

Your Wellness

Strategies for Mental Health, Career, and Family Success

Issue 131 December 2025

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Dr. Recco's Corner

Well, here we are again at the end of another year. The year 2025 featured many developments and worldwide issues that caught many of us off guard. Being caught off guard is not the problem.

Rather, the potential problem is if we fail to make the best of what transpired and move on to more sustainable and safe places and spaces to exist. For some of us, it was extremely easy for a “defeated” mentality to overtake us and encourage us to blame, be critical, withdraw, fail, and fear. However, there are many amongst us who decided to stand during the current political, health, social, and educational whirlwind of a crisis.

It is times like these that ordinary people like you and I rise to the top and set ourselves to be a force and voice crying in the wilderness. I dare to say that 30 years from now, it is our voice and stand that will define the good, bad, and ugly associated with 2025.



What we do and say now not only can frame our tomorrows but also impact the hopes and dreams of coming generations. The stated is absolutely exhilarating and promising to me and my like-minded fervent friends who have been waiting and preparing for such a time as this. I think it is safe to say that what we create tomorrow will impact people who have yet to be born. This is a heavy burden and calling.

Will you rise and come forth in this critical hour of need and redemption? Will you find yourself wading in the water in pursuit of a new day and a brighter future? Will you use the correct words, make the right decisions, and say the right thing? Will you? For sure I will!

Recco



The Importance of Self-Compassion

Featuring: Hannah Rau, B.S., Master's Level Counseling Intern

Self-compassion plays an important role in emotional well-being since it directly affects how we cope with stress, failure, and uncertainty. When self-criticism dominates, even small setbacks can feel overwhelming and lead to shame, anxiety, or burnout. Self-compassion softens the response to the domination by helping us regulate our emotions more effectively.

Instead of spiraling into harsh self-judgment, we can pause, acknowledge difficulty, and choose supportive next steps. This mindset also encourages resilience. When mistakes are met with understanding rather than punishment, we are more likely to try again and persist through challenges.

Self-compassion can often strengthen relationships/friendships as well, since those who treat themselves kindly tend to be less defensive and more empathetic toward others. Over time, practicing self-compassion builds a stable sense of self-worth that is not dependent on constant success or external validation. Rather than weakening motivation, it creates a foundation for sustainable growth and emotional balance.

Signs You May Struggle with Self-Compassion

Below are a few signs that indicate the presence of struggling with self-compassion.

- Do you mentally beat yourself up over small mistakes?
- Do you always hold yourself to standards of perfectionism?
- Are you kinder to others than you are to yourself?
- Do you feel worthless when you're not accomplishing anything
- Do you have a hard time accepting compliments from others?

Self-Compassion Even When it is Hard

Practicing self-compassion is especially important during moments of defeat, disappointment, or when we are overwhelmed. These are the times when self-criticism often becomes loudest. In difficult moments, self-compassion begins with acknowledging that something is hurting us instead of immediately trying to fix or dismiss it. The next step is remembering that struggle is a shared human experience, not a personal flaw. This perspective can reduce feelings of isolation and shame.

Finally, self-compassion involves asking what the best thing would be to do. This could be resting, taking a moment of reflection, or asking others for help. For example, after making a mistake, self-compassion might sound like, "I don't like that this happened, but I can learn from it without tearing myself down." Approaching challenges this way won't erase our discomfort. However, it can prevent more suffering that may be caused by harsh self-criticism. Over time, this approach can help to build emotional resilience.



Hannah Rau, B.S.

Master's Level Counseling Intern

"Self-compassion is a must for all of us."

Dr. Recco

How to Practice Self-Compassion

Practicing self-compassion does not require a complete shift in our mindset or any major changes. It begins with small, intentional moments of kindness toward ourselves. A great starting point could be choosing one phrase, practice, or pause to return to when things feel overwhelming.

One easy thing to practice is to pause during stressful moments and name what we're experiencing with warmth, such as saying, "This is challenging, and I'm allowed to take it one step at a time."

Encouraging self-talk that focuses on effort rather than perfection can also boost confidence and motivation. Journaling is another positive tool, especially when it highlights lessons learned or moments when we have been resilient. Being able to look back and reflect on our progress is a great way to remain motivated and encouraged.

Progress with self-compassion may not always be obvious, and some days may feel easier than others to practice self-compassion. When setbacks happen, they are not failures, but they are opportunities to try again. Self-compassion is not about eliminating any discomfort; it is about meeting our discomfort with care. Over time, these small moments add up to create a supportive relationship with ourselves that can carry us through challenges.

25 Self-Compassion Affirmations

The below affirmations can help us enhance our self-compassion. The re-calling and meditating on them regularly can make a difference in our mood, expectations, level of Peace, and outlook on life.

