



What is self-compassion?

“Self-compassion involves treating ourselves kindly, like we would a close friend we cared about. Rather than making global evaluations of ourselves as ‘good’ or ‘bad,’ self-compassion involves generating kindness toward ourselves as imperfect humans, and learning to be present with the inevitable struggles of life with greater ease. It motivates us to make needed changes in our lives not because we’re worthless or inadequate, but because we care about ourselves and want to lessen our suffering.”

-Dr. Kristin Neff, from *Self-Compassion: Embracing Suffering*



Three elements of self-compassion | adapted from Dr. Kristin Neff

1. Mindfulness of your own suffering

- This includes recognizing your own physical pain/illness, stress, difficult emotions, difficult situations, negative thoughts, disappointments, etc., as well as the underlying need or desire – to be healthy, to be happy, to connect with others, to do well or good, etc.
- Versus over-identification or ruminating on suffering or emotions or thoughts or ignoring our suffering, telling ourselves to just get over it



2. Recognition of common humanity

- Recognizing the shared human experience, understanding that all human beings fail and make mistakes, that all people lead imperfect lives
- This recognition enables one to develop a broader and more connected perspective with regard to personal shortcomings and individual difficulties
- Leads to connectedness, versus isolation



3. Self-kindness or self-mentoring

- Feeling warm and understanding toward ourselves when we suffer, fail, or feel inadequate, rather than ignoring our pain or flagellating ourselves with self-criticism
- Self-compassionate people recognize that being imperfect, failing, and experiencing life difficulties is inevitable, so they tend to be gentle with themselves rather than getting angry when life falls short of set ideals
- When this reality is accepted with empathy and kindness, greater emotional equanimity is experienced

