

## Self-Compassion Practice #6

# Self-Criticism vs. Self-Compassion

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**Duration:** 15 minutes

**Frequency:** Weekly

**Level of Difficulty:** Moderate

**Overview:** Although there are many reasons that we sometimes engage in self-criticism, one such reason stems from an internalized belief that self-criticism will somehow spur us on to greater heights and motivate us to improve our shortcomings. Despite how widespread this belief is, research suggests that rather than motivate us, self-criticism instead demoralizes us and makes us less likely to achieve our goals. As an alternative, studies suggest that self-compassion can be an antidote for this tendency, and actually leads to higher levels of achievement and increased motivation. In this exercise, you'll be comparing and contrasting the impact of using either self-criticism or self-compassion when it comes to behavioral change and reaching our goals.

**Instructions:** Reflect for a moment on a personal trait or habit you tend to be self-critical about, perhaps one which you have tried to change through self-criticism. For example, it could be something about yourself that you don't particularly like, or a bad habit that you've unsuccessfully tried to change.

*Habit/trait I struggle with:*

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Next, take a moment and reflect on how you tend to treat yourself when it comes to this trait or habit. Do you treat yourself with caring, kindness, and understanding? Or do you, like most people, drift into more of a self-critical or self-punitive pattern when it comes to these things? Reflect on how self-criticism impacts you in terms of this issue.

*Self-critical language that I use towards myself:*

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Next, consider the impact of self-criticism in terms of this trait or habit. Does it energize you and help you become a better version of yourself? Or does it instead drag you down and make you feel worse about yourself? Reflect on the toll of self-criticism in regards to this issue.

*How self-criticism hurts me:*

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Once you've completed the previous sections, you've probably noticed that self-criticism tends to make you feel pretty lousy and demoralized. Not only that, it makes us less likely to reach our goals or improve in the ways we'd like to. Assuming that's the case, take a brief moment and consider what it would be like to relate to yourself in a more self-compassionate manner around the particular habit or trait you're struggling with. Rather than beating yourself up, what would it look like if you were to treat yourself the way you'd undoubtedly treat those around you struggling with the same issue?

*Self-compassionate alternative:*

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