It's okay to feel whatever I'm feeling
I'm doing the best I can with it all
I can be kind to myself
It's okay to make mistakes
I'm worthy of more

I'm becoming more resilient
Daily I forgive myself
I'm allowed to be who I am
Change is indeed my friend
I'm making things easier for me

I have more life to live
I'm still powerful and necessary
I don't have to do everything
What's important to me is important
It's okay to say no

I deserve to treat myself good
I'm allowed to go easy on myself
I'm perfectly capable to do it
I'm always enough
My thoughts are important

I release the need to be perfect
I don't have to second guess myself
I'm learning and growing for me
I embrace being brave
I'm making good things happen

Understanding helps me grow
My path is becoming more clear
The spaces I dwell in are healthy
I can live big and large
Success is looking for me

"Self-talk helps our level of focus."

Dr. Recco



Recco S. Richardson Consulting, Inc.

Who Are We

Recco S. Richardson Consulting Inc. (RSRC) is a multi-faceted human service agency that provides innovative and effective mental health services, psycho-educational classes, community programs, seminars/workshops, and research. The organization was founded in 2005 by Recco Santee Richardson, Ph.D., LPC.



"Outstanding services is our focus and goal."

Dr. Recco

Our Services/Programs

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ABLE Program (Grades 6-12)
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Ivy League Pipeline Program
The Sunshine Committee
Santee Book Publishing



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"Here to help, Here to serve."

Therapist's Spotlight

Featuring: LaWanda Purches-Waller, MS, LLPC

LaWanda Purches-Waller is the Therapist Spotlight for December. She currently works full-time as a school counselor at a local middle school. She performs part-time counseling duties here at Recco S. Richardson Consulting (RSRC). She also works in RSRC's Adolescents for Better Learning Endeavors Program (ABLE), which is offered at a local school.

LaWanda is one of our several RSRC therapists who works in the ABLE Program. She facilitates groups, chaperones events, and mentors the students. Because she works in the middle school setting, LaWanda has a unique perspective and has been able to apply high-level skills with the students and in her counseling clients.

1. In your opinion, what most determines a person's personality and why?

LaWanda feels that our personality is a combination of our environment, exposure to life, and experiences. The way we are raised impacts our personality and shapes our character. She went on to say that we can fix or break negative cycles that impact our personality.

2. What seems to be a person's go to thought when they fail and what should they do to fix it?

She stated that when we fail, we can really be hard on ourselves, blame others, and become resentful. At some point, we all experience failure in an area of our lives, whether it be from failed relationships, classes, tests, goals, and so on. LaWanda shared that we should learn from our mistakes, try harder the next time, and do whatever it takes to overcome our failures. This can only happen if we take accountability and move forward.

3. Why do bad things tend to happen to good people?

LaWanda offered that it is common for us to feel that bad things happen only to good people. She feels that bad things happen to everyone and that no one is exempt from having a negative outcome. She stated that our mindset impacts the fallout from bad experiences. Other people are very likely to notice when we get stuck on a bad thing that happened to us. LaWanda went on to say that moving past negative events makes our relationships and life simpler.

4. Talk about a time you felt empowered as a person and how you achieved it.

LaWanda stated that she feels empowered when she helps others and provides them with timely support that helps them become the best version of themselves. She counts it a privilege to be able to impact the lives of children and adults who cross her path. On a regular basis, she helps students in the school setting and adults in her community-based counseling office.

5. What is the best way for your clients to cope with a failed relationship (friend, dating, marriage) and how do you help them?

After some thought, she stated that it can be difficult when relationships fail and even more difficult to work through the associated emotions. She reported that one of the best things to do is not minimize our feelings and validate our losses. As well, to cope with a breakup, it is important to have time to process and accept the loss.



LaWanda Purches-Waller, MS, LLPC

"LaWanda continues to be an effective counselor and wonderful person."

Dr. Recco

6. What are some ways a person can celebrate themselves?

LaWanda shared that most people do not often celebrate themselves enough. Celebrating our accomplishments and actions is essential. She went on to say that we can celebrate ourselves by doing something we enjoy or treating ourselves to our favorite things. If we reach the goal, by all means celebrate it. Do not wait for someone else to celebrate us. Celebration is something that we do for ourselves.

7. Why is self-worth important to have and how to you help your clients secure it?

Very quickly, she summoned that lacking self-worth is a common concern that we all have to deal with. Self-worth is important because it allows us to realize that we are capable, strong, and valuable. LaWanda helps her clients enhance their self-worth by helping them set and achieve goals, explaining how to focus on their positive characteristics, and helping them recognize and appreciate their value.

"Self-worth helps us see possibilities."

