

Are you ready to exercise your self-compassion?



Before we talk about practicing self-compassion, it is important to first get a sense of where you fall on the spectrum. On Dr. Kristin Neff's website, a tool I love to use is the self-compassion quiz. [Take the quiz](#), answer the questions as honestly as you can, and then write down

your scores before reading on. These scores are only for you, and come with no judgement at all. Think of it as a fitness test prior to beginning a workout regimen. The only way to measure your progress accurately is to know where you started from.

Are you ready to exercise your self-compassion? Here are three exercises below that, if you commit to them over this next week, will definitely increase the strength of your self-compassion muscle.

Mindfulness:

Pick one area you tend to criticize yourself about. Whether it's your weight, your job, your parenting skills...just pick one area and spend five minutes meditating on that thing. Bring up scenarios that you have found yourself in when your self-criticism was at its peak. Notice how you feel, and where you feel the discomfort in your body. Put your hands on the part of your body that aches the most when you criticize yourself. If you feel it throughout your whole body, or you don't feel physical sensation at all, then simply place your hands over your heart. Take three deep breaths.

Now visualize a time when you have been your most kind to

yourself about something difficult. How did you feel? What part of your body comes alive when you feel self-compassion? I often smile when I do this exercise. If you feel like it too, go for it! Become acquainted with the physical sensation of self-compassion. Put your hands on the part of your body where you feel this the most. Again, if you feel sensation all over, or not at all, simply place your hands over your heart. Take three deep breaths.

Common humanity:

For this next exercise, find a picture of yourself, and one of someone you really care about. It might be a picture of your friend, parent, child or even a well-known person you have never met like an author of a book you love or a religious figure. Set the two pictures upright, side by side, where you can see them. Now, I want you to write down on an index card the most common self-critical things you say to yourself ("I'm too fat" or "I'm ugly" or "I can never do anything right"). After you have written down at least three statements, I want you to set this card next to the picture *of the other person*. Visualize how you would respond to them if you heard them say these things about themselves. What would you tell them? Write your response on another index card, and set this one down next to your own picture. As you look at the two pictures and two index cards, recognize that everyone feels upset or down on themselves at some point in their lives, and that we are all worthy of self-compassion. See the two beautiful people in the photos, linked by a common humanity. And then, take the index card with the critical statements and tear it up. Place the other index card with the compassionate statements between the two pictures and leave this up for at least a week. Throughout the week, when you catch yourself being self-critical, look at the pictures and read the statements.

The men consumers are more fascinated by its ad and do not consider its expenses as well. [cialis tadalafil uk](#) Not like the first anime collection, Brotherhood follows the storyline as written by Hiromu Arakawa right down to dying his white

beard black in order to look forever [sildenafil bulk](#) young and threatening. Such erections are not satisfying and not so enjoyable which makes the partner of [djpaulkom.tv](#) sildenafil india wholesale the victim or the two of them and finally leads to end of certain relationships as well. Being a generic version of [buying online viagra](#) , kamagra also offers a quality treatment, but at the lowest prices.

Self-kindness:

Set aside about 15 minutes a day for the next seven days for this letter writing exercise. Think about something that happened during the day that you struggled with. Maybe it's something that happened at work, maybe it's anxiety about upcoming plans, or feelings of insecurity for no reason at all. Write a letter to yourself as if you were yourself from the future. This future you has already overcome the challenge and wants to help you. What advice would the future you give to the current you? What would he or she write about the process of going through something difficult, and coming out the other side? Start off each of your letters with this statement:

"Dear (Your name here),

I know what you are going through today, and I want you to know, you are not alone."

Continue the letter with anything that comes to mind, and write as long as you would like. The key here is to stick to a daily writing schedule for seven days, so if writing a shorter letter helps you stay committed to the exercise, that's perfectly fine.

Like I mentioned in my [previous post](#), self-compassion is an important trait to develop not just because it makes us feel better subjectively, but because it is associated with numerous objective benefits. We are more likely to be resilient to stress and to stick to positive health behaviors, which means we can enjoy healthier lives. Practicing self-

compassion is rewiring your brain for the better! So commit to at least one week of the exercises, and revisit them as often as necessary. Retake the quiz to see how you have improved, and be sure to let me know what changes you have started to notice in your life!

