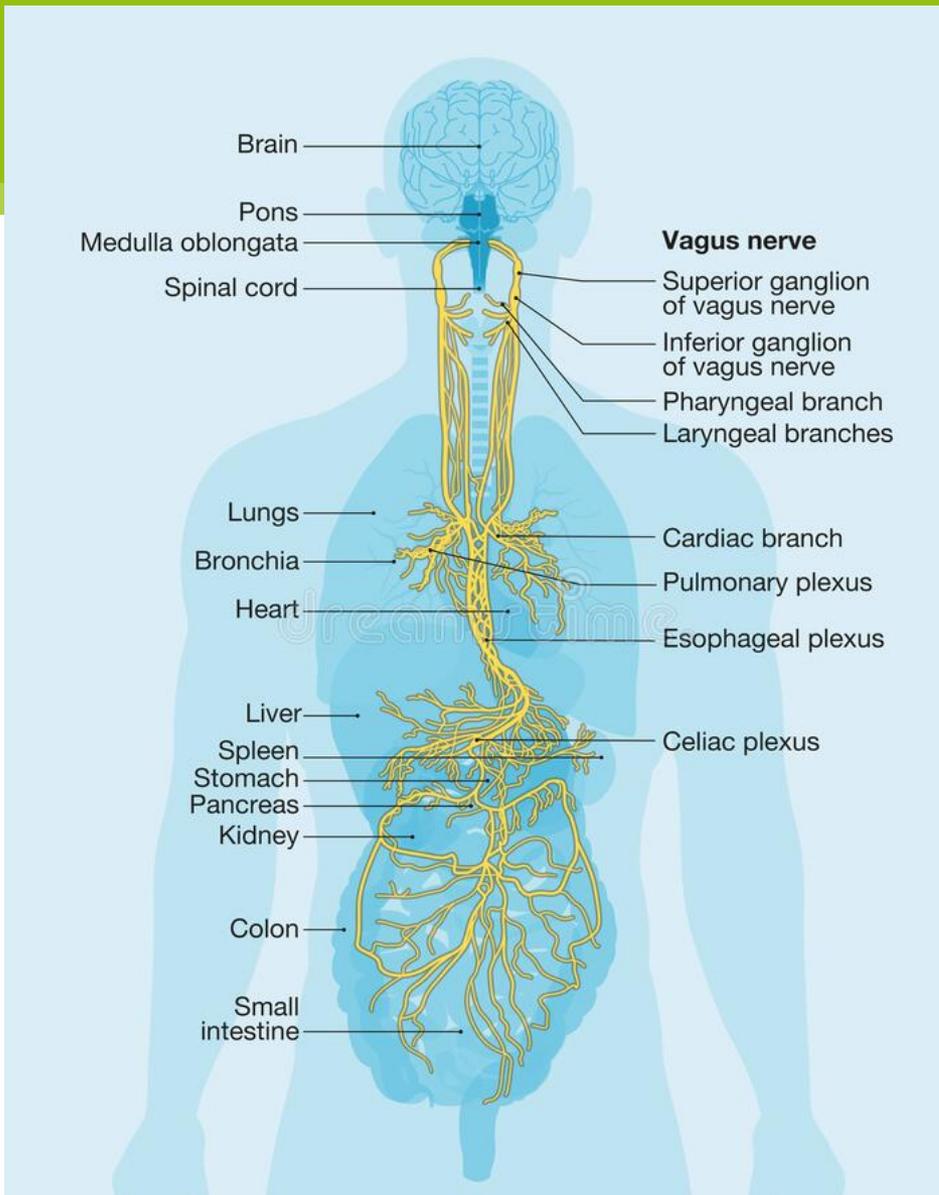
Staff interested
in learning
Mindfulness