Dr. Recco

She went on to say that working on self-worth is a common part of therapy. Whether it's a child or an adult, many people struggle with having adequate self-worth. Self-worth is closely related to being empowered, feeling good on the inside, experiencing freedom within, accepting life as it comes, staying positive via affirmations, and making the decision to start each day on a high note.

8. What are some ways to overcome feeling or being embarrassed?

LaWanda quipped, "Who hasn't felt embarrassed?" She went on to say that being embarrassed is part of life and human nature. The key is to learn from our embarrassing actions, admit that we made a mistake, realize that everyone makes mistakes, and move on. She said that most people do not remember the embarrassing thing that we did.

9. How do you assist clients in enhancing their personal character?

She offered that in therapy, there are many ways to assist clients in enhancing their personal character. One way is by having them establish goals and write down their strengths. LaWanda also said that the enhancement of personal character can also take place by focusing on what clients are good at doing.



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Shadow work comes from Jungian psychology and focuses on exploring the “shadow,” which represents the parts of the personality we have learned to suppress, deny, or judge as unacceptable. Jung described the shadow as all the traits, impulses, emotions, and memories that the conscious ego refuses to identify with. These can include anger, jealousy, competitiveness, vulnerability, pleasure seeking, or any behavior that a person learned early on would lead to rejection or conflict. Even though people push these parts away, they continue to influence thoughts, behaviors, relationships, and overall emotional functioning. In other words, the shadow does not disappear. It simply acts from behind the scenes.

Definition: In therapy, shadow work means bringing curiosity, compassion, and awareness to these hidden parts so that clients can understand them instead of being controlled by them. The goal is not to fix the shadow but to integrate it. Clients often discover that their shadow parts originally developed to help them survive difficult moments, family rules, cultural expectations, or painful experiences.

In Practice: There are several practical ways therapists can use shadow work in session. One of the most common is exploring projection. Jung suggested that aspects of ourselves we deny are often projected onto others, which means we see those unwanted qualities more clearly in the people around us. For example, a client who “cannot stand bossy people” might be disowning their own assertiveness. Therapists can gently explore these reactions by asking reflective questions like, “What specifically bothers you about that behavior?” or “If someone described you this way, how would that feel?” Journaling, guided imagery, and structured prompts can also help clients identify projections and work with them intentionally.

Therapists can also support shadow work through simple, present-focused interventions. When a client downplays anger, sadness, or disappointment, you can gently reflect the mismatch between their words and their body language. A statement like, “Part of you is saying this is not a big deal, but your shoulders look tense. I wonder if there is another part that feels differently.” This type of questioning creates space for complexity without shaming the client. Over time, this normalizes having conflicting emotions and allows clients to reclaim parts they have pushed away.

Safety: Safety and pacing are essential when using shadow work clinically. Exploring hidden or disowned parts can stir up shame, fear, or grief, especially for clients with trauma histories or rigid perfectionistic identities. Therapists should prioritize grounding, utilize emotional check-ins, and promote collaborative meaning-making. Framing is also important. Clients benefit from hearing that the purpose of shadow work is not to label them as “bad” but to help them understand themselves more fully. Overall, shadow work invites clients to know themselves more honestly, integrate rejected parts, and operate with greater authenticity. When done with warmth, stability, and clear boundaries, it can deepen insight and strengthen the therapeutic relationship.

Jung, C. G. (1969). *The archetypes and the collective unconscious*. Princeton University Press.

Renner, O. (2025). *Shadow Work Journal & Workbook: Therapist approved 5-in-1 self-therapy book to explore your depths, repair inner wounds, and integrate your shadows*. Independently published.



Leslie Hu
Master's Level Counseling Intern

“Shadowing is important to counseling.”

Dr. Recco

Understanding & Living with Bipolar Disorder

By Dr. Recco Santee Richardson, Ph.D., LPC

Bipolar disorder is a treatable illness marked by extreme changes in mood, thought, energy, and behavior. It is not a character flaw or a sign of personal weakness. Bipolar disorder is also known as manic depression because a person's mood can alternate between the "poles" of mania (highs) and depression (lows).

The changes in mood, or "mood swings," can last for hours, days, weeks, or months. It usually begins in late adolescence (often appearing as depression during the teenage years),

although it can start in early childhood or later in life. An equal number of men and women develop this disorder (men tend to begin with a manic episode, women with a depressive episode), and it is found among all ages, races, ethnic groups, and social classes.

Bipolar disorder tends to run in families and appears to have a genetic link. Like depression and other serious mental illnesses, bipolar disorder can also negatively affect spouses and partners, family members, friends, and coworkers.

"Most people who have bipolar disorder talk about experiencing "highs" and "lows"—periods of mania and depression."

