

Self-Compassion Practice #1

A Letter of Self-Compassion

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Duration: 15-20 minutes

Frequency: Repeat monthly or as needed

Level of Difficulty: Moderate

Overview: Many of us fall into a pattern of self-criticism in which we beat ourselves up because we feel as if we don't "measure up." Some studies even suggest that over 80% of people are harder on themselves than they are on others. There are many reasons for this, including internalized messages from childhood, adverse experiences throughout life, as well as societal beliefs around us. In this exercise, you'll begin harnessing the power of self-compassion through the experience of writing a letter of self-compassion. Because it's often easier to be kind towards others or to envision kindness coming from someone we care about, you'll be writing this letter from the standpoint of someone who cares (or cared) deeply for you.

Instructions: Before you start writing your letter, begin by reflecting on who in your life offers you compassion. It's often easier for us to offer kindness towards others, or to envision kindness being received from others, than it is to offer that compassion toward ourselves. So as you begin, start by identifying first a perceived flaw or shortcoming that you tend to beat yourself up over, and then see if you can identify a person in your life who you know cares genuinely and deeply for you.

Perceived flaw/shortcoming that I fixate on:

Person in my life who shows me compassion:

What words might this person say to me?

What tone might they use in speaking to me?

What actions might they take to convey caring and understanding?

Once you've brainstormed a bit above, begin writing a draft of your letter. Don't worry about grammar, spelling, or format. Instead, simply allow yourself to explore the emotional reactions that come up for you, and see if you can tap into the felt sense of kindness and caring that would emanate from this individual. *Write your letter on a separate sheet of paper.*

