

## Self-compassion

Self-compassion refers to having a friendly and kind disposition towards yourself, especially when you are dealing with pain or difficult feelings. It means realising that pain and adversity are part of the human condition and that everyone experiences such feelings at times. Self-compassion is possible through practising mindfulness, or being conscious in the present moment of your experiences as they are, rather than as the mind might interpret them to be.

### 1. Mindfulness and self-observation

First, think of situations where you tend to be particularly harsh or critical of yourself. How do you speak to yourself at such times? How do these kinds of situations and your internal dialogue make you feel?

### 2. Kindness towards yourself

Look at how you answered the first question and then compare it to how you would speak to a close friend if they were in a similar situation. What kinds of things would you say and bring up when talking with them? Is there a difference between the two? If so, consider what reasons may lie behind the difference.

### 3. Our shared humanity and a sense of belonging

Sometimes difficult emotions can make us think our own reactions are strange or wrong, or that everyone else has it better and our situation is completely different from that of others. At such times, it's important to remember that all people sometimes experience pain and suffering. Everyone also experiences stress, and even the most difficult feelings are part of our shared humanity.

Try to shift your focus for a moment to the people around you. Put yourself in their place and remind yourself that they, too, have their life stories with successes and dreams, but also with pain and struggles.

Reflect on how it feels to think about others in that way. In what types of situations could this kind of exercise be helpful to you?

### 4. Helping your future 'me'



Self-compassion isn't just a matter of thinking: it's also about doing. Practising self-compassion can be as simple as doing something in the evening to help you get more sleep the next morning.

Think of one good deed that you could do today for yourself –something you could thank yourself for tomorrow.