

How Self-Compassionate Are You: Exercise



Self-compassion is the foundation for self-care that works. When you have deep self-compassion, you can set boundaries and make healthy, objective decisions for your wellbeing.

This exercise will help you get clear on how self-compassionate you are now – and where there might be scope for growth.

Self-compassion gives you the strength and resilience you need to take care of your health and wellbeing, even in times of stress. Self-compassion can also fuel your objectivity, clarity and capacity to make healthy decisions in alignment with your values and priorities – and to say 'no' when you need to.

We don't have a "self-compassion" button we can hit. Thankfully, self-compassion can be created, nourished, and grown.

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.

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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.

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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.

Sally Clarke, 2023