Bipolar disorder differs significantly from clinical depression, although the symptoms for the depressive phase of the illness are similar. Most people who have bipolar disorder talk about experiencing "highs" and "lows"—periods of mania and depression. These swings can be severe, ranging from extreme energy to deep despair. The severity of the mood swings and the way they disrupt normal life activities distinguish bipolar mood episodes from ordinary mood changes.

When people experience symptoms of both a manic and a depressive episode at the same time, they're said to be experiencing a mixed state (or mixed mania). They have all the negative feelings that come with depression, but they also feel agitated, restless, and wired. The below list of bipolar disorder symptoms can shed light on how it looks and acts (see chart #1).

Chart #1 Bipolar Disorder Symptoms

Presence Of Mania/Highs

Heightened Mood	Exaggerated Optimism	Over Confidence	Excessive Irritability
Aggressive Behavior	Decreased Need for Sleep	Grandiose Thoughts	Inflated Self-Importance
Racing Speech/Thought	Flight of Ideas	Presence of Impulsiveness	Poor Judgment
Easily Distracted	Reckless Behavior	Thrill Seeking	Inadequate Grounding

Presence Of Depression/Lows

Prolonged Sadness	Unexplained Crying	Change In Appetite	Poor Sleep Patterns
Regular Irritability	Anger & Aggression	Worry/Dread	Agitation/Frustration
Anxiety/Overwhelmed	Distrust Of Others	Indifferent Attitude	Loss Of Energy/Fatigue
Persistent Lethargy	Feelings Of Guilt	Feel Worthless	Poor Concentrate
Indecisiveness	Lose Interest In Life	Unexplained Aches/Pains	Thoughts Of Death/Suicide

"We can surely successfully live with bipolar disorder."

Dr. Recco



Do I Have Bipolar

The following check list can be used to identify bipolar disorder. An abundance of “yes” answers may indicate the presence of bipolar disorder in person’s life.

Please Answer Yes or No

My Speech Can Be Pressured & Fast
 Life Usually Is Not Fair To Me
 People Misunderstand Me & My Intentions
 I Have Abused Drugs/ Substances
 Most Days I'm Irritated
 People Walk On Egg Shells Around Me
 I Struggle With Keeping A Job
 I Have Been Abused/Neglected By Others
 My Emotions Can Be All Over The Place
 It Is Difficult For Me To Apologize/Forgive
 I Sometimes Have Poor Self Control
 I'm Easily Distracted
 My Mouth Often Gets Me In Trouble
 Things Go Better When I'm Alone
 My Childhood Was Chaotic/Unpredictable

I Need To Be Right All The Time
 I Tend To Binge On Food, Shopping & Gambling
 I Go Days Without Adequate Sleep
 My Anger Often Gets The Best Of Me
 I Regularly Mess Up Good Things
 I Have Been Called Toxic
 Drama & Crisis Seem To Find Me
 Change Is Hard For Me Most Times
 I Argue With Other People Often
 I Tend To Be Depressed
 Most Days I Have A Bad Feeling
 I Often Feel Low & Dejected
 I Have Poor Boundaries
 I Struggle With Loving Myself
 I'm Often Impulsive

Yes Answers: _____

No Answers: _____

**“There are strategies
for managing our
bipolar disorder.”**

Dr. Recco

Strategies For Managing Bipolar Disorder

Below are several ways we can manage our bipolar disorder diagnosis and live a fulfilled life. With the help of gaining new knowledge, utilizing our support system, and being honest, we can better live with our bipolar tendencies and symptoms.

Accurate Diagnosis & Acknowledgment: The first step towards managing a bipolar disorder diagnosis is to make sure it is present. A quality evaluation for bipolar disorder can be administered by a licensed medical provider or licensed mental health provider. It is believed that most people who suffer from bipolar disorder have never been professionally diagnosed or have been diagnosed with a form of depression or mood swing. In addition we must acknowledge disruptive life events that impact us. The entering of denial and blaming others is not a proven way to manage bipolar disorder. At the end of the day, those of us who struggle with this disorder must own up to it and accept it as an influence in our lives.

Access & Action: The accessing of treatment services, such as individual counseling, psychiatric medication, participating in support groups, and developing a solid support system are proven to aid in the managing of bipolar disorder. Most communities have a plethora of services that are easily accessed and sustained. The successful negotiation of bipolar disorder features us having a plan of action. The plan often includes establishing healthier boundaries, improving eating habits, managing change and stress better, identifying triggers successfully, remaining reality-based, processing disappointment effectively, enjoying life, and exercising regularly.



Advocate: Our efforts to promote and advocate for mental health wellness beyond a bipolar disorder diagnosis are important steps in the right direction. This is thought to be true because advocacy can create within a person a sense of internal healing and hopefulness.

How to Contact Us

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