



# SELF COMPASSION



Being kind to ourselves

## WHAT IS SELF COMPASSION?

Compassion means being aware of/acknowledging suffering, experiencing feelings of kindness/care, and understanding that imperfections and mistakes are universal aspects of being human that all of us share in common. Self-compassion is nothing but compassion toward one's own self.



## Things We Tell Ourselves, But Need to Rethink!

*"I think what I need is to do things to maintain high self-esteem rather than being kind to myself"*

## Instead, consider this:

Self-esteem involves a positive evaluation of oneself. Very often, people understand and base their self-esteem on certain conditions such as being better than others in some respect, achieving things in life, etc.

Such things become the conditions for valuing ourselves positively and then our self-esteem keeps fluctuating based on whether we are able to meet these standards. This approach is not a healthy way of functioning.

**Conditional self-esteem (when we set conditions to feel OK/good about ourselves) can**



Enhance risk of depression in the face of failures/losses and result in undue anxiety and stress while trying to meet certain standard 'before we value ourselves'.



Result in various undesirable methods people might use to preserve their self-esteem (e.g putting others down, avoiding to think about what is going wrong).

*"Self-compassion seems like self-pity. I would not want that."*

## Instead, consider this:

True self-compassion is very different from self-pity. In self-pity, one focuses on oneself and may brood/ruminate over and over again about the negative aspects of a situation. Self-compassion on the other hand is about just being aware (mindful) of the situation/feelings, rather than constantly dwelling/drowning in these.

Moreover self-compassion draws upon the belief that suffering is universal aspects of living life for everyone and one is not special as compared to others. This is different from self-pity which often tends to give rise to a sense of 'me' suffering in isolation from others.

**Self-compassion is also about positive regard for oneself but remember that it is not a conditional state.**

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## WHAT IS SELF CRITICISM?

Negative thoughts and views about oneself or one's behaviours

It can be in the form of negative comparison of one's own self with others or in terms of feeling that one has not lived up to one's own internal goals/standards.

## Things We Tell Ourselves, But Need to Rethink!

“ I think being self-critical is good. It can motivate us.

Of course, it is important that we recognize our mistakes/errors/failures and learn from them or correct our patterns of thinking/action. However, this is not the same as being self-critical.

### ❗ High levels of self-criticality

i.e comparing unfairly with others or with our own harsh and unrealistic internal standards has been linked to various kinds of mental health problems. This is because high self-criticality can result in excessive brooding and worsening of moods which in turn affect our functioning.

Although some level of anxiety and tension can motivate us to do better, over generalized/global judgements of ourselves like When I forgot to address someone appropriately during a class. Telling myself “ ***I am such a stupid person who can never succeed***”

It can worsen our mood to an extent that we may end up doing self-destructive things to feel better like



scrolling endlessly to cope with the resultant low mood



avoid preparing for upcoming classes due to heightened sense of pressure

### ✅ Being self-compassionate

On the other hand, being self-compassionate can help us acknowledge rather than deny/avoid what went wrong without unfavorably judging ourselves as 'bad'/'wrong persons'. This can free us to work towards improving what we want to improve.

## How is self-criticism related to being criticized by others?

There are times when another person's comments feel upsetting because they reflect what you have already been telling yourself – in the form of an internal dialogue. Thus, others' comments/behaviors may trigger negative, self-critical or self-blaming thoughts leading to sadness.

## What can I do to be more self-compassionate?

Look back at your past experiences to figure out why and how you learnt to become so self-critical of yourself. But these insights are not automatically sufficient to change this pattern. What is helpful is practicing the new approach repeatedly and consciously till it becomes a new habit.

# DEVELOPING SELF COMPASSION



**1** WHAT?

**Become aware and catch your self-criticality in action**

HOW?

Just observe each time you notice yourself becoming self-critical. What exactly do you tell yourself? Look for the times you've been excessively harsh/global/unfairly critical of yourself.

**2** WHAT?

**Talk back gently to your inner critical voice**

HOW?

You may talk back in your mind to your inner critique.

*Say "Okay, yes, there is a point, I should've been more careful about this. I feel disappointed, but such mistakes can happen for anyone. I can try to be more careful next time. Perhaps I will use a strategy so that I don't forget such things. Anyway, it doesn't make me a stupid person"*

**3** WHAT?

**Practice replacing self-critical inner talk**

HOW?

Practice replacing your self-critical inner talk with self-compassionate statements.

Self-Critical Thought	Self-Compassionate Alternative Self-Talk
I could not talk properly to my teacher. I am a weak and an incapable person.	
I did not live up to his expectations. I am not worthy of his affection. I hate myself.	
Write down your own self critical thought here	

**4** WHAT?

**Imagine feeling and showing compassion**

HOW?

Ask yourself how you might talk to a friend who commits the same mistake/who is suffering due to something he/she did wrong. Think about the tone of voice, your words, your views that you might bring to forefront to help the friend deal with and move on. Try using that same style with your own self.

**5** WHAT?

**Ask a friend to show you how to be compassionate**

HOW?

Share your inner critical voice with someone you trust who's compassionate and authentic. Listen to what they say as a compassionate response, this may give you a few ideas on what you can say to yourself when trying to be more compassionate.