

Mindful Self-Compassion for Adults

Adapted from: https://ggie.berkeley.edu/practice/mindful-self-compassion-for-adults/#tab_2

Time needed: 5-6 minutes

The Practice

This meditation is a self-compassion meditation of revealing loving presence.

You can do this practice sitting, lying down, or even standing.

You may close your eyes or keep them open, whichever feels right for you.

We'll begin by simply settling into the breath and the body.

As you inhale, notice sensations of breath throughout the entire body, and as you exhale, relax and release that attention.

Inhale, noticing sensations in the body.

Exhale, relaxing and releasing.

Continue this pattern of noticing through the inhale, and relaxing through the exhale, on the rhythm of your own breath.

When the mind slips away—caught up by some idea, memory, or image—no problem at all.

Simply relax; release whatever has captured your attention, and return—for just a bit longer—to settling into the breath and the body.

Noticing through the inhale, relaxing and releasing through the exhale.

[PAUSE - up to one minute]

We'll now shift and focus our attention away from the breath and the body and into our practice of self-compassion.



In this practice, we're going to focus on the subtlety of compassion for ourselves—that's already here.

We begin this by simply noticing right now, right here.

Is there a sense of care, kindness, and compassion for ourselves?

The very basic human condition is one in which we are seeking to be okay.

Noticing this basic human desire to care for ourselves, see if you can feel that as a presence.

Noticing whether in the body this sense of caring or kindness can be experienced just through the simple breath.

Inhale, noticing a caring presence.

Exhale, noticing a caring presence.

This may feel hard or abstract. You can reflect on the simple ways that you take care of yourself...

Listening to this meditation.

Taking care of your body through bathing, feeding.

Think of the simple ways that you try to avoid difficulty and discomfort.

For example, shifting or moving the body if you're uncomfortable.

Putting on a warm sweater if you're cold.

Just notice these simple ways we're already kind to ourselves—caring about our well-being.

Instead of having to generate or construct self-compassion, feel or imagine simply revealing the self-compassion which is already here—our desire to alleviate our own suffering.

Continuing again through the inhale and exhale—

Inhale, considering this loving presence that's already here.

And exhaling extending a wish of compassion to our self.

Inhale, noticing the loving presence already here.

And exhale, extending that loving presence and compassion to ourselves.



[BRIEF PAUSE]

This may feel hard or hokey at first—no problem at all.

Setting our mind and intention towards this caring way of being can create a natural form of relaxation and resilience, so keep steadying the mind here.

Noticing a caring loving presence, extending a caring loving presence—for ourselves.

[PAUSE]

Consider continuing this feeling of loving presence throughout the rest of our day.

No need to shift anything, simply bringing this practice to a close.



Activity to practice self-compassion:

Self-Compassion Break Exercise (5 min) – Kristin Neff, psychologist

1. Think of a situation in your life that is difficult and is causing you stress. For this practice, especially if you are new to it, it's better to choose something that is moderately difficult in your life, rather than overwhelming.
2. Breathe. Take a moment to check in with your body.
3. Call the situation to mind and get in touch with what happened or what you think might happen. Take a deep breath.
4. (Mindfulness) Now say to yourself, "This is a moment of difficulty." This acknowledgment is a form of mindfulness—of noticing what is going on for you emotionally in the present moment, without judging that experience as good or bad. You can also say to yourself, "This hurts", "Ouch", or "This is stress." Use whatever statement feels most natural to you. Take a couple of deep breaths. Notice how this feels in your body.
5. (Connectedness) Next, say to yourself, "Difficulty is a part of life." This is a recognition of your common humanity with others—that all people have trying experiences, and these experiences give you something in common with the rest of humanity rather than mark you as abnormal or deficient. Other options for this statement include "Other people feel this way," "I'm not alone," or "Everyone experiences difficulties in their lives." Take a couple of deep breaths.
6. (Self-Kindness) Now, put your hands over your heart, feel the warmth of your hands and the gentle touch on your chest, and say, "May I be kind to myself." You can also consider whether there is another specific phrase that would speak to you in that particular situation. Some examples:
 - a. "May I give myself the compassion that I need,"
 - b. "May I accept myself as I am,"
 - c. "May I begin to accept myself as I am,"
 - d. "May I forgive myself,"
 - e. "May I be strong,"
 - f. "May I be patient."
 - g. Take another deep breath.

If you're having difficulty finding the right words, imagine that a dear friend or loved one is having the same problem as you. What would you say to this person? What simple message would you like to deliver to your friend, heart to heart? Now see if you can offer the same message to yourself.

