

## Self-Compassion Practice #2

# Self-Compassion Break



**Duration:** Five minutes

**Frequency:** Daily, or as needed

**Level of Difficulty:** Easy/Moderate

**Overview:** As defined by experts such as Kristin Neff, self-compassion consists of three separate yet distinct ingredients:

- *Mindfulness:* Being aware of our pain, without pushing it away or overly identifying with it and letting it consume us.
- *Common Humanity:* The knowledge and understanding that we are not alone in our suffering, and that the experience of pain is indeed universal.
- *Self-Kindness:* Treating ourselves with caring and compassion.

In this exercise, you will be tapping into these three aspects of self-compassion and applying them to difficult experiences in your own life.

**Instructions:** First, reflect on a situation in your life that is causing you stress at this point in time. Try bringing it to mind, and allow yourself to feel the emotions associated with it. Notice what comes up for you. *Write down the source of this stress:*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Next, either out loud or in your mind, say to yourself, "This is a moment of pain and suffering." That's *mindfulness*—simply noticing what's happening in the present moment, without judgment. We're not trying to hold onto the pain too tightly, but we're also not trying to push it away. Conversely, you might say to yourself, "This is really stressful," or, "This hurts right now." Use whatever words and language feel right for you. *Write your statement tapping into mindful awareness:*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Next, silently or softly out loud, say to yourself, "Pain and suffering is an inevitable part of life." That's *common humanity*, the awareness that we all have experiences of suffering. Rather than feeling alone and isolated from those around us, common humanity helps us to recognize that everyone has moments of difficulty, struggle, and self-doubt. Conversely, you might say to yourself, "I'm not alone in this," or, "Everyone struggles sometimes." *Use whatever words feel natural to you, and in the space below write your statement of common humanity:*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Finally, gently say to yourself, "May I have kindness and compassion for myself." This is *self-kindness*, the belief that we too deserve compassion and caring when we're in pain. Conversely you might ask, "What do I need right now to care for myself," or say, "May I accept myself for who I am." Use whatever phrase or words feel right to you. *When you're ready, use the space below to write your statement of self-kindness:*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

In the days to come, use this exercise to begin practicing how to respond with self-compassion during times of struggle. Although it may feel foreign at first, over time it will become more natural and instinctual. Use this practice at any time of day, wherever you are, to begin cultivating the valuable skill of self-compassion.

**Key Points to Consider:**

- ✓ In the beginning, practice this when you're feeling calm. Eventually it will be a great skill to turn to when difficult feelings arise, but when you're starting out, it can be easier to practice when you're feeling less emotional.
- ✓ Use whatever words feel natural to you. The suggestions above are simply examples—what's key is that you identify ways of relating to yourself that feel natural and congruent for you. So play around with it and experiment a bit.

**How and why it works:** Many of us fall into patterns of self-criticism, in which we're much harder on ourselves than we would ever be towards others. Although we may believe this will help spur us to greater heights, the research is now fairly conclusive that self-criticism is connected to decreased levels of well-being and lower achievement. Conversely, self-compassion has been linked to numerous positive mental and physical health outcomes, including lower rates of depression and anxiety, and higher rates of happiness and well-being.

