

Self-Compassion Practice

A Practice to Cultivate Self-Compassion and a Healthy Mind



Overview

Self-compassion practice helps us calm ourselves down when we're feeling distressed and helps us build an internal sense of safety and security. It is a powerful antidote to self-criticism and shame. This practice is adapted from Kristen Neff's self-compassion practice described in her book, *Self-Compassion*.

Self-compassion is bringing an attitude of care and concern to ourselves when we are experiencing difficulty or suffering. It takes some courage to work with our difficulty, and the self-compassion practice supports us in doing so.

Get Started

1. Take your seat.

- To begin, find a comfortable place to sit and take a meditation posture. Try to find a place where your spine can be straight but not rigid.
- Place your feet about hip-distance apart. Place your hands on your thighs or folded in your lap. Close your eyes, or if you prefer to keep them open, cast your gaze gently down toward the floor.
- You should be able to relax in this position and also find a sense of strength, openness, and stability.

2. Do three cleansing breaths.

- Deeply inhale through your nose, bringing the air all the way down into your belly. Then exhale by pushing it out through your mouth. You can imagine pushing out the stress of your day when you exhale like this.
- When you finish your third exhalation, let your breathing go back to its natural rhythm.

Do the Practice

3. Call to mind something that is difficult or causing some distress or suffering for you at this time.

- It might be a situation at work, a friend who is sick, or a conflict with a family member, a difficult emotion you are feeling – or anything that is stressful for you right now.
- It's best not to pick the most intense thing you might be facing, as that might be too much. Instead, pick something that is upsetting for you but not overwhelming. In self-compassion training, we start small and build our way up.
- In bringing to mind this difficult situation, pay attention to your body as a whole and notice what sensations you feel in your body when you think of this event or situation that is causing you to suffer.

4. Feeling those sensations, place your hand on your heart (optional), and say the following statements to yourself:

This is a moment of suffering.

All human beings experience suffering.

May I be kind to myself in this moment.

May I give myself the compassion I need.

5. Recalling this situation, notice again the sensations and feelings that arise in your body, and repeat the four phrases above to yourself two more times.

Close the Practice

6. Release the situation, sensations, and the practice.

- As this practice draws to a close, bring your attention to your body again and notice what sensations you might feel after completing this self-compassion practice.

If the self-compassion practice felt awkward to you, or you didn't feel much in the way of emotions or sensations, that's not unusual. Just continue doing the practice and your ability to notice these and to bring a sense of kindness and care to yourself will increase with the practice. You will also be able to recognize and label your sensations more with repetition of this practice. When you are able to recognize and attend to your sensations with kindness, you are building a sense of internal safety and security.