

# Psychological Flexibility, Values and Self-Compassion in Academic Working Life

*A practical and experiential workshop*

Many of the exercises we do today come directly from  
the **University of Jyväskylä Staff Compass** programme.

*A small experiential glimpse  
Into the programme and the skills we practice there.*



Kuvat Pixabay

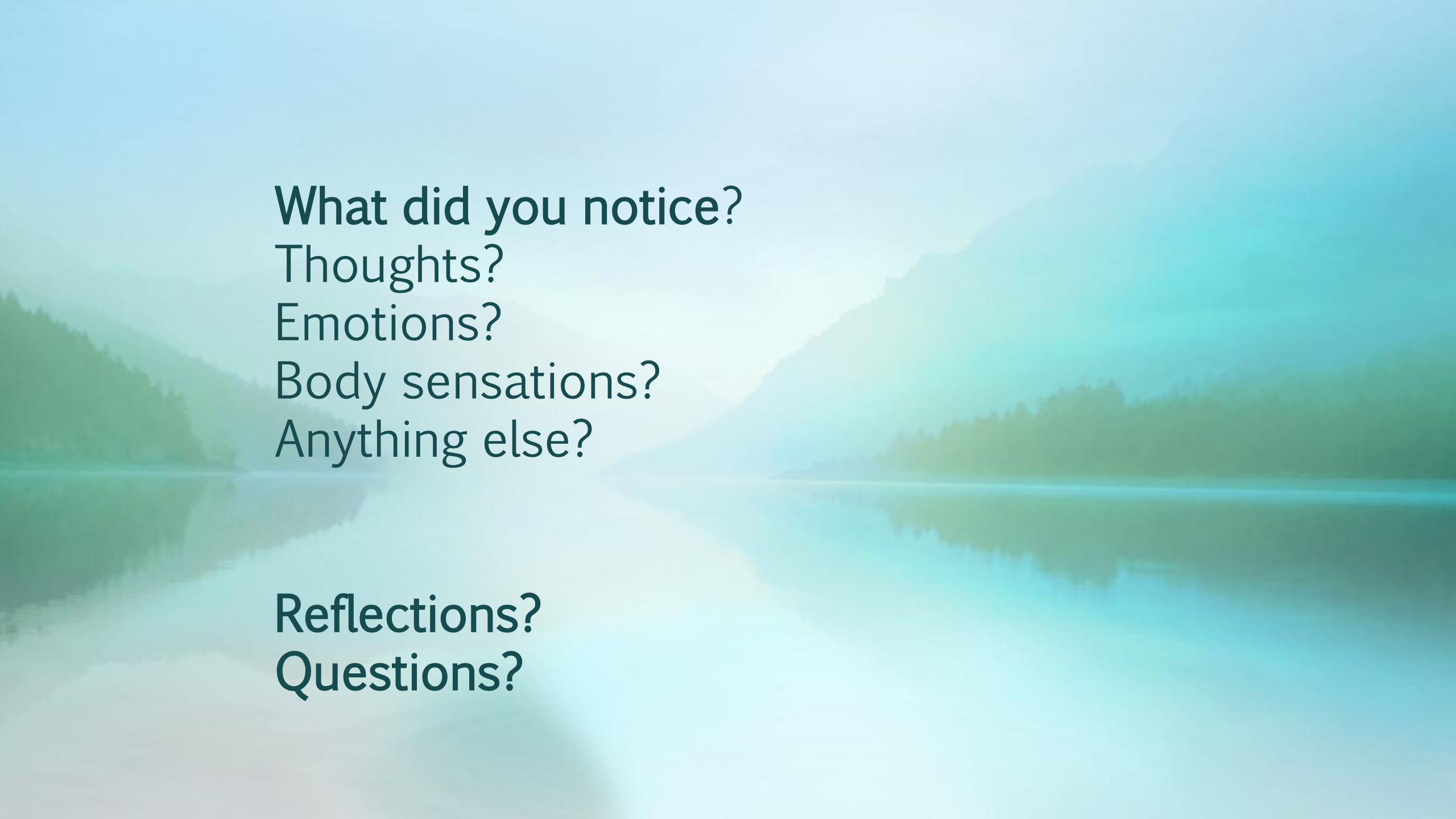
Merja Lappi  
Psychologist |  
Occupational Psychologist  
Hyvinvoinnin Taidot  
(Wellbeing Skills)

*Hyvinvoinnin ● Taidot*

# Arriving in This Moment Exercise

- This is actually *a combination of several exercises and skills* we use in the Staff Compass programme.
- Over the years I have combined different present moment awareness, acceptance and self-compassion practices into one exercise that I often use in my work.