Just Three Breaths – Vagus Nerve





Vagus Nerve Breathing

Stimulate Calm Response

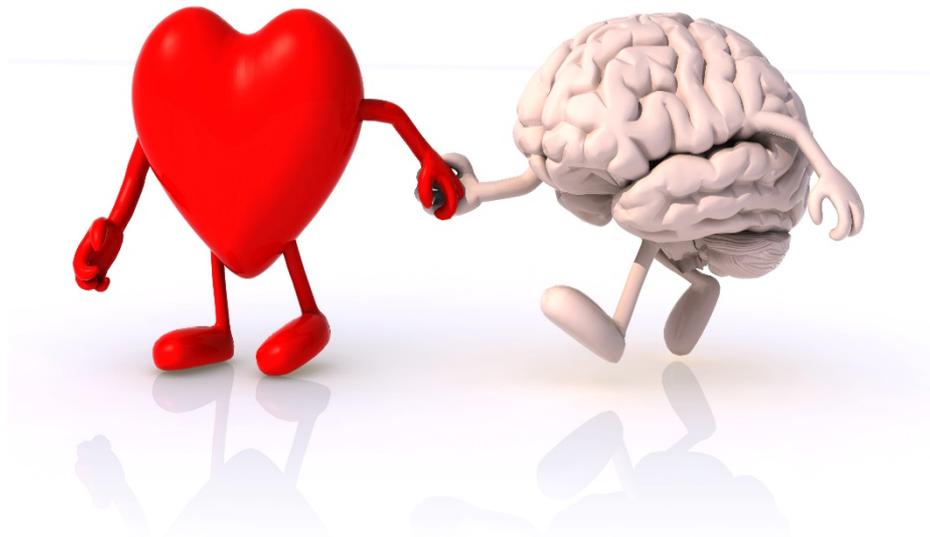




Just Three Breaths – Vagus Nerve



Lee Steel



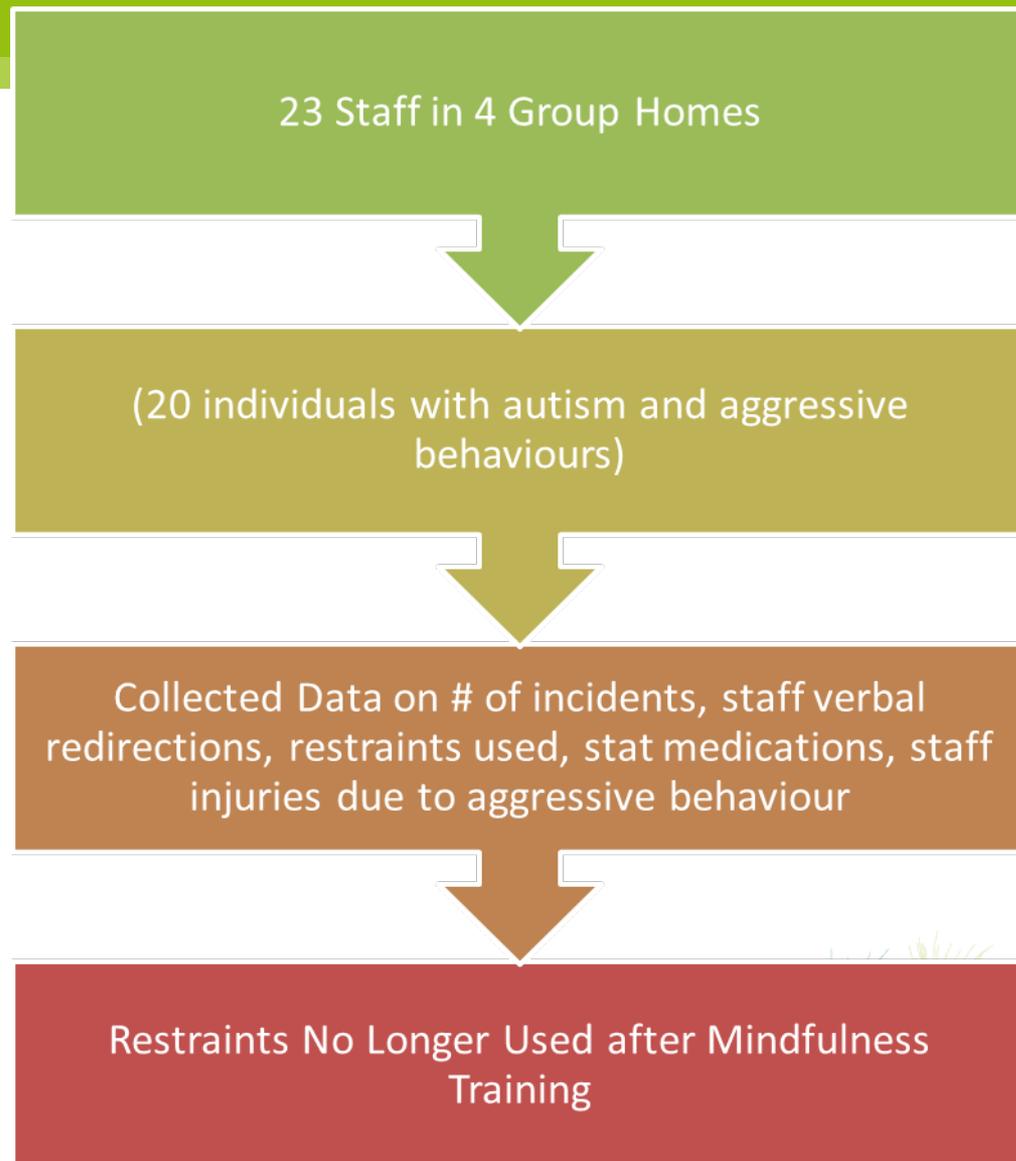
Compassion for Caregivers During Covid



Nirbhai Singh

**Autism & Staff
Mindfulness
Study**

2007



Neurodiverse Sensory Anchors



Similar to trauma,
many sense
practices are triggers
for neurodiverse
people

SOUND
TASTE
TOUCH
SCENT
BREATH
BODY

Everyone may
need a
different sense
anchor.





