



Self-compassion



What is self-compassion?

Dr Kirstin Neff identified three elements to self-compassion:

- **Self-kindness** involves showing ourselves warmth and understanding when we are struggling, instead of attempting to ignore our feelings, or hurting ourselves with an overly critical attitude.
- **Common humanity** involves understanding that suffering and making mistakes is part of what makes us human. The fact that everyone shares this experience can encourage us to take difficulties less personally.
- **Mindfulness** involves having a balanced approach to negative emotions, neither suppressing nor exaggerating them. It is about acknowledging what we are thinking and feeling without judgment.

Compassion is the response to the suffering of others that motivates a desire to help. Self-compassion involves showing yourself compassion at times of difficulty, failure or perceived inadequacy.



Why is self-compassion important?

Research suggests that having self-compassion can in fact help us manage threatening situations more effectively and cope constructively. By being **less critical** of ourselves, we are motivated to keep working towards our goals, even when faced with discouragement. In fact, we give ourselves a greater chance at succeeding when we exercise self-compassion.



How to develop self-compassion?

Self-compassion is a skill that we can all learn. Here are some strategies that can help you to develop self-compassion:

- 1. Speak to yourself as you would speak to a friend.** Unfortunately, we are often more critical of ourselves than we are of others.
- 2. Watch your language.** Become more aware of your self-talk and start to question it e.g., "Am I being too critical? Would I ever speak like this to a friend?"
- 3. Become friends with feelings.** It is ok to experience negative emotions; they are normal and part of life. Allow yourself to experience all of your emotions but remember not to hold on to them too tightly.
- 4. Develop self-compassion phrases.** Whenever you find yourself being overly self-critical or experiencing difficulty, use your phrases as a way to remind yourself that you can get through the tough times, e.g., "Everybody makes mistakes."



Student Counselling Service

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