

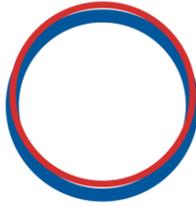
Self-compassion worksheet

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1. Noted through the worksheet text is ***tonal coloured italic wording***. This coloured prompt acts as a 'quick to find' signpost for support and links to self-compassion assistance when you need it the most.
 2. If ***negative feelings become too much***: Important note from Dr Kristin Neff (Neff, 2021):

"Some people find that when they practise self-compassion, their pain increases at first. We call this phenomena backdraft, a firefighting term that describes what happens when a door in a burning house is opened – oxygen goes in, and flames rush out. A similar process can occur when we open the door of our hearts – love goes in, and old pain comes out. There are a couple of sayings that describe this process: "When we give ourselves unconditional love, we discover the conditions under which we were unloved" or "Love reveals everything unlike itself." Fortunately, we can meet old pain with the resources of mindfulness and self-compassion and the heart will naturally begin to heal. Still, it means we have to allow ourselves to be slow learners when it comes to practising self-compassion. And if we ever feel overwhelmed by difficult emotions, the most self-compassionate response may be to pull back temporarily – focus on the breath, the sensation of the soles of our feet on the ground, or engage in ordinary, behavioural acts of self-care such as having a cup of tea or petting the cat. By doing so we reinforce the habit of self-compassion – giving ourselves what we need in the moment – planting seeds that will eventually blossom and grow."



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3. What is compassion and how does it correlate to self-compassion?

A logical place to begin is to highlight what compassion is to help define self-compassion later. The word compassion simply translates 'to suffer together'. How many times have you told a friend to stop being so hard on themselves and find your inner voice being much harsher in judgement? When we see someone in a less favourable situation, it is common to show concern and want to act on those feelings in some way. Compassion is seen as action whereas empathy is a feeling. Considering the extensive human experience of compassion, why is it perhaps so difficult for some people to be compassionate towards themselves? Experts have noted that if you are capable of compassion towards others, it is fundamentally no different than showing it to oneself (Neff, 2021). This is great news, right?! That means there is potential for every person reading this now to further improve their capacity for self-compassion.

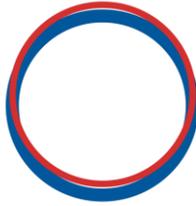
4. Five ways for you to begin your journey towards being more self-compassionate.

a. Self-Compassion through Mindfulness

Sometimes we fail or make mistakes, it is important for us not to berate ourselves over what are commonplace occurrences. In these circumstances, we try to hold onto positive feelings and attempt to shut out the negative ones. This can result in feeling decidedly worse as your mood levels lower. Mindfulness claims to work on the theory that by allowing feelings and thoughts; positive or negative to exist and be present in our awareness, we can reduce feelings of anxiety. This is also believed to work on depression, as well as more temporary afflictions such as stress or physical pain. Mindfulness is something that can be practised daily. [Some helpful and widely available short videos can give you easy and illustrative guides to carrying out mindfulness techniques. For example, 'body scanning' or 'mindful breathing'](#). One of the benefits of these techniques is that you can draw upon these methods anywhere and, at any time, once you are familiar. For example, the ethos behind mindful breathing is to relinquish the past or the future by anchoring you in the present, through the medium of breath. Something that you are doing anyway without the awareness of the action.

b. Self-Compassion through Self-Awareness

Self-awareness allows us to identify when we are being unkind to ourselves. Thus, allowing us to speak more thoughtfully, by applying more forgiving self-judgements of our perceived flaws. In other words, being self-compassionate. Initially, it perhaps will feel uncomfortable because it is not familiar but, by repeating this pattern of behaviour, familiarity will have a chance to grow as well as a heightened sense of well-being. Viskovich and George-Walker (2019) hypothesised that both mindfulness and reflective self-awareness leads to 'integrated self-knowledge' which enables self-compassion. Integrative self-knowledge is where we understand ourselves enough (perhaps through self-awareness) and it enables us to relate to our past but also aids in understanding how we reach our future goals. [Ways in which you can work on your self-awareness: 10 Simple Ways to Improve Your Self-Awareness \[With Examples\] \(nickwignall.com\)](#)



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c. *Self-Compassion through compassion training*

Positivepsychology.com's website self-proclaims to help others and contributions are made by practitioners and techniques and tools are based upon scientific principles. There is vast amounts of information accessible and to find the training exercises. [*Please navigate to roughly halfway down the page of the link presented above \(12 Best Compassion Training Exercises & Activities \(positivepsychology.com\)\).*](#)

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d. 'The Surprising Science of happiness' – an alternative perspective to Self-Compassion

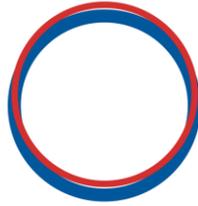
Ever thought of 'faking it until you make it', in the context of happiness? Making ourselves happy may be seen as a form of self-compassion. Gilbert's theories ([*Dan Gilbert's: 'The surprising science of happiness' Ted Talk, 2004*](#)) suggest that all humans are capable of manufacturing synthetic happiness. We tend to believe happiness is something that needs to be found or indeed can be lost. However, research has shown that synthetic happiness is something that exists and can be further cultivated. Humans can envisage a plethora of scenarios and choices before having to experience anything at all; the decision may have already been made as to whether you are happy/not happy without being part of the experience itself. This innate capability has been shown to affect levels of happiness and highlights what we do subconsciously and what we can do consciously to increase happiness possibilities.

e. 'Best possible selves' (BPS) exercises

It is suggested that consistent repetition of mood-boosting activities such as BPS exercises, aid to positively enhance emotions. Such action improves well-being overall and is effective in working towards levels of sustainable happiness. Visualization of a preferred version of ourselves in the future is believed to help us gain insight into what motivates us and foster a sense of greater control over our emotional well-being (Sheldon and Lyubomirsky, 2006). [*TIP: Perhaps find a quiet moment where you can close your eyes in a safe and familiar space, or you can undertake this process whilst out walking or sitting on a bus before your stop. Draw your mind's eye to you being in the future, living out your wishes and dreams. You are in a place where good things have happened for you. You are happy, you have reached your ultimate potential and you have achieved your goals which previously had been out of reach. Allow your mind to wander in the wonder of this version of yourself and life.*](#)

5. Final thoughts.

It can seem daunting to think of being compassionate to oneself, and this is particularly true for those who feel they are undeserving of compassion. However, you are deserving, and you are worthy, and hopefully, some of these hints and tips will help you on your journey to becoming more self-compassionate.



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References

Neff, K. (2021) 'Self-compassion' [Online] Available at: [Definition and Three Elements of Self Compassion | Kristin Neff \(self-compassion.org\)](https://www.self-compassion.org/definition-and-three-elements-of-self-compassion/) (accessed 28/06/2021)

Viskovich, S. and George-Walker, L. De. (2019) 'An investigation of self-care related constructs in undergraduate psychology students: Self-compassion, mindfulness, self-awareness, and integrated self-knowledge', International Journal of Educational Research, Volume 95, 2019, pp.109-117,ISSN 0883-0355, Doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2019.02.005.

Sheldon, K. M. and Lyubomirsky, S. (2006) How to increase and sustain positive emotion: The effects of expressing gratitude and visualizing best possible selves, The Journal of Positive Psychology, 1:2, 73-82, DOI: [10.1080/17439760500510676](https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760500510676)