

Self-compassion break



Self-compassion involves acting kindly towards yourself when you are having a difficult time.

Instead of avoiding the pain, you acknowledge that this is not easy right now and explore the ways to comfort and care for yourself at this moment.

Rather than extending harsh judgment and criticism toward yourself in the face of inadequacies or shortcomings, you extend kindness and understanding.

In addition to this, Dr. Kristin Neff, researcher, author, and founder of self-compassion.org, suggests that “having compassion for yourself means that you honour and accept your humanness.” The human experience inevitably involves making mistakes, incurring losses, and having ideals that do not match reality. According to Neff, the more we are open to this reality, this shared human condition, the more we will be able to feel compassion for ourselves and each other.

Exercise

AUTHOR

This tool was adapted from Dr. Kristin Neff’s ‘Self-compassion Break’ exercise by Dr. Lucinda Poole (PositivePsychology.com).

GOAL

The goal of this tool is to provide clients with a simple, memorable way to cultivate self-compassion when they need it the most.

Follow the instructions on page 2



Exercise continued

INSTRUCTIONS

Recall a difficult situation in your life and see if you can notice the stress and emotional discomfort in your body. Then, say to yourself:

1

This is a moment of suffering

This acknowledgment is a form of mindfulness—of simply noticing what is going on for you emotionally in the present moment without judging that experience as good or bad. You can also say to yourself, “This hurts” or “This is stress.” Use whatever statement feels most natural to you.

2

Suffering is a part of life

This statement recognises your common humanity with others—that all people have trying experiences, and these experiences give you something in common with the rest of humanity rather than mark you as abnormal or deficient. Other options for this statement include, “Other people feel this way,” “I’m not alone,” or “We all struggle in our lives.”

3

May I be kind to myself

Now, put your hands over your heart, feel the warmth of your hands and the gentle touch on your chest, and say, “May I be kind to myself.” This is a way to express self-kindness. You can also consider whether there is another specific phrase that would speak to you in that particular situation. Some examples include, “May I give myself the compassion that I need,” “May I accept myself as I am,” “May I learn to accept myself as I am,” “May I forgive myself,” “May I be strong,” and “May I be patient.”

Sometimes this practice is comforting when using a nourishing oil or lotion that you enjoy using and whilst gently massaging it on your central chest space, you express self-kindness as indicated above.

This practice can be used at any time of day or night. If you practice it in moments of relative calm, it may become easier for you to experience the three parts of self-compassion—mindfulness, common humanity, and self-kindness—when you need them most.

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