

# WHY YOU SHOULD PRACTICE SELF-COMPASSION AND HOW TO DO IT

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## Be your own best friend

We are our own worst critics and harshest judges. We often find it easier to be loving and kind to those around us yet struggle with the notion of being kind to ourselves. The longest relationship is the one that we have with ourselves. It is also the most important relationship we will ever have because regardless of what happens we will always be with ourselves. It is important that we protect it.

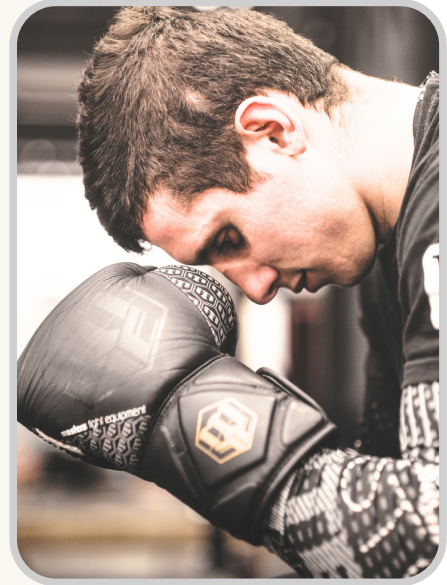
## What is Self-Compassion?

Self-compassion refers to being kind rather than judgemental and having the ability to refrain from criticism. It involves recognising that failures are a shared human experience and having the ability to maintain non-biased awareness of experiences and take a balanced approach to negative emotions. Self-compassion is often described as acting the same way towards yourself when faced with challenges as you would treat a friend going through the same experience – empathising, being kind and understanding.



# The power of our inner critic

You know that little voice that speaks to you with self-criticism... As humans we all have a safety system that has evolved in attempt to protect us from danger. While our threat defence system is very important in some instances, it often gets it wrong and can be triggered when we experience thoughts about ourselves that we perceive as a threat to our self-image. We often fall into thinking traps and make broad generalisations about who we are as a person. Our inner voice holds great power and often when we hear it criticise us with thoughts such as "I am not good enough", "I will always be alone", and "You can't do this" it fills us with doubt. Our perception becomes emotionally fuelled and derogatory adjectives or attributes become second nature to us. When this happens our body reacts as if our existence is threatened.



Research has repeatedly highlighted the link between self-compassion and well-being. Self-compassion has been found to enhance positive mind states while lessening negative ones. People with self-compassion who practice being non-judgmental and kind to themselves are happier, have higher optimism, have less stress and depression, more self-confidence, increased and more stable self-worth and greater satisfaction with life. They have a greater sense of wisdom, more motivation and willingness to take initiative and increased curiosity, learning, and exploration. Self-compassion is also associated with physical benefits such as stronger immune function and lower risk for heart disease.

## Embracing Self-Compassion



## How can we practice Self-Compassion?

- Notice when your inner critic shows up. Be aware of when you are being hard on yourself and criticising yourself more harshly than you would anyone else. Notice the thoughts and feelings and the value that they operate. Question 'Why?' these thoughts are feelings are present, for example, have these shown up because you value your learning? You want to parent a certain way? etc. Reflect on your values and consider how you can better meet your needs.
- Remember that thoughts are not facts. Be conscious not to label yourself with broad generalisations of who you are as a person. Assess your thoughts and inner critic and keep it specific to the particular situation, for example, just because you didn't get full marks on one test does not mean "I am a failure", it means there was a learning opportunity from one test.
- Focus on yourself rather than comparing yourself to others. Others may progress in different areas and at different rates to you, but they cannot do what you can do.
- Practice being compassionate and kind toward your inner critic. When it shows up, notice it with curiosity and openness, and avoid judging and berating yourself. Try not to push it away and instead say something compassionate to it.
- Write your inner critic a letter from the perspective of an unconditionally wise, loving, and compassionate friend who is struggling with the same concerns as you.