

WORKSHEET

A LETTER OF SELF-COMPASSION

"Self-compassion is being open to our own suffering and pain with the same kindness and care that we would offer to a good friend." — Kristin Neff

We often find it much easier to extend kindness and empathy to our friends and loved ones, forgiving them readily and embracing them as they are, flaws and all. Yet, when it comes to ourselves, we can be our harshest critics, setting impossibly high standards and often struggling to see our own worth beyond our imperfections.

This exercise aims at bridging that gap by offering yourself the same level of compassion and acceptance that you would offer to a dear friend.

Step 1: Choose an aspect of yourself that you dislike or often criticize; something that causes you to feel ashamed, inadequate, insecure, or not “good enough” (e.g., one related to your abilities, relationships, work/school performance, appearance, or personality). Now, briefly describe how this perceived inadequacy makes you feel. What thoughts, images, emotions, or stories come up when you think about it?

Step 2: Now, imagine someone who is unconditionally loving, accepting, and supportive and write yourself a heartfelt letter from their perspective, addressing the aspect you tend to judge yourself for (from step 1). Express compassion for your pain, remind yourself of your humanity, and offer unlimited compassion.

- *What would this loving friend say to you about your “flaw”?*
- *How would this friend convey the deep compassion they feel for you?*
- *What would this friend write in order to remind you that you are only human, that all people have both strengths and weaknesses, and that everyone’s doing the best they can with the tools they have?*

Step 3: After fully drafting the letter, put it aside for fifteen minutes. Then return to the letter and reread it. Let the words sink in. Feel the encouragement, support, compassion, and acceptance and come back to this letter whenever you struggle with the aspect you've written about.