

The practice of self-compassion: What is it?

We may not always have control over the events and emotions that unfold in our day-to-day lives. Yet, what is within our control is how we view difficult situations and engage with our thoughts and feelings. Being able to do so in a self-compassionate manner enhances our well-being and our ability to cope with life's challenges.

"If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete"- Jack Kornfield

DEFINING SELF-COMPASSION

Practicing self-compassion means approaching ourselves with the same kindness we extend to others such as our family and friends. In moments of difficulty, failure, or self-doubt, we recognize our pain instead of ignoring it and provide ourselves with comfort and care. It's acknowledging that everyone experiences challenges, as this is simply part of being human.¹

THE THREE KEY ELEMENTS OF SELF-COMPASSION²

- 1** Self-kindness vs. Self-judgment: Offering ourselves warmth and acceptance during difficult times or when making mistakes, rather than judging ourselves harshly.
- 2** Common Humanity vs. Isolation: Recognizing that no one is perfect and that we aren't alone in our struggles are key elements of our shared human experience.
- 3** Mindfulness vs. Over-identification: Bringing awareness to painful thoughts and feelings and taking a step back to see them as they are, rather than getting overwhelmed by them.

HOW TO PRACTICE SELF-COMPASSION

-  Pay attention to your inner voice. Is it supportive or overly critical?
-  Replace unhelpful thoughts, such as "I shouldn't feel this way" or "I'll never fit in" with more helpful ones, like "anyone would feel disappointed in these circumstances" or "I accept my whole self."
-  Try [specific self-compassion exercises](#) such as writing a letter to yourself or engaging in a loving-kindness meditation.
-  Prioritize self-care with activities like going for a walk, journaling, calling a friend, or treating yourself to your favorite dinner.
-  Cultivate a mindfulness practice.

WHY START?

We're all deserving of compassion, kindness, and understanding. Cultivating self-compassion not only fosters more positive mental health but also supports the development of stronger connections with others.³ This powerful tool empowers us to lead more fulfilling lives. By approaching it in a manner that respects our individual needs and journeys, we contribute to bringing healing into the world. The journey starts with each one of us.

¹ Neff, K. (n.d.). The Three Elements of Self-Compassion. self-compassion.org. <https://self-compassion.org/the-three-elements-of-self-compassion-2/>

² Neff, K. (n.d.). The Three Elements of Self-Compassion. self-compassion.org. <https://self-compassion.org/the-three-elements-of-self-compassion-2/>

³ Inwood, E. & Ferrari, M. (2018). The benefits of self-compassion and optimism exercises for individuals vulnerable to depression. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 13(4), 355-362. <https://self-compassion.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Inwood2018.pdf>