

How self-compassionate are you? Exercise

Self-compassion is a strong foundation. This foundation gives you the strength and resilience to start to unravel any unhelpful beliefs you might have internalized. You need this strength and resilience because many of these beliefs are held deeply, and undoing them and releasing their grasp on you can be a lengthy process.

Self-compassion can also fuel your objectivity and clarity, which helps you uncover your own authentic beliefs about work, value, and meaning.

We don't have a "self-compassion" button we can hit. Thankfully, self-compassion can be created, nourished, and grown. I know this from extensive research and personal experience.

To create a map of where we want to go, we have to establish where we are now, with honesty and (you guessed it!) self-compassion.

Take some time to reflect on the following prompts. Writing your answers will give the process more impact, so grab a pen and paper and get started.

1. How do you **talk** to yourself? What kind of thoughts do you tend to have about yourself — are they generally negative, judgmental and harsh, or kind, open-minded and encouraging? What are some of the thoughts you have most frequently about yourself? Make a list.
2. How do you **feel** about yourself? Do you love and accept yourself, most of the time? Do you often feel self-judgment and shame about yourself? What does the judgment or shame tend to be about? Where might this judgment or shame have sprung from?
3. Put your pen down for a few moments and imagine you are your own **best friend**. Imagine you are looking at yourself with a completely compassionate gaze: kind, warm, gentle, and curious. Now, list all the qualities you have: What are some loving words to describe yourself? What makes you *amazing*? How do you show up for other people? What about you makes you feel delight, pride, and admiration? What are some of the cool things (small and big) you have done and accomplished in your life? How do you see yourself when you look through the compassionate, loving, admiring eyes of a best friend?
4. What are the ways you are **already** self-compassionate? How do you show up and stand up for yourself? Do you give yourself rest, sleep, water, or other nourishment when you need it? Do you reach out to others for help and support when you are struggling? Think of the ways you already show yourself kindness, even small ones. List as many as you can.
5. Take some time to think of ways that you can show yourself **more** self-compassion. What are a few things you could do — even tiny — that would help you show

yourself greater kindness, understanding and nourishment? List as many as you can come up with.

6. Could your thoughts about yourself be **kinder**? If so, write a few kind thoughts down, so you have something prepped for the moments when you need some self-compassionate thinking. My friend Maria has a kind of mantra she uses when she notices she's judging herself harshly. She takes a few moments and focuses within. She silently says to herself, "I am doing my best. It's going to be okay." Sometimes she puts her hand on her heart to emphasize the words. Taking a few moments to go within and offer herself some kind words and the emphasizing gesture help her find self-compassion in these moments.

Let me know how you go!

Sally Clarke