

What is Self-Compassion and Why is it Important?

Being kind to yourself in the presence of your own suffering. Self-compassion is like being your own best friend. “What am I experiencing? What do I need to feel better?”

Components:

1. Mindfulness - Clearly seeing our own suffering
2. Self-kindness - A genuine desire to alleviate our own suffering
3. Sense of common humanity - A recognition that suffering is part of the human condition

Common concerns about self-compassion:

Concern	Response
It's selfish to focus on myself.	It gives us the resources to care.
It's really only about feeling sorry for yourself.	It helps us feel connected to others who are suffering which reduces our self-pity.
It's hard to be nice all the time.	Self-compassion emphasizes reality not pleasure.
It's self-indulgent.	Self-compassion focuses on long-term improvement not short-term satisfactions.
But it's necessary to be critical of ourselves some of the time.	Being discerning about what needs to change about ourselves is different from harsh judgment.
Without self-criticism and negative self-judgment we will lack motivation to improve.	Self-compassion motivates with care not fear and shame.

Research on self-compassion shows:

1. Reduces depression, anxiety and shame
2. Increases happiness and life satisfaction
3. Reduces social comparison
4. Associated with healthier body image and less disordered eating
5. Reduces caregiver burnout
6. Associated with better physical health and immune function
7. Associated with better sleep quality

How to practice self-compassion

1. Be compassionate to others
2. Own a pet
3. Practice yoga
4. Be a friend to yourself. Ask yourself these three questions:
 - a. How would I treat a friend in this situation?
 - b. What do I need to comfort myself?
 - c. How do I care for myself already?
5. Practice

Kaethe Weingarten, Ph.D.

The Witness to Witness Program | <https://www.migrantclinician.org/witness-to-witness>