



Caregiver, Nurture Thyself

The Importance of Self-Compassion

“Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; our God is merciful.”

– Psalms 116:5

Overview

Practicing self-care in the midst of meeting others’ needs is challenging enough, but what about remembering to practice self-compassion?

Self-compassion means “being open to and moved by one’s own suffering, experiencing feelings of caring and kindness toward oneself, taking an understanding, nonjudgmental attitude toward one’s inadequacies and failures, and recognizing that one’s experience is part of the common human experience.”¹

There is growing evidence that treating ourselves kindly when confronted with personal failures can improve emotional well-being and increase our ability to withstand the impact of negative events. In turn, this type of intentional self-care can refill us and help us care for others more effectively.

Reflection Questions

- How can I begin to treat myself with the same compassion I show towards others?
- How can I develop more awareness of my own internal dialogue and be more accepting of and kinder to myself?

Why it Matters

People who practice self-compassion are less likely to be anxious or depressed, and they experience higher levels of social connectedness, life satisfaction, and overall happiness.

Practicing Self-Compassion^{2,3}

1. Be mindful: notice and accept painful thoughts and feelings without over-identifying with them or over-emphasizing their importance.
2. Recognize that your challenges are part of a common, imperfect human experience: all human beings suffer and fall short. This can make your experience feel less isolating and overwhelming.
3. Reframe your internal dialogue: instead of focusing on the negative, acknowledge the difficulty of the situation and consider ways you might offer yourself forgiveness or comfort.

Additional Resources

Learn more about how to use self-compassion to improve emotional well-being and effectiveness:

- <http://selfcompassion.org>
- Neff, K. (2011). *Self-Compassion: Stop beating yourself up and leave insecurity behind*. New York: William Morrow.
- Germer, C. K. (2009). *The mindful path to self-compassion: Freeing yourself from destructive thoughts and emotions*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Hayes, S., & Smith S. (2005). *Get out of your mind and into your life: The new acceptance and commitment therapy*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

Sources Cited

¹Neff, K. (2003). The development and validation of a scale to measure self-compassion. *Self and Identity*, 2, 223-250.

²Weir, K. (2011). Golden rule redux: Research suggests that for emotional well-being, you should treat yourself the way you'd want others to treat you. American Psychological Association, *Monitor*, 42 (7), 42.

³Leary, M., Tate, E. et al (2007). Self-compassion and reactions to unpleasant events: The implications of treating oneself kindly. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92(5), 887-904.