

Self-Compassion and Loving Kindness for Therapists

Written by Emily Wharton, M.S.

Based on Self-Compassion and Loving Kindness work of Kristen Neff, Ph.D.

As you get into a comfortable position, you can close your eyes if you'd like or leave them open.

Taking a few deep breaths, a few more.
Asking yourself, what am I feeling right now?
How do I know? How is my body telling me?
Can I notice any tension in my body?

Call to mind something that has been difficult for you lately.
It can be something in your personal life, in your role as a therapist, as a loved one, something that has
been happening in the world that has distresses you.
Asking yourself, what feelings has this challenge brought up for me?
What has it been like for me to hold this?

Observe what happens in your body as you touch this difficulty.
Can you soften to this feeling, breathing into the part of your body where you feel it most?
If you wish, you can say to yourself,
This hurts.
This is tough.
This is suffering.

Now, I invite you to think about a therapist you know.
It can be a friend who is a therapist, your own therapist from the past or right now, a colleague you
admire, a famous therapist you respect, someone you feel warmth toward.
It can be a person who is alive or not.
Imagine this person's face.

Recall memories with this person, connecting with them, or learning from them at a distance.
What made them come to mind for you?
What are the values this person embodies in your mind?
Do you see any of these values in yourself?
Are there ways you have been trying to live by these values or hope to in the future?

Now bring this person's face to mind.
Imagine what kind of struggles they may have faced.
What thoughts and feelings they may hold right now or have held in their life.
Their joy and their pain.
You may acknowledge:
This is a person who has experienced suffering.

Now imagining looking into this person's eyes, you can say these phrases or make your own:
May you feel my love now
May you accept yourself just as you are
May you find peace
May you be happy

Let that person's face disappear from your mind's eye, knowing you can always come back to them.

Now think about a client you feel warmth toward.

A client you felt deeply connected with.

It can be a client you are seeing now or have seen years ago.

A client you may have felt very present with.

A client you care about deeply.

Recall sessions with this person.

What made you choose them right now?

What was it like for you to hear their story?

What did you feel in the room with them?

What was it like for you to sit with their pain, with their joy?

Bring this person's face to mind.

What caused them suffering?

What made them smile?

You may acknowledge:

This is a person who has experienced suffering.

Now imagining looking into this person's eyes, you can say these phrases or make your own:

May you feel my love now

May you accept yourself just as you are

May you find peace

May you be happy

Let the image of their face fade away. Now imagine your own face, your eyes.

Ask yourself:

What emotions am I experiencing right now?

What has been challenging for me recently?

What has sustained me?

What values have carried me through my work, my life?

What feels most important to me now?

What has brought me pain?

What has brought me joy?

You may acknowledge to yourself: *This is a person who has experienced suffering.*

Now imagining your own face in your mind's eye, you can say these phrases or make your own:

May I feel my love now

May I accept myself just as I am

May I find peace

May I be happy

Noticing what is coming up for you right now.

What it has been like to send these messages to others and to yourself.

Remembering that you are in a group of therapists that are all working together. You have a community of people who suffer and experience joy, who have their own clients and family members and friends. Therapists all over the world are connecting with themselves and with each other right in this moment. As you feel ready you can open your eyes.