

# no one takes care of you better than you: self-compassion

**W**e can be our own toughest critics, especially when times get tough. Yet, research has shown that showing ourselves compassion can have numerous mental and physical benefits.

## Treat yourself with kindness

**Self-compassion** means treating yourself with kindness and gentleness. This includes having a caring, soothing, and understanding attitude, especially when experiencing difficult life experiences or personal shortcomings. It can be hard to switch off the negative thoughts we aim at ourselves, so the trick is to treat yourself as you would a friend.

When being compassionate with ourselves, we can learn to recognize when we are suffering, and be gentler with ourselves during those times. Plus, practicing self-compassion has been shown to reduce anxiety and related depression.



## There are many ways to be kind to yourself:

**Comfort your body.** Make yourself a healthy meal or snack, lie down and rest your body, massage your shoulders, neck, or hands, or take a walk. Small actions that improve your physical wellbeing are a great way to show self-compassion.

**Write yourself a letter.** Describe a situation that is causing you some negative feelings (like a breakup or a lost job). Recognize your emotions without placing blame on anyone. This can help you validate what you're feeling while maintaining a broader perspective.

**Encourage yourself.** Positive self-talk can make a big impact on your state of mind and your body. Identify the negative self-talk when you're critical of your performance or ability, and try to switch your viewpoint to something positive. Leave encouraging notes for yourself with positive affirmations.

**Practice mindfulness.** An easy mindfulness exercise is the *Body Scan*. Sit or lie down on the floor. Bring your attention to one part of your body, such as your toes or the top of your head, then work your way up or down your body. Acknowledge any sensations — such as warmth, coolness, tingling, or pressure. If you notice yourself thinking, gently guide your focus back to the part of the body you were scanning.

There are five ways to bring self-compassion into

your life via **physical, mental,**  
**emotional, relational,**  
and **spiritual** methods.

*From The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion by Harvard psychologist, Christopher Germer*