Turn Daily Activities Into Mindful Practice



Wiring our brains and hearts

10 seconds every hour



Richard Davidson,
neuroscientist studying
the “brain on meditation”

Meditators' brains found
incredibly active in the
left prefrontal cortex,
the part of the brain
responsible for positive
emotions, executive
function, self regulation.

*(Davidson, U of
Wisconsin 2004)*



Concrete Practice Examples



Five-Finger
Breath

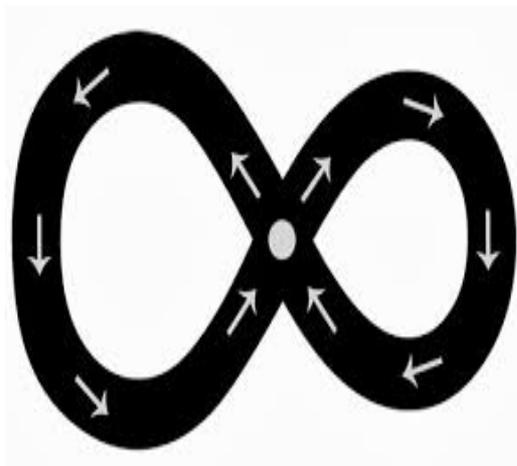


Figure 8
Breath



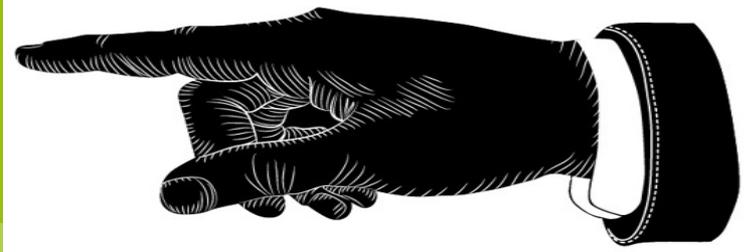
Lotus
Breath





**Guided Meditation
Forest Practice
Mindful Compassion**

Resources



**New Podcasts – Caregivers,
direct staff, autistic &
neurodiverse adults**

**New Autism-Focused Guided
Meditations**

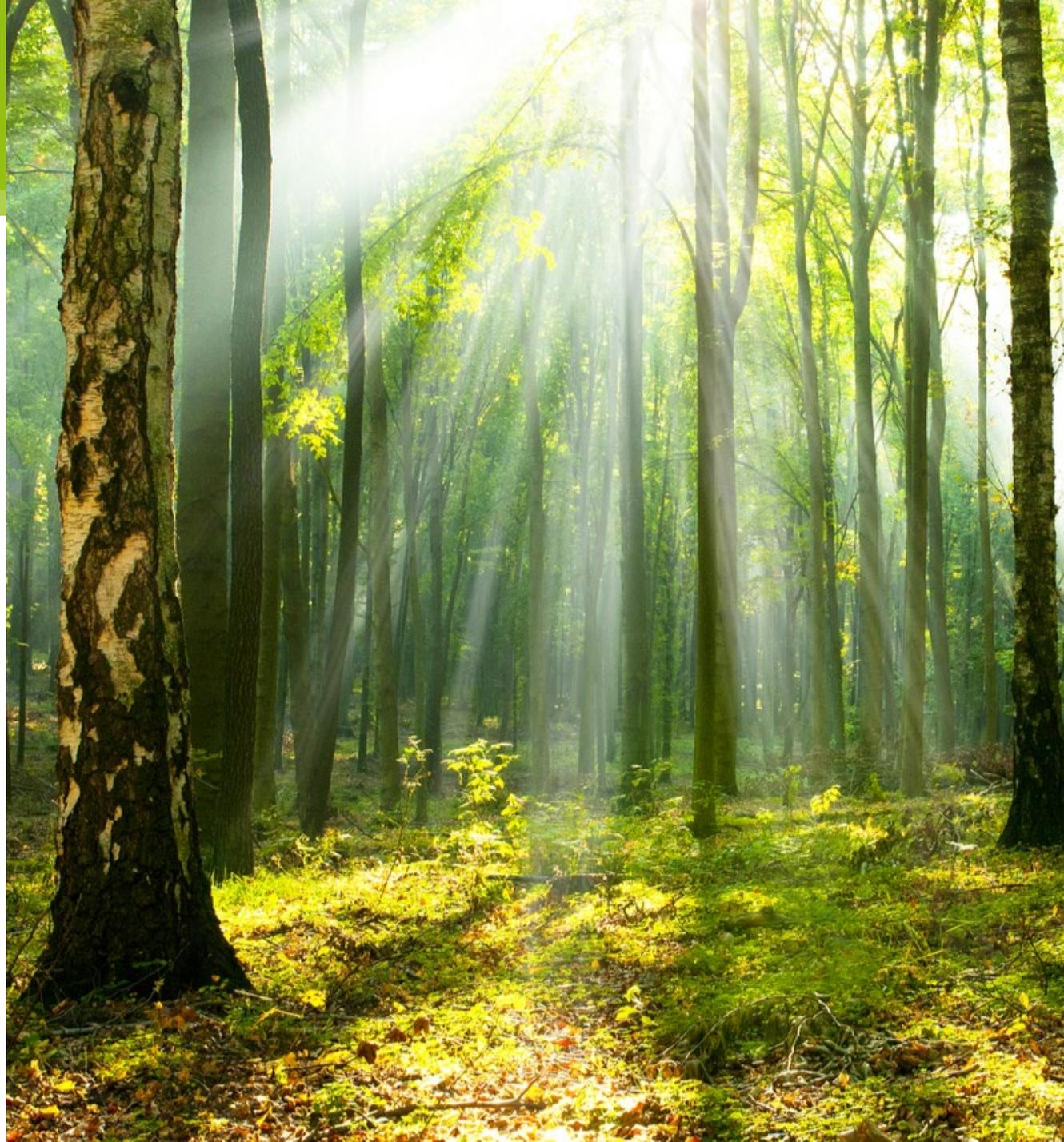
**Upcoming free 6-week CAMH
Mindfulness Groups for
Adults, Caregivers**