What did you notice?  
Thoughts?  
Emotions?  
Body sensations?  
Anything else?

Reflections?  
Questions?

About Me

**Merja Lappi**

Psychologist (M.Psych.)

Occupational Psychologist

M.Ed. (Educational Sciences)

| Adult Educator

Founder of *Wellbeing Skills (Hyvinvoinnin Taidot)*

### **Professional Background**

Rehabilitation Psychology

Research and Development Projects

Occupational Health Psychology

Clinical Practice and Individual Counselling

Wellbeing Training and Group Facilitation

### **Worked with**

People living with chronic pain and long-term health conditions

Family caregivers

Older adults

Parents of children with special needs

University staff and other professionals



# Staff Compass Programme

- University of Jyväskylä
- Since 2020
- Developed by researchers, psychologists and wellbeing professionals at the University of Jyväskylä, including:  
**Päivi Lappalainen**, **Raimo Lappalainen**,  
**Katariina Keinonen** & **Juho Strömmer**

**Based on Acceptance  
and Commitment Therapy (ACT)**

## Focus

### Psychological Flexibility

The ability to stay present, make room for difficult experiences and act according to what matters.

## Format

- Online Programme
- Individual Sessions
- Group Meetings, (follow- up group meetings end of each semester)



# Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)

One theory behind ACT is called Relational Frame Theory, or RFT. It explores how human minds naturally create connections and stories

• Not about:

- ✗ Getting rid of difficult thoughts
- ✗ Controlling emotions

*Human Minds Do This*

*Create stories*

*Make connections*

*Solve problems*

*Predict threats*

*Compare*

• Instead:

- ✓ Noticing
- ✓ Making space
- ✓ Doing what matters

*This is not a flaw.*

*This is what human minds are designed to do.*

*The challenge is that sometimes we become*

*so entangled with these stories that they start running our lives.*

The goal is to change our relationship with our thoughts and emotions

# ACT in a Nutshell

## A – Accept

Make room for thoughts and emotions as they are.

## C – Clarify

- Clarify what truly matters to you.

## T – Take Action

- Take small steps towards your values.

**present moment awareness**  
**cognitive defusion & self-as-**  
**context**  
**acceptance**  
**Self- compassion**

**values**  
**committed action**

# ACT Skills in Practice

## Values and Meaning

- Values Clarification  
*(What truly matters to me?)*
- Values-Based Actions  
*(How do I bring these values into everyday life?)*

## Awareness and Acceptance Skills

Present moment awareness  
Noticing thoughts  
Noticing emotions  
Self-compassion

