**Self-Compassion Activities**

**How Would You Treat a Friend?**

Perhaps the single best way to provoke compassion for yourself is through this exercise: treating yourself like a good friend.

It’s easy to give our friends love, compassion, and understanding, even when they fail or make a mistake. It can be much harder to extend that same understanding and compassion to ourselves when we make a mistake.

Follow these instructions from self-compassion expert Dr. Kristin Neff to start showing yourself more compassion:

1. First, think about times when a close friend feels really bad about him or herself or is really struggling in some way. How would you respond to your friend in this situation (especially when you’re at your best)? Please write down what you typically do, what you say, and note the tone in which you typically talk to your friends.
2. Now think about times when you feel bad about yourself or are struggling. How do you typically respond to yourself in these situations? Please write down what you typically do, what you say, and note the tone in which you talk to yourself.
3. Did you notice a difference? If so, ask yourself why. What factors or fears come into play that lead you to treat yourself and others so differently?
4. Please write down how you think things might change if you responded to yourself in the same way you typically respond to a close friend when you’re suffering.

An exercise like this can be a first step towards treating yourself like a good friend – not just for a quick, 10-minute exercise, but for life.

**Self-Compassion Break**

To begin, bring to mind a situation in your life that is causing you stress or pain. Think about this situation and how it makes you feel, both emotionally and physically.

When you have this situation in mind and get in touch with the feelings associated with it, say the following things to yourself:

* *“This is a moment of suffering.”*

This will activate mindfulness; other options include “This hurts,” “This is stress,” and, simply, “Ouch.”

* *“Suffering is a part of life.”*

Saying this helps you realize that you have this in common with all other human beings on the planet – suffering is an unavoidable part of life. You can follow this up by putting your hands over your heart or using whatever soothing self-touch feels right to you. Other options include “Other people feel this way,” “I’m not alone,” or “We all struggle in our lives.”

* *“May I be kind to myself.”*

Alternatively, you can use other phrases that may apply better in your current situation, such as “May I forgive myself” or “May I be patient.”

Great relief can come from simply affirming that you are experiencing suffering, a difficult but natural part of life, and stating your intention to be kind, patient, or accepting of yourself.