

**"Through self-compassion we become an inner ally
instead of an inner enemy."**

Kristin Neff, PhD

holding space for your pain with compassion

RELATING TO YOURSELF WITH COMPASSION

We need to learn how to 'be with' our pain long enough to understand it and respond to it with care, kindness and compassion. This journal practice provides a tangible method to do just that.

Mindful Self-Compassion practices, like this one, are scientifically proven methods to help breakthrough emotional pain, suffering, anxiety, depression, and more.

Mindful Self-Compassion is a multi-faceted approach that entails three pillars: Self-kindness (unconditional positive regard), Mindfulness (presence), and Common Humanity (connection).

This journal practice provides a method to be kind to yourself when you are feeling insecurities, painful emotions, having a rough day, or are going through especially difficult times.



THREE ASPECTS OF MINDFUL SELF-COMPASSION

1) SELF-KINDNESS



Being kind and understanding with oneself as one would be with a friend. Understanding that we are intrinsically deserving of care and kindness just like everyone else.

2) COMMON HUMANITY



Understanding that we're not alone in our mistakes, weakness, failures and pain. As this is all intrinsically human and a normal part of life. Life is tough and we are all learning as we go.

3) MINDFULNESS



Being mindful (observing) our own emotions and feelings without over-identifying with them. Validating our emotions without shaming or adding fuel to the fire.

"When we deny our stories and disengage from tough emotions, they don't go away; instead, they own us, they define us... in other words, the more we try to avoid our emotions, the more control they have over our thoughts and behavior."

Brene Brown, PhD

What are you currently struggling with? Or what big concern are you dealing with that you want to focus on?

HOW WOULD I TREAT A FRIEND

Visualize various times in life, when you've had a close friend who was struggling in a similar way (felt inadequate, depressed, in emotional pain, heartbroken, rejected, or suffered a loss). Describe what this friend was going through in detail. If a friend hasn't experienced what you're going through, imagine a friend going through the exact same thing. Describe from this view.

How did you respond to your friend(s) in these situations? What did you say? How did you say it? If you didn't have an opportunity to say anything, what do you wish you had said or done?

Take a few moments to close your eyes and feel into the memories of offering kindness to friends or family members. Describe what you are most proud of in the way you treat others and how you are able to help others.

Now, think about various times in life when you were struggling. How do you typically respond to yourself in these situations? What do you say to yourself? What tone do you use? What actions do you take? What choices do you make?

Free-write what you notice in the differences between how you treat others when they are struggling and how you treat yourself. Do you notice any patterns? What emotions are you noticing as you make these comparisons?

HOW MAY I RELATE TO MYSELF WITH MORE KINDNESS FOR EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING?

MINDFULNESS (PRESENCE)

Continuing with your current struggle as identified above, describe ways you are in the story line of the situation. What is the story you are telling yourself? What regrets or if-only's do you have? Are you looping or replaying details?

See if you can acknowledge the pain involved at this point in time. Describe the painful and difficult emotions you feel. Take the time now to locate these feelings in your body. Label the emotions and describe any areas of tension and pain.

How do you feel towards the way you are feeling? How do you feel towards your emotions right now?

Are you taking responsibility for your feelings? Remember our emotional response (along with negative emotions that we tend to dislike) to any situation needs to be 100% owned, embraced and cherished (empowering). Do not abandon your emotions, refuse to accept them as valid, nor expect others to make amends, apologize, explain, understand or validate your emotions for you (this renders you powerless). Are you taking responsibility for your feelings or blaming others for them?

Validate the difficulty of this situation, the way you would for a friend.

For example, *"I can understand why you'd be feeling really disappointed and frightened right now. You are going through too much all at once."*

Start by writing, I can understand why you...

What validates this for yourself?

No one, not even the most empathetic friends or the most experienced therapists can truly understand how and why you are feeling what you're feeling. What's important is that you are giving yourself permission to feel. We always feel the way we feel for a reason. What are your thoughts on why you are feeling the way you are right now?

COMMON HUMANITY (CONNECTED)

Describe ways you may be feeling isolated and alone by this situation you are in. What beliefs do you have associated with being alone? For example, are you assuming that if you had been perfect this wouldn't have happened? Are you telling yourself you are burdened with failures, pain, rejection or unlucky more than others.

Remind yourself of the common humanity of the situation. The reality is, failures, disappointments, screw-ups, and even bad luck are part of being human - whether we like it or not. How may you offer this wisdom to yourself? How would you say this to a friend so they understand they are not alone? For example, *"It makes sense to feel rejected right now and that stinks. I've felt rejected before too,"* or *"I wish rejection never happened, especially to good people."*

Now, write down ways you may be judging or beating yourself up for what happened. Are you being harsh and taking on too much responsibility for someone else's actions?

Finally, offer yourself words of kindness in a gentle, supportive, mentoring, wise, nurturing way. For example, *"I realize how disappointing this is and I'm here to support you through this the best way I can."*