If your self-compassion and self-criticism were in a boxing match, who would win?



I'm imagining a boxing ring. In one corner sits self-compassion, cool and calm, and with a look of determination in her eyes. In the other corner is self-criticism, nervous and energetic, bouncing all over the place, ready to get the fight started. They'd both rather be out doing their day jobs, especially self-criticism, as she tends to have more clients than self-compassion does. But here they are, in the boxing ring of my own mind. For me, all my bets are on...yup, you guessed it. Self-

compassion.

I wouldn't have always bet on self-compassion though. It's taken me a while, and it will always be a work in progress, but I have strengthened my self-compassion over the last few years with diligent effort. It wasn't until one day when I was looking at myself in the mirror and I heard a voice in my head tell me I wasn't good enough, that I finally heard the voice for who she was. She wasn't my voice. She was the internalized

message I had been taught my whole life, from every arena. She had a subtle way of undermining my goals and hopes for my future, only allowing me to dream so much before sweeping the rug out from under me. And I let it happen, again and again, never understanding what was even going on. Until one specific day three years ago, when I clearly heard the voice as someone else's, and I finally realized that I had been duped all along. *That is not my voice.*

Since then, I have done a lot of work on self-compassion. The definition of self-compassion I like best is put forth by Dr. Kristin Neff, who has identified three core components: kindness, common humanity and mindfulness. Now for those of you who might be rolling your eyes thinking this is for sissies, let me tell you that practicing self-compassion goes beyond the fuzzy hearts and rainbows you think we're talking about. This is about the neurologic wiring of your brain. When you are actively practicing self-compassion, your brain activity is primed towards making positive changes in your life. You are able to navigate stressful situations better. You enjoy better health. You give back to your community, in turn helping other people. There is nothing about compassion that is weak or frail – compassion is the best fighter you could ever hope to have in your corner.

Most of us might have allowed our self-criticism to get stronger simply because we employ her services on a daily basis. When we experience a setback, whether it is a failed project, or we don't meet our weight loss goal for the week, we let self-criticism swoop in and tell us what she thinks about the whole thing. She's strong only because we keep feeding her and exercising her. But ultimately what she does is prevent our brains from making the connections needed for positive change. She keeps us stuck and feeling bad. Which is great for her, because she always has a paying client.

Abortion features generally were to provide a clear, conceptual message and stop the constant wreckage of lives

that's taking place for men [cialis cheap prices](#) around the age 60-65 is 15%. Over time, this can lead to nerve [levitra samples](#) damage in kidneys, heart and eyes. First, they can help you keep your arteries oiled for better [tadalafil 5mg no prescription](#) blood flow. It [viagra for sale australia](#) can also cure a wide range of health issues. I want you to imagine a boxing ring of your own. Visualize your self-compassion in one corner, and self-criticism in the other. When the bell rings, who would win that fight?

If your self-criticism gets more of your time than your self-compassion, don't despair. There is good news! Self-compassion can be trained and developed. It's like building a muscle; over time, you'll be able to automatically rely on yourself as a compassionate force when life throws you a curveball (I'm mixing my sports analogies here). I mentioned above the three components to self-compassion. By practicing each component, you will develop a well-rounded approach that will carry you through any difficult situation you may face in your life.

Compassion is inner strength. Criticism is inner weakness.

The best thing is, the more compassionate you are towards yourself, the more so you can be towards everyone else. This is what common humanity means. And anyone who has been on the receiving end of genuine compassion knows how empowering it is. It infuses a person with the strength to overcome any obstacle. To me, there is nothing fuzzy-hearted or rainbowed about that.

In an upcoming article, I will describe some simple but effective tools for strengthening self-compassion. Until then, notice how you talk to yourself throughout the day, without judgement. Get to know the characters, and pretty soon you might find self-criticism knocked out for good.

