

What Is Self-Compassion?

Insight Timer

Created in collaboration with self-compassion expert [Kristin D. Neff, Ph.D.](#)



[Self-Compassion Break](#)

Self-compassion is treating yourself with the same kindness and understanding you would offer a good friend when they are struggling. It involves turning toward your own pain with warmth, support, and care instead of judgment or avoidance.

The Three Elements of Self-Compassion

Self-compassion rests on three core elements that together support emotional resilience.



Mindfulness

Noticing when you're struggling without ignoring or exaggerating your pain.

Example thought: "This is really hard for me right now."



Common Humanity

Remembering that suffering, mistakes, and imperfection are part of being human.

Example thought: "I'm not alone in feeling this way. Everyone struggles sometimes."



Kindness

Responding to yourself with warmth and understanding instead of criticism.

Example thought: "How can I comfort and care for myself in this moment?"

Self-Compassion vs. Self-Criticism

How we talk to ourselves matters. One voice lifts us up, the other tears us down.

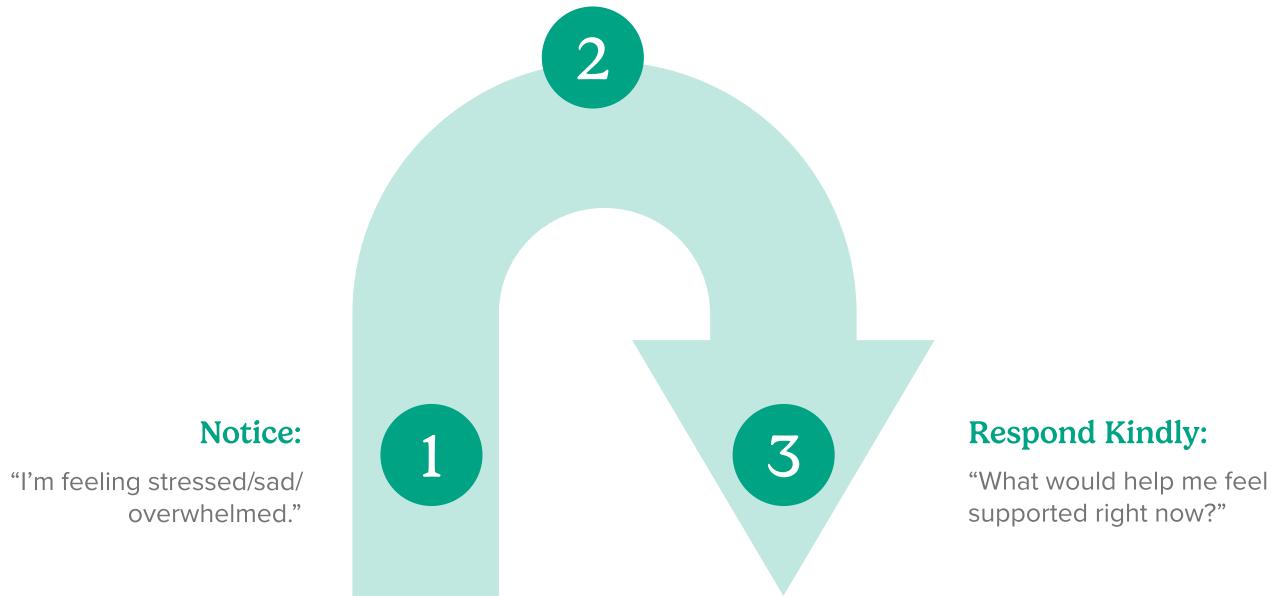
Self-Compassion	Self-Criticism
Encourages growth from a place of care	Triggers shame and discouragement
Accepts human imperfections	Demands unrealistic perfection
Motivates through support	Motivates through fear

How to Practice a “Self-Compassion U-Turn”

When you notice a friend’s suffering → you feel compassion → you respond with kindness. With self-compassion, you do the same for yourself.

Acknowledge:

“This is part of being human.”



Small Self-Compassion Practices



Place a hand on your heart and take a few slow breaths.



Write yourself a short note of encouragement.



Speak to yourself as you would to a dear friend.



Ask yourself “What do I need right now?”

Gentle Reminder

Perfection is not the goal. Being human means you will face challenges, make mistakes, and feel pain. Just like everyone else. **You deserve kindness, especially from yourself.**