*Observe  
Without Judging*



# Values

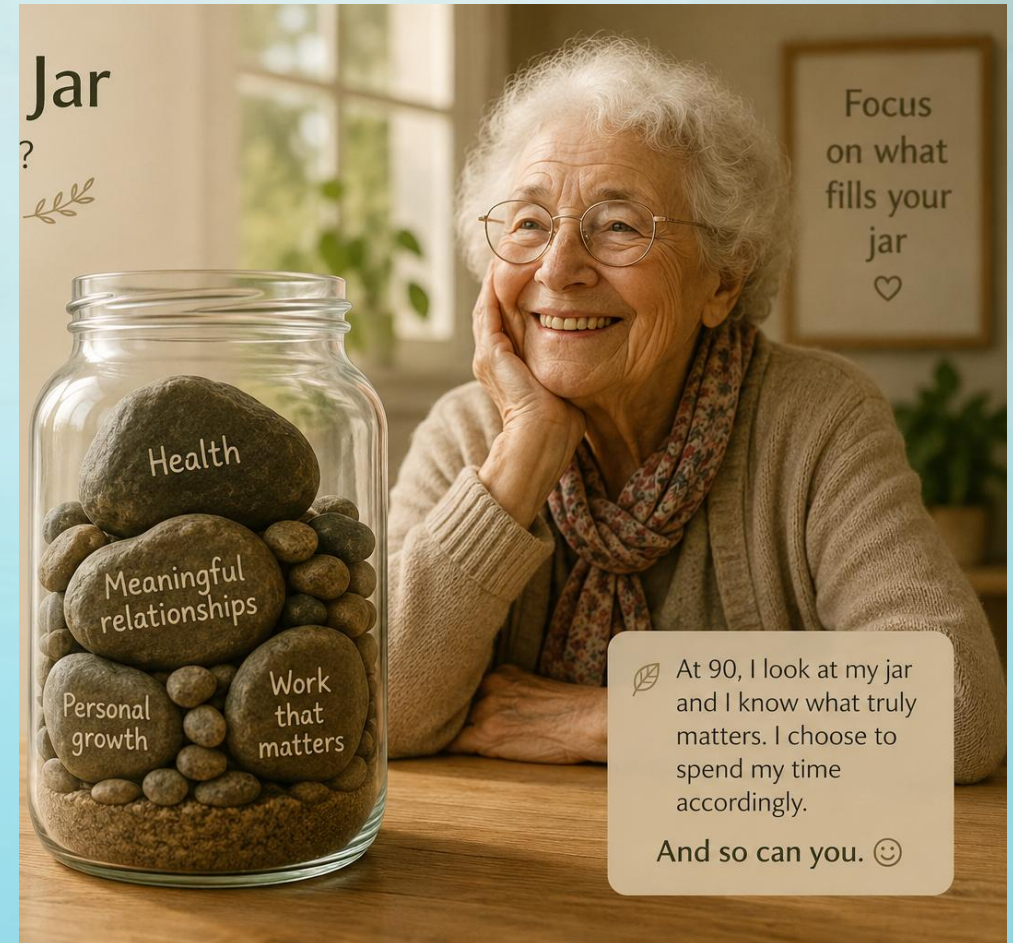
## What matters to me?

### Big Stones First

- If we fill the jar first with small things...
- Will there be room for the big stones?


### Visualization & Reflection Exercise

- Imagine yourself at age 90...
- Looking back at your life...
- What would your older and wiser self want to remind you about?



# Values Clarification

- What matters to you?
- What brings meaning?
- What would you like more of in your life?

 *Words · Sentences · or  
Mind Map*



## Values → Action

Values become meaningful through action.

What is one small step towards something important?

Perhaps this week.

Perhaps today.

# Conscious Listening

🤝 In pairs

Round 1 – 2 minutes You do not need to share anything personal.

Person A speaks

You may talk about:

Person B listens

The exercise itself

Round 2 – 2 minutes Something you noticed

Person B speaks

A value that stood out

Person A listens

Or anything you would like to share



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## Group Reflection

- What did you notice?
- What was it like to speak?
- What was it like to listen?
- Any observations or surprises?



# Group Discussion

## Wellbeing in Academic Working Life

- How is staff wellbeing supported at your university?
- What works well already?
- What kinds of wellbeing challenges do you notice?
- What skills or practices seem particularly helpful?



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Share one key insight with the group





# Key Insights

- One idea from each group
- What stood out?



## Closing Practice A Moment of Self-Compassion

May I be well.

May I be kind to myself.

May I live according to what  
matters to me.

# Thank You

Thank you for your openness,  
participation and  
sharing this moment together.

Wishing you wellbeing and  
meaningful moments ahead.

Merja Lappi

Psychologist |

Occupational Psychologist

*Hyvinvoinnin  Taidot*

## Optional exercise (5–10 min)

### Top 10 Stories My Mind Is Telling Me Right Now

- Write down ten recurring thoughts, worries or stories.
- Fold the paper.
- Hold it for a moment.
- Notice: these are thoughts, not facts.
- Optional: take the paper with you and notice when your mind returns to these stories.