



Self-compassion



What is self-compassion?

Compassion is the response to the suffering of others that motivates a desire to help. Self-compassion involves showing yourself compassion at times of difficulty, failure or perceived inadequacy.

Dr Kirstin Neff identified three elements to self-compassion:

- **Self-kindness** involves showing ourselves warmth and understanding when we are struggling, instead of attempting to ignore our feelings, or hurting ourselves with an overly critical attitude.
- **Common humanity** involves understanding that suffering and making mistakes is part of what makes us human. The fact that everyone shares this experience can encourage us to take difficulties less personally.
- **Mindfulness** involves having a balanced approach to negative emotions, neither suppressing nor exaggerating them. It is about acknowledging what we are thinking and feeling without judgment.



Why is self-compassion important?

Research suggests that having self-compassion can in fact help us manage threatening situations more effectively and cope constructively. By being **less critical** of ourselves, we are motivated to keep working towards our goals, even when faced with discouragement. In fact, we give ourselves a greater chance at succeeding when we exercise self-compassion.



How to develop self-compassion?

Self-compassion is a skill that we can all learn. Here are some strategies that can help you to develop self-compassion:

- 1. Speak to yourself as you would speak to a friend.** Unfortunately, we are often more critical of ourselves than we are of others.
- 2. Watch your language.** Become more aware of your self-talk and start to question it e.g. "Am I being too critical? Would I ever speak like this to a friend?"
- 3. Become friends with feelings.** It is ok to experience negative emotions; they are normal and part of life. Allow yourself to experience all of your emotions, but remember not to hold on to them too tightly.
- 4. Develop self-compassion phrases.** Whenever you find yourself being overly self-critical or experiencing difficulty, use your phrases as a way to remind yourself that you can get through the tough times, e.g.; "Everybody makes mistakes."



Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

+61 2 8627 8433
caps.admin@sydney.edu.au
sydney.edu.au/counselling

Level 5, Jane Foss Russell Building
Opening hours: 9am to 4.30pm,
Monday to Friday

Crisis contacts

Ambulance/Fire/Police: 000
Lifeline (24 hours): 13 11 14
Mental Health Access Line: 1800 011 511