www.suehuttonmindfulness.com

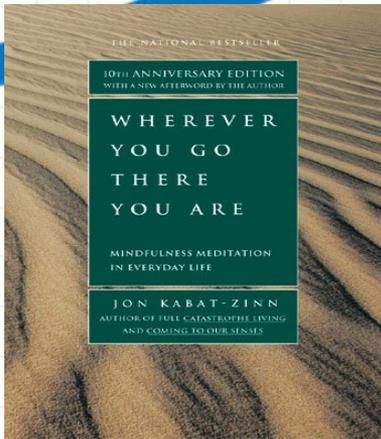
Join the Mailing List for Upcoming
Groups



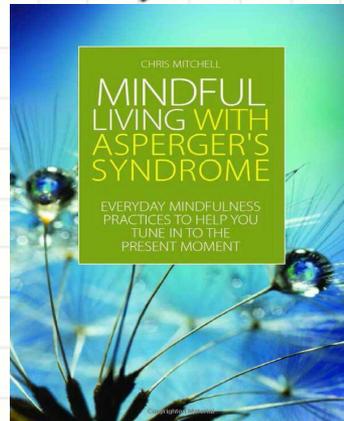
Closing Thoughts From Lee



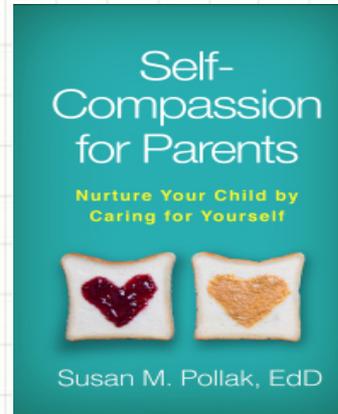
SUGGESTED BOOKS



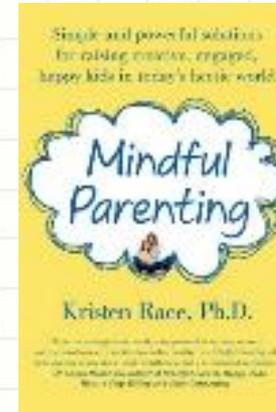
Wherever you go, there you are
Jon Kabat-Zinn



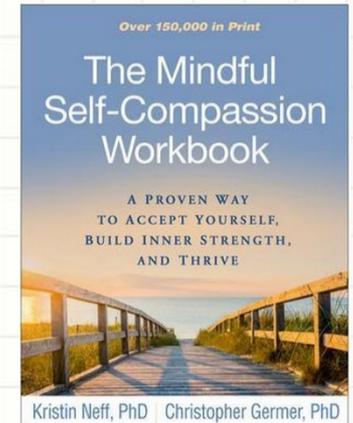
Tools for Autistic Adults from an autistic adult
Chris Mitchell



Self-Compassion for Parents
Susan Pollack



Mindful Parenting:
Simple and Powerful Solutions for Raising Creative, Engaged, Happy Kids in Today's Hectic World by
Kristen Race



Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook
Kristin Neff & Christopher Germer

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